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FROM: WALT ROSTON
TO: THE PRESIDENT
CITE: CAP67966

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TO THE PRESIDENT

FROM WALT ROSTON

YOU WILL WANT TO READ THIS INTERESTING AND LUCID ACCOUNT
OF THE FIGHTING AROUND DAK TO WHICH WAS SENT IN BY GENERAL
ABRAMS.

BEGIN TEXT

IT IS 1800 NOVEMBER 22, IN SAIGON AND I HAVE JUST RETURNED
FROM KONTUM PROVINCE. I SPENT SOME TIME WITH PEERS AND
LT COL LUAT, THE SPECIAL ZONE COMMANDER FOR FLEIKU
AND KONTUM AND HIS ADVISOR COL KAUFFMAN. I VISITED
BRIEFLY WITH COL JOHNSON 1ST BRIGADE 4TH DIVISION AND COL RATTAN
1ST BRIGADE 1ST CAV, AND A GOOD TALK WITH SCHWEITER OF
THE 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE. I THEN FLEW OVER MUCH OF THE BATTLE AREA.

IN LATE OCTOBER INTELLIGENCE INDICATED THAT THE 1ST
NVA DIVISION WAS PREPARING TO ATTACK DAK TO. DEPLOYMENTS
TO KONTUM TO DATE ARE 9 US BATTALIONS AND 5 ARVN
BATTALIONS.

DAK TO LIES ON A VALLEY FLOOR ADJACENT TO A RIVER.
TO THE NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST DAK TO IS SURROUNDED
BY MOUNTAINS, RIDGES AND PEAKS EXTENDING FOR MANY
KILOMETERS IN ALL DIRECTIONS. THESE PEAKS AND RIDGES
VARY BETWEEN 800-1300 METERS IN HEIGHT. THE
SLOPES ARE STEEP, THEY ARE COVERED BY TREES 100 TO 200
FT. HIGH AND UP TO FOUR FEET IN DIAMETER AND TOPPED WITH
DOUBLE AND TRIPLE CANOPY. IN ORDER TO PREVENT AN ATTACK
ON DAK TO YOU MUST SECURE THE HIGH GROUND AROUND IT.
THIS THE 4TH DIVISION BEGAN ON 4 NOV AND MADE ITS FIRST CONTACT ON
THE FIRST RIDGE SOUTH OF DAK TO. ON SUCCESSIVE DAYS THE
1ST BRIGADE 4TH DIVISION, PUSHED SOUTH AND WEST FROM DAK TO. THE
173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE PUSHED WEST AND THEN SOUTHWEST AND THE ARVN PUSHED
OUT TO THE NORTH, NORTHEAST AND EAST. THEY HAVE ALL
FOUND THE ENEMY IN DEFENSIVE POSITIONS ON THE TOPS OF THE
PEAKS AND RIDGES. I VIEWED ONE POSITION TODAY CONSISTING OF

DECLASSIFIED

Authority

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By

25/11, NARA,

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3 CONCENTRIC TRENCHES MAKING 3 COMPLETE CIRCLES AROUND THE TOP OF ONE MOUNTAIN. I AM INFORMED THAT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE TRENCHES ARE SOME HORIZONTAL HOLES DUG BACK INTO THE MOUNTAIN WHERE THE ENEMY STAYS DURING BOMBING AND ARTILLERY.

THE PATTERN OF ENEMY DEPLOYMENT NOW APPEARS TO BE THE 24TH REGIMENT WITH ITS 4TH AND 5TH BATTALIONS AND THE 304TH VC BATTALION NORTHEAST AND EAST OF DAK TO. THE 1ST NVA DIVISION WITH THE 65TH, 320 AND 174TH REGIMENTS AND THE 6TH BATTALION OF THE 24TH REGIMENT SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST AND WEST OF DAK TO. IN THE LAST 2 DAYS THE 4TH BATTALION OF THE 93 BRIGADE HAS MOVED IN WEST OF XONTUM CITY.

SINCE THE FIGHTING BEGAN 4 NOVEMBER IT HAS BEEN HARD AND TENACIOUS ON BOTH SIDES. A DEFECTOR FROM THE 320 NVA REGIMENT SAID HIS UNIT HAD NOT HAD FOOD FOR SIX DAYS. THIS IS NOT A GENERAL CONDITION EVEN IF TRUE IN HIS UNIT. THE BATTALION EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE 4TH BATTALION 24TH REGIMENT WAS CAPTURED AND LATER DIED OF WOUNDS. HE HAD ON HIS PERSON A HAND WRITTEN DIRECTIVE THAT HE WOULD DEFEND HIS POSITION TO THE LAST MAN. THIS IS THE POSITION ASSAULTED AND TAKEN BY THE ARVN AIRBORNE TASK FORCE. ON THE 14, 15, AND 16 THERE WAS A LULL EXCEPT FOR THE MORTAR ATTACKS ON THE DAK TO BASE. ON THE 17TH HEAVY FIGHTING BEGAN AGAIN AND CONTINUES TO NOW. THIS IS BROUGHT ABOUT BY FRIENDLY FORCES PRESSING FURTHER OUT. TODAY THE FIGHTING CONTINUES FOR HILL 875 ABOUT 8 KM FROM THE BORDER AND 882 ABOUT 3 KM FROM THE BORDER. MANY SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS COME FROM ALMOST ALL STRIKES IN THE VALLEYS WEST OF THE RIDGES.

	FRIENDLY CASUALTIES		
	KIA	WIA	HA
US	245	813	16
ARVN	54	228	3
TOTAL	303	1043	19

THE MEDICAL OFFICERS ESTIMATE THAT OF THE WOUNDED EVACUATED 75 PERCENT TO 80 PERCENT WILL BE RETURNED TO DUTY FROM IN-COUNTRY FACILITIES. SOME MEN IN THE 2ND BATTALION OF THE 583D BRIGADE WERE WOUNDED UP TO 48 HOURS BEFORE BEING EVACUATED. SOME MEN OF THE 31ST INFANTRY BATTALION WERE WOUNDED UP TO 24 HOURS BEFORE BEING EVACUATED. THIS WAS BECAUSE OF INTENSE FIRE ON THE LANDING ZONE AND IN ONE CASE THE DUST-OFF WAS HIT BY A B40 ROCKET IN THE LANDING ZONE AND EXPLODED AND BURNED. THE LANDING ZONE HAD TO COOL OFF AND BE CLEARED BEFORE EVACUATION COULD BE RESUMED. SERIOUSLY WOUNDED ARE TAKEN FROM DAK TO THE 71ST EVACUATION HOSPITAL IN PLEIKU IN A SPECIALLY FITTED AND EQUIPPED CHINOOK. MEDICAL PERSONNEL, PLASMA, WHOLE BLOOD, ETC. OF THE WOUNDED WHOSE EVACUATION WAS DELAYED ONLY 2 LATER DIED IN THE HOSPITAL.

SINCE THE 4TH OF NOVEMBER 1968 TACTICAL AIR SORTIES HAVE BEEN EXECUTED IN DIRECT SUPPORT OF THIS FIGHT. ON ONE SMALL POSITION ALONE 48 SORTIES LOADED WITH 1000 LB BOMBS WERE APPLIED. 194 B-52 SORTIES HAVE BEEN EXECUTED IN DIRECT SUPPORT OF THESE OPERATIONS.

ARTILLERY	TUBES	ROUNDS FIRED
125MM	38	77,748
155MM	17	15,784
175MM	4	2,128
81M	6	4,483
TOTAL	77	100,143

LOGISTICS—295 TONS PER DAY BY AIR TO DAK TO, 532 TONS PER DAY BY TRUCK FROM QUI NHON TO DAK TO (246 KM), 288 TONS PER DAY BY TRUCK FROM QUI NHON TO KONTUM CITY.

THE PERSONNEL STRENGTH IN ALL UNITS IS GOOD EXCEPT THE 173D BRIGADE. THEIR BATTALIONS SHOULD HAVE A FOXHOLE STRENGTH OF 450. THE 1ST BATTALION HAS TODAY 360, THE 2ND BATTALION HAS 283 AND THE 4TH BATTALION HAS 292. THERE ARE 173 REPLACEMENTS AT AN KHE FOR 173D BRIGADE.

ENEMY CASUALTIES BODY COUNT

BY US	918
BY ARVN	259
TOTAL	1169

AND 19 PRISONERS

I BELIEVE THAT THE ENEMY OBJECTIVE WAS TO ATTACK DAK TO AND PROBABLY BEN HET THE NEW SITE UNDER PREPARATION FOR CIVILIAN IRREGULAR DEFENSE GROUPS. BY THIS ATTACK HE WOULD DRAW FORCES TO KONTUM WHERE HE WOULD CAUSE MAXIMUM ATTRITION TO OUR FORCES. CAPTURED DOCUMENTS INDICATE THAT EACH ENEMY REGIMENT WAS CHARGED WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF ONE US BATTALION. A PRISONER FROM A TRANSPORTATION UNIT STATED THAT FOR ALL OF OCTOBER ALL TROOPS WERE EMPLOYED CARRYING SUPPLIES AND AMMUNITION INTO KONTUM AND PREPARING POSITIONS. TODAY THERE IS NO EVIDENCE AT HAND THAT HE IS WITHDRAWING. HE MAY BE FIGHTING HARD TO GET HIS SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT OUT. VAEN SCHWIETER FEELS THE 173D BRIGADE HAS MADE INEFFECTIVE 4 ENEMY BATTALIONS FROM THE 66TH AND 174TH REGIMENTS.

WE DEPLOYED TO DAK TO BASED ON INTELLIGENCE. WE WENT OUT FROM DAK TO TO PREPARE HIS ATTACK AND TO FIND HIM AND DESTROY HIM. WE HAVE PRESSED OUTWARD AND BELIEVE WE ARE ASTRIDE HIS MAIN AVENUES OF WITHDRAWAL BETWEEN HIS MAIN FORCES AND THE BORDER. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PESS HIM BRINGING THE FULL WEIGHT OF FIRE POWER TO BEAR.

THE BATTLEFIELD IN KONTUM RESEMBLES A CHESS BOARD AT PLAY. WE HAVE UNITS AND FIRE BASES ON PEAKS AND RIDGES AND THE ENEMY HAS TOO. WE SHIFT OURS BY HELICOPTER TO CHECK HIM OR GET BEHIND HIM OR ASSAULT HIM. EXTENSIVE USE IS MADE OF LONG RANGE RECONNAISSANCE PATROLS, MIKE FORCES, CIVILIAN IRREGULAR DEFENSE GROUPS, THE PEOPLE SNIPPER, AIR OBSERVERS AND ALL OTHER MEANS TO LOCATE THE ENEMY. WHEN FOUND MAXIMUM FIRE POWER IS PUT ON HIM. I BELIEVE WHEN THE ENEMY COMES FORTH FROM CAMBODIA OR LAOS WITH HIS PRINCIPAL FORMATIONS LOOKING FOR A FIGHT WE MUST GO OUT AND FIGHT HIM. THE LEADERS WE HAVE TO DO IT - PEERS, SCHWIETER, JOHNSON AND RATTAN ARE AMONG THE MOST TALENTED.

WE WILL CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS UNTIL WE HAVE SWEPT THE AREA UP TO WITHIN 3 KILOMETERS OF THE BORDER.

DTG: 221827Z NOV 67

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