

30 MARDIV S&C FILE
BT# 193769

HEADQUARTERS
2d Battalion, 12th Marines
3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF
FPO San Francisco 96602

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SER:003A16069
1 June 1969

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IS REMOVED

428869
From: Commanding Officer
To: Commandant of the Marine Corps (Code A03D)
Via: (1) Commanding General, 3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF
(2) Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force
(3) Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific

Subj: Command Chronology for period 1 May to 31 May 1969

Ref: (a) MCO 5750.2A
(b) FMFPACO 5750.8A

Encl: ✓(1) 2d Battalion, 12th Marines Command Chronology for the
period 1 May to 31 May 1969

1. Enclosure (1) is submitted in accordance with references (a) and
(b).

C. J. Killeen
C. J. KILLEEN

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COMMAND CHRONOLOGY

1 May--31 May 1969

- PART I ORGANIZATIONAL DATA
- PART II NARRATIVE SUMMARY
- PART III SEQUENTIAL LISTING OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS
- PART IV SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS *(p 10 in main body)*

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PART I

ORGANIZATIONAL DATA1. DESIGNATION

2d Battalion, 12th Marines LTCOL G. J. KILLEEN 050163/0802
 USMC

SUBORDINATE UNITS

Hq. Btry, 2d Battalion, 12th Marines CAPT C. F. NORTON 080524/0802
 USMC

Battery "D", 2d Battalion, 12th Marines CAPT M. R. ROSS 088020/0802
 USMC (1-13 May)

1STLT G. E. HODGE 096071/0802
 USMC (14-31 May)

Battery "E", 2d Battalion, 12th Marines CAPT H. C. BARNUM 084262/0802
 USMC

Battery "F", 2d Battalion, 12th Marines 1STLT R. R. FOULKES 0101626/0802
 USMC (1-16 May)

CAPT K. K. UPDERGROVE 084249/0802
 USMC (17-31 May)

Mortar Battery, 2d Battalion, 12th Marines 1STLT G. E. HODGE 096971/0802
 USMC (1-13 May)

1STLT J. D. MASON 0103654/0802
 USMC (14-31 May)

3d Provisional 155 Towed Battery CAPT T. S. HUTCHINSON 094820/0802
 2d Battalion, 12th Marines USMC

2. LOCATION 1-31 May 1969, RVN

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SER 003416069
1 June 1969

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3. STAFF OFFICERS

Executive Officer

MAJ R. H. LEDET 063172/0802
USMC

S-1

CAPT N. W. CARMEN 096338/0130
USMC

S-2

1STLT J. C. CHASE 0101806/0802
USMCR (1-26 May)

S-3

MAJ E. A. CONDON JR. 072264/0802
USMC

S-4

CAPT C. F. NORTON 080524/0802
USMC

Liaison Officer

MAJ J. D. MCNAMARA 078628/0802
USMC

Ordnance Officer

WO C. L. SERGENT 0105810/2020
USMC

Supply Officer

2NDLT H. J. PETERSON 0106012/3002
USMC

Motor Transportation Officer

1STLT R. R. SIMSON 0104775/3502
USMCR

Communications Officer

1STLT A. S. KYLE 0102647/2502
USMC (1-28 May)

4. AVERAGE MONTHLY STRENGTH

USMC
OFF ENL
47 635

USN
OFF ENL
3 18

3:EAC:je
 SER: 003A16069
 1 June 1969

PART II

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

1. General Overview of All Activities. The primary effort of the battalion in the month of May was devoted to the planning and execution of Operation Apache Snow, 10-31 May 1969. It was a coordinated operation in and near the A Shau Valley conducted by 3d Bde, 101st Airborne Division, 1st and 3d ARVN Regiments and 9th Marines. During the planning phase several liaison visits were conducted at the 101st Division Headquarters at Camp Evans. The operation was conceived as a phased prepositioning of forces along the northern approaches of the A Shau in order to block the escape routes into Laos along the Da Krong road. 2/12 progressively occupied mutually-supporting fire support bases McClintock (YD0430), Gaucho (YD0924), Razor (YD1418), and Erskine (YD1610).

The operation proceeded as planned with a helicopter assault into FSB Erskine on D-Day, 10 May. Btry D and 3d Prov Btry occupied this FSB. A tragic accident occurred in Battery D on 13 May 1969 when a fire ignited the ammo bunker of gun #4. The Battery Commander, Capt M. R. Ross, and the Battery Executive Officer, 1stLt D. C. Nichols were killed by a cook-off. The fire spread and subsequently destroyed the entire battery position. Btry E replaced Btry D the following day and Btry D was re-formed and refitted at the 2d Battalion CP at Dong Ha. By 23 May 1969, Battery D was back in action, in position at Elliot Combat Base.

Apache Snow drew to a close on 31 May and batteries were helilifted to VCB for further displacement into the Da Krong-Ba Long area for subsequent operations. FSB Whisman (XD9733) was assaulted on 31 May, 1969, and by night-fall, Btry E was in position and ready to fire. That same day, Btry F extracted from FSB Razor to VCB and immediately went into position at Calu (YD0145).

A significant event of Apache Snow was a highly successful liaison exchange with the 3d Bde, 101st Abn Div. The battalion S-2, 1stLt J. C. Chase attended the final brief of that Division and immediately thereafter assumed duties in the 1st ARVN Regiment TOC. During the time he was there, numerous reenforcing missions were fired in mutual support of the contiguous units. On 22 May, the Arvn fired counter-battery for 9th Marines. On 26 May, 3d Prov was the only unit able to illuminate FSB Bradley when it was attacked by sappers. Lt Chase was wounded in this action, as was his Radio Operator, PFC L. Hensley, and both were medevaced to CONUS.

A total of 2,024 missions were fired by 2/12 in May--355 observed and 1,669 unobserved. 29,640 rounds were fired--23,173 105mm, 2,021 4.2", and 4,446 155mm.

2. Command Relations. Throughout the period, 2d Battalion, 12th Marines was under the operational and administrative control of the 12th Marines.

3. Mission Assigned. Direct support of 9th Marine Regiment.

3:EAC:je
SER:003A16069
1 June 1969

4. Intelligence. The primary source of intelligence continued to be derived from information supplied by S-2, 9th Marines and S-2, 12th Marines. Close, daily liaison with the 9th Marines was executed in order to maintain a clear idea of the enemy situation. 12th Mar S-2 provided a detailed target listing for possible hostile artillery during Operation Apache Snow. For the operation, 10X10 grid sheets were placed in folders and all past target history recorded on the map and the right hand side of the folder. A master target list was put in a separate folder and all information was collected as it became available. The pattern in certain areas became clear and on 3 May an AO was directed to grid YD0802 for visual and photo reconnaissance. Upon developing the film, a 122mm gun was discovered. Air strikes were run the following day and the gun was destroyed.

5. Operations. Operation Apache Snow was conducted from 10 May-31 May.

6. Results of Operation.

a. Casualties inflicted on the enemy by artillery fire. 12 KIA's (Confirmed), and 22 Probable KIA/WIA.

b. Casualties sustained. 5 WIA

c. Enemy equipment, etc. 32 Bunkers destroyed, 1 Bunker damaged, 4 Structures destroyed, 2 Structures damaged, 1 Truck destroyed, 1 Mortar tube destroyed, 1 50. cal position destroyed, 1 Bridge damaged and 75 secondary explosions.

7. Supporting Arms. Paragraphs 1 through 6 above.

8. Logistics. The period 1-7 May was relatively quiet with no significant events. D, F, and Mortar Battery were road-bound and experienced no difficulties in resupply. The road-bound status did put the Motor Transport to a test. Road-bound batteries were limited to the use of two M35 and M151 vehicles, while the battalion moved large quantities of Class V through the use of a highboy trailer. Battery E was occupying FSB Fuller and was resupplied by helicopter. This battalion was also charged with Class V resupply of Battery "C", 6th of the 33rd U.S. Artillery located on FSB Cates. Battery F and Mortar Battery drew Class V from the Vandegrift ASP. Battery F and C/6/33 were resupplied with Class V from the Quang Tri LSA. Class I, II, III and IV resupply for these two units were lifted from the interim Vandegrift LSA. All resupply was accomplished with little difficulty and all resupply commitments were met.

Operation Apache Snow commenced on 10 May. Helicopter resupply was to be accomplished from two Logistic Support Areas. Heavy lifts (CH53) to include all Class V would operate from LSA Quang Tri. All other resupply would originate from Vandegrift Combat Base. Tactical helicopter lifts were coordinated

3:EAC:je
 SER:003A16069
 1 June 1969

by the S-3. Administrative resupply of all items was coordinated by the S-4. Requests for resupply of all items less Class V were processed through the logistics crew at Vandegrift Combat Base LSA lead by SSGT J. F. LAWTON. Class V resupply was staged at Quang Tri LSA initially by SGT R. P. SHAW and at Camp Evans LSA when operations commenced there on 13 May 1969, under supervision of WO G. L. SUGENT. As of that date, all Class V for all batteries for the remainder of "Apache Snow" was lifted from LZ Cheyenne at Camp Evans. MCB 10 hosted the LSA crew at Evans and among the many favors performed for 2d Battalion was the construction of an insulated ice carrier (which was filled with ice they provided), used to transport cold beer to Battery E and 3d Prov.

One of the frustrating problems of resupply during "Apache Snow" was the lack of helicopters. The worst days afforded no aircraft at all. Normal aircraft available for ammunition lifts was one CH47 from Camp Evans which was allocated for ten lifts per day from 17-22 May. Other resupply was equally hampered due to the non-availability of aircraft. One 105 Howitzer was staged at the Quang Tri LSA for five days before being lifted out. A PU668 FADAC generator was on the Quang Tri LSA for eight days waiting for lift-out. It was finally retrieved and sent to VCB via road and lifted. It was fortunate that the initial lifts on occupation were large enough to compensate for the sparse resupply of the above mentioned six day period. On 21 May, 3d Prov Battery was down to 186 HE rounds, which was dangerously low, and reduced the effectiveness of that unit. The lift statistics were not impressive for May; 113 separate lifts were delivered compared to 408 requested (Class V only). All Class V lifts resumed from VCB on 28 May which allowed the battalion to close the Camp Evans operation on 29 May. Back-up operations were assigned to the Quang Tri LSA.

A fire and resulting series of explosions on 13 May 1969 destroyed six howitzers of Battery D on FSB Erskine. Over sixty individual and crew-served weapons, at least nine radios and a large amount of personal and individual equipment were also destroyed. By 1500 on 14 May, a request was received asking for immediate resupply of 49 M16 rifles. The request was answered and by 1900 that same day 49 rifles were in the hands of Battery D and 3d Prov Battery on FSB Erskine. Delta Battery was extracted from Erskine on 15 May. On that same day, four float Howitzers were picked up from FLSG-B. By 17 May, six Howitzers were in the Dong Ha 2d Battalion CP. By 19 May the Battery had been refitted with enough ordnance and communication equipment to be operational. The remainder of short items were put on requisition. The replacement of essential equipment was accomplished through redistribution of the battalion's assets, float replacements, priority walk-through requisitions, and a trip to the self-service facility at Da Nang. On 20 May, Battery D was back in action.

Prior operations encountered tremendous difficulty in securing Class IV, especially PSP matting. Approximately one hundred and fifty sheets of matting were obtained in the early planning of "Apache Snow" to eliminate and prevent shortages. None occurred during "Apache Snow".

3:EAC:je
SER:003A16069
1 June 1969

9. Communications. The Communications Platoon supported the Battalion CP at both VCB and FSB RAZOR, as well as maintaining stations at VCB, Dong Ha, Quang Tri, and Camp Evans.

Prior to Operation Apache Snow, a complete operational check of all equipment was accomplished, and the Division GEO conducted a courtesy inspection of the Dong Ha Tech Shop operations and records. As a result of this inspection, some minor repairs that had previously been accomplished at the Tech Shop were determined to be 3rd echelon repairs, and have been discontinued. These included replacement of A9 modules, push-to-talk switch covers on TA-312's and TA-1's, and replacement cords on TA-1's.

On 8 May the Battalion FDC advance party moved from VCB to FSB RAZOR and initially satellited on the Btry F FDC, thus reducing the amount of communications equipment required for continuous centralized battalion control during displacement of the FDC. On 9 May the remainder of the Battalion FDC displaced to Razor. A comm bunker was constructed adjacent to the FDC bunker to house the switchboard, the Admin/Command net, and to store batteries and equipment.

Four wire lines were laid to the 9th Marines CP on Razor, one hot line to the FSCC, one spare, and two lines for two radio relay channels using the MRC-62. An AN/VCC-2 was going to be put into operation, with three radio relay channels assigned to 2/12, but the VCC-2 went down after one day, and the MRC-62, with two channels for 2/12, was used for the remainder of the operation.

Three portable voice encryption systems were used on Apache Snow--one with the 105mm battery on each FSB, and one at the CP. Considerable difficulty was experienced initially in establishing a covered shot with the 12th Marines' FDC at Dong Ha. This problem was eventually traced to several cases of bad batteries. No one particular lot was faulty. As an interim attempt to get the covered shot up, an RT/524 with a KYB-6 and power converter was set up for use with the PU866 FADAC generator; however power fluctuations which are within limits for the M18 FADAC caused the encryption set to zeroize. The problem was solved with a resupply of fresh batteries.

Communications throughout the operation were generally good except as noted, but lower band frequencies work much better than upper band frequencies. Most problems occur in the 52.00 to 56.00 range, and one assigned frequency above that range (72.55) could be used only about 20% of the time, during the coolest part of the day.

The communications platoon advanced party left FSB Razor on 29 May, arrived at VCB and set up radio and wire communications with all stations. The party that remained at FSB Razor returned to VCB the following day, 30 May, and Operation Apache Snow was terminated.

Battery D was refitted with communications equipment that had been destroyed during a fire on FSB Erskine on 13 May. This was completed by 21 May.

10. Equipment: During this month, the supply account stood an inspection by the Field Supply Analysis Office. As the name implies, this was strictly an analysis type inspection and, as such, no grade on the status of the account

3:EAC:je
SER: 003416069
1 June 1969

was given. However, the debriefing by the FSAO team was attended by the Division Supply Officer and he commented afterwards that he was pleased by the outcome of the inspection. There were discrepancies found, but these were minor and will be corrected at the earliest possible date.

Utilities continue to be a problem area. The primary reason for this is the fact that the recovery on this item has been practically nil. This situation will be improved with implementation of a recovery program initiated at completion of Apache Snow.

On the 13th of this month, Delta Battery suffered approximately 95% loss of equipment due to a fire. Through the combined efforts of S-4 and battalion supply, the battery was resupplied and ready to go back to the field in 10 days. This included a complete reissue of 782 gear, utilities, communication gear, and ordnance items.

11. Civic Action. During the month of May our Civil Affairs program was once again centered on the hamlet of Thiet Trang. Medcaps were held on 3 May and 10 May with the following number of civilians treated: 46 children, 6 adult males, and 4 adult females. Because of a priority tactical commitment to resupply one of the batteries in our battalion, the Civil Affairs Officer was not able to hold his Saturday Medcap on 17 May. There were two other Medcaps held this month on 24 and 31 May.

The latest project for Thiet Trang has been the procurement of clay tiles and lumber for the roof of the school there. Also the hamlet chief has requested that we procure for him some school kits. These will be made available through G-5.

12. Personnel and Administration.

(1) Strength and Shortages. The battalion was at 97% manning level strength for officers and 98% of manning level strength for enlisted. The present manning level strength of all batteries is approximately 88% of T/O strength. The only present significant shortage is personnel in the grade of Sergeant in MOS 0811. In most cases Corporals and Lance Corporals are section chiefs.

(2) R&R. Forty-three men of this battalion participated in out of Country R&R during May. No personnel were sent on in-country R&R.

(3) Promotions. One man was promoted to Master Sergeant during May. There were 56 promotions to the grade of Corporal and sixteen promotions to the grade of Lance Corporal during May.

(4) Award Recommendations. Five personnel who died fighting the ammunition fire at FSB Erskine were recommended for the Silver Star. A total of 19 end of tour award recommendations were forwarded during May, these included

3:ELC:je
SER:003A16069
1 June 1969

one Bronze Star, 5 Navy Commendation Medals, and 13 Navy Achievement Medals. Recent changes of policy at higher headquarters concerning award recommendations have caused the return of many previously submitted awards, and resubmission of some.

(5) Casualty Reporting. Reporting of casualties evacuated from forward areas continues to be a problem. Where a casualty goes depends on the extent of his wound, where the hospital ship is positioned, whether delivered by Marine or Army helicopters and in some cases, weather conditions. Hence, in many cases, it is necessary to find the casualty to ensure correct reporting. Because of the location of Operation Apache Snow and support by Army helicopters many of the medevacs were delivered to Army hospitals.

(6) General Administration. A Regimental inspection of administration was conducted during April. All batteries and the Battalion S-1 were considered satisfactory with discrepancies.

(7) Legal. During April, a total of 9 Battery Commanders office hours were held and 4 personnel were brought Battalion Commanders office hours. One recommendation for undesirable discharge and two recommendations for unsuitability discharge were forwarded to higher authority.

13. Training. The following number of personnel attended formal schools;

NCO leadership School-2
SNCO leadership School-2
Embarkation School-1
KY-38 Comm Crypto School-1
Cable Splicing School-1

A total of 3 officers attended an informal Fire Direction Officers course, given by 12th Marines.

PART III

SEQUENTIAL LISTING OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

02 MAY Chopped OPCON of E/2/12 to 1/12
02 MAY Chopped OPCON of W/2/12 to 1/12

03 MAY D/2/12 helilifted from VCB to FSB GAUCHO
03 MAY Assumed OPCON of A/1/12 at FSB MCCLINTOCK
03 MAY Assumed OPCON of 2d Provisional 155 Towed Battery at FSB MCCLINTOCK

04 MAY F/2/12 helilifted from VCB to FSB MCCLINTOCK

3:EAC:je
SER:003A16069
1 June 1969

04 MAY Chopped OPCON of A/1/12
05 MAY Assumed OPCON of W/2/12 at VCB
07 MAY F/2/12 helilifted from FSB MCCLINTOCK to FSB RAZOR
08 MAY Command Group helilifted from VCB to FSB RAZOR
08 MAY W/2/12 helilifted from VCB to FSB RAZOR
10 MAY D/2/12 helilifted from FSB GAUCHO to FSB ERSKINE
11 MAY Assumed OPCON of 3d Provisional 155 Towed Battery at FSB ERSKINE
13 MAY D/2/12 (Out of action), helilifted to Dong Ha
14 MAY W/2/12 Chopped OPCON to 3/12 and helilifted to VCB
14 MAY 2d Prov helilifted from FSB ERSKINE to FSB RAZOR
16 MAY Assumed OPCON of E/2/12 Btry was helilifted to FSB ERSKINE
22 MAY Assumed OPCON of W/2/12, helilifted to FSB FILE
28 MAY 3d Prov helilifted from FSB ERSKINE to CALU
28 MAY D/2/12 helilifted to FSB SHEPPARD
29 MAY Chopped OPCON of 2d Provisional 155 Towed Battery
30 MAY Command Group helilifted from FSB RAZOR to VCB
30 MAY F/2/12 helilifted from FSB RAZOR to CALU

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SER:003416069
1 June 1969

PART IV

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

1. Copies of Staff Journal. None
2. Originated messages. N/A
3. Copies of Op orders. None
- ✓ *Fire Mission Extracts (p 11-12)*
4. After Action-1 copy of Dewey Canyon, ~~1-1-1~~
5. Other. N/A

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3:EAC:je
 SER:003416069
 1 June 1969

PART ^{TP}~~III~~

FIRE MISSION EXTRACTS FROM 1 MAY TO 31 MAY

PERIOD 312300 to 012300

1845 FM, D/2/12 (035535), Enemy movement, Grasshopper 24
 EOM 1930, 42 HEQ, 2 WP, 3 Secondaries, BX 5804

PERIOD 032300 to 042300

1128 FM, Real Estate (08252235), Enemy bunker complex, Noonwatch H
 EOM 1205, 13 HEQ&D, 2 WP, 1 Secondary, 4 Bunkers destroyed, BX 5985

PERIOD 042300 to 052300

1430 FM, Cashbox (848440), Bunker complex, Noonwatch
 EOM 1520, 983 HEQ&D, 23 WP, 65 Secondaries, 18 Bunkers, 1 KIA,
 BX 6084

1410 FM, F/2/12 (082224), Suspected enemy hooche, Speeding Home 24
 EOM 1608, 24 HEQ, 2 WP, 1 Hootch destroyed, BX 6083

PERIOD 082300 to 092300

0920 FM, W/2/12 (125230), Trails and hooches, Smitty B
 EOM 1735, 40 HEQ&D, 8 WP, 1 Hooch damaged, BX 0093

PERIOD 092300 to 102300

0755 FM, F/2/12 (225143), 40 NVA in the open, Smitty Charlie
 EOM 0840, 80 HEQ, 2 WP, 7 KIA, BX 0282

PERIOD 112300 to 122300

1548 FM, D/2/12 (076132), Suspected enemy trails, Heathen Killer W
 EOM 1643, 54 HEQ&D, 8 WP, 1 Hooch damaged, BX 0448

PERIOD 122300 to 132300

1553 FM, 3d Prov (087036), Hooches and bunker complex, Smitty L
 EOM 1645, 20 HEQ&D, 2 WP, 1 Hooch destroyed, BX 0597

1824 FM, F/2/12 (168087), Prep fire, Coconut Candy 62
 EOM 1956, 40 HEQ&D, 2 WP, 2 Bunkers destroyed, BX 2604

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3:EAC:je
 SER:003A16069
 1 June 1969

PERIOD 142300 to 152300

1240 FM, 3d Prov (157015), Bunker complex, Heathen Killer K
 EOM 1430, 52 HEQ&VT, 3 Bunkers destroyed, BX 0667

1500 FM, 3d Prov (072018), 2 NVA in the open, Heathen Killer K
 EOM 1615, 35 HEQ, 1 Hooch destroyed, BX 0694

PERIOD 152300 to 162300

1035 FM, F/2/12 (063015), Bunker complex, Heathen Killer
 EOM 1342, 60 HEQ&D, 4 WP, 2 Bunkers destroyed, BX 0727

1443 FM, F/2/12 (084097), NVA and bunkers, Smitty Z
 EOM 1633, 139 HEQ, 2 WP, 3 Bunkers destroyed, BX 0835

PERIOD 162300 to 172300

0943 FM, E/2/12 (163041), Known enemy position, Coconut Candy 24
 EOM 1100, 39 HEQ&D, 1 Bunker damaged, BX 0909

PERIOD 172300 to 182300

1123 FM, F/2/12 (232097), Time on target, Peep Sight
 EOM 1200, 15 HEQ, 12 Probable KIA/WIA, BX 0998

1733 FM, F/2/12 (136107), Active mortars, Coconut Candy 24
 EOM 1755, 80 HEQ, 2 WP, 1 Mortar tube destroyed, BX 1054

PERIOD 182300 to 192300

1027 FM, 3d Prov (15200716), Prep fire, Coconut Candy
 EOM 1132, 20 HEQ, 2 WP, 1 Secondary, 1 Fire, BX 0830

PERIOD 202300 to 212300

0647 FM, 3d Prov (268022), 200 NVA, heavy contact, Heathen Killer 24
 EOM 0746, 66 HEQ, 2 WP, 3 KIA, BX 1282 (Reinforcing mission for ARVN)

0913 FM, F/2/12 (082256), 20 NVA in a stream, Heathen Killer P
 LOM 1008, 100 HEQ&D, 4 WP, 10 Probable KIA/WIA, BX 1284

1550 FM, 3d Prov (128069), Prep fire, Coconut Candy 24
 EOM 1638, 12 HEQ&D, 2 WP, 1 Secondary, BX 1304

3:EAC:je
SER:003416069
1 June 1969

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PERIOD 212300 to 222300

1033 FM, E/2/12 (132004), 4 NVA in the open, Coconut Candy 63
EOM 1114, 75 HEQ, 2 WP, 1 KIA, BX 1384

PERIOD 222300 to 232300

0730 FM, E/2/12 (142028), Bridge, Coconut Candy 63D
EOM 0830, 35 HEQ&D, 2 WP, 1 Bridge damaged, BX 1487

2200 FM, E/2/12 (217034), Enemy truck, Heathen Killer 24
EOM 0013, 50 HEQ, 6 WP, 1 Truck destroyed, 1 Large secondary
BX 1484

PERIOD 242300 to 252300

1343 FM, F/2/12 (223158), NVA in canopy, Coconut Candy 24
EOM 1423, 90 HEQ, 2 WP, 1 Secondary explosion, BX 1686

1420 FM, 3d Prov (110060), 300 NVA, Northtide (TIO target)
EOM 1505, 52 HEQ, 2 WP, 1 Large secondary explosion, BX 1687

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HEADQUARTERS

2d Battalion, 12th Marines
3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF
APO San Francisco 965023:EAC:je
SER: 003415069
5 May 1969From: Commanding Officer
To: Distribution List

Subj: Artillery Report of Operation Dewey Canyon

Enclosure: (1) Artillery Report of Operation Dewey Canyon

1. Enclosure (1) has been prepared:

a. To assist artillerymen to prepare for and execute similar fire support base operations;

b. To provide the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines and its parent regiment, the 12th Marines, an unofficial version of the conduct of the subject operation as viewed by the senior artilleryman on the ground;

c. To present the most significant lessons learned for inclusion into the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines Standing Operating Procedures and for possible use by higher headquarters.

C. J. Killeen
C. J. KILLEEN

5 of 5

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SLR:
5 May 1969ARTILLERY REPORT OF OPERATION DEWEY CANYON

CONTENTS

PART I NARRATIVE SUMMARY AND LESSONS LEARNED

PART II STATISTICAL SUMMARY

PART III COMPOSITE MAP AND SUPPORTING TABS

- ✓ Map, Special Use S.E. Asia 1:100,000, Series I607, Sheets 6341, 6342, 6441, 6442.
- ✓ TAB A Positioning of Artillery at close of Dawson River West.
- ✓ TAB B Positioning of Artillery prior to launching into the new AO.
- ✓ TAB C Positioning of Artillery after "Movement to AO".
- ✓ TAB D Objectives for the final attack.
- ✓ TAB E Positioning of Artillery 13-28 February, and location of 1st 122mm gun destroyed in the operation.
- ✓ TAB F Movement of E to FSB TURNAGE.
- ✓ TAB G Retraction of Artillery

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5 May 1969

INTRODUCTION

Even in its initial stages, OPERATION DEWEY CANYON was different from other more recent 3d Marine Division operations. To be sure, it involved the use of mobile Marine Corps units against sizeable enemy resistance, the deployment of maneuver battalions under the protective fan of artillery on Fire Support Bases, and rifle companies operating independently for extended periods, conducting saturation sweeps and patrolling. None of that was different. What was new was the remoteness of the AO from the nearest friendly tactical forces and from normal resupply sources, the known enemy AAA capability, and the tactics and techniques developed in each phase of the operation to cope with special situations.

The purpose of this report is to assist other artillery commanders who may be tasked with a similar mission and who may be interested in the experiences of the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines--in short, the lessons learned on this operation: good things to be retained, bad things to be discarded, and new things to be implemented, if possible.

For ease of understanding, this report will first divide OPERATION DEWEY CANYON into four phases: the planning phase, the movement to the AO, the main attack, and the retraction. Secondly, an evaluation, to include lessons learned, will be presented. Before getting into the first phase, however, some background information may be of interest.

BACKGROUND

Early in January 1969, several items sparked an active interest in the future DEWEY CANYON AO. First, Route 922 leading from Laos into the A Shau was reopened by the NVA, after having been in disuse for many months. Second, AAA became increasingly evident and active along that road network. High performance aircraft received fire; an A-6 was lost; helicopters and reconnaissance aircraft were being fired at with 12.7mm, 25mm, and 37mm AA weapons. Third, truck traffic on Route 922 in Laos doubled during a short period--at times, truck sightings exceeded 1,000 a day. Fourth, the entry of a large enemy force was evident from the network of heavily-used trails, and from the fact that visual reconnaissance efforts were being contested by small arms fire (as opposed to AAA) from various places throughout the area. In addition, sophisticated wire systems were sighted. Finally, agent reports and other intelligence sources indicated the probable movement of enemy forces back into the area of the DaKrong, for commitment into the mountains west of Hue and southwest of Quang Tri. From there, the enemy would be able to launch attacks

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5 May 1969

on populated areas as far south as Danang with speed and surprise.

Topography and vegetation in the area of this activity varied from extremely rugged triple-canopied mountains, with sharp ravines and complex terrain compartments, to relatively flat lowlands covered with head-high elephant grass. In general, high hill masses on the Laotian border framed the western and southern boundaries of the AO. On the west, CO KA LEUYE, a razorback ridge 13-1400 meters high and about 3500 meters long, loomed above the entire AO. In the south, a series of ridgelines arose out of the DAKRONG Valley and ran in a north-south direction down to the border, reaching a height of about 1000 meters at the border. South of the border in Laos, the ridgelines in the southwest dropped off into an east-west valley, while those in southeast continued to rise into a jumbled mountainous area. At the southeastern corner of the AO on the border was TAM BOI Mountain, 1224 meters high, and 5000 meters north of TAM BOI. Just inside the eastern edge of the AO, was CO A NONG Mountain (commonly known as "Tiger Mountain"), 1228 meters high. Tiger Mountain sat approximately at the head of, and dominated observation into, the A SHAU valley. On the other side of Tiger Mountain from the A SHAU were the headwaters of the DAKRONG River.

Route 922, the object of so much surveillance and interest, approached the RVN border at an angle from the southwest, through the Laotian valleys south of the border, and then curved and ran generally parallel to and south of the border until it reached a point about 4,500 meters west of TAM BOI. There it crossed the border, wandered through the rugged terrain around Tiger Mountain, and finally turned east and south into the A SHAU valley, where it became Route 548. There are a proliferation of alternate routes in the mountainous portion of this route--so many that this area was, and probably always will be, a natural funnel for truck traffic from Laos into the A SHAU despite the rugged terrain and periodic interdiction efforts.

PLANNING

Planning for OPERATION DEWEY CANYON started during DAWSON RIVER WEST. It was decided that it would be a phased operation, and that the initial phase would consist of getting the 9th Marines and supporting units lined up south of VCB so that they could be leapfrogged into the future AO from mutually-supporting Fire Support Bases. If possible, Battery D would be located with the Battalion CP on this operation (each light battery is colocated with the CP, on a rotating basis), and Battery E would occupy the most distant FSB (each light battery also share the "point"). It was anticipated that three new FSB's would be required. These considerations played an important part in determining where the light batteries would be positioned upon retraction from DAWSON RIVER WEST.

The planning phase began in earnest approximately 13 January, the day

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 5 May 1969

after the CP returned to VCB from FSB SMITH. Planning evolved around three principal considerations: weather, the enemy's AAA/mortar/artillery capability, and the remoteness of the future AO.

The weather prediction may be of interest:

"..No significant precipitation will fall, mostly light drizzle and isolated thunderstorms which are at a minimum during the period of the operation. Visibility will be poor during the early morning. Fog and drizzle may reduce visibility but fog should be clear by 0900..!"

Common sense prevailed, however, and planning was based on the probability of bad weather. An alternate forward battalion logistics section was set up at Quang Tri LSA, and 6,200 rounds (5000 105mm and 600 each of 4.2" and 155mm) were drawn and stayed there by 21 January, on the chance that resupply from Quang Tri might be possible if the primary LSA at VCB was socked in. The minimum stockage objective for HE for each light battery at the three forward FSB's was initially set at 3000--4000 higher than for the FSB's closer to VCB. An extra day's supply of class I and III was prescribed (6 versus the normal 5), and the prescribed load of dry cell batteries (10 days) was double that for previous operations.

An additional 3KW Military Standard generator was obtained in order to have a backup power source for FSDAC. Moreover, since a lot of high angle firing was anticipated, an additional FADAC was requested--not only to have a backup computer capability, which is badly needed in any case, but to expedite the computation of data for multiple high-angle missions, and, perhaps most important, to have additional target storage space. It was not available.

Because of the distance between the future AO and all support activities, a relay station was planned on Hill 819. The requirement for this station, for an extra logistics section at Quang Tri, together with the good possibility of liaison requirements with adjacent U.S. Army and ARVN forces, on top of the fact that five radios were in FLSG and would not be available in time, dictated the requirement for additional radios. Seven were obtained from the 12th Marines on a temporary loan basis. Included in the inventory of equipment to be used on this operation were three PRC-77 with KY-38 portable voice encryption units. The planned distribution of these was one per FSB.

To counter the enemy's mortar capability and to provide a registration capability, attachment of an AN/MPQ-4A radar section was requested and approved. The radar would not be displaced forward, however, until our forces were established in the future AO.

The future AO was out of range of all GS artillery except for one 175mm gun position at JACK (GS YD4927), northwest of Hue. Arrangements were made through the 12th Marines to have Battery C, 1st Battalion, 83d Artillery occupy JACK with a GS-R mission. The S-3 of that unit made a liaison visit to the CP at VCB, and attached a liaison team to the 2/12 FDC for the duration of the operation.

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5 May 1969

To enhance the battalion's illumination capability, one searchlight section from the 1st Searchlight Battery would be made available after our forces had arrived in the future AO. It would not arrive until 19 February and tactical considerations would never permit use of its indirect or direct white light illumination; however, its I.R. capability was used extensively once its capabilities and limitations were understood by the resident infantry unit.

In view of the anticipated volume of work involving casualty reports and replacement requirements, in combination with the normal delay of administrative matters that could be expected as long as the battalion CP operated on a FSB in an area as remote as the future AO, a forward administrative section was established at the CP to coordinate administrative matters for the forward elements of the battalion. The remoteness of the future AO and the probability that resupply would be coming from two LSM's also placed a premium on the importance of resupply priorities; consequently, a forward logistics element would also be established at the CP to coordinate ever-changing priorities. This forward Admin/Logistics section was initially manned by one Staff Sergeant 0141 and one Lance Corporal 2311. (The Lance Corporal 2311 would be replaced by a Corporal, and the Corporal by a Sergeant, as the operation progressed. Conversely, the 0141 Staff Sergeant would be replaced by a Private First Class.)

MOVEMENT TO THE AO

The first stage in movement to the future AO was to reopen three old FSB's that stretched southward from VCB. Battery F started the action on 14 January when it rehabilitated and displaced FSB HENDERSON (GS 0841) to support a limited 9th Marines operation in the BA LONG Valley, near CALU. This operation was a natural corollary of the security mission around VCB, which was picked up by the 9th Marines as they retracted in stages from DAWSON RIVER WEST. From the standpoint of facilitating future operations, it was the mandatory first step in getting forces out of VCB and headed south. It should be noted that DAWSON RIVER WEST was still alive at the time; only the day before, Mortar Battery had displaced from VCB to LZ CHARLIE ("FSB BIG HORN II") (GS 8637) southwest of KHE SANH, to provide cover for the orderly retrograde of Battery D and the 3d Provisional 155 Battery (-) from FSB SNAPPER (GS 8434). However the evacuation of SNAPPER would not start until 18 January, and all artillery would not be retracted from DAWSON RIVER WEST until 1600 hours 19 January.

At the close of DAWSON RIVER WEST, the battalion was positioned as follows: Battery D and the 3d Provisional 155 Battery at FSB CATES (GS 9243); Battery E and the 1st Provisional 155 Battery at CALU (GS 0145); Mortar Battery and the CI at VCB; and Battery F at FSB HENDERSON, in position to support the next extension southward. (TAB A)

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5 May 1969

OPERATION DAWSON RIVER SOUTH--renamed DEWEY CANYON on 23 January--opened on 20 January with an infantry assault 8 KM south of HENDERSON to secure FSB TUN TAVERN (GS 0532), which had not been reoccupied since 6 Dec68. Battery D helilifted into TUN TAVERN late that same day and commenced prep fires on and around FSB SHILOH (GS 1026), another 8 KM south.

FSB HENDERSON was prepped lightly by Battery E for a recon insert, was secured by an infantry platoon, and occupied with minimal rehabilitation required. FSB TUN TAVERN was not prepped, was secured by an infantry company after a recon insert had checked for mines and booby traps, but it required about 5 hours of bulldozer work before Battery D could occupy it. (It had apparently been attacked as a "suspected enemy position" during its long period of disuse.) FSB SHILOH was prepped by both air and artillery prior to assault by an infantry company, and would have been suitable for rapid occupation if it had not been for a fuzing error on one 750-pound bomb. VT was supposed to have been used. The bomb functioned on impact, wiped out two of the 105 parapets, half of a third, and two ammo berms. It required about 7 hours of bulldozer work.

Battery E and 3d Prov Battery (-) helilifted to SHILOH on 21 January, four hours behind their advance parties. Three of the 3d Prov's guns, with an FDC capability, were left behind at FSB CATES, to be chopped to 3/12 for VCB security as the 9th Marines and supporting artillery moved away from the VCB/CALU complex.

Concurrent with the reoccupation of SHILOH, Task Force Hotel had planned to open a forward LSA there for emergency resupply of MCI's and Class 5. However, once SHILOH had been reopened, there was some confusion on the scene as to what priority of effort the LSA had in the overall development of the position. To expedite matters and clear the air, Battery E was tasked to build ammo berms for the LSA after both artillery positions had been completed, and the battalion logistics section at the VCB LSA was told to start staging additional Class 5 for the SHILOH LSA. The following day, however, Task Force Hotel reassumed responsibility for the entire project. This event is mentioned only to illustrate the situations encountered in day-to-day FSB operations. Nothing is surprising. A great deal of flexibility is required.

With HENDERSON, TUN TAVERN and SHILOH reoccupied, the 9th Marines were now poised to launch into the new AO (TAB B).

Even though everything south of FSB SHILOH was virgin territory for the 9th Marines, the occupation of HENDERSON, TUN TAVERN, and SHILOH was only the half-way point in the "movement to the AO" phase.

On 21 January, the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines launched into the new territory with the twofold mission of securing FSB #1 (later named "RAZOR") (GS 1418) about 8 KM south-southeast of SHILOH, and of conducting saturation patrolling around the new FSB. With the exception of scattered small arms fire, the occupation was unopposed, and the work on the battery position started at first light on 22 January. FSB RAZOR was similar to, but technically more difficult than, the other FSB's built by 2/12 in its previous

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5 May 1969

eight months of mountain warfare. For one thing, trees 3-4 feet in diameter--the largest ever encountered in FSB operations to that date--had to be cleared from the position area. For another, a relatively gentle slope on one side of the new FSB, in conjunction with two hummocks of higher ground on the flanks of the battery position, made rapid clearing more difficult than would have been encountered on a "typical" hilltop FSB having precipitous drops all around. Nevertheless, Battery F was able to displace to FSB RAZOR on 23 January. Later that same day, the 9th Marines CP, (less then FSCG) displaced to RAZOR and occupied a gently-sloping finger on the northwestern end of the FSB, beyond the hummock that flanked the north end of the battery position.

The 2/12 FDC advance party also displaced to RAZOR on 23 January, but did not have an easy time getting situated. Originally, the location of 2/12 FDC was planned for the western side of the hummock that flanked the south end of the battery position. However, due mostly to the technical difficulties mentioned above, the battery position was developed somewhat differently than originally conceived and with each of the changes, the infantry organization of the defense changed accordingly. At first light, after several moves, the Watch Officer with the 2/12 advance party found his FDC situated on the infantry perimeter. With passage of FDC control originally scheduled for anytime after 0900, the "flexibility" required in FSB operations appeared to be approaching elastic limits. However, having been through a similar if not identical situation on other FSB's, the advance party regrouped, relocated, got the forward FDC back in action and was ready to assume control by the time that the main body at VCB had to displace forward. Centralized tactical and technical control was maintained throughout this displacement. Although retention of centralized control during a CP displacement places a considerable strain on personnel and communications assets, it facilitates fire support coordination, and provides the supported commander with a greater array of responsive fire support. Consequently, the 2/12 FDC always retained centralized control on this operation (as in all past operations since August 1968) except twice, when it became absolutely necessary to decentralize.

On 24 January, the same day that the 2/12 CP displaced to FSB RAZOR, 3/9 was securing COKLEV, a razorback ridgeline some 1100 meters long which was about 6000 meters southeast of FSB RAZOR. This was the site of FSB #2--later named "CUNNINGHAM" (GS 1813)--and would become the hub of the action during the main attack. Advance parties from Mortar Battery, Battery D, and the 3d Prov Battery accompanied 3/9, and work commenced on the battery positions that same day.

From an artillery viewpoint, FSB CUNNINGHAM was large enough for an integrated position for most of the battalion, and all of the advantages of an integrated position were there: ease of command, control and communications, and--a most important consideration in this AO--ease of resupply. Being in the center of the AO, an integrated position at CUNNINGHAM presented a simple solution to fire support requirements and fire support coordination. The

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5 May 1969

main disadvantage--the enemy's counterbattery capability--was still obscure. From the 9th Marines viewpoint, an integrated artillery position at CUNNINGHAM was most desirable (if not virtually mandatory) for a variety of sound reasons that boiled down to the simple fact that a maximum of two FSB's could be secured and defended at this stage in the operation.

Battery D and Mortar Battery displaced to CUNNINGHAM on 25 January, the former from TUN TAVERN, the latter from VCB. Up until this time, the 1st Prov Battery had remained at CALU, with the understanding that it would be chopped for another mission as the 9th Marines moved southwest out of its fan. (Its fan extended to just beyond TUN TAVERN). Now as 2/9 and 3/9 made frequent contacts with NVA elements, and it became manifestly clear that this operation would not be a "dry hole", a request to retain OPCON of that battery was approved, and the battery advance party accompanied Battery D's main body into FSB CUNNINGHAM.

1st Prov Battery and 3d Prov (-) were helilifted to FSB CUNNINGHAM on 28 January from CALU and FSB SHILOH, respectively, and when Battery E moved into CUNNINGHAM from SHILOH the following day, the artillery position of "movement to the AO" was complete. (TAB C)

By this time it had been decided that FSB #3 (named "ERSKINE") would be located about 4 KM southwest of CUNNINGHAM, on Hill 406 (GS YD1610), and that it would be occupied shortly after the main attack commenced. This location was selected to provide the requisite 8 KM artillery fan for the final objectives, and would--when occupied by one of the Prov batteries--significantly improve the battalion's counterbattery capability. On 2 February, F/2/9 secured the ground for FSB ERSKINE, but weather prevented further development of the FSB at this stage.

At this point in the operation, the infantry had been conducting saturation patrolling around the FSBs and securing the flanks of the AO. G/2/9 was given the mission of securing CO KA LEUYE, which dominated the western flank of the AO. As Golf Company commenced the rugged ascent on 1 February, in bad weather, it made sporadic light contact with an enemy force of undetermined size, but the remainder of the ascent was mainly a battle against extremely rugged terrain and the elements.

Once Golf Company had secured the western flank, the 9th Marines would then be poised to commence the final phase of Operation DEWEY CANYON--a three-pronged attack across the uppermost reaches of the DAKRONG Valley and into the rugged terrain on and overlooking the Laotian border. Two of the objectives were astride the border, while the third was Tiger Mountain. (TAB D)

From the start of DEWEY CANYON, the scarcity of heavy lift helicopters (both USMC CH53's and U.S. Army CH47's) had made it impossible to achieve the initial stockage objectives for artillery ammunition at the FSB's. The seriousness of this initial shortage was quickly magnified when cloud banks and bad weather completely halted helicopter resupply operations during the

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5 May 1969

first 9 days of February. Without the reserve that would have been on hand had the initial stockage objectives been achieved before marginal weather set in, artillery firing had to be reduced to a virtual standstill. From 1-10 February, the battalion fired only 6,078 rounds--almost exclusively on contact missions--and fired as few as 149 rounds one day (7 Feb).

During this period, the infantry was forced to retract and consolidate their forces, and to assume a modified defensive posture close to the FSB's until helicopter resupply operations could bring all classes of supply up to minimum operating levels. Golf Company was ordered to link up with E/2/9 near the foot of CO KA LEUYE, and then both were to return to FSB R.ZOR.

Water became a critical item on the FSB's because the weather, though bad enough to ground choppers, brought relatively little rain for the first four or five days. Raincatches were extensively employed, and patrols were sent from the FSB's to collect water from streams in the valleys below. This latter recourse, however, consumed an inordinate amount of time and manpower for the amount of water collected.

Enemy-initiated activity, predictably, increased during this period of retrenchment. On 2 February, FSB CUNNINGHAM received approximately 30 to 40 rounds of incoming from one or more 122mm guns. Although one of the 1st Prov's 155mm howitzers was temporarily disabled by a near-hit, and the 3d Prov's FDC was put out of action by a direct hit, all units remained in action and returned fire continuously throughout the incoming. 1st Prov's FDC immediately took on the duties of the 3d Prov FDC, and the two batteries operated a joint FDC until the latter could be reconstituted. 2/12 units sustained 5 KIA (including 1 DOW) and 5 WIA in this action. After this initial shelling, incoming at FSB CUNNINGHAM continued throughout the operation at sporadic but frequent intervals. Crater analyses, in conjunction with tentative sightings by AO's, indicated that the enemy guns were located in Laos just beyond the maximum range capability of the 155mm batteries at FSB CUNNINGHAM.

On 4 February, a water patrol from FSB CUNNINGHAM was ambushed, and two Marines WIA (1 from D/2/12). Thereafter, water patrols were discontinued. By this time, however, there was enough rainfall to provide drinking water.

On 5 February, coming back down CO KA LEUYE, "G" Company encountered heavy contact and took several casualties. From then until the linkup with E/2/9 was effected, at least one platoon from all three light batteries were laid continuously on that company as it made its heroic trek down the mountain, surrounded by the enemy. The progress of the Company could be followed on the firing charts, as the forward observer used all three batteries to cover the front, rear, and flanks of the company all the way down the mountain; a "box me in" on the move. 685 rounds were expended on these missions, one of which lasted for 30 hours.

By 10 February the weather had cleared sufficiently for helicopters to move Battery F to ERSKINE. The CP moved by echelon to FSB CUNNINGHAM the following day, and the 9th Marines offensive once again moved into high gear.

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5 May 1969

THE MAIN ATTACK

There were two basic ways that the objectives could have been taken: either a fast helicopter assault directly into the objective areas, or a deliberate overland movement through the rugged jungle terrain. The CO 9th Marines decided on the latter course of action for several reasons, and fortunately so, for it was during their overland (and uphill) battle that the infantry battalions uncovered the enemy's caches, captured his artillery, and killed his troops. The overland move, which would develop into what was almost a classical regiment-in-the-attack, with three battalions abreast, rendered the enemy's significant AAA capability virtually useless--as evidenced by the fact that only one helicopter was lost to AA fire during the entire operation.

As elements of 1/9 and 2/9 moved out from FSB ERSKINE on 11 February, they encountered a sizable enemy force which had apparently been positioned to mount a ground attack against that FSB. Batteries D, E, F, Mortar Battery, and the 3d Prov Battery fired 59 ILLUM, 2 WP and 666 HE on the enemy force and likely escape routes. The enemy withdrew, leaving 25 KIA, numerous weapons, packs, equipment and explosives behind. This contact was an indicator of things to come. In the next 12 days, the battalion would fire, on the average, in excess of 5,000 rounds per day (and as many as 6,187 in one day), with over 63% of the rounds being observed fires on targets of opportunity.

On 13 February the 1st Prov Battery displaced to FSB ERSKINE, and in a counterbattery mission on 15 February destroyed the first of the twelve 122mm field guns that would be destroyed or captured during this operation. Although it was known by this time that the incoming at FSB CUNNINGHAM came from two or more guns, the destruction of this one gun had an electric effect on morale. (TAB E)

At 0430 hours on 17 February, the enemy launched an attack against FSB CUNNINGHAM which featured a coordinated mortar/sapper attack, with RPG's, concussion grenades and satchel charges. The Battalion FDC was damaged by several blasts which scattered radios and FDC equipment; however, technical fire direction was automatically decentralized in accordance with standard instructions, and the battalion continued its mission without interruption. Centralized control was reestablished in about 30 minutes. One howitzer in Battery E was knocked out of action by a mortar round, but was evacuated and replaced the following morning. 3,270 rounds were expended by 2/12 on self-defense missions, targets of opportunity, suspect assembly areas and likely escape routes between 0430 and 0730, including 88 I.C.M. and 59 beehive rounds direct fire. In addition, reinforcing fires totalling 340 HE were fired for 2/12 by the ARVN 105mm battery, located at FSB LIGHTNING (GS 2117). (The 2nd ARVN Regiment had an LO on the eastern flank of the 9th Marines.) 37 enemy KIA were found within the position at first light. Casualties sustained were 3 KIA (including 2 DOW) and 17 WIA. None of the sappers penetrated

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 5 May 1969

the firing battery positions.

On 20 February, C/1/9 overran an NVA artillery position containing, among other things, two 122mm D-74 field guns. The positioning of these two guns, and of four 85mm guns that would be captured on 27-28 February, is interesting. All were in semi-fixed fortified positions facing east, towards the head of the A SHAU valley. That was the only direction they could fire from positions. This would indicate that the enemy was expecting an operation focused in the A SHAU. Any forces entering or leaving the northern end of the A SHAU would come under the fire of those guns. There is evidence that the enemy tried to move this artillery into better positions once the 9th Marines' final objectives became clear, but by that time the 9th Marines owned the road networks, and it was too late.

Coinciding with the arrival of 3/9 in the area around Tiger Mountain, Battery E displaced to the top of that mountain on 28 February and established FSB TURNAGE (GS 2508). This new FSB was opened primarily to provide a greater overshoot capability for 3/9 operations in the southeastern corner of the AO, but it had two additional advantages: first, it provided a better balance of fire support throughout the AO, which would facilitate future operations, and secondly, it permitted further dispersal of the firing batteries--which was an important consideration in view of the enemy's counter-battery capability. (TAB F)

THE RETRACTION

By the end of February, the 9th Marines had just about run out of real estate in the DEWEY CANYON AO, and organized opposition by regular NVA forces had virtually collapsed. It was obvious that most of enemy troops not killed or captured had withdrawn into their Laotian sanctuary. There was evidence of, and scattered activity from, small groups of enemy throughout the AO--mostly mortar crews--but it was also apparent that no further significant troop contacts would occur.

Route 922 had been successfully interdicted; thousands of tons of the enemy's food and medical supplies and ammunition caches had been captured and destroyed; the equivalent of two batteries of his medium artillery (twelve 122mm field guns) and one light battery (four 85mm guns) had been captured or destroyed, along with prime movers and ammunition trains; his underground headquarters, storage complexes, and troop quarters, as well as his fortified positions, had been overrun and destroyed; and a significant portion of his AAA potential had been located and destroyed. In short, by 1 March, with the exception of a clean-up detail, the DEWEY CANYON mission had been accomplished and it was time to go elsewhere.

The original concept of Operation DEWEY CANYON envisioned a "leapfrogging" retraction from the AO, with each element always under a protective artillery fan--just the reverse of the technique used to get into the AO. This would

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5 May 1969

have required about ten battery displacements; and, since a reasonable level of Class 5 has to be maintained at all times during the leapfrog maneuver, it would entail approximately 25 heavy lifts per cannon battery and 5 heavy lifts for Mortar Battery, not including other normal resupply lifts. If good weather prevailed throughout, and there were an abundance of helicopters, a leapfrog retraction could be accomplished in about seven days.

As the operation drew to a close, however, several factors dictated a reappraisal of the retraction plan. First, the weather showed no signs of improving; second, continuation of the operation throughout a retraction phase would require an initial surge of approximately 100 heavy lifts of artillery Class 5 (120-150 rounds per lift) to bring on-position stocks up to appropriate levels. That this level of support would not likely be forthcoming was evident from the daily shortfall of normal Class 5 resupply during the last week of February and in the first few days of March. For example, 93 lifts were required on 1 March to sustain operations and 35 were received; 94 lifts were required on 2 March and only 2 were received. Part of the shortfall was due to intermittent marginal weather; a large part of it was due to limited helicopter assets. Finally, the 9th Marines were scheduled to relieve the 3d Marines in the VCB-Rockpile-Route 9-CamLo AO so that the latter could participate in Operation Maine Crag, which was already in progress.

The foregoing considerations dictated a faster retraction, with less helicopter assets, than a leapfrog maneuver would permit; consequently, plans were revised to lift all units directly to VCB without any intermediate stops, and with a minimum of Class 5. This required a delicate balance of firing vis-a-vis weather and the possibility of resupply and/or retraction. It also meant that one battery had to retract without covering artillery fires.

Over two months earlier, on Operation Dawson River West, Mortar Battery had displaced from VCB to LZ "Charlie" to cover the orderly retraction of two batteries from FSB Snapper. Since the Mortar Battery can displace very rapidly, using only 8 CH46's (provided no Class 4 or 5 is carried), and since the 4.2" mortar provides excellent close-in support, it could cover both its own position and retraction of the last cannon battery from the same position or any other position within range, and then be extracted with a minimum of effort and with minimum exposure to hostile action. Although it was not initially planned to use the Mortar Battery as just described, the capability to do so provided additional flexibility at this stage of the operation, and that capability was incorporated in Plan A, which will be described shortly.

The retraction plan originally had 2/9 (-) scheduled to lift to VCB on 3 March, and for 1/9 to lift to VCB on 4 March. After 1/9 was out, Battery F and the 1st Prov Battery (who had been covering the 1/9 portion of the AO from FSB ERSKINE) could displace to VCB, and G/2/9 would close ERSKINE. On 5 March, 3/9 (-) and Battery E would lift to VCB, leaving one company from 3/9 at FSB TURNAGE as security for the ARVN 105mm battery located there. On 6 March the ARVN infantry would retract from their AO under cover of their

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battery on TURNAGE, and FSB CUNNINGHAM would be evacuated, all units there going to VCB. Finally, On 7 March the ARVN battery and the one company from 3/9 would extract from FSB TURNAGE under the cover of fixed wing aircraft, and the retraction would be completed.

The first step in the retraction plan--the retraction of 2/9 (-)--went as scheduled. Everything else changed. The weather turned from marginal to bad. In addition, before clearing the DEWEY CANYON AO, the 9th Marines were tasked with the add-on mission of linking up with and extracting a Special Operations Group (SOG) that had been operating adjacent to the AO. A third development was the discovery of additional caches in the eastern portion of the AO that had to be exploited further.

On 8 March, 1/9 commenced an overland movement to TAM BOI mountain (GS YD2404) and FSB ERSKINE was evacuated, with Battery "F" going to CALU and the 1st Prov going to VCB. Two plans were developed ("A" & "B") for further operations in the AO and for retraction, both of which hinged on whether or not 1/9 linked up with the SOG by 1300 hours 10 March. If they did, Plan "B" provided for their extraction that day, followed by the displacement of all artillery on FSB CUNNINGHAM to VCB before dark. Then on 11 March, K/3/9 would have closed CUNNINGHAM, after which the ARVN battery, Battery E, and I/3/9 would be extracted from FSB TURNAGE and move to VCB under cover of fixed wing aircraft. Plan "A" provided for the displacement of Mortar Battery to TAM BOI on 10 March to cover 1/9; for the closing of CUNNINGHAM as scheduled above; and finally for the employment of Mortar Battery as described earlier to cover the closing of FSB TURNAGE.

A modified Plan "A" was implemented, which followed the same general idea as the original, but which changed frequently as weather and other factors dictated.

One of the factors which had a significant bearing on the techniques used in this retraction phase was the enemy's timing of rocket, mortar and artillery attacks to coincide with the approach of helicopters. The full array of this capability was exercised for the first time during the evacuation of FSB ERSKINE. It was known that the enemy would not normally fire his artillery or rockets unless his forward observer could observe the target area. The retraction plan for FSB CUNNINGHAM, therefore, included aerial observers on station and a smoke screen between the FSB and likely OP locations, as well as for a program of mortar/rocket suppression fires.

The weather finally broke sufficiently on 15 March to move Mortar Battery to TAM BOI, and to extract all artillery from CUNNINGHAM. Nonessential gear was left behind with a small rear echelon, to be brought back as soon as weather and helicopter availability permitted. Helicopter approach and retirement lanes had been established which permitted all batteries to fire a continuous smoke/mortar suppression program until the last gun was lifted out. During their displacements, the batteries on CUNNINGHAM fired over 1,000 rounds, including 547 rounds on active missions and 389 rounds of HC/WP smoke for the smokescreen plan.

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5 May 1969

The 3d Prov Battery was lifted to DONG HA (GS YD2159), where it moved into a prepared position adjacent to the 2/12 (Rear) headquarters cantonment, and ended a 9-month period of continuous FSB operations. This move from CUNNINGHAM to DONG HA was made entirely by U.S. Army CH-47 "Chinook" helicopters; the first time that a CH54 "Skycrane" had not been used to move the 155mm howitzer, and proved that dependence on the scarce CH54's for 155mm battery moves is not always necessary. Under certain conditions, the CH47 can lift the towed 155 without any difficulty. Upon arrival at DONG HA, 3d Prov was chopped to 4/12.

Following the departure of 3d Prov, Battery D displaced by platoons to VCB, and occupied a temporary position north of the VCB LSA. With all batteries except two out of the DEWEY CANYON AO, the Battalion FDC decentralized technical control of Battery E and Mortar Battery, and moved to VCB. To provide fire support for those units still in the AO, Battery E was given a mission of direct support of those units, and tactical fire direction of Mortar Battery. All 1/9 and 3/9 units came up on a common COF net, and the 1/9 FSCC was given responsibility for all fire support coordination in the AO.

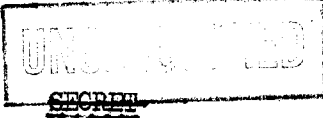
To facilitate a smooth transition of fire support, to provide a secondary check for Battery E, and to give Battery E the capability to conduct a secondary technical check on Mortar Battery, the Battalion Assistant Operations Chief and two men were sent to TURNAGE early on the morning of the 15th with additional FDC and radio equipment. During the short time that this decentralized arrangement was in effect, the two batteries fired in excess of 2,000 rounds and accounted for 34 NVA KIA(C), 18 secondary explosions, 6 mortars silenced, and numerous bunkers and fortified positions destroyed.

Marginal weather dominated the execution of the retraction plan right until the end. The battery rear echelons and infantry security force that had been left behind on CUNNINGHAM were extracted on 16 March with all their gear, and that FSB was finally closed. By this time, 1/9 had accomplished its mission and was also ready to be extracted, but the weather closed in again.

To have followed the planned sequence of events thereafter in closing out the AO might have required more good weather than it appeared to be prudent to depend upon. Therefore, when the area around TAM BOI started to clear on 18 March, CO, 1/9 decided to extract whatever could be lifted out, as weather permitted. As a result, Mortar Battery was extracted first, and did not provide covering fires for the evacuation of FSB TURNAGE as planned. Instead Battery E covered the extraction, and was in turn covered by fixed wing.

Battery E was finally able to CSMO at 1800 hours 18 March, and Operation DEWEY CANYON terminated at 2000 hours that date as the last helicopter touched down at VCB. (TAB G)

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5 May 1969

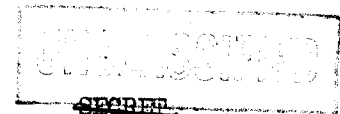
EVALUATION

By any criteria, Operation DEWEY CANYON was an unqualified success. A reinforced Marine infantry regiment, with all of its supporting artillery, had been helilifted into an area so remote that it had never been entered before by free world military forces. In less than two months, despite weather which hampered resupply for better than half that time, over 1,600 of the enemy were killed, his operations in that area were completely disrupted, his main resupply/infiltration route was interdicted, and hundreds of tons of his supplies and weapons were captured and destroyed, including twelve 122mm D-74 field guns and four 85mm field guns.

However, no post-operation report would be complete without a "lessons learned" epilogue. While these are listed in detail on the following pages, two deserve special attention: Class 5 stockage objectives, and coordination of the resupply effort.

A great deal of thinking went into the determination of Class 5 stockage objectives, and positive assurance was received that these objectives could be supported. Assurance and performance, unfortunately, proved to be two different animals, possibly because enough command interest in these objectives had not been generated at the outset. When stockage objectives are established, it is imperative that they be met and sustained from the outset, and that the alarm be sounded to the highest interested commander when it appears that the objectives will not be attained. Staff coordination has definite limits. Command interest must be generated and maintained.

Coordination of the resupply effort left much to be desired because the effort itself, and the responsibilities for various facets of it, were fragmented from the outset. A TACLOG Group, comprised of representatives of each command in the task organization, responsible only to the operational commander, and having absolute control of the overall effort, including helicopter assets, is a sine qua non for an operation of this nature.



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5 May 1969

Item: Defense of an FSB

Comment: The following passive defense measures by artillery units will enhance adequate defense of an FSB:

- (1) Plan self-defense illumination, beehive, and ICM missions in coordination with the resident infantry unit commander;
- (2) Monitor the infantry local security net and lay wire to the infantry CP;
- (3) Emplace Automatic weapons so as to not only perform their primary mission of protecting the immediate battery area, but also to complement the infantry defense plan. A definite plan for employing automatic weapons in support of the infantry must be worked out with the infantry commander;
- (4) Participate in the infantry's security disciplines, i.e., "standing to", light & noise discipline, and above all, fire discipline;
- (5) Have a standing plan to provide a reaction force, line fillers or replacements for any area around the immediate battery area;
- (6) Provide secure small arms storage/resupply points;
- (7) Hold school for infantry units on the workings of an artillery unit, and on how to call for fires.

There is a fine line between how much the artillery must actively participate in FSB defense and when such participation becomes detrimental to accomplishment of the artillery mission. The resident infantry commander must understand that the artillery unit is there to shoot artillery and not to protect the FSB. It is the infantry's job to protect the FSB. But in the final analysis, the best overall solution depends on the amount of professional understanding between the artillery and infantry commanders, and the artillery commander must constantly work to improve this understanding.

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5 May 1969

Item: TPQ of Former Friendly Positions Prior to Reoccupation

Comment: One of the techniques for reoccupying former friendly positions without giving advance notice to the enemy is to stay completely away from it, and then to prep the position with both artillery and TPQ's, using VT fuze, the night before the reentry. Although a certain percentage of both air and artillery VT fuzes will malfunction, artillery shells will cause much less damage to fixed installations than a bomb if some of the fuzes function on impact. One bomb on FSB SHILOH destroyed two parapets, part of a third, and two ammo berms. The damage was not evident until the next morning--the day of reentry--and a major realignment of engineer support had to be made at the last minute. Fortunately, a dozer was available and was fragged to Shiloh on one of the first lifts in. This is not usually possible.

Lessons learned or Recommendation:

 If a position has some fixed installations, such as parapets, which should be preserved, TPQ's should not be planned on former positions the night before reoccupation, even if VT is to be used. If for some reason a TPQ is essential, the rehabilitation plan should include a bulldozer and engineer support to reconstruct all fixed installations prior to reoccupation.

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5 May 1969

Item: Delineation of Responsibilities and Authority in Development of
a Fire Support Base

Comment: In the absence of a directive from a common higher authority which delineates the respective responsibilities and authority of artillery and infantry commanders on an FSB, some misunderstanding may occur between the battery commander(s) tasked with building artillery positions and the infantry battalion commander tasked with overall responsibility for the FSB.

The keystone to the rapid and proper development, smooth daily operations, and successful defense of a fire support base is personal liaison and professional understanding between the artillery and infantry commanders. This personal approach has certain limits, however, when one of the two commanders is senior by two grades and there is a lack of experience or understanding on the part of one or both of those commanders.

Lessons Learned or Recommendation:

A division-level directive would be appropriate for reference, as needed.

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5 May 1969

Item: Incoming Trenches

Comment: The use of a back-hoe to dig incoming trenches ASAP after arrival of the Battery recon party should be done whenever possible. These trenches, if properly situated, can double as personnel staging areas for the IZ.

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5 May 1969.

Item: Positioning of Resupply Pads on FSB's

Comment: There was a significant amount of mutual interference between resupply operations and artillery firing during this operation. Class 5 resupply choppers had to take advantage of wind direction, and this was often along the long axis of the gun line. Check firing for resupply choppers is not only unacceptable; in contact missions, it cannot be done. On the other hand, it is equally unacceptable to either have the choppers wait for an opening, or divert to another FSB.

Much forethought must be given to the positioning of artillery within fire support bases so as to permit continuous resupply of Class 5 externals, and wheels-down landings, without check firing. This will require at least two things: more LZ's, and a prior knowledge of the prevailing daytime winds at the proposed FSB location.

Lessons learned or Recommendation:

- (1) Lay the requirement on the cognizant command or staff to provide low-level wind information for a 5 KM radius around proposed FSB's.
- (2) Ensure that the required engineer support and priority of effort for additional LZ's and pads is understood, approved and arranged in the planning phase.
- (3) Organize the engineer effort when building FSB's so that there are sufficient alternate LZ's and resupply pads, considering the prevailing winds, to reduce the mutual interference described.

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5 May 1969.

Item: Ammo berms

Comment:

The importance of deep and well-reveted ammo berms was repeatedly pointed out during DEWEY CANYON. In several instances Class 5 was protected from direct hits from artillery and RPG's by the retainer walls built at the ends of linear bulldozer-dug berms.

There are never too many of these berms. Many times, Class 5 will be diverted from one FSB to another because of weather, incoming, etc., and will cause an overflow condition unless there are extra berms available.

Receiving berms should be constructed adjacent to each parapet for ammo which is to be broken out and placed in ready bunkers.

Since quantity-distance safety criteria cannot be adhered to on an FSB, extra measures are required to keep all ammo well-protected.

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5 May 1969

Item: Incoming Holes Within Parapets

Comment: The number of casualties sustained might have been reduced if all batteries had incoming holes within the parapets. These holes provide some measure of protection for the gun crews between missions, particularly during firing of a counterbattery program. They are not a substitute for, nor do they serve the same purpose as, fighting holes outside the parapets.

Lessons learned or Recommendation:

That consideration be given to having incoming holes within parapets whenever possible.

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5 May 1969.

Item: Fire Hazards and Fire-Fighting Equipment on FSB's

Comment: Any FSB, by virtue of the relatively large concentration of explosives, POL, and other flammables in a very small area, is a potential disaster area. Numerous fires were experienced on this operation. One of them spread to an area containing approximately 100 rounds of 105mm HE awaiting BOD disposal. The resulting cookoffs closed the FSB to choppers, and put two batteries out of action (so that personnel could take cover) for several hours. Other brush fires on the periphery of battery areas, started by incoming and trip flares, interrupted firing as cannoners had to be assigned to fight them.

Propellant fires are particularly violent and hazardous, and require a large volume of CO₂ as soon as possible. Only the 150-lb hand-cart extinguisher with extension hose is considered adequate for this type of fire. They are not, however, available in sufficient quantity.

One problem with all fire extinguishers is that they have to be sent all the way back to Dong Ha for recharging. Since there are not enough extinguishers on hand to start with, the excessive round-trip travel time compounds an already-serious shortage.

Lessons learned or Recommendation:

(1) The brush and undergrowth cleared from the top of an FSB will eventually burn, so it should be burned off at the first opportunity--preferably before the battery moves in. Regardless of when or how it will be burned off, it should be pushed as far down the side of the FSB as possible, to reduce the hazard of sparks igniting anything on top of the FSB. Fibers and ammo boxes thrown over the side will also eventually burn, so they should be burned continuously under controlled conditions, preferably in an area well away from helicopter approach and retirement routes.

(2) One 150-pound mobile extinguisher should be authorized for each gun section.

(3) Refilling/recharging facilities for fire extinguishers should be located at forward areas, and qualified inspectors should visit FSB's on a routine basis.

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5 May 1969

Item: HF net problems:

Comment: The battalion was prepared to communicate with HF-SSB equipment, and a shot was activated because of the initial difficulty with VHF-FM. The frequencies assigned were 3925 KHZ and 9300 KHZ. The station in Dong Ha had loud and clear communications with the stations at Vandegrift Combat Base and FSB Cunningham but the latter two stations could not talk to each other. When VHF-FM communications improved (with discovery of the best frequency range), the attempts to establish a HF-SSB circuit were abandoned. It was learned later that the 9th Marines had successful comm on 5050 KHZ.

Lessons learned or Recommendation:

When employing the AN/PRC-47, several frequencies should be obtained which cover the entire HF band.

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5 May 1969

Item: VHF frequency problems

Comment: Due to the large distances between the fire support bases and logistical support areas, it was oftendifficult to communicate with the VHF-FM family of equipment. During the hot hours of the day, communications were poor and a relay stations had to be used. It was found that the range 48-52 MHZ was the best: below 48 MHZ there was too much interference from aircraft, above 52 MHZ the signal faded as described above.

Lessons learned or Recommendation:

Frequencies in the middle of the band should be assigned to the nets which have stations separated from each other by large distances or by terrain features which interfere with electrical line-of-sight.

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5 May 1969

Item: Back-up Communications (Radio)

Comment: During the attack on FSB Cunningham all computer hot lines between the batteries were cut by incoming, and the battalion had to shoot decentralized until FD communications were reestablished. Radios had been set up at the computer table in the FDC with pre-set frequencies, and the standing instruction was that the FD nets would be activated whenever land lines were out. However, it took at least 15 minutes to get all batteries up on an FD net. The source of the delay varied from net to net. The lesson learned is that there is no way to guarantee a smooth transition of alternate means of communications in an emergency situation. However, frequent practice in reestablishing communications under simulated emergency conditions will probably ensure better results than if no practice is held.

Lesson learned or Recommendation:

Daily drills in alternate comm plans, involving simulated losses of equipment and personnel, be incorporated in FDC drills.

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5 May 1969

Item: Long-range Communications

Comment: Using a whip antenna and an AN/PRC-25 radio, Battery E communicated loud and clear from FSB Turnage on Tiger Mountain to Vandegrift Combat Base, a distance of over 47 KM.

Lessons learned or Recommendation:
 Elevate your antenna.

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5 May 1969

Item: Employment of radio technicians

Comment: It was found that a technician on a fire support base can significantly lessen down-time on a variety of equipment. At one time, Headquarters Battery had 6 AN/PRC-25 radios down, of which the technician was able to repair 5. Using a soldering iron (powered by a small 300 watt generator) and a multimeter, loud-speakers, handsets, coaxial cable connectors and sound equipment were repaired on the spot, thereby avoiding lengthy evacuation of essential items.

Lessons learned or Recommendation:

When possible, a radio technician should be assigned to a battery on each fire support base during extended operations.

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5 May 1969

Item: Back-up Communications (Wire)

Comment: In the midst of the ground attack at FSB CUNNINGHAM, it was necessary to lay wire line between two of the batteries so that one of them could reestablish land line communications with the battalion FDC.

Lesson Learned or Recommendation:

In addition to the normal primary and alternate wire lines between senior and subordinate units, all units on an FSB should be interconnected by primary and alternate wire lines. Improvement of land line communication options, like improvement of a battery position, should be continuous. Of equal importance is the requirement that wire diagrams be updated whenever changed, and that the full array is reviewed and understood by all officers and NCO's--not just the communicators.

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5 May 1969

Item: Protection of Wire Lines on FSB's

Comment: Wire communications between units on FSB CUNNINGHAM were disrupted daily, either by incoming or by fires.

Lesson Learned or Recommendation:

A simple method for protecting land lines from both fires and incoming, and for making the location of breaks easy to spot, is cover the entire length of all wire lines with one layer of sandbags.

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5 May 1969

Item: Mail/Courier and Passenger Service

Comment: Mail/Courier and passenger service was uniformly poor because weather/limited helicopter assets placed an extremely high priority on resupply requirements (particularly artillery Class 5 resupply). and almost all pilots operated under the unwritten policy that they could not carry both passengers and external heavy lifts. The assumption that an external heavy lift utilizes all of a chopper's load capacity, and that one passenger with a bag of mail would be the proverbial straw, is simply incredible in 99.9% of the cases.

Lesson Learned or Recommendation:

(1) That all heavy lift resupply choppers be permitted to take one passenger with each lift

(2) That helicopter priorities be revised so that no couriers or passenger will wait more than one day for transportation to or from an FSB.

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5 May 1969

Item: Smoke Operations

Comment: Smoke was used very successfully to screen FSB CUMMINGHAM from direct observation during the retraction phase. Suspect OP's were located throughout an area of several thousand square meters to the southwest, and could not be individually screened, so the screen was planned on a ridgeline 2 KM west-southwest of the FSB. A screen 250M high by 2500M long was built up on that ridgeline, using 258 WP and 121 HC. It was effective for about three hours, by which time smoke-laying aircraft had been scrambled to continue the screen.

For some reason, the WP hung lower and lasted longer than expected. HC was used mainly to fill gaps in the WP.

The mission was observed by one of the battery commanders involved in the firing, who was authorized to make adjustments in firing data to achieve the desired effect. Decentralization of the mission in this manner ensured timely good results.

Lesson Learned or Recommendation:

(1) The proper mix of WP and HC cannot be accurately forecast in advance, nor were the tables contained in field manuals of much value in planning this smoke screen, even as a guide.

(2) If at all possible, the mission should be observed and completely controlled by the battery firing the screen. This will give the best screen with the least expenditure of smoke.

(3) To screen an FSB from distant observation, plan the smoke on some close-in terrain feature.

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5 May 1969

PART II - STATISTICAL SUMMARY

A. Losses sustained by the enemy:

1. Personnel:
 - 1627 KIA
 - 5 POW
 - 8 DET
 - 2 CHIEU HOI
2. Motor Transport:
 - 84 Vehicles
3. Bunkers/Structures:
 - 1000
4. Weapons:
 - 1223 SA
 - 243 CSW
 - 26 Mortars
 - 66 AA Weapons
 - 12 122mm Field Guns
 - 4 85mm Field Guns
5. Ammo:
 - 690,598 SA Rds.
 - 63,012 Mortar Rds
 - 28,286 AA Rds.
 - 7,530 HOW/GUN Rds.
 - 14,808 RPG's
 - 60,429 Grenades
 - 2,920 Mines
 - 1,027 Rockets
 - 2,998 Recoilless rifle Rds.
6. Explosives:
 - 1,910 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.
7. POL:
 - 2,750 Gal. Fuel
 - 370 Gal. Grease
8. Food:
 - 228,730lbs.
9. Communications equipment:
 - 5 Radios
 - 1 Switchboard
 - 2 Multiplexors
 - 2 Field phones
 - 6000 ft. of communications wire

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5 May 1969

B. Surveillance of Artillery Missions (included in the totals given in A above).

1. Personnel:

172 KIA

5 WIA

90 Probable KIA/WIA

2. Bunkers/Structures:

116 Bunkers

1 House

2 Structures

3. Secondaries:

157

4. Vehicles:

6 Trucks destroyed

4 Trucks damaged

5. Weapons

2 122mm D-74 Field guns

1 82mm Mortar

1 50cal

6. Miscellaneous

1 Cave

1 Powerline

C. Losses sustained by friendly forces.

218 KIA, 903 WIA, and 2 MIA

D. Losses sustained by artillery units (included in the totals given in C above)

8 KIA (including 3 DOW's), and 58 WIA

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