

DECLASSIFIED

HEADQUARTERS
1st Battalion, 9th Marines
3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF
FPO San Francisco 96602

UNCLASSIFIED

3/RCM/tjl
005750
9 Apr 67

~~00110~~ 00110-67 2 of 15

SER. NO. 0013-67

From: Commanding Officer
To: Commandant of the Marine Corps (Code A03D)
Via: Commanding General, 3rd Marine Division (Rein), FMF

Subj: Command Chronology for period 1 March to 31 March 1967.

Ref: (a) MCO 5750.2
(b) FMFPAC 5750.8

Encl: (1) 1st Battalion, 9th Marines Command Chronology

1. In accordance with the provisions of reference (a), enclosure (1) is submitted.

F. D. Mitchell Jr
HEADQUARTERS
1st Battalion, 9th Marines
3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF
FPO San Francisco 96602
By direction

3/RCM/tjl
005750
9 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

From: Commanding Officer
To: Commandant of the Marine Corps (Code A03D)
Via: Commanding General, 3rd Marine Division (Rein), FMF

Subj: Command Chronology for period 1 March to 31 March 1967.

Ref: (a) MCO 5750.2
(b) FMFPAC 5750.8

Encl: (1) 1st Battalion, 9th Marines Command Chronology

1. In accordance with the provisions of reference (a), enclosure (1) is submitted.

UNCLASSIFIED

F. D. Mitchell Jr
HEADQUARTERS
1st Battalion, 9th Marines
3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF
FPO San Francisco 96602

DECLASSIFIED

1ST BN/9TH MAR

CMO CHRON

MAR 1967

UNCLASSIFIED

HEADQUARTERS
1st Battalion, 9th Marines
3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF
FPO San Francisco 96602

COMMAND CHRONOLOGY

1 March 1967 to 31 March 1967

INDEX

- | | |
|--|---|
| PART I | - ORGANIZATIONAL DATA |
| PART II | - NARRATIVE SUMMARY |
| PART III | - SEQUENTIAL LISTING OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS |
| PART IV | - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS |
| <i>Filed</i> <i>w/</i> <i>Chron</i> (1) | - S-1 JOURNAL |
| (2) | - S-2 JOURNAL |
| (3) | - S-3 JOURNAL |
| (4) | - AFTER ACTION REPORT PRAIRIE II |
| (5) | - AFTER ACTION REPORT PRAIRIE III |

UNCLASSIFIED

005750
9 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

PART I

ORGANIZATIONAL DATA1. DESIGNATION

1st Battalion, 9th Marines

COMMANDERMajor J. L. DAY
1 Mar to 17 Mar 1967
Major D. J. FULHAM
18 Mar to 31 Mar 1967SUBORDINATE UNITS

H&S Company

1st Lt THOMSEN
1 Mar to 31 Mar 1967

Company "A"

Captain FESTA
1 Mar to 25 Mar 1967
Capt SLATER
26 Mar to 31 Mar 1967

Company "B"

Captain SAYERS
1 Mar to 31 Mar 1967

Company "C"

Captain CURD
1 Mar to 25 Mar 1967
Captain REED
26 Mar to 31 Mar 1967

Company "D"

Captain KEYS
1 Mar to 8 Mar 1967
Captain SEAW
9 Mar to 31 Mar 1967ATTACHED UNITS

NONE

2. LOCATION

From 1 March to 6 March the battalion CP moved with the companies in the AO near the DMZ. From 7 March to 15 March the battalion CP was located at Dong Ha Combat Base, RVN. Commencing 15 March to 28 March the CP was again moving with the companies in the AO near the DMZ. From 28 March to the end of the reporting period the CP was located at Camp Carroll, RVN.

3. STAFF OFFICERS

Executive Officer

Major VON HARTEN
1 Mar to 31 Mar 1967

S-1

2nd Lt RAMIREZ
1 Mar to 31 Mar 1967

Enclosure (1)

UNCLASSIFIED

005750
9 Apr 67

S-2

UNCLASSIFIED

2nd Lt YAGGY
1 Mar to 31 Mar 1967

S-3

Major BEANS
1 Mar to 31 Mar 1967

S-4

Captain REED
1 Mar to 26 Mar 1967
Captain MANNING
27 Mar to 31 Mar 1967

4. AVERAGE MONTHLY STRENGTH

| <u>USMC</u> | | <u>USN</u> | |
|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <u>OFF</u> | <u>ENL</u> | <u>OFF</u> | <u>ENL</u> |
| 41 | 1181 | 3 | 54 |

Enclosure (1)

UNCLASSIFIED

005750
9 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

PART II

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

During the month of March the 1st Bn, 9th Marines was engaged in fighting VC and NVA forces in four distinctive operational periods. From 1 March to 6 March offensive operations were conducted just south of the DMZ near YD 080670. From 7 March to 15 March responsibility for the Dong Ha Combat Base Defenses was assumed by the battalion. On 16 March offensive combat operations were started for the second time during the reporting period and continued until 28 March when the battalion moved to Camp Carroll where it took over the camp defenses. The month ended with the battalion at Camp Carroll.

From 1 to 6 March the 1st Bn, 9th Marines was sent northwest of the Dong Ha area in pursuit of a NVA force which had engaged elements of the 2nd Bn, 3rd Marines. A helicopter assault was made at YD 070635 from where search and destroy operations were conducted north and then east. Contact was made on 2 March and continued through the 6th of March. The battalion was mortared 14 times during the period and engaged NVA units up to company size. Casualties sustained were medium to heavy on occasion but were far less than those inflicted on the enemy. On 6 March the battalion, having fought from the original LZ to YD 070653 through the village complex at YD 117683 to the village of Phu An (YD 137658), commenced a tactical foot march out of the area of operations which ended in a motor march to Dong Ha.

On 7 March 1st Bn, 9th Marines relieved 3rd Bn, 4th Marines of responsibility for the Dong Ha Combat Base Defenses. The battalion was considerably split up due to the large distances between defensive positions. Very little in the way of offensive operations transpired, only a few search and clear operations were attempted. Contact for the period was minimal and of virtually no significance. The time was spent largely in coordinating defenses and attending to administrative matters. On 15 March 3rd Bn, 4th Marines returned to Dong Ha relieving 1st Bn, 9th Marines of all base defense activities.

Offensive operations were commenced for the second time during the month when, on the afternoon of 15 March, the battalion went to the field. For the next 13 days operations were conducted in the same general area that had been worked during the 1st of the month. Rather than pursuing a force thought to be in the area, this operation was to be a recon in force. Little contact was made on the first search and destroy operation which was made. The area covered extended from YD 086590 northwest to YD 046636 and into "Helicopter Valley" (YD 030640). The battalion was mortared once during the sweep sustaining casualties from well directed enemy 82mm mortars. On the second search and destroy during the period contact with the enemy was made in the village of Phu An. Heavy casualties were sustained on both sides but the marines took the village with the aid of artillery and air support. The search and destroy continued as far north as YD 125715 with no more significant contact. At the conclusion of the sweep the battalion marched south to the vicinity of the

Enclosure (1)

3

UNCLASSIFIED

005750
9 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

Cam Lo Bridge, on 28 March, and was trucked to Camp Carroll.

At Camp Carroll 1st Bn, 9th Marines assumed responsibility for camp defense. Patrols were run from the camp but no contact was made. The month ended with the battalion at Camp Carroll preparing for future offensive operations.

Enclosure (1)

UNCLASSIFIED

005750
9 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

PART III

SEQUENTIAL LISTING OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

1. FMF Organizations committed to Combat and the SLF.

a. Combat mission assigned. The battalion was employed in Prairie II in three different periods each with a specific mission.

(1) Period I

(a) Land the battalion by helicopter assault in the vicinity of YD 070635, consolidate the position and conduct search and destroy operations in accordance with 3rd Marines Frag Orders.

(2) Period II

(a) Assume base defense of the Dong Ha Combat Base. Coordinate and provide security for the Dong Ha Combat Base.

(3) Period III

(a) Conduct a reconnaissance in force operation through objectives 1, 2, and 3. After securing objective 3 conduct a detailed search of hill complex formed by objectives 4, 5, 6, and "Helicopter Valley" vicinity of GS YD 0364 (enclosure #4).

Operation Prairie III commenced on 19 March from battalion position in the vicinity of objective #3 (enclosure #5) the battalion was to conduct a detailed search of the hill complex formed by objectives 4, 5, and 6 and "Helicopter Valley" vicinity of GS YD0364. An additional mission to search "Mutter Valley" and the area between YD 075605 and 051605 was assigned. Upon completion of the aforementioned missions the battalion established a new position and received a concomitant mission to attack to the north and to seize objectives "A" and "B" (enclosure #5). The battalion was to be prepared to continue the attack to the north or east. Search and destroy operations were to be carried out in the ZOA and patrol activities to the southwest. The final mission for the battalion was to move to Camp Carroll and assume duty as base defense battalion.

Company "B", (-)(Rein) assigned separate combat mission under OPCON 3RD MARDIV/IIIMAFREP, KHE SANH.

b. Significant operations conducted. The battalion (-) participated in Prairie II from 1 March through 18 March and in Prairie III from 19 March until the end of the reporting period.

c. Casualties inflicted on the enemy.

| | <u>possible</u> | <u>body count</u> |
|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| WIA | 29 | 2 (captives) |
| KIA | 104 | 278 |
| Enemy captives | 5 | |

5

UNCLASSIFIED

Enclosure (1)

005750
9 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

1. Intelligence. During the reporting period the battalion was engaged almost exclusively, with NVA units, what specific units of the NVA is not known. On three different occasions what appeared to be reinforced NVA companies were engaged. The contacts took place in the vicinity of Phu An (YD 135673) and territory immediately north of the village. The enemy demonstrated a highly refined ability to ambush from strong, fortified positions within the village. Just north of the village the NVA executed an extremely successful well planned delaying action. It is believed that the delaying action, executed on March 5, was to cover some sort of withdrawal but no concrete proof of the theory was found. Through out operations in the western part of the battalion AO heavy enemy mortar fire was encountered (Area from YD 070630 to 070660 and west). Four 82mm mortars and 1 60mm mortar captured in the area indicated that the battalion was in contact with some sort of NVA mortar unit. The NVA appeared to have an inexhaustable supply of ammunition. Only one mine, command detonated, was discovered in the area of operations. Of particular interest was a NVA rocket site discovered at YD 073617 on 21 March. Four rockets were also found at the launch position.

m. Communications. Radio and telephone communications were employed throughout the month in support of all operations without difficulty.

n. Weather. In the early part of the month weather was characteristically poor, with early morning ground fog and mist. These conditions deteriorated further to a cold rain accompanied by chilly winds. The limited visibility created hazardous conditions for helicopter operations and the rain filled ground depressions which created obstacles for tracked vehicles. In the last half of the month the weather was typically warm and sunny with some overcast in the early morning hours.

o. Fire Support. Artillery was employed during the month on targets of opportunity in counter mortar fire and in grid saturations. Harassing and interdicting fire was conducted both day and night. On 3 March artillery fire was called on an enemy column in the open with highly successful results. Counter mortar fires were very effective. Forward observers were positioned to watch for muzzle flashes and any other signs of incoming mortars. Preparatory fires and reconnaissance by fire were used to support attacks and sweeps in the AO. H&I fires were very satisfactory in intercepting enemy movement and protecting the battalion perimeter from probing attacks. H&I fire was placed close to the perimeter at frequent intervals.

p. Air Support. Marine air was used extensively during the reporting period. Helicopters were used for troop lifts, medevacs and resupply. All were carried out in the fashion which has become routine in Vietnam. Close air support was used to a very large degree during the month. A three hour air strike was flown upon a large NVA column on 3 March 1967 resulting in a large number of NVA kills. Later in the month a large air strike was directed against the NVA by heavily engaged 1st Bn, 9th Marines company. Marine air was also used to prep suspected enemy positions when possible. The third facet of the air support provided the battalion consisted of

UNCLASSIFIED

Enclosure (1)

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~005750
9 Apr 67

airborne observers. The air strike on 3 March was directed by an AO and artillery missions throughout the month were controlled by AO's. At times AO's became eyes and navigator for the battalion. In foul weather one AO led medevac helicopters into the battalion LZ to extract critically wounded marines. Fixed wing air support throughout the period was uniformly outstanding.

q. Activation/Deactivation/Redesignation. Nothing significant

UNCLASSIFIED

Enclosure (1)
~~SECRET~~

005750
9 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

d. Casualties sustained.

| | |
|------|-----|
| USMC | |
| WIA | 227 |
| KIA | 39 |

| | |
|-----|----|
| USN | |
| WIA | 11 |
| KIA | 0 |

e. New techniques employed. None

f. Command relations. The 1st Battalion, 9th Marines chopped OpCon to 3rd Marine Division Forward 011245H March 1967, Chopped OpCon to 3rd Marine Regiment 011600H March 1967, Chopped OpCon to 3rd Marine Division Forward 061850H March 1967, Chopped OpCon to 3rd Marine Regiment 151000H March 1967 and remained until the end of the reporting period.

g. Equipment. M-16 rifles were issued to the battalion on 29 March 1967.

h. Logistics. During the reporting period logistic support of combat operations was conducted through the LSA. Resupply was by helicopter and motor transport. Weather sometimes hindered resupply by air but did not affect the accomplishment of the combat mission.

During the period of base defense responsibilities logistic matters were handled in a routine manner.

i. Civic Action. No civic action was undertaken in this reporting period.

j. Administration. Nothing significant

k. Personnel. The following personnel were drop transferred by SR from this Command.

| <u>USMC</u> | | <u>USN</u> | |
|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <u>OFF</u> | <u>ENL</u> | <u>OFF</u> | <u>ENL</u> |
| 1 | 155 | 1 | 7 |

The following personnel were joined to this Command.

| <u>USMC</u> | | <u>USN</u> | |
|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <u>OFF</u> | <u>ENL</u> | <u>OFF</u> | <u>ENL</u> |
| 7 | 182 | 1 | 7 |

Enclosure (1)

UNCLASSIFIED

HEADQUARTERS

1st Battalion, 9th Marines
3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF
FPO San Francisco 96602

UNCLASSIFIED

1st BATTALION 9th MARINES
S & C #20102-17 COPY 12 OF 13

3/RCH/rgs
003480
Ser N 0011-67

From: Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines
To: Commanding General, 3rd Marine Division
Via: Commanding Officer, 3rd Marine Regiment

Subj: Prairie II, After Action Report

Ref: (a) Maps: Vietnam 1:50,000 AMS, Series L7014, Sheets 6342I
and 6442IV

Encl: ✓(1) Concept of Operation Overlay, 2 March 1967
✓(2) Concept of Operation Overlay, 4 March 1967
✓(3) Concept of Operation Overlay, 15 March 1967
✓(4) Execution Overlay, Period I
✓(5) Execution Overlay, Period III

1. Code Name. Prairie II
2. Dates of Operation. 011600H March 1967 to 182400 March 1967
3. Location. Quan Cam Lo, Quan Gio Linh, Quan Trieu Phong
4. Task Organization.

1st Battalion, 9th Marines (-)

Maj DAY (1 Mar-15 Mar)
Maj FULHAM (16 Mar-18 Mar)

H&S Co (-)(Rein)
LnTm "D", Btry, 2d Bn, 12th Mar
Det, 4th Plt, Co "B", 3d Engr Bn

Lt THOMSEN

Company "A" (-) (Rein)

Capt FESTA

Co "A"
FoTm, Btry "D", 2d Bn, 12th Mar
Det, 4th Plt, Co "B", 3rd Engr Bn
Det, H&S Co
FAC Tm
FO Tm 81mm Mortar Plt
Det, Med Plt
Det, Comm Plt

UNCLASSIFIED

Tab 4

003480
2 Apr 67Company "C" (-)(Rein)

Capt CURD

Co "C"
 Det, 4th Plt, Co "B", 3rd Engr Bn
 FO Tm, Btry "D", 2nd Bn, 12th Mar
 Det, H&S Co
 FO Tm 81mm Mortar Plt
 Det, Med Plt
 Det, Communication Plt

Company "D" (-)(Rein)

Capt KEYS (1 Mar-7 Mar)
 Capt SHAW (8 Mar-18 Mar)

Co "D"
 Det, 4th Plt, Co "B", 3rd Engr Bn
 Det, H&S Co
 FO Tm 81mm Mortar Plt
 Det, Med Plt
 Det, Comm Plt

5. Supporting Forces.

a. The battalion was employed in Prairie II during three different periods. Period I was from 1 March to 6 March, while the battalion was deployed in the field, Period II was from 7 March to 14 March while the battalion was base defense battalion for the Dong Ha Combat Base and Period III was from 15 March to 18 March when the battalion was again deployed in the field.

b. Artillery.

(1) Period I - Artillery was employed in AO. during the five day period on targets of opportunity, including troops in the open, possible mortar positions, and in counter mortar missions. Harassment and interdiction of enemy movement, both night and day, constituted other artillery missions during this period.

Counter mortar fires were quite effective in destroying several mortar positions. The time delay in getting the first rounds into the target area was cut to the minimum. Forward observers were positioned about the battalion CP perimeter and stood a mortar watch both night and day, watching for muzzle flashes and any other signs of incoming mortars.

H&I's were used with a very satisfactory effect in interrupting enemy movement and protecting the Battalion CP perimeter from probing. The H&I's were fired close to the perimeter at frequent intervals. Area saturation fired by 175mm guns on possible areas of enemy mortar positions was conducted with reasonably successful results. Forward observers fired 105mm missions within 75 meters of friendly units enabling them to suppress enemy fire and carry out their mission.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67

Twelfth Marines fired a total of 5525 rounds of artillery in support of 1st Bn, 9th Marines. Most of the missions fired were on possible enemy mortar positions or were counter mortar missions. One hundred fifty-four 105mm Howitzer missions and fifty-four 155mm gun missions were fired. This ammunition expenditure does not include H&I fires and grid square saturation fired by the 175mm guns.

(2) Period II - Artillery was used to a very limited extent during the period of 7 March through 14 March, while 1st Bn, 9th Marines was in control of Base Defense of the Dong Ha Combat Base. Artillery was used mostly for illumination of the perimeter when requested and in H&I fires. Two combat missions were fired on VC sniper fire. All defensive and counter mortar fire plans were reviewed with the assistance of the 12th Marines and found quite satisfactory with some duplication being eliminated. A total of 12 combat missions were fired. Two targets of opportunity and 10 illumination missions. A total of 50 rounds; 20 ill, 28 HE, and 2 WP were fired.

(3) Period III - Artillery was used during this period on targets of opportunity, counter mortar fires, prep fires, reconnaissance by fire, grid square saturations and H&I fires.

Artillery was used in prep fires quite extensively. It was determined that the forward observers could obtain better results on a prep fire if they would first fire the prearranged fires then work over specific areas with adjust fire missions.

Reconnaissance by fire was used during this period with satisfactory results while moving through close terrain where observation was very poor.

Counter mortar fires were good once the enemy mortar positions were located. Once the mortar fire was suppressed, battery fire for effects were fired on avenues of approach and other likely mortar positions throughout the night to inhibit further mortar attacks.

Artillery fires from "K" Btry, 4th Bn, 12th Marines were brought within 100 meters of friendly units who were in close contact with the enemy in order to suppress mortar and machine gun fire.

A total of 109 combat missions were fired during this reporting period. Artillery fired a total of 5694 rounds of 155mm and 105mm ammunition. This count does not include ammo expenditure on H&I fires and grid square saturations.

c. Armor.

(1) Period I - One USMC Tank (M-48) and four US Army (M-42) Twin 40 vehicles were attached to this unit during three days of Period I. The fire power they provided proved of some value in one fire fight

UNCLASSIFIED

SECRET

(4)

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67

in which company "D" participated. The armor was of minimal value due to the terrain and logistic support difficulties. Vehicles were extremely limited in their ability to move through the hilly terrain and undergrowth in which the battalion was operating and were completely channelized to roads and trails. Therefore, the infantry units were required to move where the vehicles could move. The loud noise of their approach, their obvious route and their slow movement gave the enemy ample time to set up ambushes. The infantry unit became security for the armor rather than the armor being support for the tactical movement of the infantry. The M-42's ran out of ammunition rapidly and became low on fuel shortly thereafter. The combination of all these factors, coupled with an inability to resupply the five vehicles made them more a liability than an asset.

(2) Period II - Armor consisting of five M-48 tanks and fourteen M-42 Twin 40 vehicles were utilized in the base defense role. No incident required the use of armor except in the static role of the perimeter.

(3) Period III - No armor was utilized during this period.

d. Air.

(1) Period I - Air was used extensively during this period, in four categories: close air support, medevac's, recon/observation and logistics. Air requests were forwarded to the 3rd Marines via air common frequency on FM radio. No requests were pre-planned. Due to the extremely heavy traffic on the net, communication with AO's and helicopters was often accomplished via UHF.

Close and direct air support missions were flown by a total of nine A4's, six F8's and fourteen FA4's. The following ordnance was expended: sixty-four (64) 250 pound G.P. bombs, nine (9) 500 pound canisters of napalm, one hundred and ninety (190) 2.75 inch rockets and 3950 rounds of 20mm cannon. Air strikes were controlled by FAC (A) and TAC (A) with coordination by FAC. Approximately 275 tons of ordnance was dropped in direct support by T.P.Q. bombing. A total of 101 Marines were medevaced. Medevacs were hindered at times by inclement weather.

Recon/observation aircraft did an exceptionally fine job. Controlling air strikes and artillery, spotting enemy positions, suppressing enemy mortar fire, finding trails for tracked vehicles, pinpointing friendly positions and leading medevac helicopters into landing zones during inclement weather were all done by the observation aircraft.

Airborne logistics were also hampered by adverse weather. A total of 750 troops were initially heli-lifted into position. Weather made additional airborne troop movements unattainable. Resupply was likewise limited to approximately 16 tons by helicopter.

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED

(2) Period II - During period II the use of air was limited. "C" Company was extracted from the mouth of Cam Lo River by helicopter and later in the same day inserted into a new area by helicopter. AO's were used during "C" Company's search and destroy operation. Helicopters were used twice for reconnaissance of the base defensive perimeter.

(3) Period III - During Period III there was limited use of helicopters for logistical purposes. AO's were used to observe the terrain in the front of the battalion's route of march. Fixed wing aircraft were not used. There were 3 medevacs with a total of 9 people evacuated.

6. Intelligence.

a. Period I

(1) Intelligence Estimate. At the time the battalion was committed, it was believed that contact had been made with a reinforced battalion of the 812th Regiment, NVA. This estimate was based on the size of the contact made for the two preceding days, 27 and 28 February 1967. While the exact location of the battalion was unknown, it had been operating in the vicinity of YD 0864. There were indications that the battalion was moving in a northerly direction towards the DMZ, 3,000 meters distant.

By heli-lifting to Hill #162 (YD 070635) it was anticipated that a large contact with the fleeing battalion could be made. This contact was expected to include extensive mortar employment by the NVA. Intelligence gathered before the operation was limited to a hasty briefing by the assistant G-2 at Dong Ha. The situation that developed after landing was as anticipated. Contact was made on the second day with an estimated company. On that same day, the CP received the first of fourteen mortar attacks. The contact maintained for the duration of the operation were characterized by successful delaying tactics by the NVA.

Through prisoners and documents it was determined that contact had been made with elements of the 4th and 6th Battalions, 812th Regiment, 324th "B" Division, NVA. Four 82mm mortars were captured indicating contact with a mortar company of unknown designation. Three types of shoulder weapons were captured, the SKS Soviet carbine, the AK-47 assault rifle and the RPD Soviet light machinegun. In addition an RPG Rocket Launcher was captured. All of these weapons are organic to the NVA.

The extensive use of squad and platoon sized elements to interdict suspected communication routes resulted in many successful ambushes. Upon receiving initial enemy sightings from AO's, OP's, front line troops, and friendly patrols the Command Post would immediately relay this information to the nearest friendly force and they in turn would set up immediate ambush sites along the enemy route. These tactics worked extremely well during the second and third days of the operation, when NVA forces were moving in and out of the objective area in groups of five to fifty men.

5 **UNCLASSIFIED**~~SECRET~~

④

003480
2 Apr 67~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED

On four occasions friendly ambushes were able to kill or capture every NVA soldier who came within the "killing zone".

This period was a success from an intelligence outlook in that the enemy suffered heavy casualties and lost many weapons.

(2) Terrain.

(a) Cover and Concealment. The concealment afforded by the area was, in general, plentiful. The Hill #162 (YD 070635) was largely devoid of any vegetation other than knee high grass which would conceal a man in the prone position. The "Three Sisters" area (YD 068653) was largely the same, but the grass was up to three feet high. There were also considerably more groves of twenty feet high trees in the ravines on the sides of the hill complex. The triangular arrangement of the "Three Sisters" formed a large defiladed area which adequately concealed the battalion CP, the 81mm mortar platoon, and the LZ. The open area north of "Three Sisters" was more deep grass until it reached the area running north south along the creek bed located from YD 086656 to YD 083686. At that boundary dense bushes and small trees made the terrain ideal for concealment. Terrain characteristics, broken up by occasional one acre cultivated plots, remained the same until the villages of Thon An Hoa and Thon Tan Hoa were reached. Here, the concealment and cover was typified by dense tree lines surrounding dwellings and gardens averaging the size of a basketball court. Movement in this area was severely channelized. Both concealment and cover were plentiful in this area. The cover in the entire area was not exceptionally good. The rolling nature of the hills provided defilade. In the villages cover was excellent. Numerous sunken trails were encountered.

(b) Obstacles. In the Hill # 162 and "Three Sisters" areas there were no obstacles to infantry operations. Tanks also would have been able to operate successfully here. In the village area, each tree-line became an obstacle due to its channelizing effect on the rifle companies movements. The tanks and M-42 support units also found the treelines to be obstacles. The treelines in effect, rendered each tank and M-42 relatively useless because their weapons could not be effectively engaged. The tracked vehicles had difficulty making the tight turns in the village. The stream crossing at YD 136665 became an obstacle for the tracked vehicles due to the thick mud and steep stream banks.

(c) The key terrain. Key terrain features were felt to be Hill #162 and "The Three Sisters" (Coord YD 070635 and YD 068653).

(d) Observation. Hill # 162 offered excellent observation, the "Three Sisters" did the same. The best observation for the area north of the "Three Sisters" was to be found on the nose located at YD 077663. This position commanded a view of the flat area of up to two miles on the west, north, and east sides. Observation from the village area was poor.

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED

(e) Avenues of approach. Ridges running to the east and west of Hill #162 were considered poor avenues of approach. Several groves and treelines led into the "Three Sisters" complex making it less tenable than Hill #162. However, the groves and treelines were so thick as to make a silent approach to the perimeter through them almost impossible. The village area was one large avenue of approach due to the maze of treelines and trails.

(f) Weather. From the 1st through the 4th the weather was generally poor with mist and ground fog in the morning. The early mist prevented support by helicopter. On the 5th and 6th the weather was rainy, cold, and windy. The ceiling varied from 0 to 600 feet. Helicopter support was severely curtailed, preventing, in two instances, emergency medevacs. The rain also made depressions difficult for tracked vehicles to maneuver through.

(3) Civil affairs. No effort was made in the area of civil affairs. The reason for this is that the indigenous personnel had abandoned the area.

(4) Psy warfare. Since the battalion had no interpreter during this period, psy warfare attempts were minimal, being limited to Chieu Hoi appeals. The reason for this was due in part to having no interpreter, and in part to the battalion's being engaged during the two days it was in the village area. No security could be guaranteed the team, plus the fact that the villages were virtually deserted. Henceforth the battalion would prefer to have the psy-war team provided on a request basis and not dispatched without request by the battalion.

b. Period II

(1) Intelligence Estimate. While 1st Bn, 9th Marines assumed the Dong Ha Combat Base defense enemy activity appeared to be limited to small, hard core guerrilla unit activities mostly located to the south of the base complex. Although enemy ability had been reported in the hamlets to the north of Dong Ha and to the west of Highway #1, the majority of the contacts came from the area south of the Grid Line 57 East of Highway #1. Interrogation reports and captured materials showed at least one sniper platoon working in this area with the mission of harassing marine tactical columns.

One attempt was made to intercept local guerrilla units on a rice-gathering mission with negative results. Interrogation of a hard core sniper and information from village chiefs indicated that the guerrilla rice collection program was a success, although the villagers in this area have little to give in the way of rice on an individual basis.

(2) Terrain. A terrain resume will not be included as Dong Ha Combat Base is a semi-permanent installation.

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

(3) CA/Psy warfare. The short duration of the battalions stay at Dong Ha Combat Base precluded the planning and execution of any Psy-warfare or civic action programs.

c. Period III

(1) Intelligence Estimate. The area was believed to be occupied by elements of 324 B Div, NVA, probably battalion sized from the 812th Regt. This estimate was made on 14 March and was based on the Battalion's earlier encounter with two NVA (Rein) battalions earlier in the month. These beliefs were reinforced on 17 March 1967 when elements of an NVA battalion were suspected to be deployed in the "Mutter's Ridge-Helicopter Valley" area. (Rated A-2 by G-2 3rd MarDiv at the time). Contact, it was believed, would consist mostly of harassing mortar fire with few small arms engagements initially. It was anticipated that if the battalion moved by tactical foot march 82mm mortars, could be expected on the second or third day.

Suspected locations of enemy units indicated that enemy contact would be from the north and west and would increase as the battalion approached "Helicopter Valley". Possible defense from bunkers along ridgelines was included in the estimate of the situation. Intelligence gathered before the operations was minimal due to the short time between initiation and execution of the order to move.

Enemy contact following the Battalion's move across the LOD on 17 March was not as heavy as expected, although items of captured gear, enemy sightings and discovered emplacements indicated that NVA units were at that time operating in the area. An estimated five NVA were sighted on battalion objective #3 where they were apparently temporarily set-in. A check of their freshly dug emplacements produced five complete demolition dets, 25 Chi-Com grenades, four dish-type anti-personnel mines and one anti-vehicular mine weighing approximately 15 lbs. Along with their personal gear was discovered new time fuze, electrical and non-electrical blasting caps and detonating cord. The blasting caps were French made and carried a date of productions of 1965.

The area to the north and west of battalion objective #3 showed numerous signs of recent occupation by small units of NVA. The enemies unwillingness to defend and the type of material discovered indicated the presence of small combat support units with the mission of fortifying strategic high ground in anticipation of a later occupation by larger forces. A large cross cut saw, along with picks and shovels were amongst the material captured. Freshly dug positions for crew served weapons, with living bunkers attached, indicated a future intention on the part of the enemy to hold certain key terrain longer than momentarily.

UNCLASSIFIED

4

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67

At coordinates YD 052644, in the vicinity of objective #4, a complex of such crew served weapons positions was found. Two circular pits with parapits to accept a 12.7mm Machinegun were discovered along with two estimated 82mm mortar pits. The machinegun positions were not as yet camouflaged, but selective cutting of the surrounding vegetation afforded a 360 degree field of fire for the weapon. Six hundred and fifty rds of 12.7mm ammo was found in one of the adjacent bunkers. Although the recently constructed living quarters appeared to have been occupied the previous night, there was nothing to indicate that the holes had been manned in the role for which they were intended. The presence of the machine guns or mortars was not in evidence. The constant direction of enemy egress was to the north, indicating a general direction for the parent unit. The size of the parent unit could not be determined at the time.

(2) Terrain

(a) Cover and Concealment. Terrain along the ridge line running west from Hill #162 (YD 070636) was moderately precipitous. Vegetation, consisting of high grass along the high plateaus and thick brush in gullies and on hillsides, confined troop movement to the trails and open areas of the topographical ridge. Hence, friendly troops were unable to capitalize on the plentiful opportunities for concealment afforded by the vegetation. The relief presented numerous defilade areas, which, along with the narrow ridgeline, made the area susceptible to a strong forward or a reverse slope defense.

(b) Key Terrain. Prominent high ground was key terrain. It was easily defensible, but often too confining for a battalion CP. Obvious high ground heightened the threat of a prompt mortar attack after setting in. The probability that the enemy has mortars registered on such high ground is great. Also, the channelizing characteristics of the ridgeline make the prediction of the direction of friendly troop movements feasible.

Key terrain in this area were hill #162 (YD 070636) which afforded excellent observation to the highlands and plains to the north and east; Hill 208 (YD 042644) and the fingers radiating off of it, which commanded "Helicopter Valley, and objective #3, which occupied the center of the ridge line leading southwest into "Mutter's Ridge". That the NVA recognized Hill #162 as key terrain was indicated by the fact that in addition to evidence of freshly dug bunkers, the battalion discovered that the hill mass had been rigged with surprise firing devices to deny its use to us.

UNCLASSIFIED

4

003480
2 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

(c) Obstacles. Obstacles to troop movement were the steep terrain and thick undergrowth below the ridgeline. These two factors confined movement to the well used trails in the open areas and along the topographical ridge. Yet there was no evidence to indicate that enemy forces had developed a successful alternative to this type of movement.

Landing zones were fairly adequate east of the gridline 04, after which it was anticipated that precipitous relief and thick vegetation would be prohibitive.

(d) Weather. Weather for the most part of the operation was warm and clear, with late evening and early morning fog reducing visibility to from .2 to .5 miles. A unit's extraordinary dependence on air logistical support in this area made the weather especially important in this case.

(3) Civil Affairs. The area contained no civilian personnel.

(4) Psy Warfare. Limited enemy contact and lack of knowledge of any nearby concentrations precluded the use of psy warfare.

7. Mission.

a. Period I

(1) Land the battalion by helicopter assault in the vicinity of YD 070635, consolidate the position and conduct search and destroy operations in accordance with 3d Marines Frag Orders.

b. Period II

(1) Assume Base Defense of the Dong Ha Combat Base. Coordinate and provide security for the Dong Ha Combat Base.

c. Period III

(1) Conduct a reconnaissance in force operation through objectives 1, 2, and 3. After securing objective 3 conduct a detailed search of hill complex formed by objectives 4, 5, 6, and "Helicopter Valley" vicinity of GS YD 0364.

UNCLASSIFIED

④

003480
2 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

8. Concept of Operation.

a. Period I

(1) No overall concept of operation was set forth at the beginning of this period. The battalion was assigned an initial mission and then the concept was developed as the tactical situation dictated. Basically the concept was to interdict and destroy NVA forces that were attempting to return to the DMZ. The initial mission was to land by helicopter on Hill #162 (YD 070635) and then to secure and consolidate the position. The 3d Marines Frag Order 11-67 received on 1 March called for the battalion to conduct a search and destroy mission to the north and northeast through regimental objectives #4 and #5. Intermediate battalion objectives A, B, C, D were assigned for control purposes (See enclosure 1). The concept of operation for the following day was for the battalion to patrol from objective #4 since objective #5, which had not been reached on the previous day, could be controlled from the battalion's location on objective #4. The concept of operation for 4 March was to conduct a search and destroy operation in the northeast through regimental objectives #5 and #6 then turn east to regimental objective #7 then southeast to the final objective, hamlet, Thien Chanh (YD 166641). Intermediate battalion objective A was designated and the final objective was called objective B for control purposes (See enclosure 2). On 6 March the concept was changed and called for the battalion to attack to the south through the hamlet of Phu An and then proceed south to the Cam Lo bridge. Upon arrival at the bridge the battalion was to return to Dong Ha by truck.

The concept called for the maximum utilization of aerial observation first to detect the enemy and then supporting arms to destroy the enemy whenever possible.

b. Period II

(1) The concept of operation was to deploy the battalion so as to provide adequate security for the Dong Ha Combat Base. One rifle company to be used on the base perimeter, the remainder of the companies to be used for security of adjacent facilities, a Sparrow Hawk commitment and to conduct deep patrolling in surrounding areas.

c. Period III

(1) The overall concept of operation called for a battalion (-) motor march to an assemble area south of objective #1 on the first day, followed on the second day by a battalion (-) size reconnaissance in force through battalion objectives #1, #2, and #3. Once objective #3 was secured, the battalion (-) on the third day, was to setup a CP in suitable terrain in that vicinity and conduct aggressive patrolling to objectives 4, 5, 6, and in "Helicopter Valley" (vicinity of GS YD 0564). See Enclosure (3).

11

UNCLASSIFIED

SECRET

(4)

003480
2 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

The motor march for the first day was to be accomplished in two consecutive convoys. The first shuttle was to carry one company to the vicinity of the LOD (Cam Lo River) which it could march to and secure objective #1 (YD 085589) and provide local security in anticipation of the next day's move. The concept for the second day called for a battalion sized march through objectives 2 and 3. The Axis of advance was to be northwest along the low ground of "Mutter Valley". The Company north of the river was to move first, followed by the battalion CP and one company, while the remaining company followed in trace. A distinct interval between companies was to be maintained. After a battalion CP was to be established in the vicinity of objective #3 on the third day aggressive patrolling to objective #4, #5, #6 and "Helicopter Valley" was planned.

Maximum use of supporting arms was planned for all phases of the operation, both to cover the movement of the battalions elements and to interdict enemy lines of communication.

No provision for a battalion egress was included in the concept of operation and the battalion anticipated to move on order to carry out a new mission.

10. Execution. (See Enclosure (4) for period I)

(1) On 1 March 1967 at 1555 the 1st Bn, 9th Marines heliolifted to Hill #162 (YD 070635). By 1830 the entire battalion had reached Hill #162. Preparations were made for the night and the next day's activities. Local security measures were taken for the night.

On 2 March the battalion conducted search and destroy operations from Hill #162 (YD 070635), north to the regimental objective #4 (YD 070635) through battalion intermediate objectives A,B,C,D. The battalion advanced with two companies up and one company back to provide CP security.

First contact was made when at 0740 the battalion CP at YD 070635 was mortared. The VC were estimated to have been located at YD 065652. The battalion position received a total of 70 incoming 82mm rounds. When counter mortar fire was brought to bear (99 - 55 rds/ & 13 - 81mm mortar rds), the enemy ceased fire. Two non serious Marine WIA's were sustained. Five VC bodies were later spotted by an AO in the area of the artillery fire.

At 0920 the two leading rifle companies commenced search and destroy operations to the north from Hill #162. Company "D", was on the left and Company "A" on the right. Company "C" remained on Hill #162 to provide security for the battalion CP. From the Hill #162 position eight VC were seen running on a trail at YD 078637. A marine sniper fired five 7.62 rds at the VC, killing 1 as the others disappeared.

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67~~SECRET~~

UNCLASSIFIED

As Company "D" swept forward, a small bunker was discovered at YD 065647. The bunker contained several uniform items and 20 rounds 7.62 ammo. The sweep continued into the afternoon. Terrain difficulties slowed the operation considerably.

From 1240 to 1300 the VC mortared the battalion CP. Twenty 82mm rounds fell during the period. Nine marines were wounded in this contact. The VC were discovered by an AO to be in the vicinity of YD 050665. Two Hundred fifty - seven (257) 105mm rounds were fired on the suspected VC position. Again at 1340, with companies "A" and "D" north of Hill #162 the battalion CP was mortared. Twenty-four 82mm mortar rounds landed inside of the perimeter. Six marine WIA resulted from the sustained mortar attack. Seventy-five rounds of 105mm rounds were fired on the same suspected position at which time the mortar attack ceased.

By 1510 the forward rifle companies had nearly reached the objective area at YD 070653. The battalion CP displaced forward to the new position reaching the position at 1600.

At approximately the same time, Company "D" was fired on by an estimated squad of VC in the vicinity of YD 060650. One USMC KIA and 2 WIA's were sustained. While moving into the area from which the VC fire had come, Company "D" surprised an estimated VC platoon. In a classic enveloping maneuver Company "D" assaulted the VC killing 10, capturing 8 Chi-Com automatic rifles and 24 hand grenades. The VC KIA were wearing NVA uniforms. During the action, 2 marines lost their lives and 7 were wounded.

The battalion held at regimental objective #A and set in a battalion defensive perimeter including objective #4, C, and D for the night ("Three Sisters, Hill Complex"). While consolidating the position at YD 070653, Company "A" spotted 6 to 10 VC, to the northwest in front of the battalion position. The group was taken under fire. Two VC were killed.

The day's contact with the enemy ended when at 1915 the VC mortared the battalion CP position with twenty 82mm mortar rounds. Eighty-five 105mm howitzer rounds were returned on the suspected VC position.

A quiet night passed until 0425 the morning of 3 March when the battalion position was again mortared. Twenty-one 82mm mortar rounds landed, most of them beyond the battalion position. Eighteen 81mm mortar rounds and 85-155 Howitzer rounds were fired on the VC position estimated to be at YD 050655.

Search and destroy missions were continued on the third day of the operation. Patrols of squad and platoon size were sent from each rifle company.

~~SECRET~~

UNCLASSIFIED

(4)

003480
2 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

on the early morning of 3 March, 2 minor contacts were made. At 0745 Company "D", spotted 25 VC in an opening north of their position, at YD 065663. Three 81mm mortar rounds were fired. The last round on target was believed to have killed 2 VC. The others disappeared and the 81mm mortar mission ceased. At 0800 2 VC in green uniforms were shot and killed just outside the battalion perimeter at YD 071665.

At 0800 an AO observed over 250 NVA troops moving northwest along the trail at YD 075667. Artillery fire was brought to bear on the enemy column. By 1030 airstrikes had commenced. Two F8's, 2 A4's and 2 F4's aircraft flew a succession of missions on the moving NVA. Between air strikes, artillery missions were kept directly on the North Vietnamese. Meanwhile, Company "A" was maneuvered into a position from which it could sweep directly into the NVA column as soon as the air and artillery missions had ceased. While maneuvering into position, Company "A" fired upon 10 enemy running from the adjacent artillery and air strikes. Two bodies were found at YD 073667 and there were indications that possibly 6 more VC were killed as a result of this action. At 0930 Company "A" fired small arms at 8 VC moving in front of the company position. Four VC fell under the Marine fire. At 1130, Company "A", commenced its sweep with only minor resistance by a completely disorganized and fleeing enemy. Company "A", searched the battle area and contributed considerably to the enemy losses through ground action. At 1215 Company "A" received 30 rounds of carbine fire from 20 VC at YD 076666. An attack into the area resulted in 1 VC captured with a light machinegun, a complete 60mm mortar and 4 82mm mortars. At 1245 Company "A" was fired on by approximately 65 VC, YD 076668. One platoon immediately assaulted the VC unit. Five were captured, 25 were killed, and drag marks in the area after the fire fight indicated that 16 more VC kills were probable. At 1315 Company "A" engaged a disorganized force of about 60 NVA at YD 080665. Twelve VC were killed by body count with 7 probable kills estimated. During the same incident, 4 AK-47 Rifles and 38 Chi-Com hand grenades were captured. The sweep continued with Company "A", recovering 70 VC bodies on the battle field in addition to the VC which the company had killed in fire fights.

Meanwhile, the rest of the battalion had light contact around the Battalion CP perimeter. At 0805 on 3 March Company "C", sighted 5 VC at YD 077652. The VC were taken under fire by small arms. A search of the area indicated that 2 VC may have been killed in the action. Company "D", at 0820 spotted 2 VC about 200 meters northwest of the perimeter (YD 071665). The VC were taken under fire and taken captive as a result of this engagement. One VC died of wounds before either could be medevaced. The two had some light military equipment and a gas mask. At 0930 the Battalion CP took 9 rounds of 82mm mortar fire. All were off target. Fifty-three artillery rounds and six 81mm mortar rounds were fired on the suspected VC position at YD 054655. At 1100, Company "D" killed 5 VC and captured one weapon, a Chi-Com carbine at YD 062650.

UNCLASSIFIED

(4)

003480
2 Apr 67~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED

The same Company "D" patrol, at 1310, moving through the area of the previous day's fire fight, found 23 NVA bodies. Coordinates of the lightly covered graves were YD 062655. The bodies were believed to have resulted from the fire fight Company "D" had had on 2 March 1967.

At 1340, during resupply at the Battalion CP (YD 070654) 92 - 82mm mortar rounds were fired into the perimeter. The VC position at YD 055665 was fired upon with 96 - 81mm mortar rounds, 120 - 155mm rounds and 49 - 155mm rounds. One friendly KIA AND 16 WIA resulted. An hour later (1450) the VC mortared the medevac helicopters in the LZ. Thirty 82mm rounds landed in the battalion perimeter. One hundred 105mm rounds were fired at the VC positions. The VC mortaring ceased, but 7 more Marine WIA'S were sustained.

On the flight back to Dong Ha one medevac helicopter had engine failure and was forced down. Company "C" dispatched a platoon to the downed helicopter to provide security for the night.

At 1745 a Company "C" patrol found 7 VC bodies, no weapons but some equipment of a military nature. The bodies were found at YD 067652.

Company "A", returned from its successful sweep at 1750. The VC fired 70 - 82mm rounds at the company while enroute to the battalion perimeter. Most rounds were long and missed the target. Three non-serious WIA were sustained.

The final incident of 3 March occurred at 1910 when 58 VC mortar rounds over shot the battalion CP position. No casualties resulted. Eighteen 81mm mortar rounds and 39 - 105mm rounds were fired at YD 044656, the suspected VC mortar position.

First contact on 4 March occurred at 0330. Company "C" fired at a suspected probe of the battalion perimeter. At first light 1 uniformed VC KIA was found.

At 0721 a marine sniper fired on and killed 2 VC moving 600 meters north of the battalion perimeter. No bodies were found during a battalion sweep of the area later in the day.

At 1130 on 4 March 1967 the battalion started a search and destroy operation through regimental objective #5 and objective A. The battalion moved in a column of companies in the order of Company "D", Company "C", and Company "A", providing security for the battalion CP group. Company "D", found one grave at 1145, at YD 080666, containing 12 NVA KIA. Still another grave, encountered at 1200 (YD 081686), yielded 10 NVA bodies. A total of 43 enemy bodies were found during the search on 4 March.

~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED

By 1300 the battalion was moving in column to the northwest. As Company "A", and the CP group departed YD 071654, five mortar rounds fell near the 81 mortar section. Three U. S. WIA's were sustained and had to be medevaced. Immediately following the five rounds of VC mortar fire, a sustained attack of 150 82mm rounds landed beyond the battalion line of march. No casualties resulted.

On the move, at 1454, Company "C", captured 1 NVA and found two VC bodies in vicinity of YD 105676.

One more contact was made at 1500 on 4 March. Company "D", at YD 115681 was hit by two command detonated pie shaped, directional mines. Seven WIA and two KIA resulted. At the same time, a bullet from a sniper hit D-1 Platoon Commander in the chest killing him instantly. No VC were found during a search of the area.

At 1600 the battalion was requested by the Commanding Officer, 3rd Bn, 3rd Marines, to hold a blocking position while the 3rd Bn, 3rd Marines drove the enemy north into the position. Although the block was held for approximately 90 minutes, no contact was made. The remainder of daylight hours were spent establishing the battalion in a night defensive position at YD 117683. A platoon from Company "D", was sent to pick up four (4) M-42 vehicles and one M-48 tank which were placed under operational control of the battalion. The M-42 vehicles and M-48 tank were moved into the battalion perimeter by nightfall on 4 March 1967.

The night passed uneventfully, but the 5th of March was marked by a very successful harassing and delay action by the enemy. The first contact was at 0700 when the defensive sector of Company "C", received sniper fire wounding 1 marine. The marine was medevaced. A search and destroy mission was conducted with Company "C", as the lead element, Company "D", swung north and provided security for the armor and Company "A", provided security for the battalion CP following in trace of Company "C". Company "C", moved out as lead element at 0730. At 0820 at YD 127683 the point platoon received automatic weapons fire and several hand grenades. Several casualties were sustained and fire was returned. For the next three hours while trying to medevac casualties, Company "C", received fire resulting in a total of seven Marine KIA and WIA. Company "C", killed six VC by body count and possibly two more while trying to drive off the VC harassing fire. Six VCS were also picked up in the area. Six automatic rifles, 1 machinegun, several Chi-Com grenades and one claymore type mine were captured. In connection with this action 9 additional WIA casualties were sustained in small skirmishes developing in the area.

As Company "C", dealt with the VC in it's area, Company "D", moved out with the armor. At 1255 Company "D" made contact in the vicinity of YD 127686. The VC were at the same coordinates, throwing grenades at the marines. While pressing forward against the VC, Company "D", again at 1315 took fire at YD 131679. During the return fire and assault, seven VC were killed and eight more fresh bodies were found in what was

UNCLASSIFIED

(4)

003480
2 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

apparently a VC hospital. A considerable amount of U.S. 782 gear, boots, utilities, and web gear, were found around the hospital. Two U.S. WIA were sustained during the action. At 1330 a Company "D", platoon at YD 127687 and a helicopter in the LZ received incoming small arms fire. A squad pursued the sniper, killed him and captured his AK-47 rifle and two Chi-Com grenades.

Due to a delayed medevac and an emergency resupply mission, the battalion CP had still not been able to move. Company "A", provided CP security. At approximately 1345, 35 rounds of small arms fire were fired into the perimeter. The sniper was not located.

At 1430 the CP began moving and the VC delaying action continued. At 1500 Company "C", platoon received 20 small arms rounds and five 60mm mortar rounds. The platoon was hit at YD 129673. Artillery was called with 30 105mm rounds being fired. Two marines were wounded during the action. Two VC KIA were considered to be probable.

At 1515 in vicinity YD 132673 another Company "C", platoon was fired on by a machinegun. No friendly or enemy casualties resulted.

At 1615 Company "C", was mortared. Twenty-five 82mm mortar rounds hit around the company while a medevac was being attempted. Fire was returned with 10 60mm mortar rounds and 8 81mm mortar rounds. Six marines were wounded. Drag marks in the area indicated two probable VC KIA.

At 1630 Company "D", made the largest contact of the day. While moving at YD 136673 Company "D", was ambushed by 40-50 VC. The VC fired 50-60 rounds of 60 mortar, heavy small arms and possibly a 57mm RR. Company "D", having the M-42 vehicles and M-48 tank in direct support returned fire, firing cannister rounds and 40mm cannon fires. In addition, 30 60mm mortar rounds were fired. The VC were driven off, but continued harassing fire when Company "D", tried to medevac the casualties. Artillery was called, but the medevac helicopters were unable to approach the LZ. In the action, Company "D", killed 5 VC by body count and 10 probables were indicated. Due to approaching darkness, Company "D", was ordered to withdraw with 14 WIA and 4 KIA to the new battalion position being set up at YD 133675. The WIA's were evacuated the next morning without incident from that position.

As companies "A" and "D", set in around the battalion CP, Company "C", which had progressed past Phu An, set up a separate perimeter. While moving to set in Company "C", received 15 sniper rounds from YD 136658, sustaining 1 WIA. No VC were seen. The Company established a defensive position at YD 137658.

The night of 5 March passed uneventfully as close TPQ's and closer H&S fires were fired to drive off the VC. The tactic was apparently successful. The mission assigned by the commanding Officer, 3rd Marines was changed due to a shift in the boundry between 1st Bn, 9th Marines

UNCLASSIFIED

4

003480
2 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

and the 39th Arvn Ranger Battalion, operating to the northeast. The boundary change eliminated regimental objective #7. The mission of securing Thien Chanh (YD 166641) was assigned to 3rd Bn, 3rd Marines. The 1st Bn, 9th Marines was ordered to move south through Phu An and then return by trucks to Dong Ha.

Company "C", already below the hamlet of Phu An, held in a blocking position just south of the hamlet. After a heavy artillery prep fire, Company "A", moved through Phu An with no contact. After Company "A", and Company "C" linked up, Company "D" with the battalion CP moved in trace. The battalion commenced a tactical march south to a rendezvous with a truck column at Cam Lo bridge and was transported by tactical motor convoy to Dong Ha. Three minor contacts occurred during the march. At 1100 near YD 135674, 1 VC was shot while watching the battalion move.

At 1200, 2 VC bodies were discovered at YD 135673 in fresh graves. Later at 1315 three snipers opened fire with automatic weapons, wounding three Company "D", marines. (YD 135670), who were medevaced. Two of the snipers were killed.

The final incident occurred at 1600 when the rear plt of Company "D", received sniper fire at YD 136666. No marine casualties resulted and no VC were found.

The rest of the march was uneventful as the battalion concluded Period I, and changed Operational Control from 3rd Marine Regiment, to the 3rd Marine Division (Forward).

c. Period II - For the period 7-15 March the battalion assumed responsibility for the defense of the Dong Ha Combat Base. The 3rd Bn, 4th Marines was officially relieved at 1500, 7 March 1967. Responsibilities during this period included one rifle company on the perimeter at Dong Ha, one rifle company guarding the POL dump at the mouth of the Cua Viet River, a Sparrow Hawk Platoon, a platoon at Cam Lo bridge for security of that bridge and a reaction force to be provided by the rifle company supplying the Sparrow Hawk Platoon. Various other commitments were laid on the battalion and met on a daily basis.

There was no enemy contact on 7 March as the battalion relieved 3rd Bn, 4th Marines in place.

On 8 March Company "C" (-) conducted a search and destroy operation through GS YD 3169, 3069, 2968, and 2867. No contact was made. The remainder of the battalion and the perimeter units conducted local security patrols with minimal contact. An 11th Engineer Battalion patrol received small arms fire from the back of a grayish truck headed south on Highway #1 at coordinates YD 264585. Fire was not returned due to civilian traffic on the road. The same patrol found two different sets of arrows on the ground, one made of 6 rocks and the other made of 81 mortar round containeers. Both pointed at the airstrip, the first from YD 259579, the second from YD 255583 and were felt to be aiming stakes. Both sets of

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

4

003480
2 Apr 67~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED

of aiming stakes were destroyed. Such contacts were to be typical of the whole period involved. Nothing of major significances occurred during the entire time the battalion was involved in the base defense.

On 9 March Company "D" conducted a sweep from YD 190589 to 283573. Two 155mm duds were found and 1 apparent mine. All were blown in place. While on the sweep D-1 received six rounds of sniper fire wounding one marine. Fire was returned as the platoon moved rapidly into the VC position. One VC was captured, one killed and two Chi Com rifles, one helmet, and one pack were recovered. No further contact was made on 9 March as patrolling continued.

10 March arrived and passed with no enemy contact. All units conducted patrolling. Companies "D" and "C" conducted platoon sweeps in their company zones of action with negative results. An additional mission was assigned when D-2 was required to provide security for "F" Btry, 2d Bn, 12th Marines at Cam Lo.

On 11 March Company "M" 3rd Bn, 4th Marines became under OpCon to 1st Bn, 9th Marines and relieved Company "C" of duties at the mouth of the Cau Viet River. Company "C" was flown back to Dong Ha. Later the same day Company "C" conducted a search and destroy operation on a suspected VC cadre meeting at YD 266543. Only sniper fire was encountered and 1 VCS was apprehended. Company "C" was trucked back to Dong Ha arriving at 2130. Mean while during the day no further activity took place on 11 March.

On 12 March 1967 Company "C" was sent to an area north of Dong Ha to conduct extensive patrol activity. The company set up a CP at YD 186613 with two platoons. One platoon C-2 set into position at YD 177622. The mission of the rest of the battalion remained the same with two additions. An "A" Company squad was sent as security for a MCB unit working at the gravel pit near the Cam Lo bridge and another was given the task of providing security for a survey team. Contact on the 12th was minimal. At 1330 a CAC patrol, Tiger Papa-2, fired on 5 VC at YD 269560. The five VC were pursued to YD 275567 where contact was lost. At 1550 the survey security received 15-20 rounds of sniper fire from YD 234555. Fire was returned with M-79 rounds, 12 - 105 rounds but the operational commitment precluded pursuit of the VC. The firing ceased and 2 VC KIA were estimated.

Company "C" set up for the night at YD 202612 with two platoons. One platoon, C-2 set up at YD 246617. Only 2 minor sniper incidents occurred during the night. Company "M" received 3 rounds at 2000 from YD 341693. A Company "C" patrol at 2025 received 1 burst of automatic weapons fire in the vicinity of YD 224616. Fire was returned with M-79's but no blood or bodies were found.

The battalion retained all commitments for the 13th of March. No contact was made until well into the afternoon. At 1450 a CAC Patrol received 20 to 30 rounds of automatic weapons fire from YD 278551. The area was searched but nothing was found. A Company "D" patrol apprehended

~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67

1 VCS at YD 268582 at 1607. He was turned over to the battalion intelligence officer. During the evening at 2115 A company patrol observed 6-10 VC while moving into a position at YD 370657. The VC were approximately 175 meters away from the patrol. The squad opened fire. The VC returned fire and ran into a treeline. A search was made of the area under artillery illumination, but nothing was found. No further contact was made on the 13th.

Again on the 14th no change in mission was effected. Company "C", continued to patrol north of Dong Ha while the other battalion units provided security for the various activities in the Dong Ha area.

The only significant incident during the day occurred at 1210 when a Company "M" patrol came across an area approximately 1000 meters wide flanked by signs reading "Danger area, no one pass beyond this point". A booby trap was discovered in a 2 foot log. The explosive was a Chi Com grenade. While uncovering the device it was activated and exploded wounding 1 marine. He was evacuated from YD 385645. Two more mines were found in the immediate vicinity. They were successfully destroyed.

On the 15th all 1st Bn, 9th Marines units were relieved of duties in connection with the Dong Ha Combat Base Defenses. Company "M", 3rd Bn, 4th Marines changed OPCON back to its parent unit. At 1000, 15 March the battalion became OPCON to the Third Marines and commenced moving to the field for offensive operations against the Viet Cong and NVA.

c. Period III. At 151000 March 1967, the battalion chopped OpCon to the 3d Marine Regiment. At 1145 Company "C", commenced the battalion's move by motor convoy to objective #1. By 1640 of 15 March the entire battalion had arrived at YD 086590, the prescribed assembly area. Company "C" conducted search and clear operations of the high ground on both sides of the river and set up a defensive position in the vicinity of YD 080597. The evening of 15 March was uneventful. All units set up night defense positions and conducted extensive local patrols and ambushes. The battalion continued preparations for a move towards objective #3 on the following day.

The 3d Marine Regiment planning message for 15 March advised the battalion that the remaining phases of the operation were to be postponed until 17 March. The battalion was instructed to conduct daylight patrolling of "Mutter Valley" in the vicinity of Hill #124 (YD 077623) and battalion objective #2 (YD 057624). Company "A" conducted detailed reconnaissance of Hill #124 (YD 077623) and the eastern side of the battalion's future route. Reconnaissance of the high ground on western side of the eastern end of "Mutter Valley" was accomplished by Company "C". Company "C" conducted platoon size patrols to Hill #100 (YD 067605), to objective #2 (YD 057624) and to Hill #190 (YD 068593). Company "B" assumed perimeter defense responsibility and conducted a reconnaissance north of the river for a possible battalion CP location.

UNCLASSIFIED

(4)

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67

Some evidence of recent enemy activity was found by the patrols. At YD 069593 a camouflaged pith helmet was found by a Company "C" patrol, and at YD 075591 the site of a vacated enemy mortar position was located.

On 17 March the battalion deployed from its position. The lead element, Company "C", moved towards objective #2 at 0730. Company "A" and battalion CP followed in trace with Company "D" remaining approximately 1000 meters to the rear. During the movement additional signs of very recent enemy activity were found. One AK-47 round and fresh sneaker tracks were seen along the trail at YD 058613. Company "C" located 15 improved fighting positions at YD 055637. At YD 048636 the point of Company "C" engaged 2 enemy by small arms fire. The enemy fled but upon search of the area, bunkers were discovered which contained demolitions, mines and other equipment. An additional enemy position of platoon size was discovered at YD 055637. Demolitions, gas masks, pith helmets, and miscellaneous equipment were captured at this site. Enemy activity was limited to sniping and harassing fire at resupply helicopters. Company "C" continued to objective #3. Companies "A", "D", and the battalion CP held for the night in a position vicinity of YD 058634.

Night defense positions were set in and aggressive patrolling and ambushes were conducted from both sites. No enemy activity was encountered during the night.

The battalion CP and Company "A" and "D" moved to the vicinity of objective #3 on 18 March. Company "A" provided security for the CP while Company "C" conducted patrols and a sweep of objective #4. Company "D" conducted a sweep of Hill #162 and then proceeded to the vicinity of objective #3 to establish its CP. A mine, detonated by a trip wire, was encountered by Company "D" on Hill #162. Its detonation resulted in 3 USMC WIA. Company "C" patrol activities resulted in the disclosure of numerous extensively developed enemy positions at YD 053635, 052644, and 062641, and in the capture of some abandoned equipment. Night defenses were established on objective #3. Patrol and ambush activities were conducted with no enemy contact until the termination of Prairie II at 182400 March 1967.

10. Results.

a. Period I

(1) Casualties

- (a) USMC KIA 18
USMC WIA 105
- (b) VCKIA by look count 238
VCWIA one captive
VCKIA 57 Probable
VCWIA 29 Probable
KBA No Estimate
VC Captured 5

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67

(2) Equipment Losses

- (a) USMC - None
- (b) VC Equipment Losses

- 1 Bandoleer Carbine Ammo
- 1 SMG
- 1 60mm mortar with bipod and baseplate
- 47 packs
- 1 green uniform
- 3 pith helmets
- 2 cartridge belts
- 4 shelter halves
- 3 E-tools
- 1 flashlight
- 1 mosquito net
- 1 bamboo mortar sight
- 5 carbine banana clips
- 66 grenades chi-com
- 10 AK-47's
- 1 RPG rocket launcher
- 43 Chi Com Mines
- 2 RPD MG
- 6 9mm Pistols
- 13 SKS Carbines
- 4 Aiming stakes
- 4 82mm Mortar tubes
- 2 82mm bipods
- 4 82mm baseplates
- 2 82mm sights
- 2 boxes chi-com blasting caps
- 20 blocks chi-com TNT
- 2 boxes link 7.62 ammunition
- 1 Homemade AP mine
- 1 box radio tubes
- 1 book of shackles
- 2 maxim machine guns
- 40 gas masks
- 3 cans 82mm mortar and boosters
- 1 M-14
- 4 Field phones
- 6 82mm rounds
- 1 Reel Communication Wire
- 1 Heavy MG Spare barrel
- 1 large box asst. Med Supplies.
- 2 Map cases
- 2 Field Switchboards
- 2 Small Medical bags

All areas in which air strikes were conducted were searched by U. S. Marines.

22

UNCLASSIFIED

(4)

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67

(2) Equipment Losses

- (a) USMC - None
- (b) VC Equipment Losses

- 1 Bandoleer Carbine Ammo
- 1 SMG
- 1 60mm mortar with bipod and baseplate
- 47 packs
- 1 green uniform
- 3 pith helmets
- 2 cartridge belts
- 4 shelter halves
- 3 E-tools
- 1 flashlight
- 1 mosquito net
- 1 bamboo mortar sight
- 5 carbine banana clips
- 66 grenades chi-com
- 10 AK-47's
- 1 RPG rocket launcher
- 43 Chi Com Mines
- 2 RPD MG
- 6 9mm Pistols
- 13 SKS Carbines
- 4 Aiming stakes
- 4 82mm Mortar tubes
- 2 82mm bipods
- 4 82mm baseplates
- 2 82mm sights
- 2 boxes chi-com blasting caps
- 20 blocks chi-com TNT
- 2 boxes link 7.62 ammunition
- 1 Homemade AP mine
- 1 box radio tubes
- 1 book of shackles
- 2 maxim machine guns
- 40 gas masks
- 3 cans 82mm mortar and boosters
- 1 M-14
- 4 Field phones
- 6 82mm rounds
- 1 Reel Communication Wire
- 1 Heavy MG Spare barrel
- 1 large box asst. Med Supplies.
- 2 Map cases
- 2 Field Switchboards
- 2 Small Medical bags

All areas in which air strikes were conducted were searched by U. S. Marines.

22

UNCLASSIFIED

(4)

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67

b. Period II

(1) Casualties

- (a) USMC WIA 1
- (b) VCKIA confirmed 1
VCKIA Est. 2

(2) Equipment Losses

- (a) USMC - None
- (b) VC Losses

Two Chi-com Rifles (1 with scope)
one Helmet
one pack

c. Period III

(1) Casualties

- (a) USMC WIA 3

(2) Equipment Losses

- (a) USMC - None
- (b) VC Losses

1 gas mask
1 green uniform
4 entrenching tools
14 packs
1 pancho
1 shelter half
3 canteens
650 rounds 12.7mm ammo.
150 lbs demolitions in satchel
21 lbs block TNT
25 Chicom grenades
2 claymore type mines
1 AT mine
1 coil time fuse
1 box fuse lighter
40 no electrical caps
8 electric caps
6 blasting cap with fuse
Engineers tools including saws, picks, rope, and wire.

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
2 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

11. Administrative Matters

a. Period I

(1) The battalion deployed for Prairie II with a prescribed load of one day of Class I, a BA of Class V and combat essential Class II. Resupply was by helicopter and motor transport from the LSA. Weather hindered resupply by air but did not effect the accomplishment of the combat mission. Nothing significant occurred regarding maintenance or transportation. No special equipment was used.

(2) Casualties were treated by the battalion medical officer in the field and medevaced as rapidly as possible by helicopter.

(3) Communications - Nothing of significance to report.

(4) Medical evaluation. The presence of the battalion medical officer on the operation proved extremely valuable. Medevacs were often delayed by the weather and the enemy. The doctor was able to aid many of the wounded who could not be immediately evacuated. Other medical matters were routine.

b. Period II

(1) Administrative matters in period II were handled in a routine manner since the battalion was deployed around the Dong Ha Combat Base.

(2) Casualties were treated in the field by the corpsman and returned to the medical facility at Dong Ha

(3) Transportation - Nothing Significant

(4) Communications - Nothing Significant

(5) Medical Evaluation - Nothing Significant.

c. Period III

(1) Casualties were treated by the corpsmen in the field and medevaced as rapidly as possible by helicopter.

(2) Communications - Nothing Significant.

(3) Medical Evaluation - Non battle casualties due to heat were encountered and treated by corpsmen in the field. Three heat casualties required evacuation.

UNCLASSIFIED

(4)

003480
2 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

12. Special Equipment and Techniques. Nothing significant.

13. Commanders Analysis.

a. This was the first encounter this battalion has had with elements of the North Vietnamese Army. For the most part, their tactics and reaction to our tactics were conventional. Their 82mm mortars were employed in basically the same manner as we employ ours. However, the accuracy of their mortars was relatively poor. One example of this was their inability to negate our use of helicopter landing zones even though they continually fired into these zones when helicopters came into them. Only one helicopter was damaged while in a landing zone and this damage was slight. They also seemed to be unable to accurately adjust their mortar fires; if they were close to their target on their initial rounds, subsequent rounds very often were much too long or short. It was also noted that most of their adjustments were in depth and they had a particularly difficult time in their lateral adjustments. They seemed to possess an inexhaustible supply of mortar ammunition.

Toward the end of the operation the NVA adopted a hedgerow type of defensive and harassing posture. Although the battalion has encountered these same tactics while fighting the Viet Cong, the NVA positions including fields of fire, fire discipline and coordination were much more effective than the VC. Of significance here, is the fact that the NVA in their hedgerows would often hold their fire until our troops were within 20-30 meters of their positions. Tanks were effective against the hedgerows, especially when they used 90mm cannister. Flame tanks would have definitely enhanced our position.

Psychological Warfare effects were energized during Period I on the second day of operations by the use of Psychological Warfare Team and extensive pamphlet drops. However, because of the continual contacts and heavy mortar fire no loudspeaker announcements were made. Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) leaflets and the standard variety leaflets were dropped.

Less than twenty civilians were encountered in our area of operations seven of which were evacuated as detainees.

It is felt that the two command detonated pie shape Chi-Com mines found on Hill #162 were intended to be utilized in an anti-helicopter role. The artillery prep fires and air strikes cut the wires and apparently drove off the enemy personnel who were to set off the mines. It is recommended that all helicopter landing zones be extensively prepped prior to use.

UNCLASSIFIED

(4)

003480
2 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

b. Period II. While the battalion was assigned the mission of base defense for the Dong Ha Combat Base a physical and aerial check of the defensive perimeter was conducted. One of the major discrepancies noted was the lack of barbed wire; in Sector I (the portion of the line recently extended), Sector II (lack of stakes and engineer support which had been requested), in ~~sector~~ IV (one portion not yet completed). Another discrepancy was the close proximity of the civilian hamlets in Sector V. The hamlets preclude fields of fire and provide a covered avenue of approach right up to the barbed wire. The hamlets should definitely be moved. In general, the defensive perimeter needs immediate and continuous improvement.

A lack of alert system is also considered significant especially in case of an mortar or rocket attack. Due to the noise of the continued H&I firing, the initial salvo of incoming rounds maybe ignored by a large portion of the base. The next salvo after adjustment, may still catch personnel in their bunks if no adequate warning system is provided. An attempt was made to utilize the MAG-16 siren, but the siren was not loud enough to be heard over the majority of the base.

c. Period III. Although it was evident that the enemy was preparing positions within the area it appeared that they were intended to be outpost type positions for approximately platoon sized units. There was no evidence of recent heavy traffic by large units in the area.

D. J. Fulham
D. J. FULHAM

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

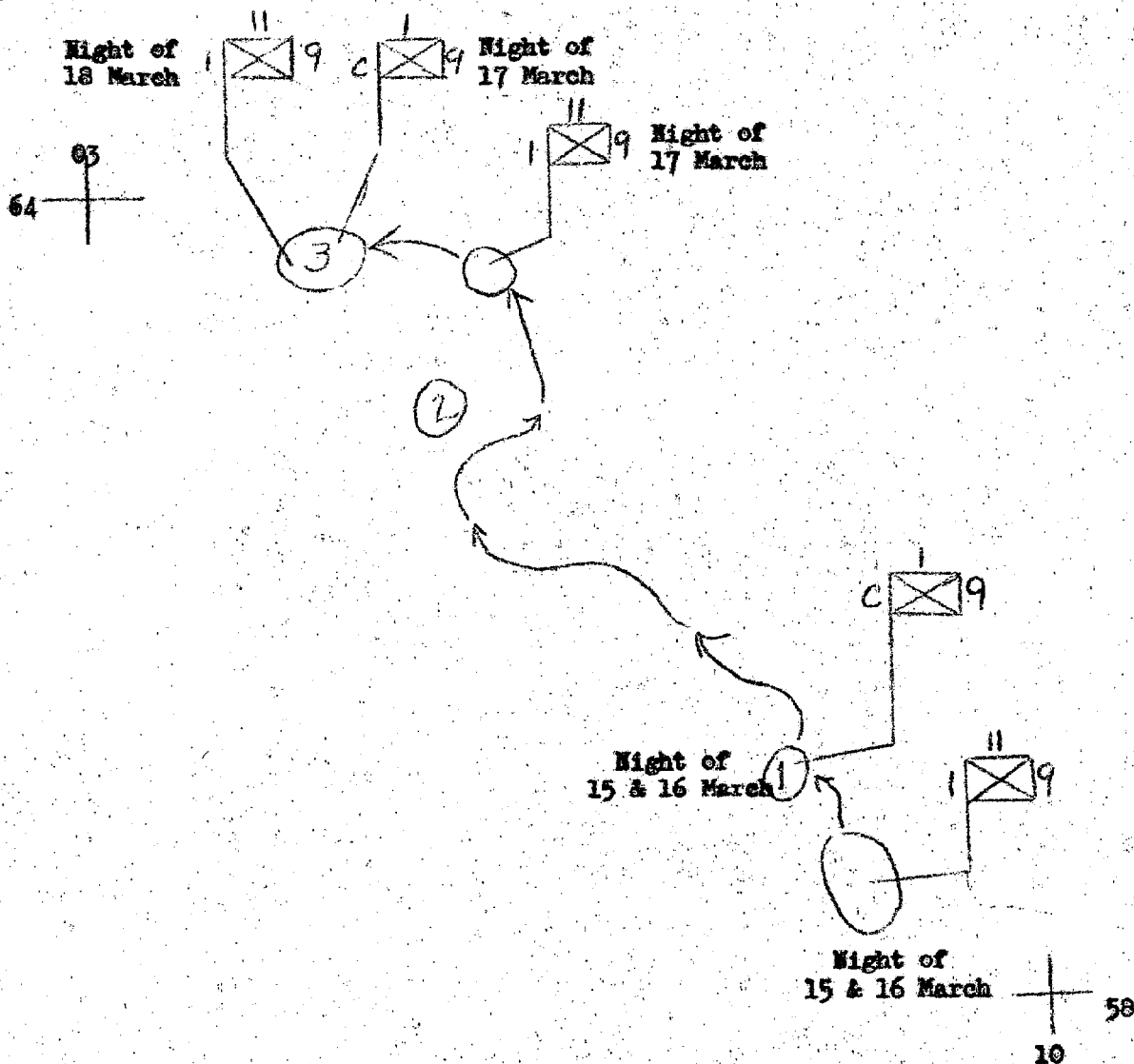
1/9. Mar 67

PRAIRIE II

Ref: (a) Maps: Vietnam 1:50,000 AMS,
Series No L7014, Sheets 6342I
and 6442IV

Execution Overlay Period III

Time Zone: H



UNCLASSIFIED

ENCLOSURE 5

(4)

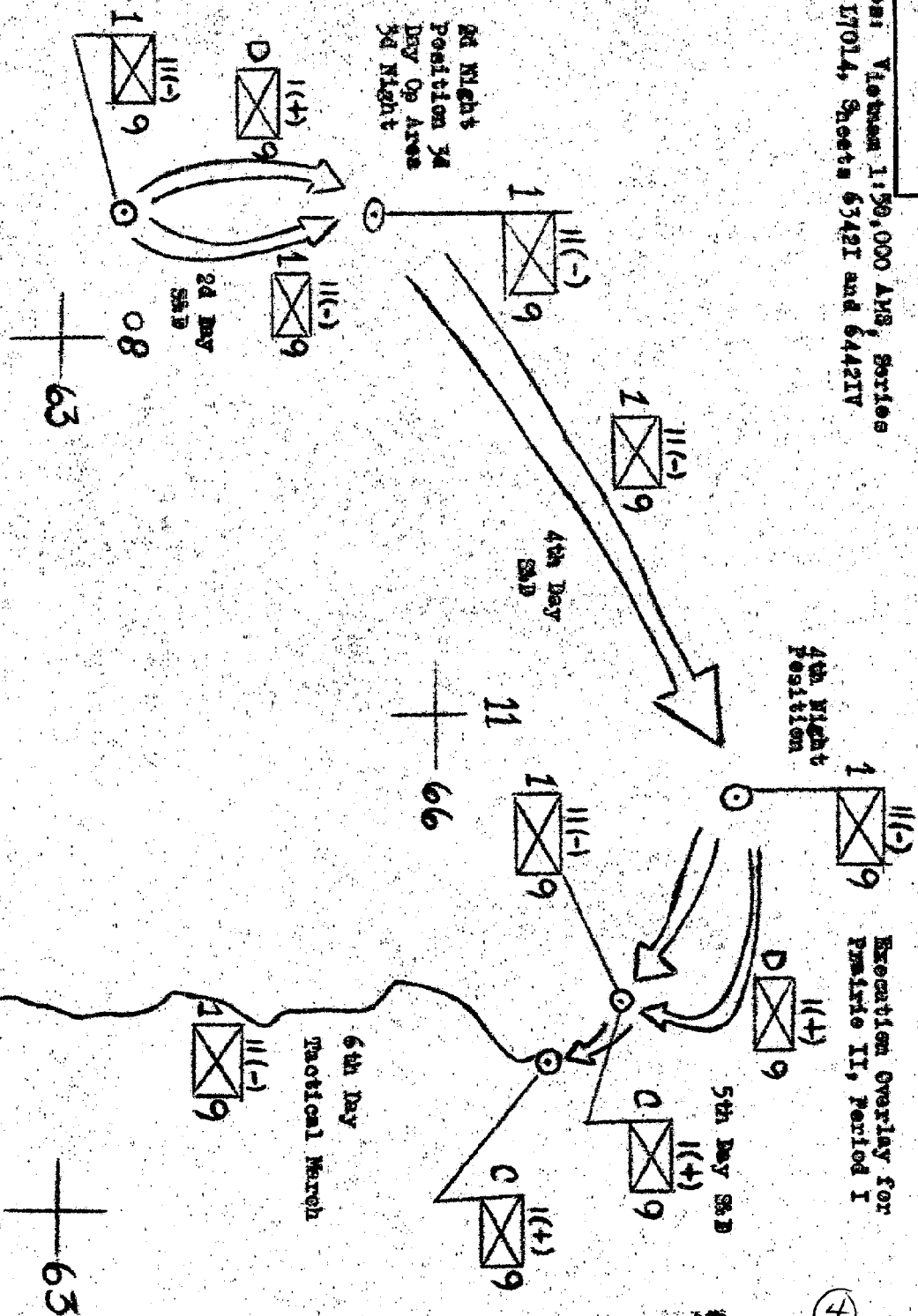
UNCLASSIFIED

Ref:

(a) Map: Vietnam 1:50,000 AMS, Series
No 17014, Sheets 6342I and 6442IV

Time Zone: H

1/9, Mar 67



UNCLASSIFIED

ENCLOSURE 4

UNCLASSIFIED

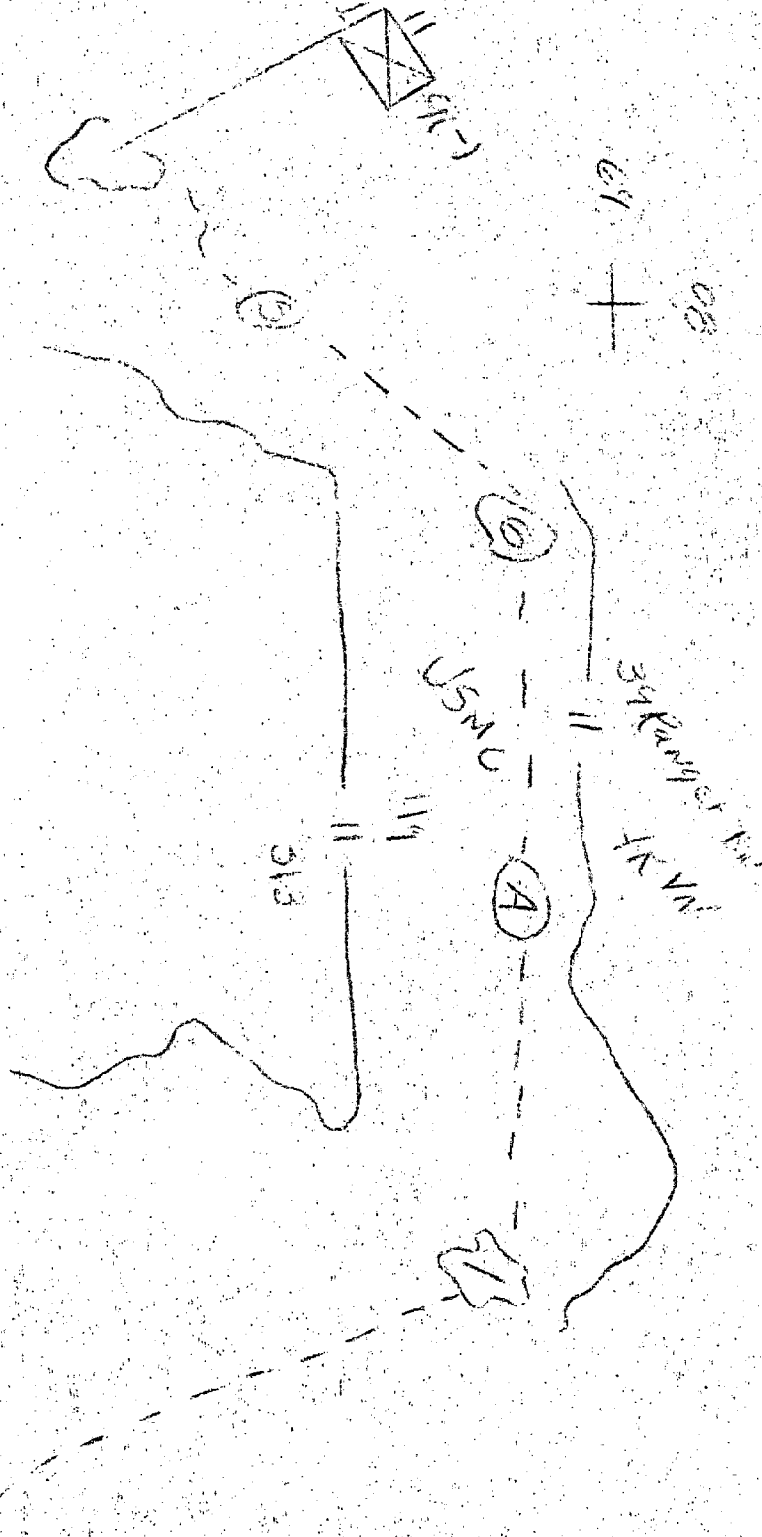
Ref: Map: Vietnam 1:50,000 AMS, Series
No 17014, Sheets 6342I and 6442IV

Time Zone: X

Concept of Operation Overlay
(4 March 1967) Period I

Prairie II

(+)



UNCLASSIFIED

ENCLOSURE 2

UNCLASSIFIED

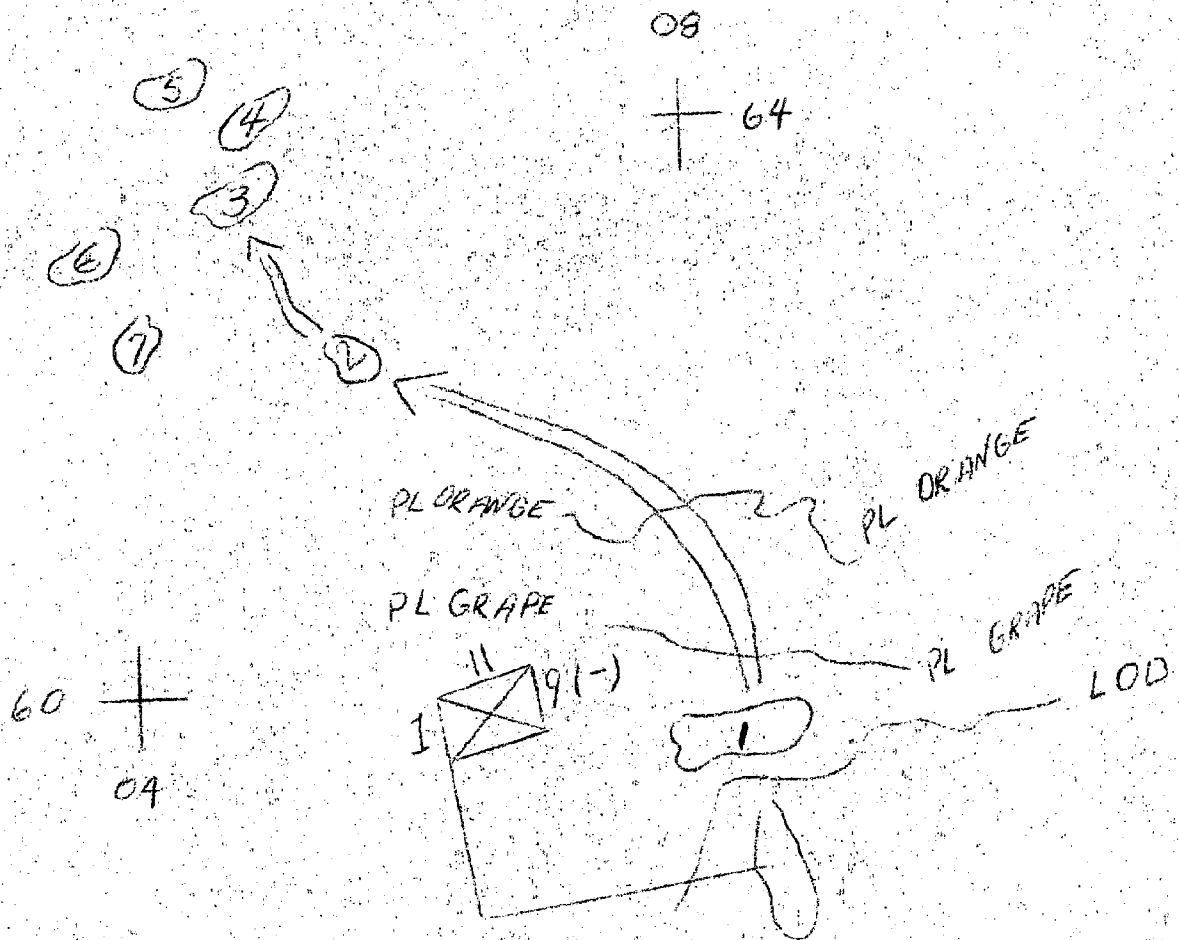
1/9, Mar 67

PRAIRIE II

Concept of Operation Summary
Period III

Ref: (a) Maps: Vietnam 1:50,000 106,
Nations 17014, Sheet 65421

Time Zone: H



ENCLOSURE 3

UNCLASSIFIED

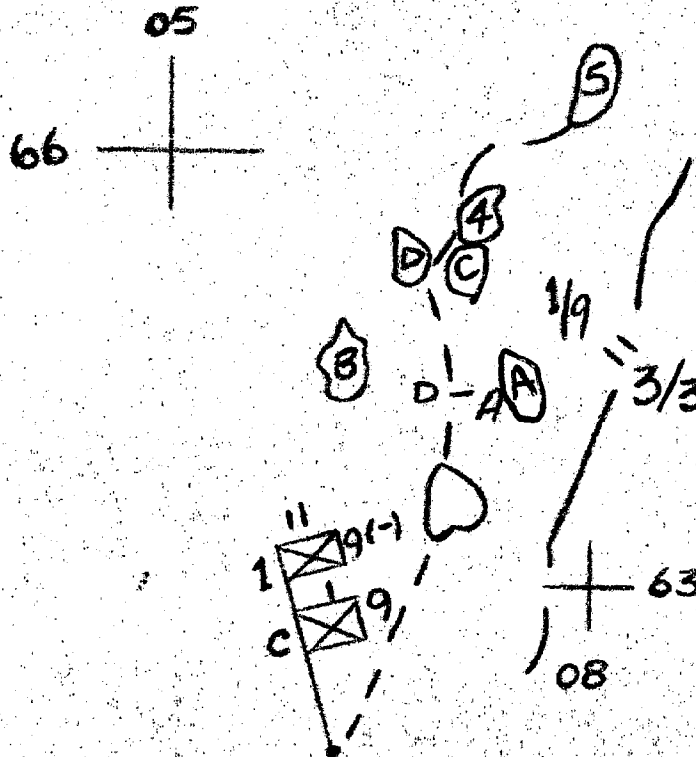
UNCLASSIFIED

Ref: (a) Maps: Vietnam 1:50,000 AMS, Series
No L7014, Sheets 6342I and 6442IV

Concept of Operation Overlay for
Prairie II, Period I

2 MAR 1967

Time Zone: H



UNCLASSIFIED

ENCLOSURE 1

(4)

HEADQUARTERS
1st Battalion, 9th Marines
3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF
FPO San Francisco 96602

UNCLASSIFIED

3/RCM/tjl
003480
9 Apr 67

SER NO 0012-67

00109-67

2 of 15

From: Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines
To: Commanding General, 3rd Marine Division
Via: Commanding Officer, 3rd Marine Regiment

Subj: Prairie III, After Action Report

Ref: (a) Maps: Vietnam 1:50,000 AMS, Series L7014, Sheets 6342I
and 6442IV

Encl: ✓(1) Operations Overlay I
✓(2) Operations Overlay II

1. Code Name. Prairie III
2. Dates of Operation. 190001H March 1967 to 031735H April 1967
3. Location. Quan Cam Lo, Quan Gio Linh, Quan Trieu Phong
4. Task Organization.

1st Battalion, 9th Marines

Maj FULHAM

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| H&S Co (-)(Rein) | (19 Mar-28 Mar) | Lt THOMSEN |
| InfTm, Btry "D", 2nd Bn, 12th Mar | (28 Mar- 3 Apr) | Capt HUTCHINSON |
| Det, 4th Plt, Co "B", 3rd Engr Bn | | |

Company "A" (-)(Rein)

| | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| (19 Mar-24 Mar) | Capt FESTA |
| (25 Mar- 3 Apr) | Capt SLATER |

Co "A"
FoTm, Btry "D", 2nd Bn, 12th Mar
Det, 4th Plt, Co "B", 3rd Engr Bn
Det, H&S Co
FAC Tm
FO Tm, 81mm Mortar Plt
Det, Med Plt
Det, Comm Plt

UNCLASSIFIED

1/9
a/a, PRAIRIE III

19 MAR-3 APR 67

003480
9 Apr 67Company "C" (-)(Rein)(1 Mar-25 Mar) Capt CURD
(26 Mar-31 Mar) Capt REED

Co "C"

Det, 4th Plt, Co "B", 3rd Engr Bn
FO Tm Btry "D", 2nd Bn, 12th Mar
Det, H&S Co
FO Tm, 81mm Mortar Plt
Det, Med Plt
Det, Comm PltCompany "D" (-)(Rein)(1 Mar-8 Mar) Capt KEYS
(9 Mar-31 Mar) Capt SHAW

Co "D"

Det, 4th Plt, Co "B", 3rd Engr Bn
Det, H&S Co
FO Tm, 81mm Mortar Plt
Det, Med Plt
Det, Comm Plt5. Supporting Forces.

a. Artillery. Artillery was used during this period on targets of opportunity, counter mortar fires, prep fires, reconnaissance by fire, grid square saturations and H&I fires. -

Artillery was used in prep fires quit extensively. It was determined that the forward observers could obtain better results on a prep fire if they would first fire the prearranged fires then work over specific areas with adjusted fire missions.

Reconnaissance by fire was used during this period with satisfactory results while moving through close terrain where observation was very poor.

Counter mortar fires were good once the enemy mortar positions were located. Once the mortar fire was suppressed, battery fire for effects were fired on avenues of approach and other likely mortar positions throughout the night to inhibit further mortar attacks.

Artillery fires from "K" Btry, 4th Bn, 12th Marines were brought within 100 meters of friendly units who were in close contact with the enemy in order to suppress mortar and machine gun fire.

A total of 109 combat missions were fired during this reporting period. Artillery fired a total of 5694 rounds of 155mm and 105mm ammunition. This count does not include ammo expenditure on H&I fires and grid square saturations.

b. Armor. Armor consisting of four M-48 tanks, four M-42 twin 40 vehicles and two M-50 Ontos were utilized on 22 March while the battalion was required to move rapidly along a road north of the Cam Lo Bridge. On 23 March the armor was returned when the battalion arrived at its designated position. On 24 March four M-48's and one tank (Flame) were requested and

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
9 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

utilized in an infantry tank attack on Phu An. In attacks the previous day on Phu An the enemy had been well dug in with machine gun emplacements. When the armor was used in the assault no enemy forces were encountered. Whether this was due to extensive artillery and air preps, tactics of the NVA or the effectiveness of armor is unknown. One tank hit an anti-tank mine and lost one tread during the attack. This was repaired. The armor was to go in direct support of the 3rd Bn, 3rd Marines on 25 March, but enroute another tank hit a mine although the route had been swept by engineer teams. Because of the difficulty the sweep team had in locating the mines (believed to be non-metallic), the large number (total of 5 encountered in 800 yds) and the channelization caused by the terrain, the tanks were sent to the rear. If the enemy had elected to defend Phu An as done previously it is felt that the shock action and firepower provided by the tanks would have been effective. The tanks were used to recon by fire during the assault.

c. Air. During Prairie III helicopters were used for resupply and to transport a number of replacements. Seven medevacs were made which carried a total of 93 marine casualties. On the night of 19 March 1967 there were 38 marine casualties these casualties were not evacuated until 20 March due to the inability of pilots to get into the landing zone. Inclement weather played only a part in the aborted attempt to extract the casualties from the combat zone. These casualties were evacuated just prior to noon on 20 March. This was done despite the regimental 14 recommendation, to not launch the helicopters because of adverse weather (The helicopter pilots who came in despite the weather did an outstanding job of evacuating the casualties).

Medevacs ran on a semi-continual basis from 1400 to 2230 on 24 March. These medevacs were efficiently executed.

Fixed wing aircraft were used in direct air support of the battalion on 24 and 25 March. They were controlled by the AO and coordinated by the battalion FAC. A total of 2 F-8, 6 A-4, and 4 F-4B aircraft expended 4650 rounds of 20mm cannon ammunition, 8 Zuni Rockets, 114 2.75 rockets, 35 500 pound cannisters of napalm, and 24 250 pound bombs.

6. Intelligence. On Operation Prairie III the battalion expected to encounter elements of the 324 B Division, probably battalion sized, from the 812th Regiment. On 17 March this information was rated A-2 by 3rd Marine Division G-2. Harassing mortar fire with occasional small arms engagements were expected to comprise most of any enemy contact. Contact was expected to come from the northwest and increase as the battalion moved in that direction.

Contact, when the operation began, was less than anticipated. Only one mortar attack disturbed the conduct of activities in the planned area of operations.

The battalion was moved east on the 23rd to a position from where a northerly search was to be made. The only intelligence available was past experience of the battalion in the area. Ambushes of varying size were

UNCLASSIFIED

⑤

003480
9 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

expected. They were encountered. Two reinforced NVA companies executed two highly successful minuet ambushes. They occurred in the vicinity of the village of Phu An. The NVA appeared to have been well rehearsed and were extremely well dug in. Only their withdraw was somewhat sloppy in execution.

Terrain in the area of operations was of two types. The first consisted of rolling foot hills which extended into steep mountainous terrain. Almost without exception dense undergrowth impeded movement and limited helizones. Tracked vehicles would have been difficult to employ at best and nearly impossible to use for the most part. In the village area around Phu An dense quadrangular tree lines were an obstacle to both movement and sight. They provided excellent cover and concealment to a defending enemy. LZ's were difficult to find and all tracked vehicles were canalized onto trails. Commanding terrain features in the village area were non-existent due to the lack of visibility in the areas.

The weather for the entire operation was excellent. It should have presented no problem to air support and did not present any problems to ground units.

Of notable intelligence value was the discovery of a NVA rocket launch site near YD 073617. There were 5 to 7 positions, having 10 to 15 rocket pads each, stretching over approximately 100 meters length. Each firing position was a shallow hole approximately 2 X 2 X 4 feet. Two stakes in front were used to support the shoulder of the rocket round and three in back were used as a back stop (The stakes were used to support the round itself). Numerous BA-30's were found in the area believed to be used to electrically launch the rocket. Four rocket rounds were also at the site.

No psychological operations were conducted on this operation.

7. Mission. From battalion position in the vicinity of objective #3 (enclosure #1) the battalion was to conduct a detailed search of the hill complex formed by objectives 4, 5, and 6 and "Helicopter Valley" vicinity of GS YD 0364. An additional mission to search "Mutter Valley" and the area between YD 075605 and 051605 was assigned. Upon completion of the aforementioned missions the battalion established a new position and concomitant mission to attack to the north and to seize objectives "A" and "B" (Enclosure 2 operation overlay II). The battalion was to be prepared to continue the attack to the north or east. Search and destroy operations were to be carried out in the ZOA and patrol activities to the southwest. The final mission for the battalion was to move to Camp Carroll and assume duty as base defense battalion.

8. Concept of Operation. From a CP established YD 046636 at objective #3 the battalion (-) was to conduct aggressive patrolling to objectives 4, 5, 6, (enclosure #1) and in "Helicopter Valley" (vicinity of GS YD 0564). In "Mutter Valley" one company was to conduct a detailed search of GS YD 0462 and one half of GS YD 0461 and one company was to conduct detailed search of the area south of the stream in GS YD 0561 and YD 0661. The battalion was then to be transported by motor convoy to the vicinity of the Cam Lo Bridge YD 148604. The battalion was to advance in a column

UNCLASSIFIED

5

003480

9 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

of companies to objective #1 (enclosure #2) and on order to continue the attack to objective #2. The lead company was to continue the attack to objective "A" and the second company to attack objective "B". Both companies were to be prepared to continue the attack north or east and the third company was to be prepared to take the mission of either company. Maximum use of supporting arms was planned for all phases of the operation both to cover movement of the battalions elements and to interdict enemy lines of communication.

9. Execution. On 18 March the battalion (-) was in position at YD 046636 engaged in Operation Prairie II. Word was received that Prairie II would end 182400H March 1967 and Prairie III would begin at 190001 H March 1967. The battalion (-) began Prairie III from its position in vicinity of YD 046636. Company "D" made a search and destroy sweep to the northwest of objective #5 (enclosure #1) Company "C" conducted a reconnaissance patrol to and around objective #5 and provided cover by fire for Company "D". At 1325 Company "C" found a well developed bunker system at YD 043644. There was no contact until 1935 when the battalion (-) position received 90 rounds of 82mm mortar fire. The barrage lasted approximately 25 minutes and resulted in 35 marine WIA and 6 KIA. The battalion remained in position, conducted aggressive ambush and patrol activities but no further contact was made. Artillery was called on the suspected NVA positions and H&I fires were directed in the area during the night. The casualties were medevaced on the late morning of 20 March. On 20 March Company "A" made a reconnaissance of objective #6. No contact was made. In the afternoon of 20 March the battalion (-) moved by tactical march to the vicinity of YD 053620. A diversionary action was initiated when establishing the bivouac site by moving the battalion (-) past the bivouac site just prior to dark and then returning to the position under cover of darkness. This maneuver was thought necessary since another Marine Battalion used the position on the previous night and the position was exposed to possible enemy observation from high ground on three sides of the position. Normal night activities, ambushes and patrols were carried out without incident. On 21 March the battalion (-) moved from its position to the assembly area at YD 086589. An extensive search and clear mission was carried out when the battalion moved to the new position. The battalion (-) set in position, conducted night defense, patrols, and ambush activities without incident. The day of 22 March was spent preparing for forthcoming operations. Local patrols and night activities were conducted without incident. On 23 March local security activities were conducted and no contacts were made. In the late afternoon the battalion conducted a motor march to a assembly point at YD 150606. From this point a tactical foot march, with armor escort, was made to an over night bivouac site in the vicinity of YD 135622. Local security was established with patrols and ambushes. At first light on 24 March Company "A" conducted sweep north with Company "C" and the battalion CP in trace and Company "D" in the rear. Company "A" moved to attack objective #2. Company "A", at YD 134671, while in the attack, received 5,000 rounds of automatic small arms fire, 250 grenades and approximate 140 rounds of 60mm mortar fire from an estimated 120 NVA. The NVA were well deployed and were wearing khaki and gray uniforms with pith helmets. Their positions ran generally east and west along coordinates YD 136671 to

UNCLASSIFIED

003480
9 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

to YD 131671 and north and south along coordinates YD 131671 to YD 133676. The NVA were well organized with mutually supporting positions from which they would not move. Company "A" returned fire with approximately 9,000 rounds 7.62, 350 rounds M-79, 70 hand grenades, 30 Laws, 26 12 guage, 28 rounds 60mm and an artillery and 81mm mission were called. Supporting fires were placed as close to friendly troops as safety would permit. An enveloping maneuver was attempted but heavy cross fire precluded its success. The attacking company was withdrawn after 2 hours of heavy fighting to permit artillery saturation and close air support. The target area was well covered with rockets, bombs, napalm and strafing runs. Company "A" sustained 5 U.S. KIA and 27 WIA while killing 14 NVA by body count and estimating 40 possible NVA KIA. Company "C" continued the attack on objective #2 after artillery saturation and air strikes were secured. At 1700 they were taken under fire at the north end of the village (Phu An) by approximately 15 NVA. The enemy was well dug in and armed with at least five machine guns in cross fire positions. The NVA allowed the point to pass and then fired into backs of the point and took the main body under fire. Company "C" returned fire and called artillery in on enemy positions. One marine KIA and 17 WIA were sustained by Company "C" 2 NVA bodies were counted, 1 NVA was captured and 43 possible kills were estimated from the condition of the battle field. Company "C" returned to YD 133659 to spend the night. The battalion (-) normal night activities were carried out without further contact. On 25 March, after early morning air strikes on Phu An, Company "C" and "D" conducted a sweep through objective #2 without incident. Company "A" provided security for the battalion CP. Tanks were in support of sweep activities and one tank at YD 133673 hit a mine which blew off the track and two road wheels. Thirty-one bodies were found and one NVA WIA was taken prisoner. A large amount of hastily abandoned NVA equipment was found. The enemy losses appeared to be the result of the previous days encounter. The battalion set up in the vicinity of YD 136668. Night defense, ambushes and patrols were conducted all without contact. On the morning of 26 March Company "D" moved towards objective "A" with Company "C" in trace. Both companies moved through the objective without incident. Four bodies were found at YD 134674. All of the bodies were clothed in NVA uniforms and had apparent gunshot wounds. The battalion CP and Company "A" remained at YD 136668 while Company "C" and "D" stayed at objective "A" throughout the night. Extensive night activities were conducted at both sites but no contacts were made. On 27 March contact was made when a tank hit a mine at YD 134674. No casualties resulted, however, a track was blown off. Patrol activities to the north were conducted by Company "C". The battalion moved to the vicinity of YD 132655. While moving to the new position three NVA bodies, all in uniform, were found at YD 131676. Normal night activities were carried out with no incidents. On 28 March the battalion conducted a tactical motor march to Camp Carroll. There the battalion was used to defend the perimeter of the combat base. Patrol and ambush activities, both day and night, were conducted in connection with base defense in the period from 28 March to 3 April. The battalion also provided a company for rough rider and platoons for bridge security. During the period at Camp Carroll, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines controlled the operation of the perimeter, filed all reports and kept journals covering the 1st Bn, 9th Marines activities while at Camp Carroll. On 3 April the battalion entrucked for transportation to Dong Ha and chopped opcon to 3rd Marine

UNCLASSIFIED

5

003480
9 Apr 67

UNCLASSIFIED

Division Forward at 131200H April 1967. The battalion was further transported to the Chincok area and chopped upon to the 4th Marines at 031735H April 1967 which terminated 1/9 activities in Prairie III.

10. Results.

- a. USMC KIA 13
USMC WIA 103

There were no equipment or material losses by USMC units.

- b. NVA KIA confirmed - 36
NVA KIA possible - 43

All areas of air strikes were searched.

c. Equipment Losses NVA.

- 1 Chi-Com Machine gun
- 1 Anti-tank weapon
- 20 60mm Mortar rounds
- 49 Chi-Com Grenades
- 1 Russian Rifle
- 12 Sub-machine guns (6, AK-47's)
- 60mm Mortar fuses (6 boxes)
- 6 60mm Mortar primers
- 1 Russian Anti-tank rocket
- 1 Chi-Com Carbine
- 2 Magazines for Sub-machine gun
- 4 82mm Mortar rounds
- 400 rounds Machine gun ammo
- 500 7.62 rounds
- 4 rounds 82mm RR ammo

11. Administrative Matters.

a. At the onset of Prairie III the battalion was deployed in Operation Prairie II with a prescribed load of one day of Class I, a BA of Class V and combat essential Class II. Resupply was by helicopter and motor transport from the LSA. Weather did not hinder resupply by air.

b. Maintenance. Nothing significant

c. Casualties were treated by the battalion medical officer or corpsman in the field and medevaced as rapidly as possible by helicopter.

d. Motor transportation for the battalion motor marches and for resupply was conducted without serious incident.

e. Communications. Nothing significant

UNCLASSIFIED

SECRET003480
9 Apr 67

f. Medical evaluation. The battalion medical officer was not present in the field during the entire period reported on. However, his presence was extremely valuable when large numbers of casualties were encountered in a brief time period. The doctor was able to aid many of the wounded who could not be immediately evacuated. Non battle casualties due to heat continued to be a problem. It is felt that a more heedful use of salt tablets will lessen this problem.

12. Special Equipment and Techniques. Nothing significant

13. Commanders Analysis. In this period of encounter with the NVA forces the action at the village of Phu An typified the tenacity and demonstrated the ~~defensive capabilities~~ of the enemy. The village was not known to be fortified or defended and had been evacuated by the civilian populace. Artillery prep fires were conducted but adverse weather precluded any air prep. A marine company in the attack recieved a large volume of well directed small arms fire and grenades from well placed mutually supporting positions. The enemy withheld all fire until the marines were within 25 meters of NVA machine gun implacements. As the battle progressed it became evident that because of the close proximity of friendly troops and the loss of direct observation due to hedgerows, the unit would have to withdraw to permit maximum utilization of supporting arms. When the unit attempted to withdraw the NVA fired pre-registered mortar barrages on all routes of egress and inflicted numerous casualties on the marines. It would appear that this action elucidates the defensive posture and planning of NVA forces in this type of situation. During actions involving disengagement by withdrawal all counter mortar fire precautions should be taken including avoidance of obvious routes of egress

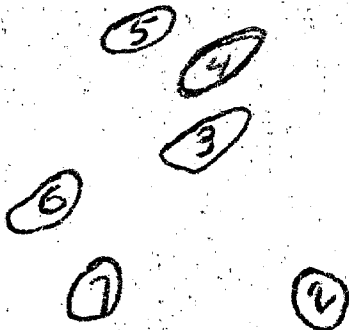
Other contacts in this action were of less significance than the battle at Phu An. However, the enemy appeared to be uniformly proficient although less effective in these contacts.


F. D. MITCHELL
By Direction

1/9, Mar 67

SECRET

Operations Overlay



08
+ 64

60
+
04

By Command of D. J. FULHAM

F. D. Mitchell Jr.

F. D. MITCHELL JR
Lieutenant, U. S. Marine Corps
Assistant S-3

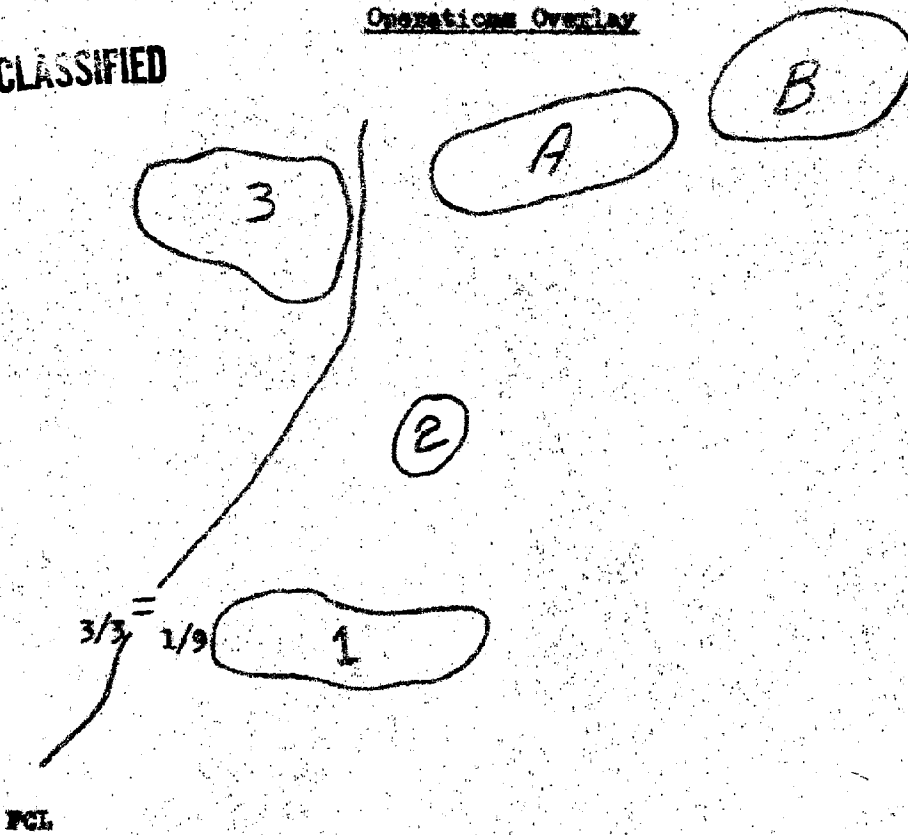
Enclosure (1)

⑤

1/9, Mar 67

UNCLASSIFIED

Operations Overlay



+ 65
19

By Command of D. J. FULHAM

F. D. Mitchell Jr.

F. D. MITCHELL JR.
Lieutenant, U. S. Marine Corps
Assistant S-3

UNCLASSIFIED
Enclosure (2)

(5)