



9th Infantry Division



The Old Reliable

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Republic of Vietnam

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VC Saigon drive repelled

Over 700 invaders killed by Reliables

SAIGON – A sustained enemy drive to invade this capital city from the south was smashed by 9th Division forces in five days of grueling combat May 7-11.

Division infantrymen, armored personnel carriers, gunships and artillery mowed down over 700 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army regulars who tried each day to enter the capital via the Y-Bridge and Kinh Doi Canal two miles from the Presidential Palace.

The enemy's renewed but diminished show of strength prior to the Paris peace talks sent thousands of men, women and children pouring across the bridge, seeking refuge inside the city. Many didn't make it, as the communists honored no distinction between Allied Forces and innocent civilians.

Old Reliable units lost 27 killed in the five-day fight.

Action first exploded before dawn May 7 when an estimated VC platoon assaulted the Y-Bridge leading into downtown Saigon. At the same time, an ARVN outpost farther west came under siege by an enemy company.

APCs of the 5th Mechanized Battalion, 60th Infantry, which had helped repel hostile intruders from Cholon during February's *Tet* turmoil, sped into the area from the Mekong Delta.

As Company C, 5th/60th approached the ARVN outpost, it encountered heavy small arms, automatic weapons and B-50 rocket fire. Simultaneously, Company A, 5th/60th, racing to intercept the enemy at the bridge, also met intense VC fire. Gunships and artillery supported both.

At dawn, U.S. airstrikes raked the area, killing many VC who had taken cover in a nearby factory complex. When the trapped communists tried to flee south across open rice paddies, they were battered by gunships of the 3d Squadron, 5th Armored Cavalry, and 7th Squadron, 1st Air Cavalry.

While Company AA sealed off the bridge access, Company C's tracks roared through the factory-rubble from the west, shutting off the enemy in a cement block building near the center of the complex. All the while, Huey Cobras and the new OH-6A Cayuse gunships hammered the VC position with miniguns and rockets.

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The Old Reliable – Vol 2, No. 20, page 1 (continued)

The enemy body count reached 213 as fighting tapered off by late afternoon. Contact continued into the night, with ARVN Rangers moving into the east side of the complex to complete the deadly pincer movement.

Early next morning, elements of the 3d Battalion, 39th Infantry, were summoned from Long An Province to guard the southern entrances to the city. Reaching the Kinh Doi Canal, a major shipping lane bordering the district of Cholon, the unit received heavy fire from dwellings in the area. A house-to-house counterattack chased enemy snipers to the roofs in a vain attempt to halt the 3d/39th. Allied gunships again devastated the battleground with miniguns and rockets.

Meanwhile, further south, the 4th Battalion, 39th Infantry, turned back another enemy force on its way to Saigon.

In all, 115 enemy perished during the second day of fighting.

At about 10 a.m. May 9, elements of the 5th/60th ran into heavy contact along the canal, while the 3d/39th engaged the enemy near the bridge.

As fighting intensified, the 2d Mechanized Battalion, 47th Infantry rushed from Camp Bearcat, 20 miles away, to assist in parrying the enemy thrust.

When heavy small arms and rocket fire greeted the 2d/47th tracks east of the bridge, the Panthers answered with .50 cal machineguns, which, together with gunships and airstrikes, soon forced another enemy withdrawal.

The Division's newest maneuver battalion, the 6th/31st Infantry, encountered its first significant contact since arriving in Vietnam in early April. Most of the action flared between Highways 15 and 230. At one point during the afternoon, the 6th/31st forces were pinned down, but they soon overcame the snipers and moved to secure the bridge north and south of the contact.

Toward evening, the enemy had lost an additional 169 men.

Earlier in the day, gunships of the 3d/5th Cav spotted 20 medium-sized sampans hidden in a cove along a stream about 1,000 yards from the contact. They were covered with blue plastic material and contained packs, webbing and food. The gunships quickly destroyed them.

Shortly after, about 3,000 yards from the battle site, gunships observed two enemy 107mm rocket positions, mounted and ready to fire. The gunships disposed of the sites and the two rocket warheads near them.

On May 10, Division units continuing to sweep and secure the southern fringes of Saigon combined to kill 106 enemy in separate engagements throughout the day. At least 13 kills were credited to gunships from Troop B, ?/1st Cav and D Troop, 3d/5th Cav.

The next day was relatively tranquil until about 7:20 p.m. when the 3d/39th exchanged heavy fire with the enemy about 500 yards south of the Y-Bridge. Airstrikes and gunships helped the infantrymen kill 80 VC in the two-hour struggle.

At the same time, eight miles south of Saigon, the 6th/31st felled 24 enemy in an hour-long battle punctuated by airstrikes and gunships.