

# Operation Grouser I

*The Sequel to Hickory II*

(September 1, 1967)

## One Long Day

*In writing this narrative, it is my hope that others who participated in Grouser I will offer their recollections so that a more complete and accurate narrative can be written of our operations as “AmGrunts” in Vietnam. The Forum Section for AmGrunts has a topic for Operation Hickory II where you can also post your recollections or corrections concerning Operation Grouser I.*

*[Ed. Note: This is just a quick summary of Operation Grouser I obtained from the Battalion’s Command Chronology and 3<sup>rd</sup> MarDiv message traffic. Note that specific grid coordinates and sequence/timing of certain events differ depending upon which source material is used.]*

*Throughout the text are numbers in brackets: [1]. These refer to the numbers added to the left margin of the attached Command Chronology pages that link the chronology events to the corresponding numbers overlaid on the map of the area in which our part of Hickory II was conducted. The links to the map and the selected pages from the Command Chronology appear at the end of this narrative.*

Although just a battalion-sized operation dreamt up by the leadership of 1<sup>st</sup> AmTrac Bn, Operation Grouser I was both successful and unique. Although in large part a repeat of the 1<sup>st</sup> AmTracs portion of the OpPlan from Operation Hickory II, there was an unusual twist. The “A” Co. AmGrunts, led again by then-Captain Leo Jamieson, were accompanied by an official infantry company, “F” Co. 2/3 from BLT 2/3 (led by Captain Reginald G. Pomsford III) who were placed under operational control (OPCON) of 1<sup>st</sup> AmTracs for the express purpose of conducting Operation Grouser I.

Operating as a mechanized infantry battalion, the two infantry companies operated as a team, with “B” Co.’s AmTracs providing the mobility for both. A Section of 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Amphib. Co. HOW-6’s tagged along just as in Hickory II. The total number of tractors was a little less than in Hickory II. There were 19 LVTP-5’s, the 2 LVTH-6’s and 2 LVTE-1’s. Another twist was that the same ARVN battalion (2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 2<sup>nd</sup> ARVN Reg.) involved in Hickory II would serve as a blocking force rather than as part of the search and destroy team. They were also supported by 6 LVTP-5’s from “H&S” Co. Including the “H&S” Co. tractors, a total of 29 LVTs from 1<sup>st</sup> AmTracs participated in the operation.

The notion of a mechanized infantry battalion employing AmTracs was elaborated on in the After-Action Report for Operation Grouser I:

On dismounting, Companies “A” and “F” employed tank and infantry tactics. When they made contact, the LVT 30 caliber machinegun and the LVTH-6 organic weapons (a turret-mounted 105mm howitzer and a 50 caliber machinegun) were used to establish fire superiority for maneuvering elements. Wounded Marines were covered from enemy fire by moving the one LVT operating as a litter tractor between the enemy positions and the point where the Marine fell, thereby providing a shield. Other LVTs and the LVTH-6s

then suppressed enemy fire allowing protected recovery and subsequent delivery to the helicopter MED-Evac site. The endurance and momentum of both infantry companies was increased by spread loading each sub-unit's supplies on their respective LVT. This provided a mobile resupply directly behind the advancing forces.

The most recent intelligence had indicated at least 3 NVA companies were in the area of operations:

The K-400 Company (160 men) equipped with 60MM and 82MM mortars, light machineguns and sufficient individual weapons and an unknown infantry Company of the 266 NVA Bn (Unk Div) (120 men) similarly equipped. The enemy's mission was to gain control of the Nhi Ha forest area as a base to interdict the Cua Viet River and prevent movement of Navy craft that resupply Dong Ha from the (NSA) LST/LCU ramp at Cua Viet and to hamper National elections North of the river.

The mission was simply to eliminate all VC/NVA forces South of the DMZ within the assigned Zone of Action. The zone was roughly coterminous with our northern TAOR: From the South China Sea coast on the east, to Jones Creek on the West and the Cua Viet River on the South.

The companies completed crossing the Cua Viet river on AmTracs at 6:45 a.m. on September 1<sup>st</sup>, progressing about 4,000 meters up the coast before being taken under artillery fire (100 MM) an hour later (7:45 a.m.) from the DMZ to the northwest. Significant enemy contact was not encountered until both letter companies advanced south below the DMZ in the vicinity of An My (YD 255747). At this point Co. "A" took heavy 82 MM mortar fire from the vicinity of YD 258737. Sniper and automatic weapons fire was also received. This fire was countered by 105 MM howitzer fire from 3<sup>rd</sup> Plat. 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Amphibian Co. from Cua Viet, 60 MM mortar fire from "A" Co., and direct fire from the section of LVTH-6 in the field. Strong resistance was not encountered again until Co. "A" and Co. "F", abreast, attacked the built up area in the vicinity of YD 256743 when 82 MM mortar fire and small arms fire was again received. Mortar positions at YD 259738 were located by an AO (Cat Killer 44). Five fixed wing airstrikes were run on the mortar position and points of contact with enemy forces. Both companies then advanced by fire and cleared the area. Twenty NVA KIA (Conf.) and 2 NVA KIA (Prob.) were credited to air and ground action. Contacts throughout the remainder of the operation consisted of intermittent sniper fire. An additional 21 NVA KIA (Conf.) were credited to the ARVN blocking force.

On advancing north along the route of advance no contact was made which deterred movement. Enemy artillery was not adjusted but employed direct observation by line of sight down the beach. More elaborate bunkers were encountered than found during Operation Hickory II. The new bunkers found were constructed with heavier log overhead coverage. Some had concrete and were oriented toward the North and northeast. All heavily used trails had spider holes and fighting holes in ambush positions on the approaches to built up areas. Anti-tank mines were found in the open and had not been laid. Those detonated by tracked vehicles were not laid in any systematic pattern.

Execution:

At 9:30 a.m. on August 31, 1967, C.O. 1<sup>st</sup> AmTrac Bn issued Operation Order 5-67 to all organic and attached unit.

At 5 a.m. on September 1, the units departed the Battalion CP to cross the Cua Viet River and head north along the coast. At 6:45 a.m. near the original (destroyed) Giem Ha Trung just to the west of the treeline (vic YD 295749), Co. "A" spotted 10 NVA in the open and took them under fire. [1] Fifteen minutes later, Co. "A" received one incoming artillery round from a couple of kilometers to the west within the DMZ and called for TOT (Time-on-Target fire). As it continued north, Co. "A" reported that the NVA were moving North into the DMZ and that the column had received an additional 12 rounds of incoming arty at 7:10 a.m., but no casualties. [2] "F" Co. then turned west heading toward An My (YD 257747) while "A" Co. headed closer to the DMZ (to Phase Line Blue) before they would turn west and proceed abreast of "F" Co.

"A" Co. dismounted and deployed along Phase Line Blue and immediately spotted 3 NVA running towards the DMZ. They opened up on the NVA with rifles and 30 caliber Machine gun fire with negative results. Shortly thereafter, at 8:10 a.m., the Bn Forward CP was established at YD 288755, which included the Bn C.O and S-3 Officer (then-Capt. P.M. Johnson). Security for the the Forward CP was provided by one platoon from "H&S" Co. and and one 81 MM mortar squad attached to "F" Co.

A few minutes later, the two companies received 25 more rounds of incoming artillery, this time from the northwest. Aerial Observer (Article 21) detected a muzzle flash and adjusted return artillery fire from the Gio Linh Composite Artillery Battery on suspected enemy arty site, reporting that one NVA artillery piece was knocked out. It was a costly barrage, with "A" Co. suffering its sole KIA (Cpl. S. L. Keyes) and two WIA, while "F" Co. suffered 3 WIA. (all 5 WIA were Med-Evac'd). [3]

About an hour later, having crossed the desert and moved southwest from An My, "A" Co. (vic YD 256743), while moving through heavy vegetation, started taking mortar and small arms fire from several hundred meters to the east, placing the enemy position just to the west of that same set of dunes where the first major contact occurred in Hickory II. "A" Co. moved into assault. [4]

Five fixed wing Airstrikes were made on the enemy position while "A" Co. assaulted on the ground, with AO (Cat Killer 23) controlling the airstrikes. "A" Co. suffered another 3 WIA (non-Med-Evac). Upon completion of the airstrikes, "A" Co. completed the attack on the enemy position. The results were 20 NVA KIA and the capture of 3 AT mines at (YD 267733) near the northwestern foot of Hill 31. [5]

At 10:02 a.m., "A" Co. again was receiving small arms fire and began prep firing on the village of Nhi Thuong at (YD 257725) with 60 MM mortars and called in naval gunfire on the enemy positions. [6] Within the hour, the Battalion Forward CP was contacted by "G" Co., 2d Battalion, 2d ARVN Regiment (Nickle Wind Up Golf) indicating that, while serving as our blocking force, 45 NVA had been engaged as they cross Jones Creek to the West vic (YD 251735) to evade the earlier airstrikes. An additional 21 NVA KIA (conf.) resulted from the engagement. The ARVNs had done much better this time around. Of course, having the support of 6 H&S Co. LVTP-5's may have provided the necessary backbone. [7]

While crossing a rice paddy vic (YD 257725) at 11:20 a.m. both companies began receiving incoming artillery rounds from the DMZ. About 30 rounds were fired. Naval gun fire was delivered on suspected artillery site vic (YD 244784). Results unknown. [7]

"A" Co was continued receiving heavy artillery and started taking casualties from the barrage as they continued their sweep South vic (YD 268732 – Hill 31). Two new AO's (Safety Zone 22-E and Oak

Gate 61) adjusted return fire missions on grids (YD 2378) and (YD 2582). [8]

At 1:45 p.m. “A” Co. and “F” Co. move into attack on the outskirts of the village of Nhi Trung vic (YD 285703) While maneuvering for position, “F” Co. came under automatic weapons fire, suffering 2 WIA (Med-Evac’d). Both companies continued sweeping southeast through the various villages along Jones Creek until they swept between the two Nhi Ha villages around 4:45 p.m. [9]

At this point, “B” Co. started taking incoming artillery and “F” Co. observed and took under fire two NVA as they advanced under small arms fire from 300 meters at vic (YD 285701). The two enemy were observed as they fell and crawled into a hole. Demolitions were used on the entrance to the hole resulting in two NVA KIA (Prob.). [10]

At 5:10 p.m. the Battalion Forward Command Post received 3 rounds of 100MM artillery while moving to a new location. [11]

From 5:55 p.m. to 7:10 p.m. both companies continued their search and destroy operation, sweeping south to the Limit of Advance (the Cua Viet River) against harassing sniper fire. At 8:00 p.m., the search and destroy operation was complete and all units returned to the Cua Viet Port Facility.

The 6 LVTP-5’s from H&S Co. remained in direct support of the 2nd ARVN Regiment.

It had been one very long day. We had suffered 1 KIA and 20 WIA. However, the enemy suffered worse: 20 KIA (Conf.), 2 KIA (Prob.), plus another 21 KIA (Conf.) thanks to the ARVNs and H&S Co. tractor crews.

**Attachment: Map of GROUSER I**

**Attachment: Grouser I Overlay**

**Attachment: Grouser I Command Chronology**

**Attachment: Casualty Lists From Grouser I**

**Sources: (USMC Historical Division, Archives Section Vietnam CDs)**

1<sup>st</sup> Amtracs Command Chronology, September 1967 BVNCD-009,

3<sup>rd</sup> MarDiv Command Chronology September 1967- VNCD-029

3<sup>rd</sup> MarDiv Unit Journal September 1967- VNCD-029





~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

7-76  
25

PL  
BLUE

PL  
WHITE

PL  
RED

2/11  
ARVIN A - F/3

PL  
GREEN

PL  
GREY

PL  
BLACK

VEHICLE  
PLD.

11  
CMD  
FWD

110  
REAR

POLICE ALFA

310  
CMD

33-68

UNCLASSIFIED

ENCLOSURE (1)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

HEADQUARTERS  
 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion (Rein)  
 3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF  
 FPO, San Francisco, California 96602  
 01 0001H Sept 1967  
 to  
 01 2400H Sept 1967

Time		Serial Number	DTG	Incidents, Messages, Orders, etc.	Action Taken
In	Out				M-Maps
0001		1	010001	Journal opened.	SF
0400		2	010400	Bn Scout Team returned to CP. Negative contact.	SF
0500		3	010500	Elements of Co "A", Co "B" and H&S Co 1st AmTrac Bn with Foxtrot Co 2/3 departed CP for search and destroy mission in northern sector along east coast to DMZ then south along Jones creek to the CUA VIET River.	SF
0645	1 2	4	010645	Co "A" spotted Ten enemy in open vic (YD 295749). Took enemy under fire. At 0700 received one arty rd from suspected arty position (YD 275775). Called for TOT. 0740 Co "A" reported enemy deploying north of DMZ. 0740 received 12 rds of arty. Negative casualties.	SMF
0810	3	5	010810	Foxtrot Co 2/3 and Co "A" 1st AmTrac Bn vic (YD 240750) received heavy mortar and artillery fire. AO (Article 21) adjusted naval gunfire on (YD 250810). Reports one NVA artillery piece knocked out. One USMC KIA and Five WIA Med-Evac.	SMF
0915	4	6	010915	Co "A" 1st AmTrac Bn vic (YD 256743) received mortar and SAF from vic (YD 259738). Co "A" moving into assault.	SMF
0930		7	010930	Co "A" 1st AmTrac Bn vic (YD 256743) in contact with enemy vic (YD 259738). Fixed wing Airstrike held on enemy position. AO (Cat Killer 23) adjusted. Three USMC WIA, non Med-Evac.	SMF
1000	5	8	011000	Airstrikes complete. Co "A" moving into attack. Found three AT mines at (YD 267733). At 1002 Co "A" receiving SAF.	SMF

DECLASSIFIED

Annex B

DECLASSIFIED



DECLASSIFIED

S-2/3 Section  
1st Amphibian Tractor Bn  
01 0001H Sept 1967  
to  
01 2400H Sept 1967

JOURNAL

Time		Serial Number	DTG	Incidents, Messages Orders, etc.	Action Taken
In	Out				
1050	6	9	011050	Co "A" First AmTrac Bn vic (YD 257725) prep fired village with 60 MM mortars. Called in naval gunfire on (YD 269728) for prep fires. At 011110 Nickle Wind Up Golf has contact at (YD 251735). Reported 20 enemy KIA. At 011120 resumed prep fires. At 011130 Co "A" receiving incoming arty. Taking casualties. All units moving into attack.	SMF
	7				
1200		10	011200	S-2 disseminated the challenge and password.	STF
1230	8	11	011230	Co "A" still receiving heavy arty. Oak Gate 61 and Safety Zone 22E adjusting mission on grids (YD 2378) and (YD 2582).	SMF
1345	9	12	011345	Foxtrot Co 2/3 and Co "A" with elements of Co "B" 1st AmTrac Bn vic (YD 285703) moved into attack.	SMF
1625	10	13	011625	Foxtrot Co 2/3 receiving ANF. Manuvering for position. At 1720 Co "B" started receiving incoming arty. Two WIA Med-Evac Foxtrot 2/3.	STF
1710	11	14	011710	H&S Co while moving out of forward CP vic (YD 297742) received 3 rds of 100 MM arty or larger, from estimated 7,000 meters on azimuth of 295 degrees.	SMF
2000		15	012000	Elements of H&S Co, Co "A", Co "B" and Foxtrot Co 2/3 returned to CP from search and destroy mission. <i>Old ar get away enemy KIA's</i>	STF
2400		16	012400	SUMMARY OF PERIOD'S ACTION: Three LVTP-5 2d Plat Co "B" D/S of 3/4. Six LVTP-5 H&S Co in D/S of 2d ARVN Regt. Bn still maintaining 24 hr patrols in rocket belt. Bn continues to run day and night patrols and ambushes in AO and to provide security for CUA VIET PORT FACILITY. Bn also continues to carry out Operation Liberty.  Journal closed.	SMF

DECLASSIFIED

Annex B

DECLASSIFIED





**DECLASSIFIED**

S-1 SECTION  
1st AmTracBn, 3d MarDiv  
01 2400H SEP 67  
to  
02 2400H SEP 67

JOURNAL

TIME		SERIAL NUMBER	DTG	Incidents, Messages, Orders, etc.	ACTION TAKEN
IN	OUT				
		9	020001	Journal opened.	S
020830		10	011000	HM3 J. G. MULHOLLAND WIA: Received shrapnel wounds on right arm from an enemy explosive device, while participating in an operation against hostile forces in the Dong Ha area. Med Evaced to D-Med.	S
021000		11	011000	CPL E. S. WALLACE WIA: Received shrapnel wounds on buttocks from an enemy explosive device, while engaged in action against hostile forces in the Dong Ha area. Treated in field and returned to duty.	S
021000		12	011000	2ndLt D. L. RANKIN WIA: Received shrapnel wounds on buttocks from an enemy explosive device, while participating in an operation against hostile forces in the Dong Ha area. Treated in field and returned to duty.	S
021000		13	010930	PFC R. L. ALLEY WIA: Received shrapnel wounds on right leg from an enemy explosive device, while participating in an operation against hostile forces in the Dong Ha area. Treated in field and returned to duty.	S
021000		14	011145	SGT T. E. HOFFMAN WIA: Received shrapnel wounds on left cheek from an enemy explosive device, while participating in an operation against hostile forces in the Dong Ha area. Treated in field and returned to duty.	S

DECLASSIFIED

Annex A

DECLASSIFIED

**DECLASSIFIED**

JOURNAL

S-1 SECTION  
1st AmTracBn, 3d MarDiv  
01 2400H SEP 67  
to  
02 2400H SEP 67

TIME		SERIAL NUMBER	DTG	Incidents, Messages, Orders, etc.	ACTION TAKEN
IN	OUT				
				Page two (2) of journal continued.	S
021000		15	011145	LCpl H. D. HESSION WIA: Received shrapnel wounds on right leg from an enemy explosive device, while participating in an operation against hostile forces in the Dong Ha area. Treated in field and returned to duty.	S
021000		16	011145	LCpl L. D. GREGORY WIA: Received shrapnel wounds above right eye from an enemy explosive device, while participating in an operation against hostile forces in the Dong Ha area. Treated in field and returned to duty.	S
021000		17	011145	PFC L. A. TENNEY WIA: Received shrapnel wounds on both arms from an enemy explosive device, while participating in an operation against hostile forces in the Dong Ha area. Med Evaced to D-Med.	S
021000		18	011145	PFC M. C. BARNES WIA: Received shrapnel wounds on right side of head and lost right thumb from an enemy explosive device, while participating in an operation against hostile forces in the Dong Ha area. Med Evaced to D-Med.	S
021000		19	011145	LCpl R. E. LYONS WIA: Received shrapnel wounds on right leg from an enemy explosive device, while participating in an operation against hostile forces in the Dong Ha area. Med Evaced to D-Med.	S

DECLASSIFIED

Annex A

DECLASSIFIED