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office located in DI AN. Additional responsibility for the mail courier (Pony Express) and Errand Boy courier was also a part of the DTO operation. The operation was conducted in two phases.

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a. Phase I, 1 July - 9 August, the DTO had control of all CV-28 aircraft available. Phase II, 10 August - 26 August, the DTO and the brigade had joint operational control of the CV-28 aircraft. The following data reflects the airlift operation for both phases.

- 1) Sorties ----- 112A.
- 2) Supply tonnage moved -- 2086.7 short tons.
- 3) Passengers moved ----- 9661.
- 4) Mail tonnage moved ---- 516 short tons.

b. The DTO coordinated seven resupply convoys during the period. They were used to augment the airlift of the division with supplies for the LAI NRE brigade and to support the operations. The convoys consisted of 912 vehicles carrying 4460 short tons of supplies.

(b) Maintenance was conducted by establishing contact teams from the 701st Maintenance Battalion in all supply point locations. Liaison visits were conducted daily by the battalion as well as technical inspections and assistance teams on the request of forward units.

1. Volume of Business:

- a. 537 job repairs by contact teams.
- b. 706 job repairs by TI teams at unit locations.
- c. Equipment evacuated:
  - 1) Automotive -- 1.
  - 2) Electronic -- 12.
  - 3) Instrument -- 1.
  - 4) Small Arms -- 1.
  - 5) Engineer ---- 1.

2. Supply support resulted in the shipment of 30 short tons of repair parts to the forward units.

(c) Medical Evacuation and Hospitalizations:

1. Concept: Forward sections of D Company, 1st Medical Battalion, 2 June - 28 July, and C Company, 1st Medical Battalion, 23 July to 3 September, and 1st Medical Battalion clearing platoons provided division level medical support from a forward base to battalions and brigades. Medical supplies were sufficient for the operations and a minimum of 15 days supply was on hand at all times. Whole blood requests were filled by 406th Medical Laboratory. The replacement of C Company by D Company was due to a possible contingency plan which D Company was designated to support. This change did not impair the medical support and gave the medical battalion an opportunity to give more of their personnel field experience.

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Volume of Operations:

- a. Patient load ----- 1078.
- b. Patients evacuated ----- 412 (aeromedical evac).
- c. Patients returned to duty -- 636.

"Dust Off" operations were sufficient with one "Dust Off" operation located at QUAN LOI and a standby located at LAI. Other "Dust Off" standby were located at SAIGON and LONG BINH and were provided on an as needed basis. "Dust Off" units were also used for resupply of urgent medical supplies.

d. Administrative matters for 1st, 2d, and 3d Brigades are included in Annexes A, B, and P.

11. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUES:

a. Three-Column Formation. This technique envisions an armored cavalry troop marching with two columns straddling a road where the off-road mobility is afforded. Two armored cavalry platoons move side-by-side approximately 20 meters off each side of the road. The third element moves either on or off the road, but the head of the third element is abreast of the tail of the leading elements. This formation affords mutual supporting fires from two platoons in a given area of contact and puts the maximum amount of strength to the front of the column.

b. Use of SKY SPOT (Radar Bombing) in the close in support role. Three flights of SKY SPOT (Radar Bombing) were used in a close air support role during the attack on 2/18th Infantry, 2 July. These strikes which landed within 500 meters of friendly troops, were the first known SKY SPOT strikes to be used in a close air support role.

c. A requirement for a rapid reaction aircraft flare delivery capability emerged during the operation. Delivery of the M1-24, mod 3 aircraft flare from UH-1 aircraft requires certain equipment and compliance with specific procedures to insure safety for aircraft and crew. These procedures and necessary equipment are described in detail in letter SFWAF-2, eq Ammunition Procurement and Supply Agency, Joliet, Illinois, dated 22 July 1965, subject: Flare, Aircraft, Parachute, M1-24, all mods. One UH-1 aircraft in A Company has been rigged to drop these flares; SKY flares are on hand in the division area; and three crews have been trained in their handling and use. Availability of this aircraft and flare system under the direct control of the division commander permits night illumination of two hours with 40 - two million candle-power flares being carried internally in the UH-1. While time on station and number of flares is not nearly as great in this organic system as can be provided by the Air Force, it does provide a significant emergency, back-up illumination capability.

d. Speed OH-47. The OH-47 supported operations six times during the period 25 June to 9 July. On three occasions the aircraft was forced to land as a result of hits from enemy fire. The OH-47 was used to attack and establish in attack positions, utilizing all the types of armament on board the aircraft. During the action on 30 June, it was discovered that the 7.62mm Miniguns alone do not have the necessary suppressive capability. When an OH-47 is forced down, it immediately becomes a battlefield liability, requiring the diversion of combat forces for security until it can be repaired and/or extracted. Recommended employment is to have the aircraft stand off and take advantage of the range of its on-board weapons.

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e. Light Assault Field Artillery Battery, 4.2 inch. This unit was organized in July 1968 under 1st Infantry Division provisions and is known throughout the division as the 1st Lighthouse Artillery Battery. The battery was conceived as a means of filling a possible void in airborne operations. Movement of 105mm howitzers batteries in support of LZ's were dependent upon CH-47's which were often in short supply. The Lighthouse Battery is designed to be moved completely by UH-1 slicks. This capability increased the firepower flexibility of the division and provided additional assurance that adequate firepower could be made available to isolated LZ's. The battery also has the capability to move by road in organic vehicles. Personnel and equipment for the unit which is commanded by a Major were provided by the heavy mortar platoons of 2d, 2/2d, and 2/16th Infantry Battalions with additional Headquarters and Fire Direction personnel being provided from Division Artillery and Division Headquarters resources. During operation EL PASO II the battery displaced seven times, firing a total of 2305 rounds in support of road clearing and convoy operations along Route 13.

12. COMMANDER'S ANALYSIS:

a. General: Operation EL PASO inflicted a severe defeat on the 9th VC Division, completely frustrated the monsoon offensive in the northern III Corps Area, and represented an important learning process throughout the 1st Infantry Division.

b. Although it was not apparent through the counting of bodies on the battlefield during the five major engagements of EL PASO, subsequent interrogation of prisoners from all three of the VC regiments of the 9th VC Division make it clear that the division lost over 2,000 troops and several thousand wounded out of a strength of about 10,000. In the last battle, the 272d Regiment went into action with 800 North Vietnamese replacements only three days after their arrival. The VC employed against the 1st Division tactics which had been successful without exception both against the French and against the Vietnamese Army - that is, ambushes by very large VC forces against small friendly forces. Each time the VC were defeated and each time they were defeated more quickly than the time before as the 1st Division learned more and more how to react to this type of attack.

c. The first ambush was against a single cavalry troop from the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry (Troop A). The deployment of VC forces was along a five kilometer stretch of road and far over-extended the length of the cavalry column which was moving in a reasonably tight formation. The bulk of the troop was able to pull into a small clearing toward the head of the ambush site and there it accounted for itself very well. In this particular section, the 1st Battalion, 272d Regiment lost its lead and wounded approximately 80% of its strength. One cavalry platoon was isolated at the Hiep Bridge together with about 90 ARVN soldiers. This element was engaged by the 2d Battalion of the 272d VC Regiment, which in the course of four hours lost about 50% of its strength, killed and wounded. The 1st Battalion extended farther to the south and engaged the trail party, including a VTR, one tank, two APCs and an amphibious dozer tank. The VC lost very few men in this engagement and the 1st Battalion withdrew from the battlefield largely unharmed. On the US side, original estimates of the size of the VC force were low and only after about an hour's fighting did it become apparent that a whole VC regiment was involved. As a consequence, both air and artillery were used, but not as effectively as in later battles because they were directed only against the enemy units in direct contact and not against the area in which the enemy was maneuvering, reinforcing or withdrawing.

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Additionally, commanders involved were not as aggressive in using fire support as they could have been owing to the underestimate of enemy strength and lack of knowledge as to its exact location. The infantry reaction force did not arrive on the scene of battle in time to be decisive. By the time it did arrive, the VC were withdrawing.

d. After a thorough criticism by all commanders involved, the communications were tightened up, the coordination of air and artillery was improved by the simple means of preplanning artillery support on one side of the road and air support on the other so these two decisive weapons could be used continuously and simultaneously. It was also decided that the infantry reaction would be divided into two elements. First, a battlefield relief force to preclude a defeat in the area of the main attack, and second, a battlefield exploitation force which would be landed along the routes of withdrawal in order to destroy VC forces some distance from the ambush site.

e. On 30 June, the 271st Regiment attacked two troops of the 14th Cavalry, reinforced by a company of the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry. During this battle, the coordination of fire support was vastly improved, the cavalry maneuvered during the battle and the battlefield relief force arrived in time to engage the VC prior to withdrawal. The battlefield exploitation forces eventually succeeded in landing behind the enemy along the Cambodian border where another major engagement with a full regiment of VC ensued. The cavalry by this time had doubled its basic load of 50 calibre ammunition and doubled the number of canister rounds. More artillery was within range and had registered ahead of time. VC casualties in the battles of 30 June - 2 July were significantly higher than on 8 June.

f. Prior to the battle of 9 July, intelligence indicated the positioning of the 272d Regiment along the MINH THANH Road. Deception as to the size of the US force to transit the road was employed, five batteries of artillery positioned, four infantry battalions positioned next to the ambush site or within helicopter rapid reaction distance. In this battle, fire coordination improved even further, again putting the artillery on one side of the road, in this case, the north side, and continuous air strikes on the south side. Four infantry battalions were introduced into the battle within three hours; one of them within 45 minutes by helicopter; whereas two battalions were moving to the battle through the jungle within a matter of minutes after the ambush started. This combination of maneuver and increased fire power caused the VC to break off the battle in one hour and 45 minutes, whereas previously, they had fought for four hours and six hours respectively.

g. In each successive battle, the number of VC killed and captured rose sharply and the number of weapons captured was particularly high on the 9th of July, including some 23 machineguns, plus recoilless rifles and a large number of AK-47 assault rifles and SMGs. No unit of the 9th VC Division undertook any combat operations of any kind for 3 1/2 months after the 9th of July. It is not known at this time whether the division has recovered, or to what extent. Since those battles, the 1st Division has run convoys on Route 13 and cavalry reconnaissance on Highway 15 and adjacent roads without contact. Civilian traffic is now flowing, and although the division fully expects more such engagements in the future, perhaps by even larger forces, the techniques developed for rapid reaction and heavy fire power should make it impossible for the VC to enjoy a victory and should result in further heavy losses should they choose again to employ this favorite of all their tactics. It is perfectly clear that armored units have a high utility in connection with road security and road reconnaissance. Since 9 July, the 1st Division

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has been reinforced with two tank companies and is now asking for its own 69th Tank Battalion to be deployed to Vietnam. The combination of armored elements and air mobile infantry and light artillery presents the VC with tactical problems with which they seem unable to cope.

h. The last victory of the 9th VC Division was in November 1965 against the ARVN 7th Regiment in the MICHELIN. A year has now gone by without their having conducted any profitable operation. As a consequence, the local guerrillas and regional VC force have been without the support of this main force unit and have in turn, suffered a series of major and minor defeats which is beginning to show up as a marked up-turn of the overall security of the northern III Corps area.

### 13. LESSONS LEARNED:

a. Dust Off and resupply sites should be established by elements other than those engaged with the enemy. Movement of wounded personnel by the unit, particularly armored elements, detracts from the firepower available. Empty medevac vehicles including personnel carriers and helicopters should be used to transport ammunition to engaged elements.

b. Committing reserve (trail) elements of armored cavalry should be done as soon as the battle develops in order to bring the maximum amount of firepower to bear.

c. Infantry mounted on and fighting from armored personnel carriers is found to be unsatisfactory when the crew exceeds five men. If more than this number is present they tend to get in each other's way. Infantry can best be utilized by riding on vehicles of the trail elements, then committed as dismounted infantry where needed.

d. Concentration of elements composed of tanks and APC's in the "killing zone" has proved effective in that it massed more firepower in the VC "killing zone". Concentration is considered to be an extra-closed column (10 - 15 meters between vehicles).

e. VC used a trench in defense to trap attackers. The main VC elements were in fortified positions on a small hill and had prepared a straight-line trench near the bottom. As the attacking U.S. platoon approached the position, they came under mortar, grenade and automatic weapons fire. The U.S. forces made the instinctive reaction of taking cover in the trench in preparation for the assault. The VC maneuvered a machine gun into the trench on the flank of the platoon, giving them good enfilade fire which caused heavy casualties in the platoon in a matter of seconds. The attacking forces could have denied success of this maneuver to the VC had flank security been established prior to seeking cover in the trench.

f. The VC use routes of attack as initial routes of withdrawal. Several VC captives stated that the initial route of withdrawal from an objective area or ambush site is the same route that is used for movement to the attack. This makes it easier for the soldier to find his way back to assembly areas. In three regimental sized attacks against U.S. forces, the VC never attacked through the column. Their withdrawal was always in the direction from which they attacked. This is a prime consideration in the employment of artillery and air once it is determined that the VC are attempting to break contact. If the route of attack is known, artillery and air must be placed on the routes to block the withdrawal. It must also be made known to the friendly forces in order for the commander to properly execute the pursuit.

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g. The VC showed the capability to recuperate rapidly after heavy losses. On 8 June, two battalions of the 272d Regiment were severely decimated, losing upwards of 340 men. On 9 July the same regiment attacked a column with three battalions. Captives stated that up to 800 NVA replacements had joined the regiment on 7 July. On 30 July a returnee from the 271st Regiment stated that his regiment had received 500 NVA replacements on 26 July. The 271st Regiment had approximately 570 men on 30 June. All NVA replacements were trained soldiers and gave the VC regiments the ability to regain combat effectiveness in short order. Intelligence personnel must consider this capability of the Viet Cong and continue to maintain locations of units that have suffered heavy losses.

h. When dropping CS-1 from CH-47 aircraft the drop should start about 200 meters before reaching the target area due to the minimum speed of 40 knots per hour. With a 22 1/2 second fuze, the drums should be dropped from 3300 feet to obtain tree top bursts.

i. Pathfinder teams should be attached to brigades when it is necessary to support a fixed airfield. Minimum equipment necessary will include runway lights and radio communications with FM and VHF capabilities. Personnel should not be rotated during the operation without proper coordination with brigade headquarters.

j. When USAF aircraft are utilized to lift elements of a brigade an air combat control team should be established at both the point of embarkation and the point of debarkation. This is necessary to have adequate control to prevent a serious accident and to enable pilots to receive instructions to make loading and unloading more efficient.

k. FAC's should be equipped with a radio covering the same frequency range as the ground troops. It is necessary for the FAC to be able to monitor the actions of ground commanders, thereby gaining a better perspective of the ground operation which in turn will help him to provide better close air support with higher assurances of troop safety.

l. The VC attempted to fortify the high ground around LOC NINH in preparation for an attack on that town. Extensive patrolling disrupted the VC fortifications, and allowed the decisive defeat of a VC battalion. Aggressive and continuous patrolling provides the best defense against enemy offensive build-up.

m. Supporting logistical units must maintain direct communications with the supported element. There were several instances in which the logistical support elements were not in direct land line communications. Radios were used, but due to the limited communications in the supporting units adequate communications were difficult to obtain. Logistical units must be provided with sufficient communications facilities to insure a primary command net with a backup radio net.

n. The majority of FCL products were delivered to forward support areas in 55 gallon drums. Since forward support areas are manned by a minimum of personnel the quick responsiveness required by the supported units at times was barely adequate. 500 gallon collapsible drums are preferred since they are easier to handle by support point personnel. Responsiveness of USAF logistical lift continues to be of concern although new procedures in requesting airlift and programming missions are being tested. Air Force personnel must be made aware of the necessity of back hauling empty containers.

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o. The logistical element does not have control of logistical aircraft. An Aircraft Control Center should coordinate all division air transportation. A detailed and systematic method should be established by the Support Command with close coordination between the G-3 and G-4 to insure all modes of land and air transportation are utilized to the maximum.

p. The medical battalion has a low priority for air movement. Because of this the forward brigades are usually moved into an AO and do not have the ready support of the forward element of their medical company. Earlier movement would enhance the supported units medical service. Four sorties are required to move the element. The brigade conducting operations in forward areas should consider the movement of their forward medical unit during operational planning.

q. When a convoy is attacked the direction from which the fire is being received and the major concentration of VC forces must be determined immediately. Due to the confusion that can result as personnel becomes disoriented a recommended method of pointing out the direction of attack is through the use of smoke. Heavy concentrations of supporting fires should be placed 100 - 400 meters off the road since the bulk of the VC force is often back from the road and moves up to fighting positions along the ditches after the initial exchange of fire. Main elements of the VC force will usually be located in areas adjacent to the road where the jungle is most dense and few or no landing zones exist thereby protecting their flanks and rear against rapid reaction forces.

r. Reconnaissance by fire by ground elements moving along a road is unsatisfactory if the fire is placed at a 90 degree angle to the column. The lead vehicles should direct their fire into the ditches where camouflaged foxholes are likely to exist. Enfilade fire in the ditches is more likely to cause the VC to disclose position prematurely.

s. The operation revealed significant shortcomings in the organization and equipment of the divisional aviation battalion for employment in the RVN type environment. The current authorization of 16 UH-1D aircraft in the airmobile company is wholly inadequate to support divisional quick reaction airmobile force requirements. The addition of five UH-1D aircraft to the non-divisional air assault companies is a step which should also be taken in the divisional airmobile company at the earliest practicable date. With 21 troop carrier aircraft, the divisional airmobile company would have a more potent airlift capability and be capable of properly supporting the division in airmobile operations. This capability is essential when non-divisional assault helicopter units are not available immediately.

ANNEXES:

- A -- Battle of SROK DONG Narrative
- B -- Battle of LOC MINH Rubber Plantation Narrative
- C -- Battle of MINH THANH Road Narrative
- D -- Operations Overlay - AN LOC - QUAN LOI AO
- E -- Operations Overlay - SONG BE AO
- F -- Operations Overlay - MINH THANH AO
- G -- Operations Overlay - TAY MINH AO
- H -- Raid Target 21 - 27 June 66
- I -- Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols
- J -- VC Installations
- K -- Close Air Support Sorties
- L -- Communications Traffic and Circuit Diagrams
- M -- List of Commanders
- N -- After Action Report 1st Bde
- O -- After Action Report 2d Bde
- P -- After Action Report 3d Bde
- Q -- After Action Report Division Artillery

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ANEX A  
BATTLE OF SROK DONG NARRATIVE



9 AUG 1966

## INTRODUCTION (U)

The 271st Viet Cong Main Force Regiment was defeated on 30 June 1966, near the village of SROK DONG in one of the classic engagements of the Vietnam conflict. In continuing their efforts to repel the 1st Infantry Division from the EL PASO II area of operations, the VC attempted to ambush Troops B and C, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry and Company C, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry. As a consequence, the 271st Regiment suffered heavy losses and was soundly defeated.

## BACKGROUND (U)

Operation EL PASO II commenced on 2 June 1966 when intelligence indicated that three Viet Cong and one North Vietnamese regiments were poised to resume their "Monsoon Campaign" by attacking GVN and U.S. Special Forces compounds in MINH THINH, HON QUAN, LOC NINH, and SONG BE. Because of this threat, Commanding General, II Field Force, Vietnam, directed one infantry and one artillery battalion be deployed to LOC NINH to strengthen the defenses in this area. Subsequently, additional elements were deployed by CG 1st Div until by mid-June the majority of the division was operating throughout BINH LONG and THUOC LONG Provinces. 1st Infantry Division troop dispositions as of 30 June 1966 are indicated on attached map 1. Two significant engagements had been fought with the VC prior to 30 June. On 8 June, Troop A (+), 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry had spoiled an ambush on Route 13, set by the 272d VC Main Force Regiment while passing through TAU O, an area between CHON THANH and HON QUAN. When the 4-hour engagement ended, the VC had lost 105 KIA (BC) with an additional 250 probably killed. The second significant engagement involved elements of the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry and CIMV forces in the Battle of LOC NINH Plantation on 11 June 1966. One battalion of the 273d Main Force Regiment was emplaced in trenches and heavily fortified bunkers but after massive artillery and mortar fire and air strikes, the positions were overrun. VC losses were 98 KIA (BC) and 150 KIA (Probable).

For about two weeks the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry with the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry (-) had the mission of securing the division base at QUAN LOI and the HON QUAN airfield. From 8 June, the cavalry squadron had been performing reconnaissance to the east, south, southwest, and to the north limited by the destroyed bridge on Route 13 at XT 722973. In coordination with ARVN forces the banks of the stream were prepared to permit emplacement of an armored vehicle launched bridge (AVLB) just to the left of the one that had been damaged. An operation was planned in conjunction with the emplacement of the AVLB, to commence on 30 June. The squadron plan was submitted to Lt Col Herbert McChrystal, Commanding Officer, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry, and was approved for operations in the area indicated on maps 2 and 3. The mission assigned to Lt Col Leonard Lewars, Commanding Officer, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, was actually threefold. First the squadron (-) was to cross Check Point GOLDEN GATE (AVLB) and proceed north along Route 13 conducting a reconnaissance in force. Troop C was to operate in area of operation FOOTBALL while B Troop would initially operate in FOOTBALL and later in TENNIS. Second, B Troop, in conjunction with operations in TENNIS, would escort an engineer scoop loader from LOC NINH, back to Check Point GOLDEN GATE. Third, the operation was to deceive the enemy as to the actual area in which the division was planning to operate in the near future. Both troops were to close back into HON QUAN by 1930 on 30 June.

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Troop B would have one platoon of C Company, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry attached, while the remainder of C Company would move with C Troop. The 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry maintained B Company on alert as the rapid reaction force. With final planning completed, the operation would begin on 30 June.

The vegetation in the area of the contact is wooded on both sides of the road. The only open areas are rice paddies, some stream lines, and small lakes. Even here, there is adequate concealment due to the chest-high grass. There are heavily forested areas as indicated on map 3 and the sketch maps, with the trees 150 - 200 feet high. Although movement in the grass is difficult to observe from the ground, it can be observed from the air except where the terrain is heavily forested. The chest-high grass comes up to the shoulders of the road. The weather at the time of contact was clear and hot.

#### THE BATTLE OF SROK DONG (U)

On 30 June, Troop B, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, with attached 1st Platoon, C Company, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry and AVLB section departed the squadron perimeter at HON QUAN enroute to Check Point GOLDEN GATE. The column was located at the bridge site by 0859 hours. Troop C was to depart HON QUAN at 0730 with C Company (-). However, this column was delayed until Troop C could reorganize after the search operation conducted until 2400 hours the previous night. At 0910, the column crossed GOLDEN GATE with B Troop leading and proceeded north on Route 13 to the operational areas specified in the order. Upon arrival at Check Point 1, the 3d Platoon with the platoon of infantry turned east and conducted a reconnaissance to the ford at Check Point 2. Due to the depth of the ford, the platoon retraced the route to Check Point 1, turned north on Route 13, passed through the 1st Platoon, and continued north. Order of march was now 3d Platoon with attached infantry, Troop Command Group, 2d Platoon, and 1st Platoon.

Troop C turned west at Check Point 1 and proceeded to the first stream. Three mortar carriers, ten infantry-men, and the 3d Platoon remained at Check Point 1 and established a perimeter. The mortars were laid west to support the troop. As C Troop moved west, they flanked the road on both sides. After crossing the stream, the infantry dismounted and deployed.

At about 0938 hours when the lead personnel carrier of B Troop, moving north on Route 13 toward LOC NINH, reached a point about midway across the rice paddy (sketch map 1), it began receiving mortar, small arms and recoilless rifle fire and appeared to be the only one engaged. 1st Lieutenant James P. Flores, B Troop Commander, could see the mortar rounds bursting from his position in the column about 600 meters to the rear of the lead vehicle. He immediately called Col Levane, who was over the area in an OH-13 helicopter. The 3d Platoon then reported receiving heavy fire from the north and north-west. A preplanned airstrike was currently in progress vicinity XT 7499, which Col Levane diverted to XU 721018 at Lt Flores' request. Lt Flores then called the 2d Platoon forward and deployed them around the 3d Platoon. The 2d Platoon brought their two tanks and one from the 1st Platoon forward. By this time all but one tank and a personnel carrier of the 3d Platoon had returned to Check Point 1 with wounded and to replenish ammunition. All platoons were now in contact on both sides of the road, with the heaviest volume of fire coming from the west.

The Viet Cong had set up the ambush in the shape of an "L", with a heavy security element crossing the road along the trail north of the paddy. The logs piled at random to the east of Check Point 3 afforded good protection and some of the recoilless rifles were probably located here. Mortars were reported by a forward air controller in the woods to the north of the village. The ambush extended for about 2000 meters, but with the exception of a security element to the northeast of Check Point 1, the eastern side of the road was lightly defended. The VC appeared to be lined up all along the west side of the road with the heavy weapons about 150 meters from the road in the heaviest vegetation. The VC were wearing a variety of khaki, black, and green uniforms. One strong point had been established by the VC in vicinity XV 722007. The recoilless rifles caused the most trouble, and were also the most difficult to locate. During the first 30 minutes of the contact, the enemy concentrated on knocking out the tanks. All four B Troop tanks were disabled from hits on the tank commander's cupola and subsequent wounding of the crew.

The 1st Platoon of B Troop was carrying the wounded to GOLDEN GATE with an intermediate aid station set up at Check Point 1. They also helped with the establishment of a strong point at Check Point 1. Because the incoming fire at Check Point 1 was so intense, Dust Off aircraft could not land so the squadron S-3 set-up the Dust Off LZ at GOLDEN GATE and wounded were collected at Check Point 1 and then moved south.

Troop B concentrated on laying down a heavy base of fire to the west. Airstrikes which had been continuous from the initial strike, were being placed to the north and west. Artillery was attacking targets on the east of Route 13 and armed UH-1B's and CH-47's were making firing passes north and south on the areas immediately adjacent to the road. When the 1st Platoon reported receiving fire at Check Point 1, it appeared to Lt Flores that the VC were attempting to cut him off from Check Point 1. An airstrike was immediately called in and the fire slackened at this location. The remaining elements at the head of the column were still receiving heavy fire from all types of weapons and Lt Flores called requesting C Troop come up and help.

When the first contact was reported, Captain Stephen Slattery, C Troop Commander, ordered the infantry to mount up and prepare to move back to Check Point 1, establish a strong point, and be prepared to assist B Troop. The 3d Platoon had been receiving some light fire at Check Point 1, but when the other platoons arrived at this location, the fire became more intense. Several of the infantry riding on the personnel carriers were hit as mortar rounds started falling into the area. Capt Slattery ordered the platoons to deploy and push out the perimeter, primarily to the north. The 3d Platoon was operating northwest of the crossroads, 1st Platoon east, and 2d Platoon west and southwest. The mortars had been re-laid to fire to the north. Check Point 1 was becoming very jammed with C Troop maneuvering and vehicles returning with B Troop wounded. Check Point 1 continued to receive heavy small arms fire with most of it coming from west of the road. Mortar and recoilless fire was being answered with a heavy volume of 50 caliber fire from the personnel carriers at the road junction. Col Levane called and ordered C Troop to push north and relieve the pressure on B Troop. The 3d Platoon was finally able to start moving north with the tank from 2d Platoon. About 200 meters from Check Point 1, the tank was hit in the turret and the commander, Sergeant Allison, and the loader were seriously wounded. They were pulled from the tank and evacuated. The tank continued north. The

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C Troop column consisted of the 2d Platoon, 1st Platoon, and Troop Command Group (sketch map 2). The 3d Platoon, C Company (-), and mortars remained at the crossroads. Intense fire was received all the way to B Troop's position, but a heavy base of fire was maintained by the personnel carriers and the tank. The brush was so thick and close on both sides of the road, grenades were just tossed over the sides of the vehicles. About 600 meters after the first hit, the tank was hit again, but the driver kept going even though the gunner, Sergeant Riddle was wounded and evacuated. When the Troop C column arrived at the tail of the B Troop position, Lt Flores said to go farther north and fire to the west. The 1st and 2d Platoons moved up and deployed as best as they could since they were blocked to the area immediately left and right of the road. Fire was directed east and west with the heaviest volume to the west. Col Lewane ordered C Troop to hold at this point until B Troop could be extracted and move south. The C Troop tank went almost to the 01 grid line before it turned around and came back. Three men from the 2d Platoon joined Sergeant Wilson in the tank and although power to the turret was gone, they succeeded in getting the gun bearing to the north and northwest. Sixty rounds were fired before the ammunition was exhausted. The tank was then moved along side a disabled B Troop tank and the ammunition transferred. VC could be seen jumping around but didn't appear to be withdrawing. Artillery was firing north and east and airstrikes were being concentrated on the west, but appeared to be too far west. Captain Slattery asked Col Lewane to move them in closer and the next strike came in south to north with CBU which landed very close to the road.

With the arrival of C Troop, Lt Flores pulled all the remaining elements of B Troop back to Check Point 1, to regroup, rearm, and establish a block along the road west from Check Point 1. When the first lifts of A Company, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry were approaching the LZ, Lt Flores pulled back. Troop B remained at Check Point 1 for about 40 minutes to rearm and get the wounded and dead back to GOLDEN GATE. The next 30 minutes were taken to move the 1st and 2d Platoons down the road to block. The 3d Platoon handled the evacuation of wounded (sketch map 3).

Lieutenant Charles D Cole with the 3d Platoon of C Troop had been handling casualties between the forward elements and GOLDEN GATE. He loaded C Company on the personnel carriers and moved to the head of the column. After the infantry were dropped, the 3d Platoon deployed west of the road while the 2d Platoon moved off to the east in an attempt to push the VC out onto the LZ (sketch map 4). Lt Cole's platoon hit a VC strong point. He was hit in the chest and several others were wounded before they could pull back. The mechanized flame thrower with Lieutenant John K Lyon's 1st Platoon assisted in the extraction of 3d Platoon. As the infantry began to land on LZ 2 and C Company began to deploy, the fire slackened. Fire from the personnel carriers was directed more to the west. The VC started withdrawing and many were killed as they jumped to run through the high grass.

After a delay of about 30 minutes caused by enemy fire received from both sides of the road, B Troop was occupying their blocking position. Initially, the head of the column halted just west of the stream until information was received that a reinforced ARVN APC troop would assist. The block was then extended to about the 70 N-S grid line. From the blocking position, VC could be seen withdrawing along the trail that parallels the road and were taken under fire.

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Troop C established a perimeter along Route 13 until the infantry started making the sweep. By 1530 contact along the road had practically ceased and the personnel moved into the brush to search for dead and wounded VC and weapons. The 3d Platoon, B Troop returned to the blocking position with the Aero Rifle Platoon of D Troop. By 1700 movement had ceased and the two troops remained in position the remainder of the day.

#### REACTION (U)

For a week prior to 30 June 1966, B Company, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry had been maintained on a 30 minute alert as a rapid reaction force and was in this posture at the time B Troop made contact. When it became obvious that both troops and the attached rifle company were heavily engaged, B Company was alerted for probable deployment. Two questions had to be answered first; how they would be employed and by what means of transportation. All helicopters were fully committed on other missions. Twelve 3/4 ton trucks were collected from the various units in the vicinity of the battalion command post at QUAN LOI, and B Company was prepared to move prior to their arrival. At 1026 hours the helicopters supporting the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry in the SONG BE area were diverted to QUAN LOI, but by 1040 hours had not arrived. Company B departed by vehicle for the squadron command post at HON QUAN, and at 1105 passed to control of Col Lewane.

Between 1015 and 1020 hours, A Company, 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry was alerted, pulled off the perimeter, and instructed to be on the airfield in the event helicopters became available. Company A was assembled on the airfield by 1100 hours. General DePuy called Col McChrystal to the division command post about 1040 hours to be briefed on what had happened in his battalion. General DePuy made the decision to divert 12 helicopters from SONG BE. All helicopters closed the QUAN LOI airfield at 1150 hours. Col Lewane was informed of the current status of Companies A and B and asked where and how he wished to deploy them. A command and control helicopter arrived for Col McChrystal and he and the battalion S-3 went forward for a reconnaissance.

Col Lewane had selected two landing zones: LZ 1 in the rice paddy on the east of Route 13 (XU 727012) and LZ 2 across the road. He decided on the latter with the direction of attack south. At 1145, Col Lewane was informed that the first lift of A Company was loaded. The company commander was briefed that he would land on LZ 2; he should operate his radio on the squadron frequency; and he was under control of the squadron commander. The LZ was prepared by air strikes and artillery and then was marked with smoke from Col McChrystal's aircraft. A Company closed in two lifts.

Company B proceeded north on Route 13 toward CP GOLDEN GAME. Upon arrival at that location, the company would be moved into the battle area by helicopters or personnel carriers. Major Taylor landed at the bridge and discovered there were a number of wounded requiring evacuation by Dust Off helicopters and the pick-up zone would become too congested with assault helicopters landing there also. An alternate pick-up zone was selected at XT 734967 and the road column of B Company was diverted to this location. Company B then made an airmobile assault into LZ 2 utilizing four lifts of five aircraft. A command group from the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry had been prepared for lift after B Company had closed the LZ. As one helicopter in the last lift of B Company landed, it apparently struck a dud CEU bomblet. All personnel cleared the damaged ship

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before it was consumed by fire. Col McChrystal landed with B Company, and assumed command of Companies A and B. Col Lewans was informed of this and that the battalion (-) was attacking in the direction he had specified. 62

As the companies started pushing south, B was west of Route 13 and A to their right (sketch map 5). Company A met resistance about 200 meters south of the LZ while B Company was mopping up the remaining elements of the enemy just to the west of Route 13. About 300 meters south of the LZ, B Company uncovered C Troop and C Company (-). At this time, Col McChrystal assumed command of these elements. Company C was ordered to reorganize and search the immediate area, while C Troop was to reorganize, recover disabled tanks and personnel carriers, and support from Route 13 as Company B continued sweeping south and A Company southwest. Company B ceased to meet resistance by the time they had progressed about 800 meters from the LZ. However, A Company met stiff resistance along the creek, vicinity XU 715005 (sketch map 6). The Viet Cong had established a strong combat outpost line east and west of the creek. Company A sustained a few wounded. Since no headway was being made, C Company was committed on the right flank of A Company. The link-up was made by 1515 and the strength of the two companies forced the VC out of their positions. Dust Off was completed and the sweep continued south to the blocking positions held by B Troop and the ARVN forces.

At 1600, Col Berry, 1st Brigade Commander, landed and directed the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry to assemble at LZ 2 and become the brigade reserve. The units returned to an assembly area just south of the LZ in the order B, A, and C Company, where the battalion remained overnight. The reconnaissance platoon, and mortar platoon of the battalion were flown in at 1700. Three ambush sites were established on the south, southwest, and the west, but no enemy activity was experienced during the night.

During the time the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry was preparing for deployment, the 1st Brigade Commander was alerted at 1005 to move one infantry battalion and the brigade TAC CP in that order to QUAN LOI. The 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry commenced the move at 1234 hours using C-123 and CV-2 aircraft. The brigade closed the airfield at QUAN LOI at 1530. At 1622, the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry commenced an airborne assault into LZ BLUE, (map 2) and by about 1715 had closed into the area and began sweeping eastward.

Shortly after the contact was reported, the BINH LONG Province Chief offered units immediately available to him for support of the 1st Infantry Division. The 3d Troop, 1st Cavalry, ARVN, with 20 APC's reinforced with the 3d Company, 1st Battalion, 9th Regiment, ARVN, were attached to the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry. At 1100 hours the U.S. Advisor reported to the 1st Infantry Division G-3 for a mission. He was directed to immediately proceed north on Route 13 to link up with U.S. elements at Check Point 1. This was accomplished and the blocking position established at approximately 1300 hours (sketch map 5). The 9th Regiment had one other company immediately available for operations which moved to secure the bridge at Check Point GOLDEN GATE. The Regional Force companies were securing the road between the bridge and HOI AN. One company of the 9th Regiment was called back from an operation south of QUAN LOI as a possible escort for the move of an artillery battery north on Route 13.

At about 1100 hours, two CIDG companies were sent from LOC NINH and assumed blocking positions north of the battle area.

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63 The 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry was ordered at 1020 hours to move from SONG BE to QUAN LOI. The battalion closed at QUAN LOI at 1620 and A Battery, 2d Battalion, 33d Artillery moved by CH-47 from SONG BE, closing at 2245. This battery was moved to LZ BLUE (map 2) at 1115 hours, 1 July.

At 1420 hours, the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry was ordered to terminate its operation, return to LAI KHE and prepare for movement on order. At 1430 2d Battalion, 16th Infantry was ordered to move one company from the 2d Brigade Base Camp to PHUOC VICH and the battalion (-) to LAI KHE. The 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry closed into LAI KHE at 1715 and the last of C Company, 2d Battalion, 16th Infantry was on the way to PHUOC VICH in fixed wing aircraft by 1813.

The 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry commenced moving from LAI KHE at 1600 hours utilizing C-123 and CV-2 aircraft. All elements of this battalion had closed into QUAN LOI at 1710.

1 - 2 JULY (U)

On 1 July, follow up action continued against remnants of the 271st VC Regiment. The 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry secured LZ BLUE as Battery A, 2d Battalion, 33d Artillery was lifted by CH-47 to support future operations. Company C remained to secure the LZ while the remainder of the battalion moved to seize the bridge at XT 603998; link up with the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry (-); and with B Troop proceed to Objective 1 (XU 698027). Troop C joined Company C, 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry at LZ BLUE.

The 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry conducted an airmobile assault into LZ GREEN (XT 616995) at 1000 hours. The battalion moved to secure Objective BUSEBALL (XT 623996); left one company in blocking positions; and proceeded to vicinity of XU 721021 to conduct a search of the battle area of the previous day. Light contact was made with small groups of VC.

The 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry continued to search the battle area and uncovered numerous shallow graves and additional VC bodies. At 1600 hours, the battalion conducted an airmobile assault on LZ PINK (XU 592025) and occupied positions for the night as shown on Overlay 1. Company A made contact with the VC and Company C and Recon Platoon were sent to reinforce. Mortar and small arms fire was received until contact was broken at 2030 hours. At 0545 hours 2 July, the overnight positions of A Company, C Company, and Recon Platoon, were taken under fire by VC automatic weapons and mortars. The VC then launched a series of five assaults from all directions, but the attack was countered by fire support from artillery, gun ships, and fighter bombers. A total of 61 sorties were flown by USAF fighter bombers and included close air support by three flights using SKY SPOT (radar bombing) techniques. Company B was moved at 0730 hours to reinforce Companies A and C and contact was broken at 0600 hours. A body count of VC dead revealed that the attacking 3d Battalion, 273d VC Main Force Regiment suffered the loss of 75 killed.

At 0710 hours, the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry moved from overnight positions to support the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry. Link-up was made at 0930 hours and both battalions searched the area around the defensive perimeter. The 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry then continued north toward LZ ROSE (XU 5904) but made no contact.

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The 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry, minus C Company at the artillery base, assembled on Route 13 and was helilifted into LZ RED (XU 657050), closing at 1320 hours. This LZ and adjacent LZ WHITE (XU 657037) were secured by Companies B and C, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry and attached ARVN APC troop and rifle company. 64

The 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry was helilifted into LZ PINK and relieved the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry which returned to control of 1st Infantry Division at 1530. During the night the 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry came under mortar attack which appeared later to have been a cover for the withdrawal of the VC to the southwest and northwest. A sweep of the area was made with only minor contact.

#### FIRE SUPPORT (U)

At the time B Troop made contact, a preplanned air strike was in progress vicinity XT 7499. The aircraft had commenced dropping CBU at the time Col Lewane notified the forward air controller (FAC) that the armored column was in contact. The pilot pulled out of his southeast to northwest direction of flight and brought his aircraft down the west side of Route 13, expending the remainder of his CBU, Napalm, and 20mm. A large group of VC were seen running east along the trail north of the rice paddy. The next flight concentrated on the logs at Check Point 3 and the trail. A second FAC arrived about 1030 and started working along the trail. Col Lewane requested the area along Route 13 about 300 meters from the road be hit, however, the troop commanders requested it be moved closer to the road. During the dash of Lt Cole's 3d Platoon forward with the infantry, a napalm strike was placed along side the west of the road assisting his movement. Col Lewane called for a preparation on LZ 2, but delayed the actual landing when he was notified that aircraft were on station with CBU. This strike was placed from the CO grid line to the LZ. After the LZ preparation, air strikes were directed to the west to cover trails on which VC were withdrawing in groups of from 5 to 15. Napalm strikes were placed ahead of the advancing 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry.

From the initial preplanned strike, close air support was continuous and unlimited. A total of 88 sorties were flown as follows:

A4	- 24
F100	- 40
A1	- 10 (VNAF)
F5	- 6
F4	- 8

#### Ordnance expended included:

High Explosive	- 42.3 tons
Napalm	- 48 tons
CBU	- 11.5 tons
Rockets	- 160

There was a minimum of one FAC on station at all times. These FACs were in constant communication with either the squadron commander, S-3, or troop commanders.

Artillery direct support was provided by Battery B (155mm) and Battery D (8"), 8th Battalion, 6th Artillery located at HON QUAN (XT 762894). Battery B fired 548 rounds and Battery D fired 277 from the time contact was made until about 1900 hours.

Defensive concentrations had been plotted along the route which facilitated ground observers with the column to call for fire. However, most of the missions were adjusted by air observers. Within minutes after contact began, an air observer was over the battle area. Fire was most intense from the northeast and northwest and artillery was fired on the trail north of the rice paddy. These fires were shifted to the wooded area north of SROK DONG. Col Lewane then directed that artillery would fire to the east of Route 13. This was continued until such time as he directed that artillery be placed as a block along the streamline to the west. Artillery was also used in the preparation of LZ 2 and shifted prior to the landing to the woods on the north. Artillery continued to block along the streamline to the west after the infantry deployed. Groups of VC were seen to walk into the fire, lying down or getting in holes between volleys. By 1700, resistance had ended, but air and artillery continued to interdict likely assembly areas and routes of withdrawal. Interdiction continued throughout the night.

In addition to air and artillery, helicopter gunships supported the engaged units. At 0945 hours an armed CH-47, GO-GO 154, received an ambush reaction mission in support of the armored column. Contact was made with Col Lewane at 1000 hours. The pilot was briefed on the situation and made an immediate attack on the enemy forces 100 meters west of Route 13. The first attack was made at 1008 hours using 20mm and 50 caliber guns and 40mm grenades. After the first pass, Col Lewane requested that fire be moved to within 25 to 50 meters from the road and the second attack was made using the same weapons. A third pass was made using M-18 (7.62 Miniguns) and 50 caliber side and rear guns. The Miniguns appeared to have little suppressive effect and the aircraft received several hits. Transmission warning lights, oil pressure, and temperature gauges indicated heavy damage and an immediate landing was made in the rice paddy east of Route 13. A check indicated the aircraft was safe to fly and the aircraft returned to QUAN LOI to ascertain the extent of damage. At 1130 hours, VUNG TAU was contacted for a replacement aircraft which arrived at 1300 and continued attacks on enemy troops, evacuation routes, assembly areas, and close support of elements occupying blocking positions.

Operations with armed Chinooks ended at 2015 hours. Numerous sorties were flown by armed UH-1H's both as cover for the armed Chinooks and against targets selected by Col Lewane.

RESULTS (J)

Enemy losses included:

- 270 KIA (Body Count)
- 300 KIA (Probable)
- 7 VC Captives
- 40 Small Arms
- 23 Crew Served Weapons
- 1633 Rounds of Ammunition

(C) Friendly losses are as follows:

1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry

	KIA	WIA
Hq Troop		5
B Troop	7 (1 DOW)	32
C Troop	5 (2 DOW)	18
Total	12	55

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2d Battalion, 18th Infantry

	<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>
A Company	1	12
B Company	1	10
C Company	5 (1 DOW)	17
Total	7	39

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Seven armored personnel carriers and four tanks were damaged. One personnel carrier and one UH-1 were destroyed.

CONCLUSION (U)

As the reaction forces continued to search the battle area, conclusive evidence was found that the 271st VC Regiment had been decisively defeated and again failed in its assigned mission to destroy U.S. armored forces along Route 13. The rout of 271st Regiment can be attributed to several significant facts:

From the first indication of contact until the VC withdrew in defeat, Lt Col Lewane was in complete command of the situation. At the time of contact, the squadron was under OPCON 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry. Because he had complete control of the situation, subordinate elements of the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry were placed under his control when committed to the battle. Except for short periods of time when he returned to refuel, he was over the battle area. During his absence, he had his S-3 replace him to control the action and coordinate the fire support. Col Lewane was in constant communication with his troop commanders, artillery observers, forward air controllers, and gunships. He coordinated all the fires to insure that the maximum amount of uninterrupted firepower could be brought to bear on the enemy forces.

Lt Col McChrystal's plans for deployment of the rapid reaction force saved many valuable minutes, preventing a larger number of VC from withdrawing.

The decision of General DePuy to divert helicopters for the lift of 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry, coupled with the movement of B Company by vehicle to the pickup zone cut to a minimum, the time between landing of the two companies.

Preplanned airstrikes were available for diversion to the area of contact and subsequent close air support was continuous. There was unlimited support with varying quantities and types of ordnance.

Medium and heavy caliber artillery was available within range of the battle area and rapidly responded to requests for fire by Col Lewane.

Troop C was not initially engaged and was available for immediate reinforcement on Col Lewane's order.

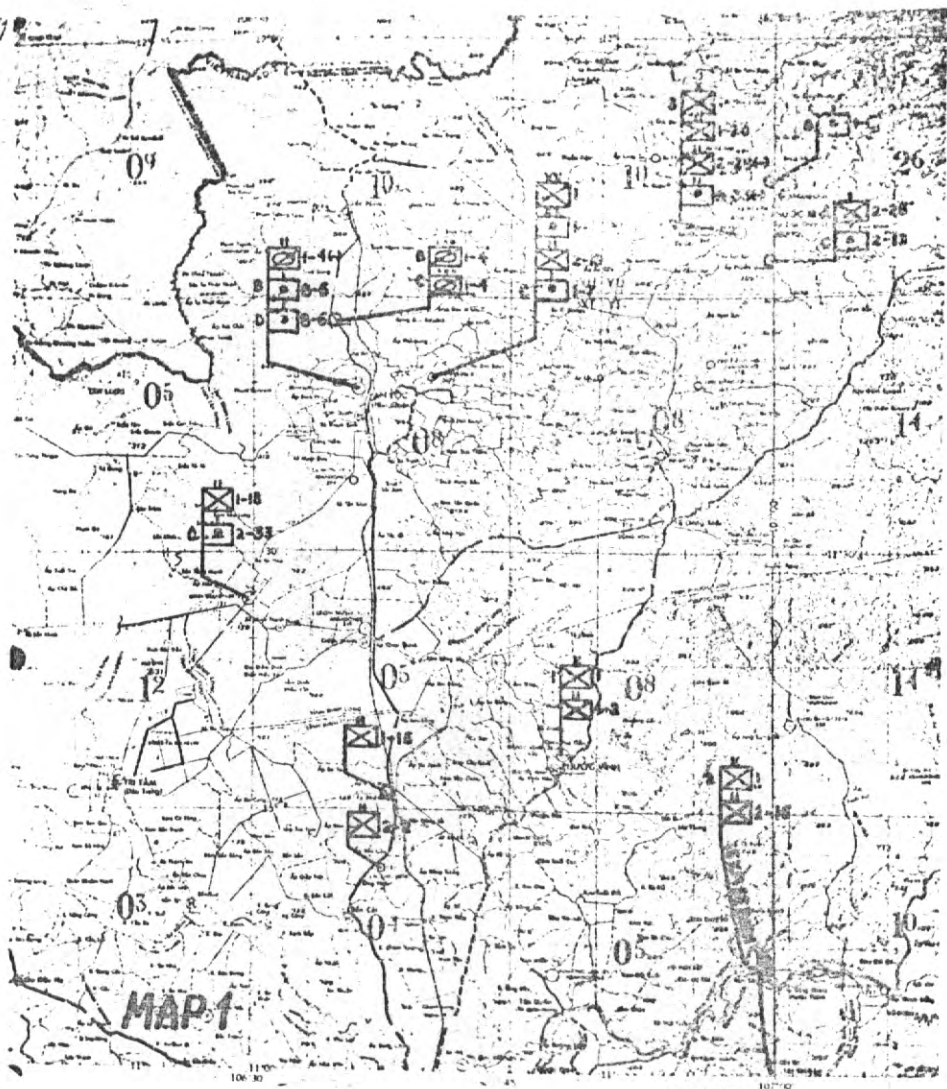
The tremendous base of fire laid down by the tanks and personnel carriers, coupled with the tenacity with which personnel fought and the outstanding leadership given the men, were instrumental in overcoming the numerically superior VC force. As squad and platoon leaders were wounded or killed, assistants immediately assumed command so that at no time were the troops lacking direction.

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The time contact was made is particularly significant. The battle started at 0938 leaving ten hours of daylight for the battle to develop, a reaction force to be committed, and a search of the battle area to be conducted after contact was broken. This denied the enemy the capability to police the area.

Weather conditions did not limit the ability of the forward air controllers or artillery observers to place effective fire on the enemy.

Incl -- MAP 1 - 1st Inf Div Troop Dispositions  
MAP 2 - Area of Operation 1:50,000  
MAP 3 - PICTOMAP Area of Operation 1:25,000  
Sketch Maps 1 - 6  
Overlay - Battle of HO KRIGNOU

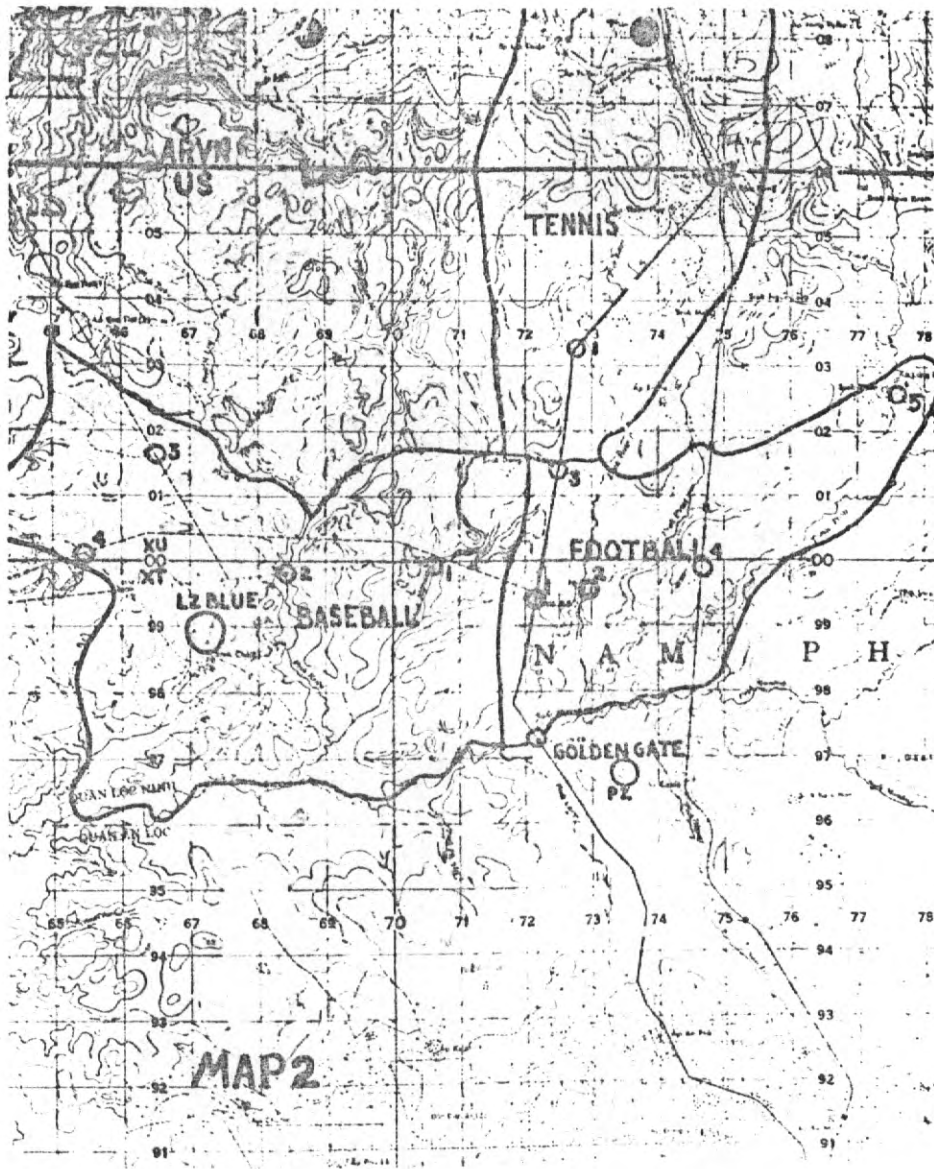


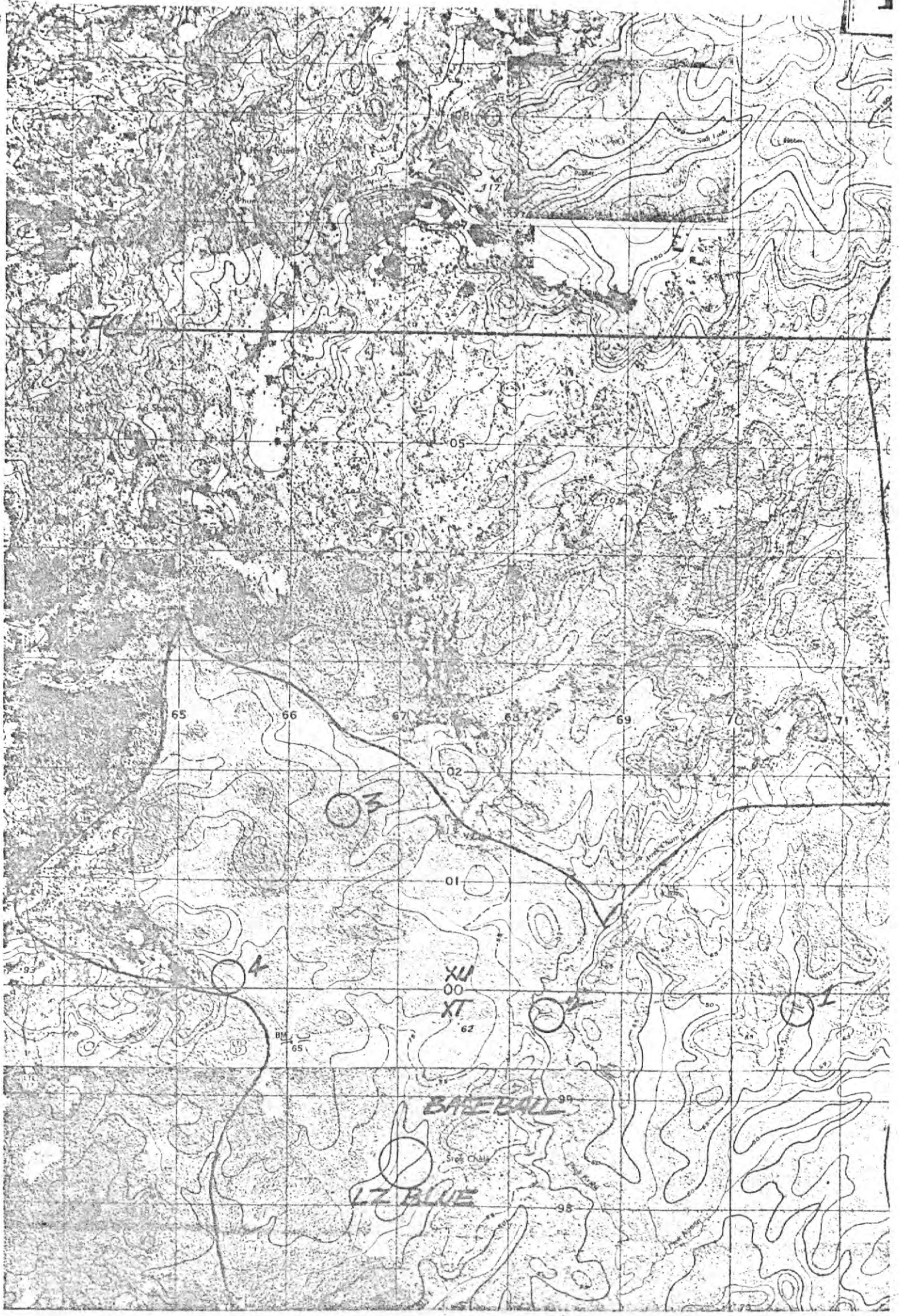
MAP 1

1000

ELEVATIONS IN FEET

71

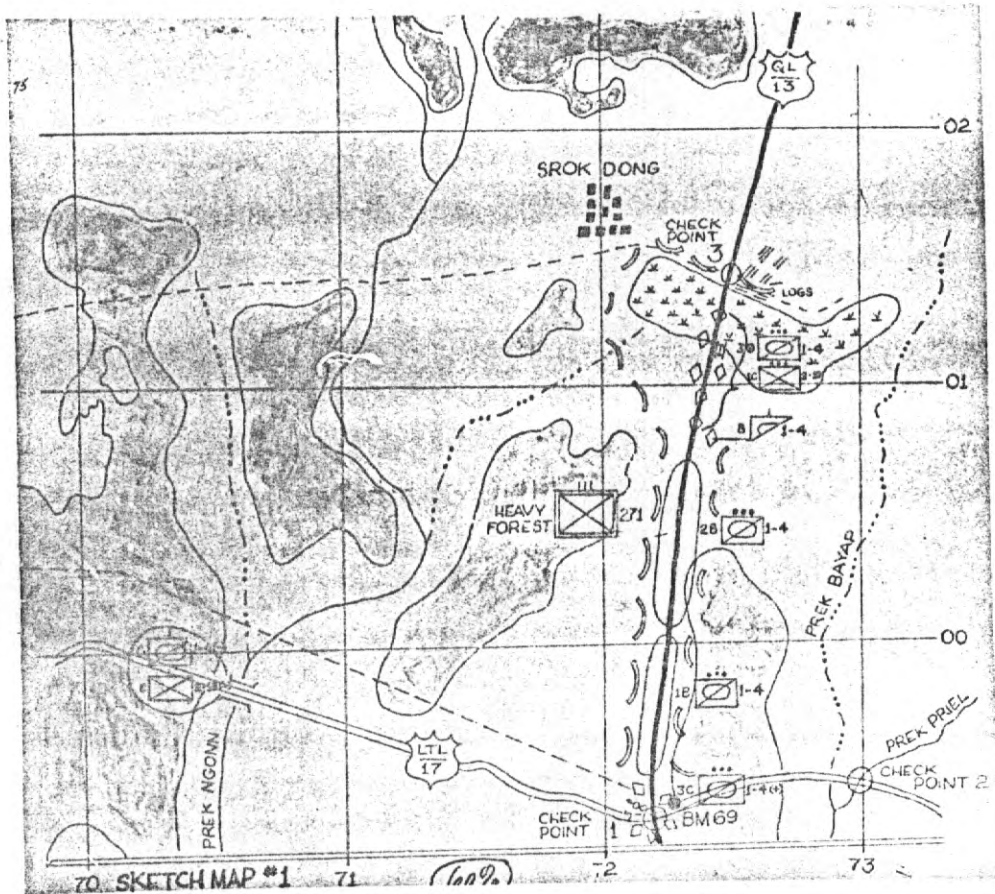




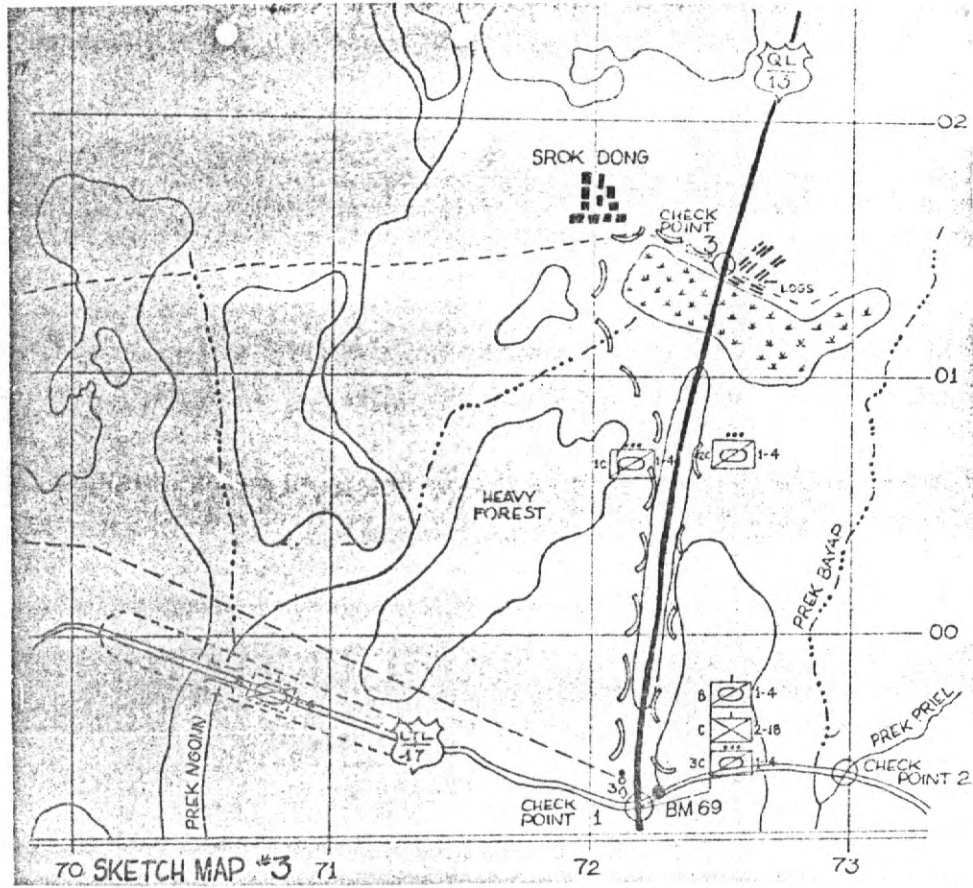


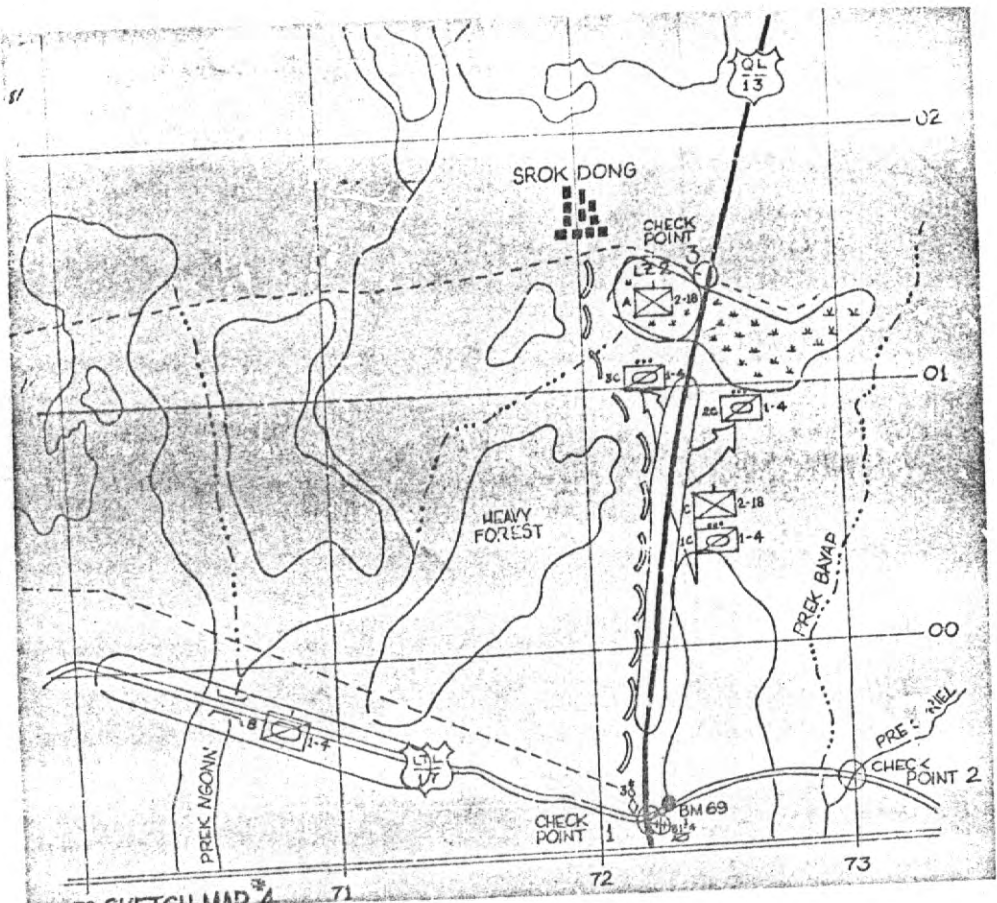




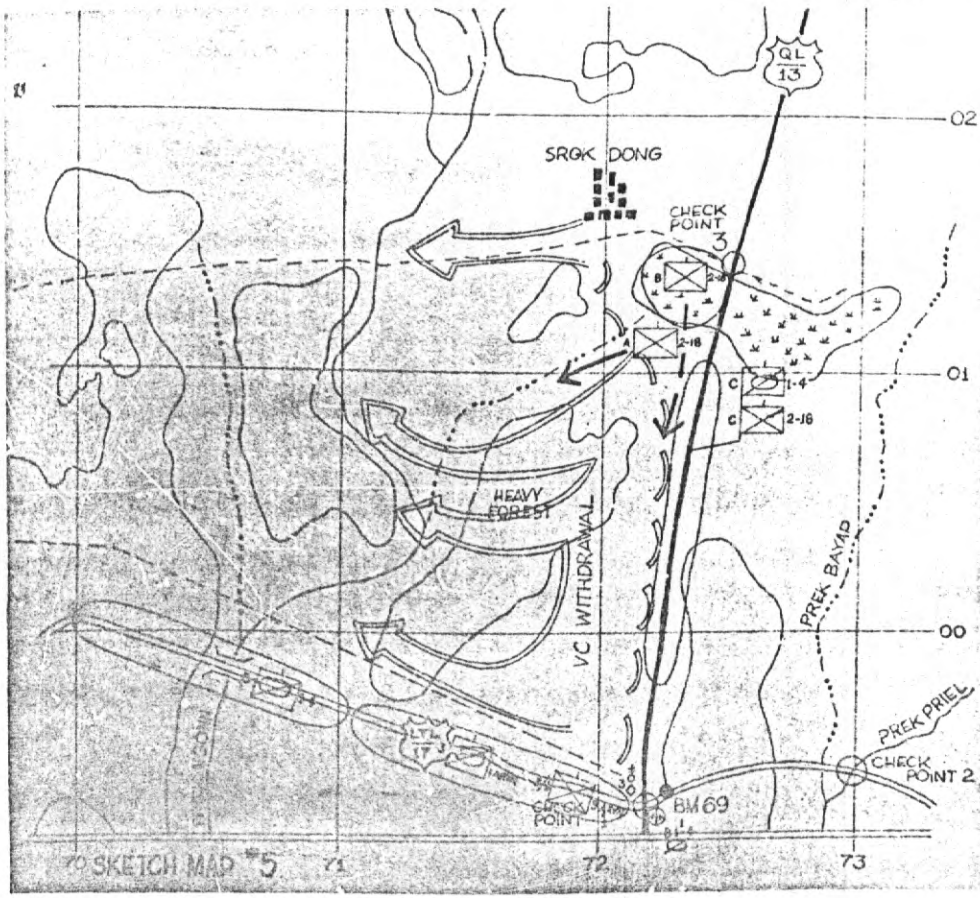


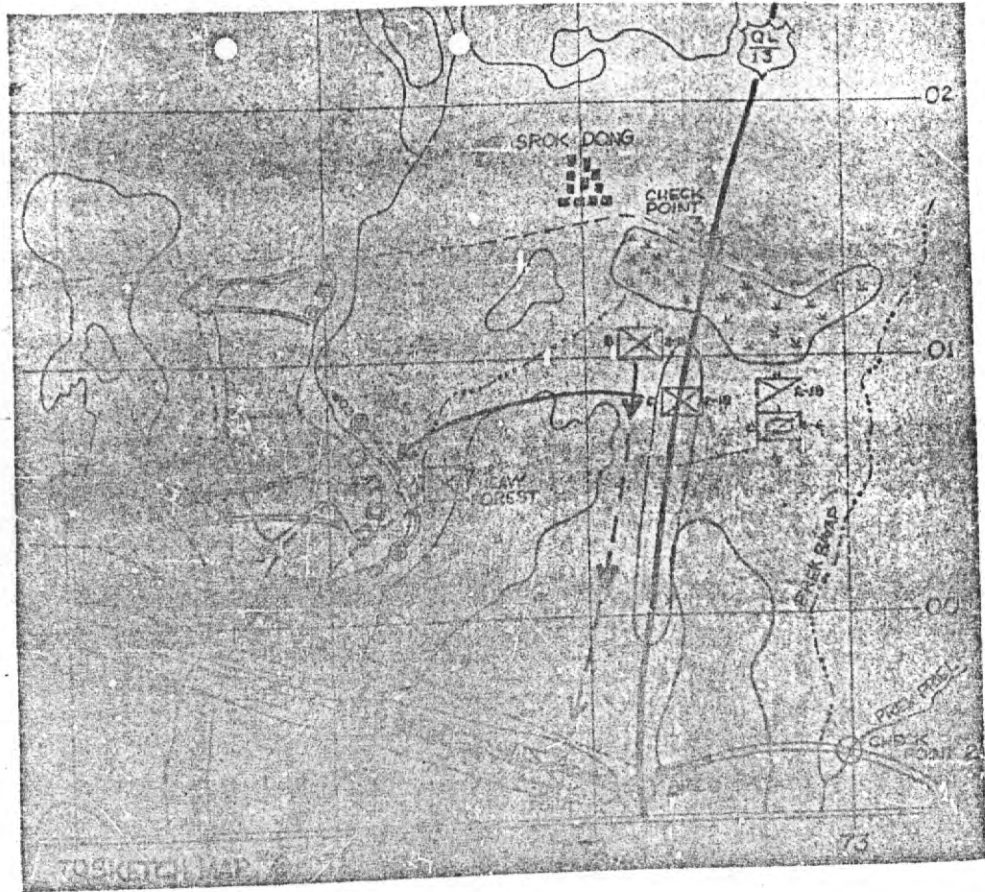




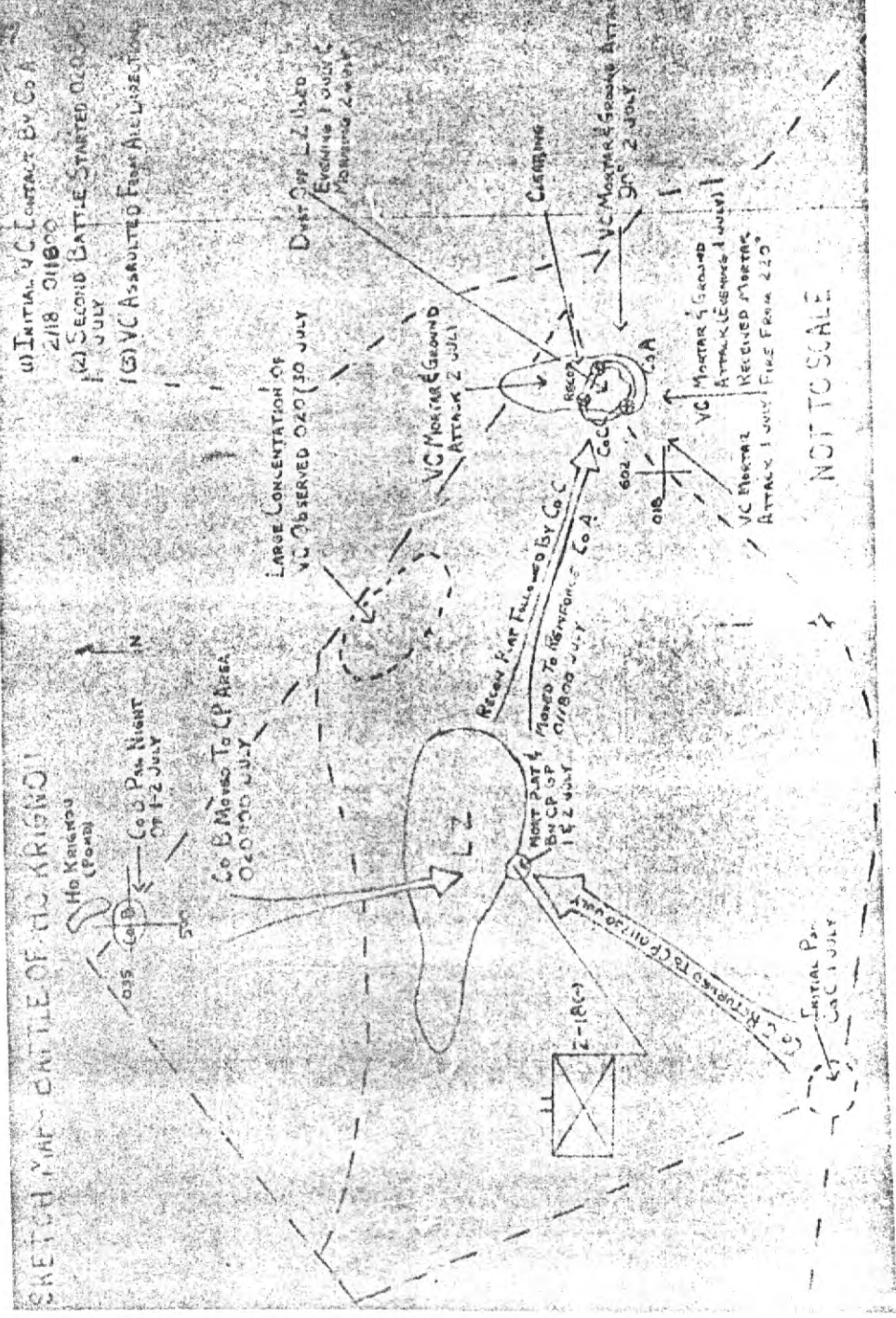


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SKETCH MAP - BATTLE OF CU KRINGOI



- (1) INITIAL VC CONTACT BY Co A 2/18 011800
- (2) SECOND BATTLE STARTED 020000 JULY
- (3) VC ASSAULTED FIRE ALLOCATION

LARGE CONCENTRATION OF VC OBSERVED 020730 JULY

Dust Off LZ Used Evening 1 JULY Morning 2 JULY

VC MOXTER & GROUND ATTACK 2 JULY

RECEIVED PAR FOLLOWING BY Co C MOVED TO HQ 020000 JULY

RECEIVED PAR FOLLOWING BY Co A MOVED TO HQ 020000 JULY

VC MOXTER & GROUND ATTACK 2 JULY

VC MOXTER & GROUND ATTACK 1 JULY

VC MOXTER ATTACK 1 JULY FIRE FROM 220

NOT TO SCALE

7

7

B

ANNEX B  
BATTLE OF LOC NINH RUBBER PLANTATION NARRATIVE

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ANNEX B Combat Operations After Action Report, Operation EL PASO II/III  
Battle of LOC NINH Rubber Plantation Narrative

RESUME OF BATTLE OF LOC NINH RUBBER PLANTATION

The Battle of the LOC NINH Rubber Plantation was conducted under the canopy of the gently rolling LOC NINH Rubber Plantation two kilometers west and northwest of LOC NINH, coord XU 737097. Vegetation under the 60 foot rubber trees was negligible. Weather for the operation was fair with the exception of heavy ground fog in the early morning. The fog delayed the heliborne portion of the operation from 0620H until 0815H when the fog dissipated sufficiently to allow the HU-1D helicopters to make their lift of one CIDG platoon and one platoon from A Company into the LZ vic coord XU 702112. Touchdown was 110835H Jun 66 following a five minute gunship preparation in the area.

The ground blocking elements, two platoons from A Company, 2/28th Inf departed the LOC NINH area at 0715H along Route RED and Route BLUE, respectively. At 0735H these elements reported receiving SA fire from approximately one platoon of VC vic coord XU 715093. A Company's 81mm mortars were fired into the area with unknown results. In the same vic, at 0810H, the blocking elements had three wounded by SA fire from the VC positions at the top of Hill 150. The 81mm mortars from A Company were again called on the hilltop. Following the mortar barrage the two blocking platoons moved into positions to the south and east of the VC locations on Hill 150, vic coord XU 715095.

The heliborne elements after their initial landing, headed south toward their original objective of the Village Nr. 10 complex, centered at XU 710100. At 0849H the blocking elements reported receiving MG fire from a bunker at vic coord XU 717095. Upon receiving this information the CIDG/A Company elements altered their mission and moved south to assist against what was now estimated to be at least one VC platoon entrenched on top of Hill 150. A Company's platoon moved to the north of the VC positions tying in with the two blocking forces on the east and south, thus forming a U-shaped ring open to the NW. The CIDG platoon attempted to penetrate the VC positions from the NW, but were repulsed by heavy SA and AV fire coming from the well entrenched enemy. The CIDG elements then displaced, tying in with A Company's blocking elements on the south. 81mm mortars were immediately called in to the north, sealing off any VC route of withdrawal.

Due to the intensity of the fighting C Company was alerted at 0910H to be prepared to move on foot to assist A Company. At 0940H C Company was ordered to move in support of the elements around Hill 150. By 1030H A and C Companies had linked up, C Company moving around toward coord XU 713098. As C Company moved to effect tie up, A Company indicated that VC were moving to the NE toward Hill 177, vic coord XU 721111. C Company was then ordered by the battalion commander to move north to intercept and attack the VC in that vicinity.

Upon approaching coord XU 720104 C Company ran into intense ground fire from at least one VC company firmly entrenched in bunkers with overhead cover in the vic of Hill 177. Artillery and 4.2" mortar fire was called on the VC positions and to the north to prevent the VC from escaping. At 1200H C Company requested ammunition resupply and further assistance to maneuver against the enemy force. In less than 15 minutes two helicopter loads of ammunition were airdropped on C Company's front lines. The Recon Platoon was immediately dispatched on foot from LOC NINH with still additional ammunition and a mission of aiding the C Company attacking elements south of Hill 177.

ANNEX B Combat Operations After Action Report, Operation EL PASO II/III  
Battle of LOC NINH Rubber Plantation Narrative (Cont)

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The Recon element moved to A Company's CP location, vic coord XU 720092 and then proceeded north to assist C Company, killing three VC snipers along the way. At 1330H Recon and C Company linked up with Recon being placed on C Company left flank vic coord XU 717104. In preparation for an assault, more artillery was fired on the VC positions around Hill 177. The attack commenced at 1425H with C Company on line east to west and the Recon Platoon pinching in on VC trenchwork from the west along a ridgeline running north vic coord XU 715113.

At this point the VC concentrated their fire on Recon and C Company platoon on the left, hurling grenades and firing SA from the trees. Simultaneously, the VC began hitting the Recon Platoon's left flank with intensified SA and AF fire. The Recon in turn attempted to fall back to prevent the VC enveloping movement. While in the process of accomplishing this maneuver, the VC moved a machinegun into a trench occupied by the remaining Recon elements, resulting in the VC overrunning the positions. C Company immediately countered with its reserve platoon, eliminating the VC resistance, pushing the enemy off Hill 177 into the artillery valleys to the north and northwest, terminating this portion of the battle at around 111615H Jun 66.

Meanwhile, in the A Company area to the south, consecutive assaults from the north, south, and west failed to dislodge the VC from their entrenched positions. A CIDG company moving west on patrol was diverted into a blocking position vic coord XU 700090. A Company's 81mm mortars continued to pound the VC positions, but to no apparent avail. The battalion commander then decided to commit his final reserve, B Company, at 1430H, at the same time moving the CIDG company east to XU 713090 into a more advantageous blocking and maneuvering location.

When B Company linked up with A Company at 1500H the A Company elements were repositioned to allow the artillery to fire a preparation all along Hill 150 prior to an assault by B Company. In the meantime the CIDG platoon attached to A Company and positioned vic coord XU 714093 retreated to the south after their interpreter had been killed by the VC, thus creating a gap in the A Company lines on the south. The SF Advisor then joined A Company until the battle ended.

Following a sixteen-volley artillery bombardment B Company assaulted Hill 150 at 1630H, completely overrunning the VC positions. The VC fled to the south and ran into a heavy volume of fire from the CIDG blocking force, causing the VC to scatter in complete disorganization.

After the final assault, consolidations were made in the battalion zone of action. Casualties were then evacuated, ammunition resupply was effected, and the battlefield was policed of VC bodies and equipment with a thorough search of the entire area. The battalion then moved on foot back to base camp location around the LOC NINH airstrip, final elements closing at 112100H Jun 66.

1. Casualty Figures:

US	VC
KIA - 33	KIA - 98 (80)
MIA - 33	MIA - 1 (Captured)

B-2

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ANNEX B Combat Operations After Action Report, Operation EL PASO II/III  
Battle of LOG NINH Rubber Plantation Narrative (Cont)

The enemy force was estimated to be from two to three main force VC companies. Because of the nature of resistance this estimation was never apparent until approximately 1200H.

2. Enemy Equipment Captured:

- a. 60mm mortar ----- 1 each complete with ammunition.
- b. SKS Russian Carbine -- 1 each.
- c. Panzerfaust ----- 1 each with ammunition.
- d. MG-42 machinegun ---- 1 each.
- e. VC webgear.
- f. VC medical supply.
- g. Numerous grenades, mines and small arms ammunition.

3. Ammunition Expended:

- a. 81mm mortars -- 400 HE, 14 Ill.
- b. 4.2" mortars -- 95 HE, 5 WP.
- c. 105mm Arty ---- 1143 HE.
- d. Small arms ---- two basic loads.

4. Air Sorties Flown: Air was used to block VC route of escape to the west side of the battle area. Sixteen sorties were flown by F-100's, F-4C's, and Navy A1H aircraft. Ordnance expended as follows: CBU, Napalm, 250 pound fragmentation bombs, 20mm cannon.

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ANNEX B Combat Operations After Action Report, Operation EL PASO II/III  
Battle of LOC NINH Rubber Plantation Narrative (Con't)

2nd Bn, 28th Inf, 1st Inf Div  
Loc Ninh, South Vietnam (XU 7308)  
101600H Jun 66  
KM

FRAG ORDER (OPERATION EL PASO II)

REFERENCE: MAP, SOUTH VIETNAM; 1:50,000 LOC NINH 6346 IV; LOC THIEN  
6346 III.

1. MISSION: A Co w/1 platoon CIDG conducts search of Village Nr. 10, Loc Minh Rubber Plantation, vic coord XU 7209, to clear area of local VC.
2. EXECUTION:
  - a. Concept of operation: A Co (-) w/CIDG platoon attached, at 110600H commences move by foot and HU1D helicopter to surround Village Nr. 10 and clear it of VC and VC sympathizers.
  - b. A Co: At 0600H two platoons follow Route Red and Route Blue to blocking positions east and south of Village Nr. 10. At 0630H one platoon from A Co w/one platoon of CIDG helilifted to LZ XU 701112, move south, conduct search and clear of VC in Village Nr. 10.
  - c. B Co: Be prepared to reinforce A Co on 20 min. alert.
  - d. C Co: Be prepared to reinforce A Co on 5 min. alert.
  - e. Heavy Mortar: GS, priority to A Co.
  - f. Recon: Reinforce on call.
  - g. AT: Demo support on call.
  - h. Coord. Instructions:
    - (1) A Co send one man to maintain constant coordination with CIDG.
    - (2) Gunship prep of LZ five minutes prior to landing.
    - (3) VC and VCS evacuated to Loc Minh on foot.
    - (4) Evacuate casualties to rear on foot if possible. Dustoff on call. Dustoff freq: 45.7
    - (5) FAC freq: 43.6

ANNEX B Combat Operations After Action Report, Operation EL PASO II/III  
Battle of LOC NINH Rubber Plantation Narrative (Con't)

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ACKNOWLEDGE:

BOWIE  
Lt Col

ANNEX: A

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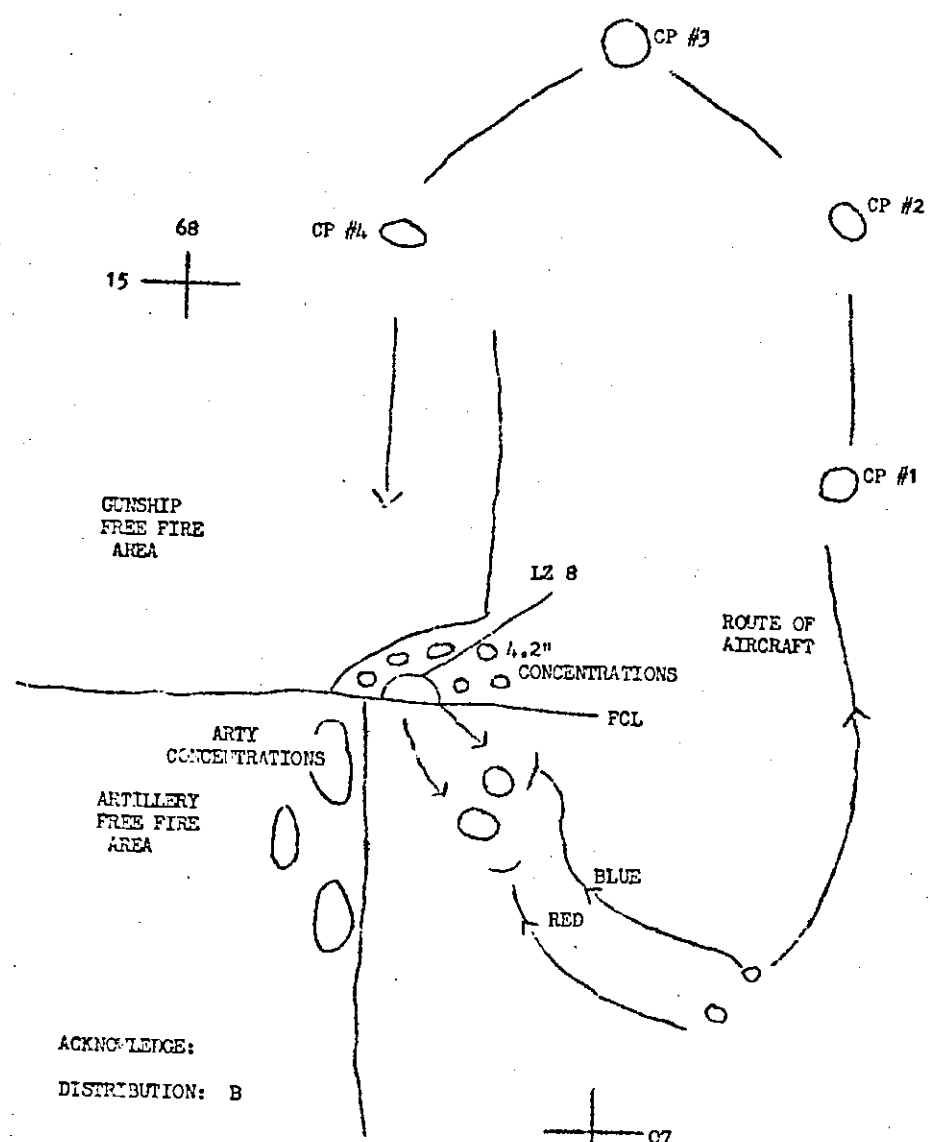
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2nd Br, 28th Inf, 1st Inf Div  
Loc Ninh, South Vietnam (XU7308)  
101600H Jun 66  
KDM

ANNEX A (OPERATION OVERLAY) to FRAG ORDER (OPERATION EL PASO II)



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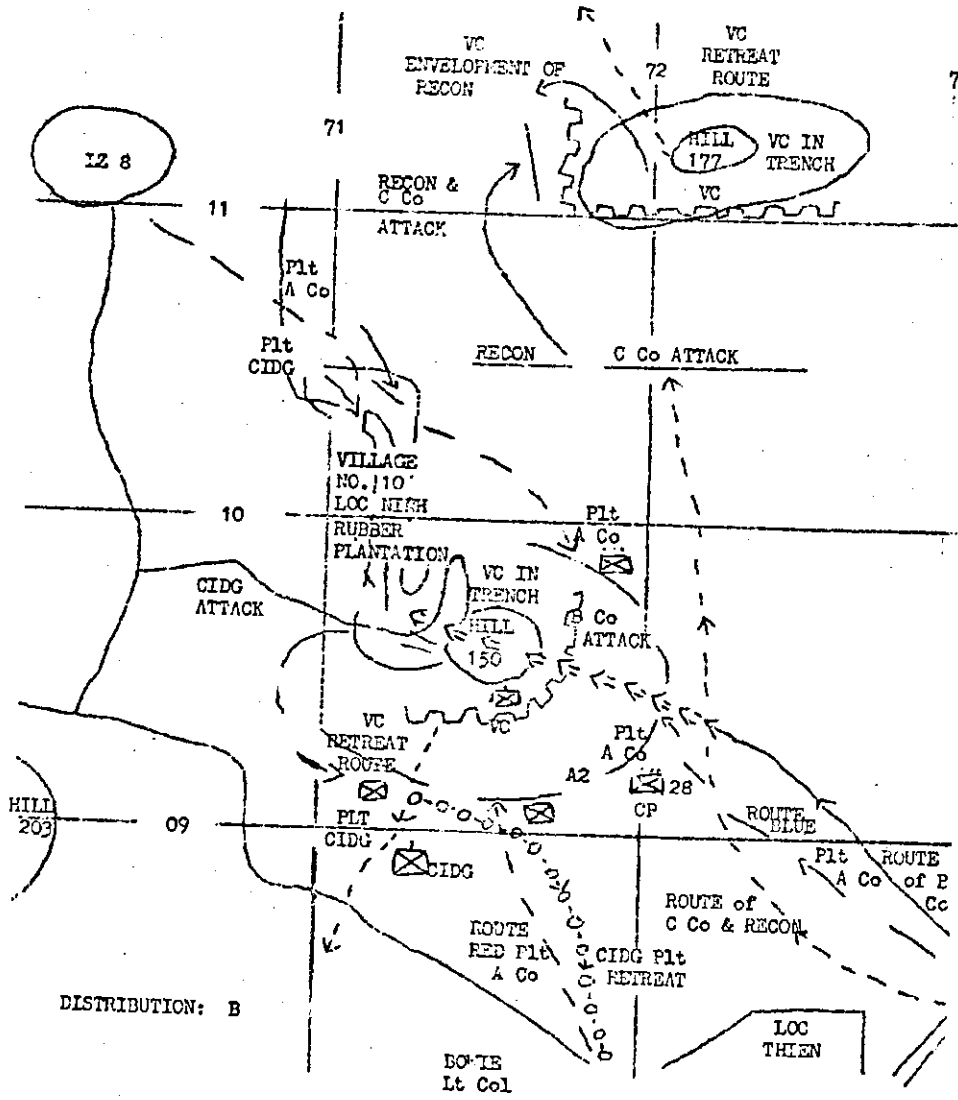
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2nd Bn, 28th Inf, 1st Inf Div  
 Loc Ninh, South Vietnam (XU7308)  
 12 June 1966  
 KM

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RESUME OVERLAY to FRAG ORDER (OPERATION EL PASO II)

NOT EXACT SCALE: APPROX 1:20,000 LOC NINH-XU7308



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ANNEX C  
BATTLE OF MINH THANH ROAD NARRATIVE

ANNEX C Combat Operations After Action Report, Operation EL PASO II/III  
Battle of MINH THANH Road Narrative

THE BATTLE OF MINH THANH ROAD

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The 272d Viet Cong Main Force Regiment is considered the elite regiment of the 9th VC Division. However, during the Battle of MINH THANH Road on 9 July 1966, this regiment suffered its second defeat by the 1st Infantry Division and supporting forces. On 8 June 1966, two battalions of the 272d Regiment had attacked an armored cavalry column and were severely decimated during the three and a half hours attack. The Battle of MINH THANH Road is another example of the departure from conventional tactics the 1st Infantry Division has experienced during its first year in the Republic of South Vietnam.

The Battle of MINH THANH Road was one of five major actions in which Viet Cong Main Force Regiments were engaged and defeated by men of the Big Red One during Operation EL PASO, June - July 1966. The battle is classic in two respects. First was the planning and execution. Second, this was not an instance of where the VC alone planned the attack and launched it at a time and place of their choosing, withdrawing before adequate resources were deployed in reaction.

Based on the previous successes of ROADRUNNER operations conducted by armored cavalry forces, the Commanding General, 1st Infantry Division, gave the 1st Brigade Commander the mission of developing a plan to lure the Viet Cong into attacking US forces. Colonel Sidney B Berry Jr received the mission, gave his staff the concept of operation, and issued the order for Operation OLYMPIA/EL PASO (OPORD 23-66), 6 July. The 1st Brigade mission was: "to position forces and conduct reconnaissance in force to lure VC forces to ambush/attack the column, enabling the 1st Brigade to destroy VC forces by offensive action." Operation OLYMPIA was a multi-phase plan in concept, easily modified to insure response to attacks on either the MINH THANH Road or National Route 13 south of AN LOC. In response to additional guidance from General DePuy, the 1st Brigade included a feint against SROC CON TRANG. On 8 July, a simulated airborne assault would be conducted into an LZ vicinity SROC CON TRANG following air and artillery preparations causing the VC to be drawn into the killing zone of a B-52 strike. Subsequent to receipt of the mission, extensive planning, reconnaissance and wargaming was conducted. All commanders participated in the plan and knew exactly what the philosophy was and what the other commanders felt. This facilitated the carrying out of modifications with a minimum of radio transmissions once contact was made. On 9 July, Phase II of the concept of operations would commence with Task Force DRAGON, consisting of Troops E and G 1/4 Cavalry and B Company 1/2 Infantry, conducting a reconnaissance in force along Route KNIFE (map 1) to MINH THANH. TF DRAGON would receive engineer equipment at MINH THANH and return to AN LOC. In the event TF DRAGON was ambushed or attacked enroute, forces previously positioned would respond immediately as the situation developed. Commitment of initial battalions would be against the VC flanks. Remaining battalions would be committed to the immediate battle area or to blocking positions. Landing zones and tentative blocking positions along likely VC routes of withdrawal were selected (map 1) to be occupied on order. To further insure the VC were lured into contact, the movement of bulldozers and resupply trucks from MINH THANH to AN LOC escorted with a small amount of armored cavalry was leaked. Information was also leaked that a convoy would be moving down Route 13 in the near future in hopes that should the VC not be lured into attacking the MINH THANH convoy, they would attack the one on Route 13. The latter convoy would be covered by Artillery Base II. The attack on the MINH THANH Road was preferred

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ANNEX C Combat Operations After Action Report, Operation EL PASO II/III  
Battle of MINH THANH Road Narrative (Cont)

because of landing zones. The plan was wargamed from the VC standpoint and although five possible sites were selected for the attack, the final position selected was the same location the actual attack took place. The intelligence estimate indicated a minimum of one battalion and possibly a regiment could be expected to attack. Intelligence had shown the 272d Regiment to be operating in the area in regimental strength.

On 7 July, the 1st Brigade began positioning its forces and completed care and maintenance for future operations. Headquarters, B, and D Batteries, 8/6th Artillery and A Battery 1/5th Artillery moved to Artillery Base I. The 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry commenced infiltration to MINH THANH, using UH-1D and CV-2 aircraft. The move was completed on 8 July. Forces at MINH THANH then included 2/2d and 1/18th Infantry and Battery C, 2/33d Artillery. The simulated airborne assault was conducted on 8 July by elements of 1/28th Infantry, followed by the B-52 strikes at 1100 hours. Air strikes were also employed against suspected VC bases in the SROC CON TRANG area. Headquarters Battery, 1/5th Artillery and C Battery 1/7th Artillery moved to Artillery Base II. Lieutenant Colonel Robert Maldane's 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry occupied positions around the abandoned airstrip 2500 meters east of Artillery Base I and secured the artillery with one company. The 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Rufus G. Lazzell, moved from LOC NINH to QUAN LOI, 5500 meters northeast on AN LOC, and came under control of 1st Brigade. Company C, 1/2 Infantry and an ARVN APC troop provided security for Artillery Base II. The 1/18 Infantry maintained one company at position S5 and the battalion (-) at the MINH THANH airfield. The 2/2 Infantry occupied overnight positions in vicinity of S11.

The 1/18 Infantry (-) began moving to S5 at 0605 on 9 July, followed by the movement of 2/2 Infantry to S11 at 0656. Company B, 1/28 Infantry, assisting in the security of Artillery Base I, returned to control of the parent organization.

At 0700 hours 9 July, Task Force DRAGON crossed the start point at the AN LOC airfield with C Troop, commanded by Captain Stephen Slattery, leading. Troop B, commanded by Captain David Kelly followed at 0710. The artillery began firing preparation along Route KNIFE at 0720 hours. Due to the low overcast and its interference with close air support, the column halted at 0755 in the vicinity of Check Point HANK. A 30 minute delay was anticipated, but it was 0900 before the column resumed movement. LTC Lowans, overflying the column, gave the order to move and Troop C continued to lead. The tactical formation consisted of two platoons flanking the road with a command group and a third platoon following on the roadway. However, as the column proceeded beyond the rubber plantation, the thickness of the underbrush and secondary jungle growth forced these elements on the flanks to return to the roadway. Tanks were interspersed with the platoons and a mechanized flame thrower was integrated into the tactical formation of each troop. Personnel of B Company, 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry were integrated into the elements of the squadron (-) with the majority with C Troop, giving each personnel carrier six fighting troops. After the column had proceeded approximately 2400 meters, the terrain on the flanks of the road opened sufficiently for assumption of the flanking wedge formation. The flanking platoons employed reconnaissance by fire, but no fire was returned and no enemy activity was observed. Artillery continued to fire on pre-planned concentrations approximately 200 to 300 meters ahead of the column and about 100 meters off the road. Fire teams (armed UH-1B's) and an

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Battle of MINH THANH Road Narrative (Con't)

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armed CH-47 were also conducting reconnaissance by fire on both sides of the road. The aerial scouts from D Troop flew ahead and to the flanks of the column to detect any VC movement.

Troop C assumed a box formation approximately 200 meters before reaching Check Point DICK with the Troop Headquarters closing the box in the rear and maintaining contact with the trail troop. An artillery preparation, followed by airstrikes, softened up the bridge area. Napalm was particularly effective in burning out dense undergrowth adjacent to the bridge. Following the airstrikes, the lead platoon, with two engineer mine sweeper/demolition teams attached and supported by overwatching tank fire, moved rapidly to the bridge site. Dismounted personnel secured both sides of the bridge and after a check revealed no demolitions were installed on the bridge, several M113's crossed to add force to the far side. Extensive scouting, mine sweeping, and checks found no evidence of enemy activity and the bridge was determined to be in good enough condition to support heavy armor. After the bridge was secured, the 1st and 2d Platoons moved rapidly across and established blocking positions on both sides of the road. LTC Lewane called at this time and instructed the column to speed up the operation. Because of the combination of the time factor and the thick jungle growth adjacent to the road, the column formation was resumed as the squadron continued movement toward Check Point TOM.

A forward air controller (FAC), flying over Route KNIFE spotted an estimated squad of VC at 0945 in vicinity of Check Point TOM headed north. An airstrike was immediately called in on the enemy. However, the column continued without incident until 1110. At a point midway between Check Points DICK and TOM, Lieutenant Jack Lyons, 1st Platoon leader of C Troop, reported an estimated five VC crossing the road from north to south. A second group of about ten VC crossed the road in the same direction and were taken under fire by the main tank gun. This was followed by incoming small arms fire then automatic weapons fire. The lead elements rapidly deployed and were engaged by enemy mortar and anti-tank fire. By 1115 the entire column was receiving heavy automatic weapons, recoilless rifle, mortars, and small arms fire (sketch map).

LTC Lewane requested a determination be made as to the direction of the main attack and on which side of the road the major concentrations were located. This was extremely difficult to determine because of the tremendous volume of fire from the deployed tanks and M113's and the confusion that existed as personnel became disoriented as the vehicles maneuvered up and down the column. Reports were received that the VC were attempting to cross the road ahead of the column from right to left and that enemy fire received from the rear was coming from the left side of the road. Based on these events, initial determination was made that the main force was on the left (south) side of the road. Soon after this, as accurate casualty counts and concise reports from the personnel on the ground and aerial observers were received, it was then determined that the main VC force was concentrated on the right side or northwest of the contact point. Artillery fire was concentrated in this area. The delay in making an early and accurate determination was probably the most critical time of the battle because of its influence on springing the reaction forces. The actual ambush site was approximately 1000 meters long. Foxholes with overhead cover were prepared in the ditch along the road, but did not appear to be fully occupied until shortly before the firing started. The bulk of the forces were from 100 to 400 meters from the road and moved up to fighting positions as the column moved into the

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Battle of MINH THANH Road Narrative (Cont)

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contact area. Drainage ditches, dug at a 45 degree angle into the contact area, were used as fire lanes by the VC although apparently were not dug for this purpose.

As soon as the attack started, the squadron assumed a compressed formation. The lead troop compressed and the trail troop closed on the lead troop and also compressed. The gunships and aerial scouts immediately moved out of the way of the air strikes and artillery to a distance of 10 kilometers and began looking for withdrawal routes. The ACH-47 was hit at 1129 and forced on the road approximately 600 meters southwest of DICK. It was later extracted by a "Flying Crane". This area was also designated as the initial Dust Off pickup zone and forward logistics site.

COL Berry alerted Major John C Bard at 1105 to be prepared to move the 1/18 Infantry to position N9 and Lieutenant Colonel Jack L Conn to be prepared to move the 2/2 Infantry on order. At 1117 the 1/18 Infantry was ordered to move on the trail from position S5 as the Battlefield Assault Force and minutes later the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry was alerted for possible movement to position NC or ND. The order was given at 1130 for the 1/28 Infantry to move to ND, then to the west and occupy a position southwest of ND from where it was planned to attack the enemy column to the southwest. The 2/2 Infantry was ordered to move to position S4, on foot, report their location, and prepare to attack due north. As the 1/18 Infantry started moving to N9, they found moving in the heavy jungle undergrowth very difficult. General DePuy directed division artillery to put more observers over the contact area. The 1/18 Infantry became tangled up in bunkers and foxholes and requested more close air support.

COL Berry radioed his present plans summary to the Division Tactical Operations Center (DTCC) at 1134: "The 1/18 Infantry is moving north parallel to the road to relieve pressure on the cavalry and to hit the VC flank. The 1/28 Infantry will land on LZ ND and move west to occupy positions southwest of ND and await orders. The 1/28 Infantry is planning to attack along the enemy column to the southwest. The 2/2 Infantry will move by foot to blocking position S4 report upon arrival and then prepare to move north to relieve the pressure on TF DRAGOON. The 1/16 Infantry has been alerted for possible movement at 1200 hours into the forward area." This plan was later modified by moving 2/2 Infantry to NC by helicopter. During the time the brigade commander was relaying his plans, the VC were hitting the column with mortars and recoilless rifle fire. Artillery was hitting the enemy force with such a heavy volume of fire, only the personnel on the ground could observe its devastating effect. Air strikes were continuous and at one time five flights of fighter bombers were stacked up waiting their turn to go in. LTC Leman's estimate of the size of the enemy force was possibly two battalions or a regiment.

The first lift of the 1/28 Infantry was off the ground at 1210 hours and touched down on LZ ND at 1215. By 1230 the entire battalion had closed ND. The 1/28 Infantry controlled its own fires on the LZ, but came under Operational Control (OPCON) of Commanding Officer 1/4 Cavalry (-) at 1250 by direction of COL Berry. At this time B and C Troop had compressed 1400 meters southwest of DICK and casualties were being evacuated to the Dust Off area vicinity of the downed ACH-47. COL Berry gave the order at 1326 to Commanding Officer 1/16 Infantry to commence his heliborne assault on NC and be prepared to move to N5 or N6 (LZ KA was

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Battle of MINH THANH Road Narrative (Cont)

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considered but not selected because it was too obvious and would probably be ambushed. This left NC as the only usable LZ from which the infantry battalions could be moved to blocking positions on the northwest.)

The VC appeared to have broken contact about 1330 and aerial observers reported large groups of VC moving to the northwest. Troops B and C pulled back to DICK for ammunition resupply. The 1/28 Infantry was located approximately 700 meters from DICK moving southwest, parallel to the road. When the battalion reached the initial contact point it also made contact with an unknown size force. The 1/18 Infantry was given a new direction of attack; east with the right flank on the road and left flank 500 meters into the woods. By 1405, 1/16 Infantry had the first lift enroute to NC and the 2/2 Infantry was preparing for lift to the same LZ. The 1/18 Infantry was deploying to attack parallel to the road in vicinity of TOM, converging on DICK. The first and second lifts of the 1/16 Infantry landed on NC at 1417 and 1430 respectively. An APC troop from the 5th ARVN Division linked up with the 1/4 Cavalry (-) at 1525 and was given instructions to retrieve 90mm ammunition that had been dropped along the road between DICK and TOM. The 1/18 Infantry received a change in direction of attack at 1435; new direction of attack north and block south of N5. An enemy blocking position was encountered approximately 800 meters north of TOM and air strikes were called in. The aero rifle platoon from D Troop reinforced C Troop at 1500 because more casualties had been sustained among the infantry than with B Troop. The VC broke contact with the 1/28 Infantry about 1540. At 1545, COL Berry recommended to General DeRuy that the 1/4 Cavalry (-) and ARVN APC troop block from TOM to DICK. The 1/28 Infantry would attack southwest along the north side of the road and then sweep back along the south side. The 1/16 Infantry was to move from NC to N5, leaving an element to secure the LZ for arrival of the 2/2 Infantry. After the 2/2 Infantry arrived, the battalion would move to N6 and in conjunction with 1/16 Infantry occupy blocking positions. By 1700, the first lift of the 2/2 Infantry was off SA enroute to NC. The 1/18 was still in light contact and clearing a bunker complex. VC in the area were wearing a leather belt with a copper buckle and a star superimposed on the buckle. The 1/28 Infantry was moving between the 1/18 Infantry and the road. The last lift of the 2/2 Infantry landed on NC at 1755. The 1/16 Infantry found the movement to N5 to be very difficult. Although contact was made with small groups of VC fleeing toward the SAIGON River, the greatest difficulty was caused by the heavy jungle undergrowth. This hurt the attempt to close the ring around the VC force. One small fight developed during which LTC Lazzell was wounded. COL Berry assumed temporary command of the battalion until LTC George H. Wallace III could be flown in to the Forward area. The 1/16 and 2/2 Infantry established blocking positions vicinity of N5 and NC respectively. Troop B occupied a blocking position at TOM while 1/18 Infantry established overnight positions northwest of TOM. The 1/28 Infantry swept west through the VC positions on the north side of the road and then returned on the south side. There was very little evidence that any considerable VC forces had been south of the road, further substantiating the determination that the main attack had come from the northwest. The 1/28 Infantry remained overnight north of TOM. Troop C remained overnight at DICK and the ARVN APC troop midway between TOM and DICK. An inventory of vehicles revealed that four M113's and one M48A3 tank had been destroyed and three additional M113's had been damaged.

On 10 July, the 1st Brigade forces conducted search and destroy operations to locate and destroy the remnants of the 272d VC Regiment,

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block routes of withdrawal, and deny the VC safe havens west of the battlefield. With the exception of contact with a platoon size force and one of unknown size, contact was limited to skirmishes with small groups of VC attempting to flee across the SAIGON River. The 272d VC Main Force Regiment had sustained the loss of 239 KIA (Body Count), 304 KIA (Probable), eight captives, 13 crew served weapons, and 41 small arms. An extensive bunker complex was discovered 1500 meters west of N5 and a battalion size base camp was located approximately 1500 meters north of TCM. The 2/2 Infantry swept from KC to DICK. Mortar positions were destroyed and evidence indicated the VC had conducted a hasty withdrawal on 9 July. The 1/4 Cavalry (-) conducted a search of the area between DICK and TCM and moved to MINH THANH at 1630. The remaining battalions were extracted from the battle area on 11 July.

Operation OLYMPIA achieved the results for which it was generated; the 272d VC Main Force Regiment was lured into attacking the 1st Infantry Division and suffered losses that probably reduced the regiment to 50% strength. The success of US forces during the Battle of MINH THANH Road can be attributed to several significant facts.

Intelligence proved to be excellent because one of the assumptions made in the intelligence estimate was that the 272d Regiment was operating in the area in regimental strength.

The value of thorough and deliberate prior planning and wargaming cannot be over emphasized. All commanders participated in development of the plan and each commander knew what the other would do. It was a plan of the whole group with each having a vested interest. As the plan was modified, it was easily executed because every commander knew the philosophy and how other commanders felt.

The decision to delay the move until the fog and overcast dissipated had a profound effect on the final outcome. This coupled with the fact that the attack came early in the day offered a sufficient period of daylight to fight the battle and sweep the area before the VC had the opportunity to return under cover of darkness and remove the dead, wounded, and weapons.

The artillery and close air support were effective as the principle killer. Over half of the enemy were probably killed by this combined firepower. The road provided an easily defined FSCL. With friendly forces fighting from the road, FAC's and airborne observers had no question as to where to place the fire. The positions selected for the artillery and the philosophy of bringing the artillery north of the FSCL and the air south placed the preponderance of both in these areas. The massed 155mm and 8" fires were instrumental in the quick breakup of the VC attack and subsequent withdrawal. Ninety-six fighter bomber sorties were expended in support of the engaged forces.

The support provided by the airlift mission commander had a tremendous effect on the successful outcome of the operation. Most important, he was present during the entire planning phase. He was also present with the unit to be lifted and sent his representative with the next unit to go.

Conversely, there were factors that had a detrimental effect on the outcome.

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Most critical was the difficulty in determining the direction of the main attack and its influence on the initial movement of the reaction forces.

Difficulty in moving through the jungle prevented the 1/16th Infantry from closing the ring and closing off VC escape routes. This was compounded by the lack of adequate landing zones to the rear of the VC force.

Viet Cong camouflage and fire discipline was significant. The pre-planned air and artillery fires, reconnaissance by fire, and continuous surveillance by airborne observers were ineffective in causing the VC to disclose his presence.

Certain readily apparent truths emerged from the Battle of MINH THANH Road in the form of lessons learned. While the basic fundamentals of tactical operations remain unchanged, changes in techniques are required as a result of lessons learned from different environmental conditions. The following lessons learned are included for the benefit of the units engaged in the battle, other units of the 1st Infantry Division, and other agencies interested in preparation of units or individuals for combat under similar conditions.

The direction of the main attack and the major concentration of VC forces must be determined immediately. This is important for two primary reasons. First, it is necessary in order to bring in the maximum amount of artillery and air to overcome any existing numerical superiority and break up the attack during the most critical time, the first 30 minutes. Second, reaction forces must be rapidly deployed to flank the VC positions and block routes of withdrawal. Due to the confusion that can result as personnel become misoriented, a recommended method of pointing out the direction of attack is through the use of smoke. Supporting fires should have been put in as soon as the first VC were spotted. Doubling the amount would not have been too much. Fires should have been placed farther from the road since the VC were initially back from the road from 100 - 400 meters and then moved up. Reconnaissance by fire farther back would have gotten the bulk of the weapons and troops before they moved up to fighting positions along the ditches.

The main attack was expected from the direction of where the jungle was most dense. It did come from that direction where there were few or no landing zones and thus prevented attacks on the flanks and to the rear.

The Compressed and Compressed "L" Formations were developed to win the firepower battle. In these formations, the lead troop precedes the trail or following troops by 100 to 300 meters. When contact is made the troops compress and the trail or following troops close on the lead troop. The Compressed "L" Formation utilizes dismounted infantry to form the "L". As the infantry move forward, the vehicles that are masked weave their way to the lead of the column. Air and artillery are placed in the pocket ahead of the infantry. During the Battle of MINH THANH Road, the Compressed "L" Formation was not used because the bulk of the infantry were riding on the personnel carriers of the lead troop.

This was the first time infantry were used as cavalry, placed in personnel carriers to fight from the carriers. This amounted to about eight or nine men per carrier including the crew. This was a mistake.

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resulting in too many personnel on one carrier to fight effectively. The optimum number of troops to fight from an ACAV is five. More than this hinder the action rather than assist it.

During the action, the M-14 Rifle proved superior to the M-16 Rifle. The infantry complained that dust collected during the road march caused the M-16's to jam. There were no reports of similar M-14 malfunctions.

The Starlight Scope proved effective during the night and periods of dawn. Enemy movement and lights were observed up to 100 meters. Activity was observed around two disabled M-113's on the north side of the road.

The type of action in which the column was engaged revealed the need for a representative from the squadron command group on the ground to establish a command post area to: (1) evacuate wounded, (2) resupply forward troops, and (3) exert additional command and control over the forward troops.

The reconnaissance by fire by the ground elements was unsatisfactory because it was done at a 90 degree angle to the column. The lead vehicles should direct their fire into the ditches where the camouflaged foxholes were located. A better possibility of causing the VC to disclose their position exists.

Tanks should have led the column. Tanks can take more punishment and put out a greater volume of fire than the ACAV. The canister round is effective at close ranges and on 9 July kept the VC from overrunning the column.

An armored unit can sustain itself during the critical-period of the first two hours. Trucks with infantry cannot be expected to sustain itself for more than a 30 to 60 minute period primarily because of the difference in the amount of firepower and ammunition available.

