

Hill 406, Nui Ngoc: 6-7 June 1968

After assisting the Marines at Nui Ha and in other hard fights along the DMZ in May 1968, the 196th Light Infantry Brigade returned in force to the Hiep Duc and Que Son Valleys to find a distressing situation. As the Army shifted its forces around late that spring, the 3rd NVA Regiment was able to infiltrate the valleys and fortify hilltops throughout them. The NVA strategy was to gain control of the high ground in the valleys, thus surrounding key American fire support bases. The NVA wanted a fight and hoped to engage the American forces left behind while the bulk of the 196th was helping the Marines. As the main American force shifted back into the valleys, its first task was to push the NVA back into the highlands.

One of the key fortified hilltops in the NVA network was Nui Ngoc, Hill 406, an abandoned U.S. fire support base. The 3rd Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd NVA Regiment had gone to great lengths to prepare bunkers that were practically indistinguishable from the flat, grassy hilltop. Though Army intelligence was aware of the complex, the information had not filtered down the elements of the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry who moved up the hill and stumbled into the bunker complex on 5 June. After pulling back and letting artillery and air support soften up the NVA positions, the infantry advanced on 6 June to take the hill. Though the hilltop had been pummeled by the air and artillery support, the NVA still ferociously contested the American advance throughout the day. After mortaring the American positions early on 7 June, the remnants of the NVA force withdrew and the Americans took the hill.

