

The Summer Offensive in the A Shau Valley

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MASSACHUSETTS STRIKER

BY LT. FRANK HAIR

The tactical value of the A Shau Valley as a main supply and infiltration route from Laos into Thua Thien and Quang Nam Provinces has rendered it an area of contest for many years. It was not, however, until this year that the U.S. and ARVN forces obtained the capability to invade the A Shau and deny the enemy the use of it for an indefinite period of time.

Operation Massachusetts Striker and Apache Snow initiated the first successful attempt to control the A Shau Valley on a permanent basis by the free world forces. Striker was directed against the southern portion of the valley while Apache Snow followed with the invasion of the northern area. Montgomery Rendezvous was next, aimed at the eastern slope and the middle of the valley floor.

The 2nd Brigade kicked off Striker on March 1 with the insertion of A Co., 326th Engr. Bn., onto a hilltop overlooking the valley. Under the protection of troopers of the 2nd Sqdrn., 17th Cav., they began construction of Fire Base Whip, the proposed forward base camp of the brigade.

From Whip the 2nd Brigade was to conduct operations in the southern A Shau and Rao Nai valleys to interdict and destroy North Vietnamese base areas and supply routes. The success of the operation required bold insertions of the maneuver battalions, followed by forced combat marches to the Laotian border to cut off enemy withdrawals. The enemy situation was obscure, but it was clear that he was very active.

On D-day minus one, Col. John A. Hoefling, then the brigade commander, told his troops, "We are in for some tough fighting ahead, but I feel we have never before been more capable of success than we are now. The NVA we are going to meet out there," he warned, "will be highly trained, well equipped hardcore troops who will stand and fight, especially when we get close to his base camps and supply depots."

The mountain weather has always been unpredictable, particularly during the monsoon season, which was due to pass in late March. As a result, the operation was delayed when the engineers were socked in on Whip the day after their insertion. They continued their construction on the fire base without adequate food and water supplies. For days they subsisted on rainwater they could catch in their ponchos.

The bad weather persisted until finally, on March 12, the 1st Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf., was able to move forward as far as Fire Base Veghel. Although this maneuver was not in the original plans, it worked out to advantage when a company of the 9th NVA Regt. was found on the abandoned fire base. "It seems," said Lt. Col. Donald Davis, Brooklyn, N.Y., the battalion commander, "that we've accidentally jumped into a battalion base area."

When the assault helicopters carrying C Co. of the O-Deuce swept down on Veghel at 5 that afternoon, they encountered the enemy in dug-in positions inside the perimeter. Claymore mines had been emplaced and aimed skyward against the helicopters, and the area was heavily boobytrapped. Most of these, fortunately, had been destroyed in the artillery preparation of the fire base as an LZ.

Four of the first five choppers to land took hits but none were destroyed. Bitter fighting ensued as the clouds closed over again, cutting off air support.

By midnight the enemy had stopped returning fire and the following morning Charlie Company's assault was completed with little difficulty. Twelve NVA bodies had been left inside the perimeter, and eight more were found along the enemy's route of withdrawal.

That afternoon the rest of the battalion joined C Co. at Veghel and began a drive westward in pursuit. For the next 33 days the First Strike battalion fought every foot of the way against well-entrenched enemy, pushing them back until they made a stand at Dong A Tay, the battle of "Bloody Ridge."

Never before had the enemy shown such determination to stand and fight for his ground. Not until the NVA battalion had been decimated did they break contact and flee to their sanctuaries in Laos. This hard-won victory, the result of a substitute maneuver because of bad weather, counted for 90 NVA killed by actual body count, with many times that number killed or wounded and carried off in the enemy's retreat.

Meanwhile, on March 20, the 2nd Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., led by Lt. Col. Joseph C. Wilson, Honolulu, Hawaii, was inserted into the Rao Nai Valley, southeast of the A Shau, and began a sweep to the Laotian border. They encountered light resistance along the way from small delaying elements of squad or platoon size.

On March 22 the No Slack 2nd Bn., 327th Abn. Inf. from the 1st Brigade came under the operational control of the 2nd Brigade and invaded the old A Shau airstrip on the floor of the valley. This was the destination of the 1st of the 502nd had it not been committed on Dong A Tay.

Again, little resistance was encountered as the No Slack troopers moved quickly southward to the Laotian border on three axes. The bad weather delays coupled with American activity on the edges of the valley had apparently telegraphed the approach of the Screaming Eagles, and the enemy units withdrew into Laos before they could be overtaken.

Once the battalions reached the Laotian border they retraced their steps and conducted intensive search operations in their respective areas. In the next several weeks enemy base camps, hospitals, high-speed trails and supply caches were discovered and destroyed or confiscated.

The No Slack paratroopers found several trucks and dozers along a heavy duty road that NVA engineers had been constructing and improving. Lt. Col. Charles W. Dyke, Clinton, Md., the battalion commander found evidence that repair crews had been through the area only five days ahead of his own companies.

Delta Company, 2nd of the 501st, came upon a way-station, hospital complex and drove off what apparently was a caretaker platoon. That night, after the company established its night position in the complex, the enemy platoon returned with satchel charges, RPG fire and small arms. The attack was repelled, three sappers dying inside the perimeter.

A few days later the Drive On troopers, following a high-speed trail, found caches that contained 120,000 AK-47 rounds, dozens of rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and mortar rounds. They continued to be harassed by booby traps and snipers and cache security guards.

By this time the 1st Bn., 501st Abn. Inf., commanded by Lt. Col. John E. Rogers, had completed a successful cordon operation on the plains and joined Mass. Striker. On April 10 they combat-assaulted into Fire Base Thor and the area southeast, spearheading the brigade's move into Quang Nam Province in the direction of Da Nang.

The 1st of the 502nd, after mopping up operations at Dong A Tay, was inserted on April 16 into Fire Base Lash astride the Yellow Brick Road (Route 614). Within four days Spec. 4 Milton Copeland, Hamilton, Ga., discovered possibly the largest electronic equipment and medical supply cache yet found in the war—100 tons. His Charlie Company encountered virtually no resistance as they probed and uncovered 14 trucks, over 600 brand new SKS rifles, Chinese Communist radios and field telephones, large stocks of medicine, large quantities of assorted supplies and equipment and documents indicating the location of another cache.

As the days went on it became obvious that the entire area of the extreme southern A Shau had been abandoned by the NVA, who left the bulk of their equipment and munitions behind in their hasty retreat. The Yellow Brick Road was interdicted and destroyed by the 2nd Brigade, leaving enemy plans for future offensives against Hue and Da Nang extremely hampered if not impossible.

A total of 178 enemy were killed by May 8 when Striker terminated. Tons of munitions and equipment were destroyed or captured. The historically valuable supply and infiltration route of the communist forces was denied to them, leaving no alternate route, so hindering their operations for some time to come.

APACHE SNOW

By LT. HARRY OYLER

During the early morning hours of May 10, anticipation heightened as the 3rd Brigade troopers made ready for their long-awaited invasion of the A Shau Valley. They were going after the enemy where he lived.

The XXIV Corps operation, code-named Apache Snow, was designed to destroy those enemy forces in the steep mountains rising abruptly from the lush A Shau Valley separating I Corps from Laos. There was good reason for a massive strike there.

In mid-January the brigade's intelligence section began receiving the information which would lead to the operation. A prisoner captured by the 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. in January, and another picked up by the 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf., both spoke freely of their activities and traced their routes of infiltration from their A Shau base "warehouse area" into the coastal lowlands of Thua Thien and Quang Nam Provinces. With other intelligence data, this was enough to pinpoint the warehouse and send Air Force fighters screaming in.

In two days of ripping up the landscape, the jets caused 16 secondary explosions while opening up much of the canopy. This allowed forward air controllers (FACs) and recon teams of the 2nd Sqdrn., 17th Cav. to accurately plot numerous bunker and hooch positions.

While Operation Massachusetts Striker continued in the extreme southern portion of the valley, plans were amended to exploit the warehouse area after the Cav made significant contacts and cache discoveries while making a B-52 strike assessment.

The 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. was selected to raid the warehouse and construct a new fire base—named Airborne—on the infiltration route nearby. The final touches were put on the plans for a new thrust into the valley.

By May 9 the 3rd Brigade and elements of the 1st ARVN Division were poised to launch the largest airmobile assault of the Vietnam war. Precise timing and surprise were the main considerations of the operation's success.

Ten artillery batteries were placed at Fire Bases Bradley, Airborne, Currahee, Berchtesgaden and Cannon only 16 hours before the invasion. Weeks before D-day, in order to confuse the enemy and disguise plans, more than 30 landing zones were “prepped” by the Air Force. Jets dropped “daisy-cutter” bombs designed to detonate above the ground, clearing vegetation without making craters.

H-hour was 7:30 a.m. on May 10. At marshaling points at Fire Base Blaze were gathered quiet groups of men of the 3rd Bn., 187th Inf., the 1st Bn., 506th Inf. and two ARVN battalions. Pilots and door-gunners stood by the 65 Hueys that would take the men into battle. When the time came the troops boarded the helicopters and Apache Snow was under way.

The choppers crossed the valley in the south and then, using the terrain as a screen, turned north along the Laotian border to the selected LZs. In the hour before, jets had bombed the landing zones for 50 minutes, artillery had followed with a 15-minute barrage, then came aerial rocket artillery helicopters for a one-minute frosting on the cake.

Covered by Cobra gunships, the lead elements of two battalions were inserted in a 45-minute period, with Cos. B, C and D and the command post of the 1st of the 506th hitting the ground at 8:12. Within minutes the soldiers were pushing from the west—to the enemy’s complete surprise.

It was a flawless combat assault. Col. Joseph B. Conmy Jr., Pembina, S. Dak., the 3rd Brigade commander, who was also responsible for coordinating Apache Snow, termed it “an outstanding example of the capabilities of an airmobile division.

“We effected complete surprise on the enemy by landing behind him, getting in without taking any casualties or losing any choppers,” said Conmy.

The allied battalions were to block enemy escape routes into Laos along Highway 922 and to interdict the enemy-built Highway 548, which runs the length of the A Shau. RIF operations would find the enemy and his caches and destroy them.

Enemy resistance was light the first day.

“He knew we were in the area “ said Maj. Kenneth H. Montgomery, the brigade S-3 (operations) officer, “but he didn’t know in what force or exactly where, and thus he was unable to organize any type of counterattack.”

For three days Rakkasans of the 3rd of the 187th engaged trail-watchers and then began receiving automatic weapons fire from a hillmass called Dong Ap Bia.

Lt. Col. Weldon F. Honeycutt, Columbus, Ga., maneuvered his companies along ridges leading to the top of the hill in an exploratory assault to determine the strength of the enemy.

That evening the 1st Currahee battalion, under the command of Lt. Col. James Bowers, Springfield, Va., was ordered to reinforce the 187th in taking the hill. Almost immediately the men came under heavy fire from enemy gunners and progress was slow.

For the next three days the combat situation remained static. The NVA units held the hilltop while Screaming Eagles probed and

looked for weaknesses. At the same time the hill was bombarded continually with artillery, ARA and air strikes as the Currahee battalion continued to meet resistance in their drive on the hill.

On the 18th, Rakkasans assaulted the enemy stronghold for the second time in an effort to drive him from his well constructed bunker complex. One unit, Delta Company, reported being within 25 meters of the top when a torrential rainstorm struck and forced the paratroopers to move off the hill, which rain turned into a barren mudslide.

Two additional battalions, the 2nd of the 501st and 2nd of the 3rd ARVN, along with A Co., 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf., were ordered to move to the hill, virtually surrounding it, and join the other two battalions for a final assault to secure Hill 937, the highest point on Dong Ap Bia.

At 10 in the morning on the 20th they started up the hill once more and by early afternoon had defeated the enemy and secured the objective, thus ending the 10day battle and decimating the 29th NVA Regt.

As the battle raged the other three companies of the 2nd of the 506th were helilifted into the warehouse area discovered prior to the start of Apache Snow. Their mission was to locate and destroy an enemy command post complex thought to be in the area, and capture his food and munitions caches.

Co. C quickly discovered both a hospital and the CP complex. More than 10 tons of rice and 75,000 individual and crew-served rounds of ammunition were also captured.

“A North Vietnamese prisoner said he had walked for two days along the valley floor and turned northwest for a few hundred meters to a hospital complex where he received treatment for his wounds,” said Sgt. Alan Austin, Homosassa, Fla., point man for C Co. “He was only about 750 meters off from the location he pointed out to us on the map, and we found the caches and command post in the same area.”

The month-long operation accounted for 675 enemy killed, three prisoners, 241 individual and 40 crew-served weapons captured, and more than 100,000 rounds of ammunition discovered.

“This operation,” said Conmy, “just proved again that the ultimate weapon is the infantry rifleman. Victory achieved by the heroism of the rifleman going in and digging out the enemy.”

VALLEY ACTIVITY

The A Shau Valley from the air looks green and peaceful—but when you get closer you see the enemy-built Route 548 and the artillery and bomb craters that pock the floor. This has been the scene of much activity since March. Most airmobile thrusts into the valley start at a marshaling point near a fire base. Troopers of the 2nd Brigade waited hours at Birmingham for the word go. Once they were on the valley floor it was a battle against the undergrowth, fallen trees, sometimes the enemy. At the end of the road, after running contact spread over days and weeks, there was a reward—maybe 600 SKS rifles discovered during Mass. Striker. Apache Snow followed—a short, quick surprise offensive from west of the valley—and then came Montgomery Rendezvous. One big project of this operation was the building of a new airstrip near Ta Bat.

MONTGOMERY RENDEZVOUS

By Spec. 5 Alan Magary

When Screaming Eagles air-assaulted back into the A Shau Valley June 8, they showed some intention of staying for a long time to be a thorn in the enemy's side. Within two weeks a new airstrip had been built and a new road was complete from the lowlands to the valley floor.

The road and airstrip added new logistical capabilities to the usual airmobile leaps around the valley, the garrisoning of fire bases in critical areas, and the continual reconnaissance-in-force operations.

The construction of the airstrip is the 326th Engr. Bn.'s largest project so far in the war. A company of infantry secured some landing zones near the old French strip at Ta Bat, some engineers were airlifted in and the next day Flying Cranes and Chinooks flew 48 sorties to bring every major piece of engineer equipment together for the first time for one job.

Equipment marshaled for the project ranged from the light-weight mini-dozer to the 15,000-pound D5A bulldozer. For the first few days the dozers floundered in the sticky bog created by the soaked clay found under the covering of elephant grass and topsoil.

Trenches were cut on either side of the strip to allow the water to drain away, parts of the bog were filled in, trees were "blown" and cleared away. Fifty-four working hours later, the strip complete, the first C-7A Caribou, a twin-engined transport, touched down in a cloud of dust.

For several weeks previously, engineers of the 27th Engr. Bn., 18th Engr. Bde. had been slowly cutting their way from FB Birmingham through the wilderness to create a graded road all the way from Camp Eagle to the A Shau. Most of the road, Route 547, was cut into the sides of steep, jungled hills. The mountainous terrain forced the engineers to build some wide loops and some narrow hairpin turns.

On June 20 the road was initiated momentously with the entrance into the valley of the first armor in history. A column of 80 tracked vehicles of the 3rd Sqdrn., 5th Cav., 9th Inf. Div. and 7th Cav., 1st ARVN Div. left FB Blaze and Cannon early in the morning. The lead APCs reached the new Ta Bat airstrip seven hours later without incident.

Maj. Gen. John M. Wright Jr., commanding general of the 101st, commented on the importance of the road and airstrip. "We're stronger now in the sense that we have more alternatives available to us to resupply whatever forces we commit out there.

“It’s more economical and more efficient to resupply our troops via ground vehicle whenever we can . . . It’s also efficient to resupply by fixed-wing aircraft.”

Meanwhile, with four Screaming Eagle battalions and two 1st ARVN Div. battalions engaged in sweeps on the eastern approaches of the valley, the enemy reacted to the allied presence with two vicious sapper attacks.

Just after 4 a.m. on June 14 at FB Berchtesgaden, Sfc. Angel M. Rosado, Jacksonville, Fla., was standing outside the CP of B Co., 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. when he spotted a figure inside the barbed wire perimeter.

“Who are you?” Rosado challenged.

“Quan,” the figure replied.

Rosado yelled a warning and rushed the startled NVA, throwing him over the wire and down a 20-foot embankment. With that the battle spread quickly as other sappers infiltrated.

Sgt. Maj. Robert D. Bryson, Houston, Mo., the 3rd Brigade operations sergeant major, killed three sappers while on his way to the brigade TOC, then wounded a fourth. The enemy managed to crawl close enough to the entrance to throw a satchel charge through it. Col. Joseph B. Conmy brigade commander, was wounded in the blast.

Two hours later the battle was over. Thirty-two NVA had been killed, two prisoners captured, and eight RPG launchers and eight AK-47s taken.

The next night FB Currahee, three and a half kilometers away, was attacked by an estimated 200 NVA believed to have come from the 29th Regt., which was decimated the month before on Dong Ap Bia. The attack was repelled by infantrymen of B Co., 2nd Bn., 502nd Abn. Inf. and two artillery batteries. No enemy managed to breach the perimeter, and the next day 54 enemy dead were found outside the wire.

As of August 5, with Montgomery Rendezvous continuing, a total of 323 enemy had been killed, 39 crew-served weapons and 144 individual weapons captured.

DONG AP BIA

By Spec. 5 Robert Borders

The rain and sweat-soaked paratroopers struggle up the slope. Swept clear of vegetation by the withering artillery fire and muddied by the rain, the denuded earth becomes a slippery mud-slide. The men struggle forward and then slip back. Dong Ap Bia itself, as well as the NVA, seems against them.

A few days earlier, this Hill 937 had been little more than a few brown contour lines on a map: meaningless. But now the ridges and depressions of Dong Ap Bia became a dark, silent enemy as troops of the 3rd Brigade inched their way upward.

In those few days, the impersonal lines had been translated into very personal realities for those who fought and died there. Almost every man has had friends killed or wounded under the merciless fire of the NVA who are so securely sheltered in the bowels of the mountain. For the enemy, the mountain is friend. The heavily jungled ridges leading to the southwest and northeast form superb highways for concealed infiltration. And just two miles away lies the shelter of the Laotian border: sanctuary.

Below the slopes lay the suspected routes of infiltration for NVA troops and supplies. For the enemy the mountain is too valuable to lose. The 29th NVA Regt., fresh from marshaling in North Vietnam, established a base camp here in April. They are well armed with new Russian AK-47 assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, and light and heavy machine guns. The stage is set.

When this scene began to take shape, the men of the 3rd Brigade knew nothing of the NVA on Dong Ap Bia. Screaming Eagles were sweeping the hills west of the A Shau Valley floor in Operation Apache Snow; this mountain lay in their path. As Spec. 4 Phillip Trollinger, of Greensboro, N.C., a rifleman with B Co., 3rd Bn., 187th Abn. Inf. put it, to them it was “just another hill.”

But as the troops approached the mountain, sweeping eastward from the Laotian border, they began to receive the harassment of sniper fire. For three days, as they neared Dong Ap Bia, the sniping increased, soon to be replaced with more concentrated automatic weapons fire. Gradually the enemy made himself known. Artillery and tactical air strikes were called in and the top of the mountain rocked and belched fire and debris at each impact. And then there was a night of waiting.

The next morning, Lt. Col. Weldon Honeycutt, Columbus, Ga., commander of the Rakkasans, maneuvered his companies along the finger-like ridges leading to the top of the hill, probing the enemy's strength.

“When we first started to assault the hill, we were in pretty heavy vegetation going up the trail,” said Spec. 4 Robert M. Rocklen of West Haven, Conn., a radiotelephone operator with D Co., “but all of a sudden that thinned out to absolutely nothing because of the artillery and air strikes.

“It looked like there was about 100 meters of open area with little or no cover. Other than two large bomb craters. there was nothing we could use for cover, and we had grenades and RPGs coming down at us.”

So now they hung, tenuously clinging to the muddy hillside, riddled by enemy fire. Two squads of B Co. make it to the top briefly but are unable to hold their prize. There will be no more advance today. They fall back and call for support. Again, Cobra gunships and artillery rake the mountain top, pulverizing the very bedrock of the hill itself.

On the next day the 187th tries to maneuver and better its position. This fails. The enemy, deeply entrenched in bunkers and

spider holes, lays down withering small arms, RPG, rocket and mortar fire.

“The fire was coming from a bunker complex, and although it was really intense fire, we didn’t pull back,” Pfc. Anthony Bresina, Chippewa Falls, Wis., a rifleman with B Co., said later. “Instead, they brought up another platoon. When they saw it was no use, we picked up our wounded and pulled back. The whole firefight lasted maybe 45 minutes.”

For the next three days, the situation changed little. Allied units probed the NVA positions, found the location of bunkers, and called in air strikes and artillery. They sought weaknesses in the enemy’s defenses. They waited for the pounding to soften the NVA.

On the morning of the 14th, Cos. B, C, and D make a concentrated, three-pronged thrust at the enemy positions on a lower ridgeline. As the troopers fight their way forward, artillery, gunships and TAC air support lay down covering fire. Explosions rock the mountain and debris showers down on the advancing paratroopers. Under this pressure, the NVA fall back and Rakkasans sweep over the crest.

During the next day troopers attempt to drive further up the mountain but face even greater resistance than the day before. The air is laced with flashing green and blue streaks of NVA tracers and the smell of cordite hangs over the hillside. The troopers are faced with concentric rows of solidly built, well concealed bunkers around the hillmass. The bunkers dominate avenues of approach up the mountain.

In the evening the 1st Bn., 506th Abn. Inf., under the command of Lt. Col. James Bowers, Springfield, Va., is ordered to reinforce the Rakkasans. Three kilometers from the hill, the battalion comes under heavy fire and progress is slow.

For the next three days the situation remains frustratingly static. The Rakkasans maneuver around the hill base while 1st Battalion Currahees move to link up. Meanwhile, artillery, aerial rocket artillery, and air strikes are repeatedly called down on the enemy positions. Before this battle is over, more than 1,000 tons of

bombs and 16,000 rounds of artillery smash into Hill 937. The actual height of the mountain is lowered several feet and the landscape takes on an eerie, unearthly aspect. What vegetation remains is twisted and burned. The mountain reeks of death.

On the 18th, three companies of the Currahees begin closing on the southern base of the hill, and the 187th takes up positions northwest of Hill 937. A Co., 2nd Bn., 506th Abn. Inf. is alerted and deploys to a staging area to be available to move at a moment's notice if required.

The following morning, as artillery and TAC air continue to pepper the hilltop, the 2nd Bn., 501st Inf. and the 2nd. Bn., 3rd ARVN Regt. are alerted to prepare for a final sweep of the enemy positions surrounding the ridgeline.

Late in the morning of May 20th, four battalions execute a coordinated assault on Dong Ap Bia. Amid the thunder of supporting fire and the rattle of small arms, the Rakkasans, with A Co., 2nd of the 506th attached, assault the hill from the north; the 1st Currahee battalion attacks from the south and southwest; the ARVN battalion from the southeast; and the Geronimos from the northeast.

By early afternoon, the once determined enemy resistance disintegrates as allied forces overrun enemy positions and all objectives are taken. On the hill the Screaming Eagles find evidence of the enemy's determination: shirts with sewn-on commands, "Kill Americans, kill Vietnamese," and "Stay and fight and don't run."

Maj. Gen Melvin Zais then commanding general of the Division, tells newsmen, "It was a tremendous, gallant victory by a bunch of gutty guys."

After the capture of the hill, allied forces sweep over the area to check the enemy base camp in detail. The 1st of the 506th secures the abandoned enemy positions, killing 46 enemy in the mopping-up on May 21, while the Geronimos and the ARVN battalion conduct recon-in-force operations to the east and west.

But the battle for Dong Ap Bia is over. After 10 days of bitter fighting, the 3rd of the 187th, the unit which bore the brunt of the struggle, is airlifted to Eagle Beach,

For the enemy, the battle for Dong Ap Bia was almost unbelievably costly. A prisoner captured during the last part of the assault revealed that 80 percent of the men in units in his area were casualties.

Most of the 2,009 bunkers and structures destroyed during Operation Apache Show, which ended twenty days later, were destroyed in the struggle for the hill,

In the battle, 62 Americans had been killed and 420 had been wounded. But although the cost had been high, Maj. Gen. John M. Wright Jr., commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division believes the victory a significant one.

“I’ve been asked whether the A Shau is the key to the war in the entire I Corps area, “Gen. Wright said. “I can’t say for certain yet, but I do know it is astride key avenues of approach that have been traditionally used by the enemy.”

“We have beaten them decisively once, and we will continue to engage them whenever they come into that area, because as long as they stay in that area and use it as a base against our units and for operations into the province, they constitute a very serious threat.”