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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, 4TH BATTALION, 12TH INFANTRY  
199TH INFANTRY BRIGADE (SEP) (LT)  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96279

AVBH-D4

30 June 1968

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Presidential Unit Citation

TO: Commanding General  
199th Infantry Brigade (Sep) (Lt)  
APO San Francisco 96279

1. For extraordinary heroism in action during the period 5 May 1968 through 10 May 1968, Company D, 4th Battalion, 12th Infantry, 199th Infantry Brigade (Separate) (Light) and attached units are recommended for the Presidential Unit Citation.
2. During this period all members of Company D performed with distinction as they searched for and located enemy elements intent on seizing Saigon, totally thwarted the enemy thrusts at the onset of the Communist Post-lunar New Year Offensive, and denied the enemy forces access to the populated areas of Binh Chanh District, rendering all contacted enemy units combat ineffective.
3. On 5 May 1968, the 4th Battalion, 12th Infantry, reacting to intelligence reports of impending enemy attacks on Saigon, established Fire Support Base STEPHANIE at grid IS758902, approximately 5 kilometers southwest of the capital city. For weeks enemy units had been moving toward the area and an attack on Saigon was probable through Binh Chanh District. The area of operation which 4th Battalion, 12th Infantry assumed on 5 May covered a large portion of Binh Chanh District, and blocked the likely route of approach into the city.
4. Company D moved as security for the battalion command section, and secured the new fire base on the night of 5 May 1968. Shortly after dark, at 052130 hours, one of Company D's three-man listening posts engaged three enemy, killing one and capturing two. One of the men, PFC James McKenzie, was largely responsible for this unusual circumstance. As the enemy came under fire from the listening post, they scattered: two running west and one east. PFC McKenzie sprang up and ran into the darkness alone after the two. When confronted by a burst of automatic weapons fire, he hit the ground behind a rice dike and returned fire, killing one of the fleeing enemy, and pinning down the other. Completely shocked by PFC McKenzie's aggressive pursuit, the enemy quickly surrendered although

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he had only fired his weapon a few times and still had a large supply of ammunition. With similar aggressiveness, the other members of the listening post captured the lone enemy who had hoped to escape to the east. Later that night, at 060045 hours, an armored personnel carrier from D Troop, 17th Armored Cavalry, attached to Company D, spotted and engaged an enemy squad moving parallel to the perimeter of Fire Support Base STEPHANIE. Elements of Company D also placed heavy fire on the enemy, but in the darkness they managed to break contact. Immediately Company D swept into the area but only blood trails could be found. As daylight broke, however, another of Company D's listening post's captured one enemy who had been seriously wounded and left behind during the firefight. He had been armed with an AK-47 rifle and two B-40 rockets.

5. At 060652 hours, Company D, reacting to sniper fire, began to push toward the suspected enemy sniper position. Two platoons moved directly toward the sniper, with Cavalry elements in support, while two platoons moved north in a screening maneuver. By 060725 hours, Company D and it's Cavalry attachment had killed nine enemy and captured three. Information gleaned from the Prisoners of War (POW) revealed that they were members of the 267th North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Battalion. The two platoons which had moved to the north made contact about the same time and by 060804 hours were engaged in a fierce fire fight. In the initial contact one platoon immediately suffered three casualties who lay in an exposed area near the well entrenched enemy positions. The rest of the platoon was pinned down. With complete disregard for his own safety the medical aidman, SP4 Harvey Cooley, moved forward to two of the casualties and began treating their wounds. The platoon maneuvered against the hostile force and was eventually able to establish fire superiority. During a brief lull in the firing the third wounded man attempted to crawl from his exposed position to SP4 Cooley's location. Seeing that the wounded man could move no further due to the severity of his wounds, SP4 Cooley rushed to his aid. As he courageously began to carry the wounded man to cover, SP4 Cooley was mortally wounded. With strong determination, the platoon made a final assault and the enemy fled their positions. By 060915 hours Company D had killed 7 more NVA soldiers and captured another POW. Throughout the day Company D pursued the beleaguered elements of the 267th NVA Battalion, until 061600 hours when no further enemy could be found. By this time, thirty nine NVA soldiers had been killed and five POW's captured, along with fourteen AK-47 rifles, one AK-50 rifle, two 60mm mortars, three rocket launchers, and a large amount of other materiel.

6. Establishing a new command post at grid XS756913, Company D dispatched three ambush patrols as darkness fell. At 062250 hours enemy movement was again detected. Allowing the enemy to move as close as possible to it's position, Company D took them under fire a few minutes later and by 062335 hours had killed four more. A subsequent sweep of the area led to the capture of an enemy machine gun, machine gun carriage, and ammunition. Later that night, at 070255 hours, Company D came under intense

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ground attack by approximately 30 enemy. Receiving heavy machine gun, rocket and mortar fire, the situation looked severe for the American soldiers. However, men like SGT David Rundell insured the success of Company D's defense. When his platoon sergeant was wounded in the early moments of the attack, SGT Rundell rallied the men by moving through the darkness and the enemy bullets to give directions and reassurance to each man personally. Although the enemy forces pushed right into Company D's line, the soldiers did not give ground. SGT Rundell personally killed three NVA soldiers at close range who were spearheading the attack. Highly inspired by the coolness and bravery of SGT Rundell and other men like him, and with great esprit de corps, elements of Company D counter-attacked and the night defensive position was maintained. Throughout the rest of the night the battle raged. A flanking maneuver by the hostile force was thwarted by elements of D Troop, 17th Armored Cavalry at 070321 hours. Company D made maximum use of all fire support, utilizing the Armored Cavalry, light organic fire teams, flare ships, and tactical fighters to accomplish a complete rout of the enemy forces. Captain James F. Dabney, commanding Company D, directed napalm strikes to within 75 meters of his position at 070500 hours. Soon thereafter the enemy attempted to break contact. Completely disorganized and demoralized, small groups of enemy began withdrawing generally to the north. With great tenacity, Captain Dabney continued to bring havoc on the enemy by directing further air and artillery strikes on the retreating foe. As dawn broke Company D could view the full toll of it's nighttime activities upon the enemy. The company spent most of the daylight hours that day sweeping the battlefield, collecting bodies, prisoners, and enemy materiel left behind during the hasty retreat. Three POW's were captured, and interrogation revealed that one was from the 272d NVA Regiment and two from different battalions of the 271st NVA Regiment. Eighty dead NVA soldiers were left on the battlefield and 7 AK-47 rifles were captured. Thirty seven enemy weapons and one RPG-7 rocket launcher had been completely destroyed by the air strikes. Large amounts of ammunition, medical supplies and documents were also captured.

7. Late in the afternoon of 7 May 1968 Company D established a night defensive position at grid XS754916. Again on the alert all night, the soldiers observed more enemy near their position at 080528 hours. As eight enemy ran approximately 150 meters forward of the perimeter, Company D fired upon them and swept immediately toward their position. The enemy escaped, however, covered by the remaining darkness and foliage, just before the break of day. Company D swept throughout that area on 8 May, burying enemy bodies and searching for further hostile activity, but the NVA forces apparently were not willing to meet them head on again so soon. Captain Dabney halted his men at 081135 hours to establish his night defensive position at grid XS 754916. While the men gained some much needed rest and prepared their weapons and supplies for future combat, Captain Dabney surveyed the terrain and devised a clever ambush plan, should the enemy again move near Company D that night.

8. As darkness fell on 8 May, Company D moved into it's preplanned T-shaped ambush. Soon the enemy was moving toward Company D from three sides; forty to the north, thirty to the west, and an undetermined number to the east. Company D grew tense and was ready to spring the ambush. The enemy moved closer, apparently unaware of Company D's presence.

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