

## Tet II, Dai Do & Nhi Ha: 29 April – 15 May 1968

After the initial phase of the bloody Tet Offensive in early 1968, the North Vietnamese wanted to improve their position at the peace talks about to commence in Paris. Their strategy demanded another series of attacks (119 on military and civilian targets) in the late spring of 1968. The 320th NVA Division launched one major part of this offensive on 29 April throughout the Demilitarized Zone. It was up to the Marines at Dong Ha Combat Base to meet this threat across the DMZ. The Marines called the series of fights above the Bo Dieu and Cu'a Viet Rivers collectively the Battle of Dong Ha.

The 320<sup>th</sup> NVA Division moved faster than the Marines anticipated and by 29 April, as the Marines were planning an operational strategy to counterattack across the DMZ, the NVA had taken positions less than five miles from Dong Ha Combat Base. Two intense engagements developed as the Marines and Army moved out to counter this immediate threat. On 30 April at the village of Dai Do less than two miles from the Marine HQ, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Marines took on elements of the 320<sup>th</sup> NVA in what would become a horrific battle. Air and Artillery support helped the Marines gain a toehold and subsequent amphibious assaults pushed the NVA back. Reinforcements came in for both sides and the battle raged for seven bloody days. Marine casualties were extreme, but as usual, they dealt the NVA a much harder blow than they took.

While the battle for Dai Do was raging, the Marines called on the Army for support in their operation. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry, 196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade answered the call on 1 May. By 2 May, the 3/21 was locked in a desperate fight with the NVA over the hamlet of Nhi Ha, six miles northwest of Dong Ha. The Army had trouble taking the village at first, but reinforcements and heavy air support from the Marines turned the tide of the battle. The NVA however were not prepared to concede the affair and, after rebuffing a pursuit attempt, they counterattacked Nhi Ha in the early morning darkness of 10 May but were repulsed with extremely heavy losses. The Army at Nhi Ha and Marines at Dai Do were both successful in reducing the Communist battalions to shadows of their former selves. By 16 May most of the 320<sup>th</sup> NVA was in full retreat, though it would return to fight another day. The Marines and the Army both had taken a beating, but Dong Ha was secure once again. The NVA had failed to gain a victory to strengthen their hand in Paris, but the casualties they inflicted in early 1968 on the Americans did take a great political toll on the home front.

