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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, 11th Battalion, 31st Infantry
196th Infantry Brigade, Americal Division
APO San Francisco 96374

12 October 1969

After Action Report

Commanding Officer
11th Infantry Brigade
ATTN: AVDF-BESC
San Francisco 96374

Commanding General
Americal Division
ATTN: WDF-HL
San Francisco 96374

1. TYPE OF OPERATION: Offensive by Task Force 4/31 Inf against the 1st AF Regiment and the 31st NVA Regiment in the Hiep Duc, Que Son and Thang Bien Valley.

2. DATE OF OPERATION: 170001H August to 032400H September 1969.

3. LOCATIONS: FSB West (MT 990251), LZ Siberia (AT 902232), LZ Karen (AT 914239), Hiep Duc Valley (vicinity AT 938256), and (vicinity BT 006224).

4. COMMAND AND CONTROL HEADQUARTERS: 196th Infantry Brigade

5. REPORTING OFFICERS:

11th Bn, 31st Inf

CO, LTC Cecil M. Henry

CO, Co A/4-31 Inf, CPT James G. Mantell

CO, Co B/4-31 Inf, CPT William H. Gayler

CO, Co C/4-31 Inf, CPT Thomas L. Murphy and CPT John R. Thomas

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CO, Co D/4-31 Inf, CPT John Whittecar and CPT Donald L. Wineman
 CO, Co E/4-31 Inf, 1LT Barry L. Brandon
 Platoon Leader, Recon Platoon, 1LT Robert L. Williams
 Platoon Leader, Mortar Platoon, 2LT Charles F. Allen Jr.

1st Bn, 46th Inf

CO, Co B/1-46 Inf, CPT Alva R. King
 CO, Co B/1-46 Inf, CPT Jesse C. Sellers

2nd Bn, 1st Inf

CO, Co B/2-1 Inf, CPT Dwight D. Sypolt
 CO, Co C/2-1 Inf, CPT Rudolph Yap

6(C) TASK ORGANIZATION:

4th Bn, 31st Inf, 196th LIB

- HHC (-), 4th Bn, 31st Inf
- Co A, 4th Bn, 31st Inf (Detached to 3-21 Inf 21 Aug thru 26 Aug 69)
- Co B, 4th Bn, 31st Inf (Detached to 1-46 Inf 30 Aug thru 2 Sep 69)
- Co C, 4th Bn, 31st Inf
- Co D, 4th Bn, 31st Inf
- Co E, 4th Bn, 31st Inf
- Co A, 2nd Bn, 1st Inf (OPCON to 4-31 Inf 27 Aug thru 3 Sep 69)
- Co B, 2nd Bn, 1st Inf (OPCON to 4-31 Inf 20 Aug thru 2 Sep 69)
- Co C, 2nd Bn, 1st Inf (OPCON to 4-31 Inf 18 Aug thru 21 Aug 69)
- Co B, 1st Bn, 46th Inf (OPCON to 4-31 Inf 19 Aug thru 27 Aug 69)
- Co D, 1st Bn, 46th Inf (OPCON to 4-31 Inf 24 Aug thru 27 Aug 69)

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Btry C, 3-82 Arty (DS)

Btry C (-), 3-16 Arty (OSR)

(C) SUPPORTING FIRES:

a. Artillery Support:

(1) Battery C, 3rd Bn (105T), 82nd Artillery

(a) This is a direct support artillery battery with 6 105 mm towed Howitzer tubes located in relatively permanent positions on LZ Siberia (AF 902232). They are employed, normally, in direct support of the infantry units in the field, and in support of FSB West, Siberia, and LZ Karen.

(b) Since one of the 1st Bn, 31st Inf habitual missions is security of C Battery, a very close working relationship has been established between the battery and the infantry troops. During the period 17 Aug 69 thru 1 Sep 69, the battery was extremely responsive, timely, accurate, and effective. They fired close-in defensive concentrations, targets of opportunity, scheduled fires, illumination, obstruction, and blocking. The intensity and close proximity of ground combat required that artillery sometimes fire within 5 meters of friendly troops. This C Battery did with uncanny accuracy never once causing a friendly casualty. The expenditures during period were as follows:

	<u>NUMBER OF ROUNDS</u>
	8455
	548
	20

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(2) Battery C (-), 3rd Bn (155T), 16th Artillery

(a) This is normally a general support battery minus with 3 155mm towed Howitzer tubes located in relatively permanent positions on LZ West. During this operation, this battery was placed in a general support reinforcing role in order to insure greater responsiveness. They are employed in general support of the infantry units in the field, and in the direct fire and self-illumination role on LZ West.

(b) During the period 17 August through 3 September 1969, this battery was extremely responsive, timely, accurate, and effective. They fired scheduled fires, targets of opportunity, destruction, blocking, defensive, and illumination missions. Many of their targets were obtained and fired based on intelligence, both from agents and POW's. The expenditures during this period was as follows:

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF ROUNDS</u>
HE	3926
WP	436
SMOKE	130
ILLUM	20

(3) The total number of artillery rounds fired in support of the battalion during this period is as follows:

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF ROUNDS</u>
HE	12,381
WP	984
SMOKE	150
ILLUM	31

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(4) Enemy personnel and/or equipment destroyed/killed by supporting artillery is as follows:

17 Aug-3 Sept 69

NVA/VC	159
WEAPONS	11 Crew Served
BUNKERS	34
SAVPANS	1
SECONDARY FIRES AND EXPLOSIONS	56

(5) Organic 81mm and 4.2 Inch Mortars:

(a) The 81mm mortars organic to each company within the 4th Bn, 31st Inf have been consolidated, and in conjunction with 4.2 inch mortars of the Battalion, positioned on LZ West and LZ Siberia. However, during this operation, it was necessary to provide immediate, close-in support to the maneuver companies in the field. But, because of the intense close enemy fire, necessity for rapid movement and maneuver; and high daily temperatures in the areas of contact, it was impossible for a company to carry an 81mm mortar section with them. Therefore, an 81mm mortar section of 4 tubes was set up with the Bn forward tactical CP on hill 118 (vic AT 920259). This placed these organic mortars well within supporting range of all the maneuver companies. Their security in this location was a problem since all available infantry elements were needed in the area of contact most of the time. Therefore, although not desirable, the mortars secured themselves much of the time; and only through aggressive leadership and efficient

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utilization of personnel was this accomplished. When engaged by enemy small arms and mortars, this section repulsed the enemy and at the same time, reacted quickly and accurately to all requests for fire. The 81mm and 4.2 inch mortars remaining on LZ West were able to provide close support to the action in the vic BT 002228.

(b) During the period 17 Aug 69 through 3 Sept 69, the 81mm mortars and the 4.2 inch mortars were extremely responsive, timely, accurate, and effective. Their fires consisted of targets of opportunity, blocking, defensive, illumination, distraction, and navigation. Even while subjected to counter-mortar fire, both elements consistently, quickly, and accurately responded to all fire requests.

(c) The expenditures for the period 17 Aug through 3 Sept 1969 were as follows:

81mm Mortars

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF ROUNDS</u>
HE	2541
WP	55
ILLUM	30

4.2 inch Mortars

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF ROUNDS</u>
HE	1694
WP	86
ILLUM	272

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(6) Air Support:

(1) Between the period of 17 Aug to 3 Sep 1969, the 4th Bn, 31st Inf recieved both normal and emergency air support from US Army Assault Helicopter Gunships, US Army Medical Evacuation Helicopters, US Army Lift Helicopters from the 71st Aviation Company as well as USAF and USMC Tactical Aircraft. Preplanned, ~~skyspats~~, beacon drops, and direct airstrikes were utilized in large quantities, both for immediate tactical support and preparation for planned tactical maneuvers. Transportation requirements were filled both upon request through the Bde G-3 Air, and voluntarily by helicopters flying within the area and monitoring emergency requests for lift requirements. Both Air Force FAC and Army pilots utilized direct communications thus affecting a great degree of accuracy in delivering their ordnance. Medical evacuation helicopters flew 27 missions throughout this period, drawing enemy fire during practically every sortie.

(2) Tactical air targets for the period of 17 Aug to 3 Sep were hit as a result of visual ground sightings, aircraft receiving ground fire, intelligence from POW's and agents, and in support of attacking elements on proposed objectives. Every Helix FAC flying for the 196th Bde was utilized during this period.

(3) The sorties, amounts and types of ordnance, BHA, target grid, and immediate acknowledged results are listed below:

SORTIES: 55

TYPE AND AMOUNT OF ORDNANCE:

750 lb bombs- 15 tons

500 lb bombs- 117 tons

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500 lb Napalm- 59½ tons

2.75" and 5" rockets- 54

20mm Cannon- 24,000 rounds

BVA: The majority were given 100/100 or 100/90. On one occasion the strike was given a BDA of 70/60.

TGT GRIDS: The centers of mass of the majority of the targets were located at AT 895260 and BT 015225

RESULTS: 45 NVA KBA

2 51 Cal Dest

1 82mm Mortar Dest

16 Secondary Fires

6 Secondary Explosions

41 Structures Dest

50 Bunkers Dest

36 Meters Trench Dest

(4) During this period, a total of 31 skyspots were dropped, mainly on intelligence targets or suspected enemy locations for an approximate total of 46½ tons of ordinance. Other than the ordinance dropped, additional particulars are not available.

8(c) INTELLIGENCE:

a. Weather: During August, Southeast Asia was under the influence of warm weather. A tropical storm came inward from the South-China Sea on the evening of 27 August resulting in light rain and drizzle during the evening hours of 27-28 August. The weather conditions during the operation were generally good. Extreme heat was experienced in the valley floor with temperatures ranging from 110 degrees in mid-afternoon to

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78 degrees in the late evening and early morning hours. From 26 Aug to 29 Aug, rain showers and cloudiness existed during the late evening to early morning hours. Illumination ranged from 17% on 17 Aug to 100% on 28 Aug. For the most part, by early morning hours, there was good clear weather in the valley with a scattered ceiling of 2500'-1300' and a Visibility of 7-6 miles.

b. Terrain:

(1) General: The area consists of terraced rice paddies with many hedgerows and heavy foliage throughout the area. The valley floor rises gently from the northern portion to elevations of 118 meters along the southern limits. Slopes become steeper with heavy vegetation along the northwestern and southwestern edges of the valley. Route 534 stretches through the valley and is a high speed route for the enemy to use to resupply their elements. The Song Lau River running through the Hiep Duc Valley and the Song Thu Bong River running through the southern portion of the area of interest flow all year long. Although the rivers are usually fordable in several areas, they do present an obstacle because of the canalizing effect on both friendly and enemy elements. The rice lands offer excellent to fair fields of fire. The principle limiting factors are the numerous dikes. The low hills are characterized by brush and grass from 1 to 4 meters high, and normally this vegetation thickens with increased elevation. Air observation varies from excellent in the rice lands to poor in the heavily vegetated areas.

(2) Cover and Concealment: The dikes in the rice paddie lands provide good to fair cover. Concealment varies from poor in the paddies to good in the hedgerows. Heavily wooded forests around the hills and mountains

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offer excellent to fair cover and concealment.

(3) Obstacles: The Song Tranh River forms an obstacle in the southern portion of the valley. The paddy dikes hinder the movement of wheeled vehicles and tracked vehicles. The dense vegetation and mountains hinder the movement of foot troops, tracked, and wheeled vehicles.

(4) Avenues of Approach: The many streams and valleys in the area offer adequate avenues for fast movement in all directions. Vehicles are restricted to existing roads and trails. Track vehicles are restricted only in areas of heavy vegetation. The heavily wooded terrain of the mountains restricts LZ's, however, the valley floor affords numerous large LZ's.

(5) Effects on enemy courses of Action: The mountainous terrain favors the enemy's employment of defensive and evasive tactics. The enemy is knowledgeable of the terrain and trails network which provides a direct advantage for evasive action, harassing action, and rapid withdrawal. The mountains and foothills in the area also provide conditions for the establishment of good early warning systems.

(6) Effects on Friendly Courses of Action: Ground vehicular movement is limited to existing roads and trails. Track vehicles are restricted only to areas of heavy vegetation. Friendly forces must rely heavily on aerial resupply and evacuation. The flat rice lands provide good aerial observation and facilitate reinforcement by friendly forces.

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c. Enemy

(1) Available intelligence indicated that the enemy forces were in a period of rest and refitting from previous engagements with friendly forces. Therefore, the enemy was expected to avoid contact unless his base area was threatened. The area around the Song Tranh River located in the southern portion of the AO had long been an intermittent enemy supply stronghold.

(2) On 11 August 1969, elements of the 1st NVA Regiment, 2nd NVA Division conducted an attack on LZ West. After the attack, in which the enemy suffered 51 KIA's and an unknown number of wounded, the Regiment was thought to be operating in the vicinity of HILL 141 (AT 982292) with an estimated strength of 800 to 900 men in the 3 Battalions. This information was obtained from POW's captured during the attack. (See ANNEX B, Defense of LZ West against a combined Snapper and Infantry Attack)

(3) Enemy disposition and strength carried by Division G-2 prior to the operation:

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Strength</u>
2nd NVA Div HQ	BS 1598	200
GK-30 NVA Sig Bn	Unk	275
GK-31 NVA AA Bn	Unk	250
GK-32 NVA RR Bn	Unk	200
GK-33 NVA Mortar Bn	AT 9438	200
GK-35 NVA Ssg/Ren Bn	BT 1108	250
GK-37 Trans Bn (NVA)	BT 1598	200
GK-38 NVA Med Bn	BT 1598	200
GK-40 NVA Eng Bn	Unk	200
3rd NVA Regt HQ	AT 9513	180

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1st NVA Bn	BT 1517	180
2nd NVA Bn	BT 0820	200
3rd NVA Bn	BT 0612	200
1st MF Regt HQ	BS 3993	225
10th MF Bn	BS 3993	200
60th MF Bn	BS 3396	250
90th MF Bn	BS 2593	210

(4) It was thought the enemy had the following capabilities:

- (a) Conduct an attack with one Regiment and one NVA Mortar Bn within the AO.
- (b) Reinforce attack with a NVA Sap/Recon Bn, NVA AA Bn, and NVA RR Bn.
- (c) Conduct harassing and interdiction operations.
- (d) Defending his base area from fortified positions.
- (e) Withdraw to safe areas and avoid friendly forces.

(5) Location of the enemy during the operation:

- (a) The general location of contact during the operation with the 3rd (31st) NVA Main Force Regiment was BT 00022 (Center of Mass) (See ANNEX A- Map and Operations Overlays)
- (b) The general location of contact during the operation with the 1st NVA Main Force Regiment was AT 938266 (Center of Mass) (See ANNEX A- Map and Operation Overlays)

9/C) MISSION:

The 4th Bn, 31st Inf's primary mission consists of securing the resettlement District of Hiep Duc from the encroachment of VC/NVA forces. Inherent in this mission is the task of finding, fixing, and destroying and/or

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capturing enemy forces and equipment within the Battalion TACR.

10. (U) CONCEPT OF OPERATION: (See ANNEX A- Operation Overlays)

Task Force 4/31 Inf, through a series of offensive maneuvers, attacks to find, fix, and destroy enemy forces in vicinity AT 89526Q and BT 015225 beginning 170600H August 1969. Priority of fires withheld until contact.

11. (U) EXECUTION:

(a) General: Maneuver elements of the 4th Bn, 31st Inf had perpetually operated in both areas of contact for one year. The method of operation was characterized by constant patrolling and ambushes of platoon or smaller size units. However, for a month prior to the initial contact, this Battalion had two companies committed to a screening mission to the north of its normal TACR, vicinity AT 970330. On 12 August 1969, the screening mission was terminated and the whole Battalion again began working its normal TACR. Between 12 August 1969 and 17 August 1969, the Battalion was primarily concerned with policing the battlefield around LZ West following the attack of 11 August 1969 (See Annex B). The remainder of the Battalion was engaged in small unit patrolling north of the Hiep Duc Controlled Fire Zone and below LZ Siberia. During the course of policing the battlefield around LZ West, D Co, 4/31 Inf engaged an enemy force which later turned out to be the 31st NVA Regiment. This meeting engagement took place on the 17th of August 1969. The following day, 18 August 1969, B Co, 4/31 Inf, while searching for a rice cache northeast of Hiep Duc, made contact with what later proved to be elements of the 1st MF NVA Regiment. Both Regiment's parent unit is the 2nd NVA Division. Overall, the execution of the entire operation began with the above two meeting engagements, and continued through with various offensive maneuvers including frontal, flanking, and encircling attacks.

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(b) Specific:

17 August 1969 (See attached Overlays-Annex A)

At 1655 hours D Co killed 3 VC/NVA at BT 005229 and while checking out the area they came under heavy fire. The initial exchange of fire resulted in 1 IE KIA and 1 US WIA. Contact was broken and Co D prepared to receive resupply. As the resupply ship (Rattler 26) approached Co D they were taken under intense enemy fire which resulted in both pilots being wounded. They managed to fly the aircraft to IE Center where both pilots were medevaced. At 1900 hours Co D again made contact with the enemy and small arms fire was exchanged resulting in 1 more US KIA and 1 US WIA. At 1930 hours Co D broke contact and moved to their NDP. A medevac was arranged for first light. Results: 1 US KIA, 3 US WIA and 1 US MIA. No other contact was made by any of the companies.

18 August 1969- (See attached Overlays- Annex A)

At 1335 hours Co B/4-31 Inf made contact at AT 947278. The company came under heavy small arms, mortar and RPG fire and they suffered 6 US WIA's. At 1430 hours Co B began taking heavy enemy fire from N-SW-E.

Firebirds on station in support of Co B, received 50 cal fire. Co B remained in heavy contact and they continued to suffer casualties. One platoon of Co C was dispatched to Co B as reinforcements. Co B remained in contact, and airstrikes and medevacs were requested. At 1840 hours an airstrike began and the jets received heavy amounts of small arms fire with negative results. At 1930 hours, a medevac was attempted with gunship support, but failed because the medevac ship was hit a number of times and they were forced to abort. At 2035 hours, another medevac was attempted, this one

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being successful and 8 US WIA were extracted. At 2015 hours the 3rd platoon of Co C linked up with Co B and they moved to their NDP. Total casualties for Co B consisted of 9 US KIA, 20 US WIA and 1 Kit Carson KIA. Spooky was brought on station and remained on station throughout the night to support B Co. B Co accounted for 9 NVA KIA, 1 AK-50 and 1 AK-47 captured in today's action.

At 1210 hours, BT 004224 Co D made contact with an estimated company size enemy force. The enemy was well equipped and dug in. Co D received 2 US KIA and 5 US WIA. Artillery and gunships were directed into the area. During the afternoon Co D continued to maneuver on the enemy but at 1535 hours, were forced to pull back and regroup with a total of 18 US WIA and 4 US KIA and 1 US MIA. At 1735 hours all WIA's were extracted and contact was temporarily broken. At 1925 hours, the company began receiving mortar fire which was followed by a ground attack from the N, S, E and , with the main attack coming from the east. The enemy was using machine M-79 and AK fire. The attack was repelled and Co D suffered 2 US KIA and 3 US WIA. Shadow was requested and was on station all night in support of Co D. Co D had a total of 52 NVA KIA's in today's action. C Co from 2/1 Inf arrived at LZ West at 1000H and will proceed to the relief of Co D 4/31 Inf tomorrow.

At 1200 hours, AT 963264, the Recon platoon made contact with the enemy and they received small arms fire from the N, E, and S. This resulted in 4 US WIA's. Recon also received incoming Chicoms. A redevec was effected and at 1100 hours, contact was broken. Recon moved towards LZ West closing LZ West at 1600 hours. 5 WIA were recovered by Recon platoon in this action.

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19 Aug 69 (See attached Overlays-Annex A)

Co D remained in their NDP this morning to provide supporting fires for Co C/2-1 Inf and the insertion of 3/21 Inf. At 0715 hours Defensive Targets were fired for Co D because they were receiving heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire. The fire was coming from the E and NE and after mortars and artillery were fired on the area, the small arms fire ceased. A link up with Co C/2-1 Inf was effected at 1200 hours. No contact was made during the afternoon and the 2 companies set up a NDP at BT 004225. At 2240 hours movement was heard on all sides of the perimeter and at 2255 hours both companies received heavy incoming automatic weapons fire and RPG rounds resulting in 1 US KIA and 14 US WIA. A Shadow was requested and came on station at 2310 hours ~~the unit~~ received small arms fire from the E, S, and W. At 0140 hours a Medevac was completed extracting 10 US WIA.

Co B was airlifted to LZ Siberia and replaced by Co C/4-31 Inf this morning. One platoon of Co C seized OBJ X, Hill 118 (AT 920259) and a section of 81mm mortars was displaced from LZ Siberia to Hill 118. The mortars from E Co 4/31 Inf will be used in direct support of the maneuver elements. Co B/1-46 Inf became OPCON to 4-31 Inf effective after they were airlifted to LZ Karen. This airlift was completed at 1300 hours. Co B/1-46 Inf conducted a link up with Co C/4-31 Inf and further ~~co~~ for a combined attack.

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20 Aug 69 (See attached Overlays-Annex A)

Co B/2-1 Inf became OPCON to 4-31 Inf. Co C/4-31 Inf and Co B/1-46 Inf left their NDP and began moving East on the morning of the 20th. Co C was conducting platoon size patrols and the 1st platoon received small arms fire at 1020 hours resulting in 1 US WIA at AT 938270. The 1st platoon continued to receive small arms fire from 3 directions S, E, and N and were unable to maneuver. Blue Ghost came on station in support of Co C and received small arms fire while supporting Co C. At 1315 hours, 1st platoon closed with the remainder of Co C and formed a tight defensive position. It was reported that the enemy was on all sides of Co C and closing in. At 1510 hours the CO of Co C and five other personnel were wounded and the enemy was only 30 to 40 meters from the CP. Blue Ghost was called in close to Co C in order to break the enemy's attack. At 1520 hours the enemy ceased fire but remained in close and at 1545 hours the Blue Ghost received extensive ground fire while supporting Co C. At 1615 hours Co C received incoming mortars and Co C suffered a number of WIA's. Co C pulled back to regroup and to effect a link up with Co B/1-46 Inf and the companies co-laagered at AT 920270. While enroute to the NDP a medevac was effected and 11 US WIA's for Co C/4-31 Inf were evacuated. Co C suffered 4 KIA's and 2 MIA and 21 WIA today. Enemy casualties are unknown at this time.

D Co/4-31 Inf moved back into the area around BT 004229 and recovered 5 US MIA and all KIA from D Co were extracted. D Co/4-31 Inf and C Co/2-1 Inf set up a NDP at BT 004225.

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An AO extension was granted and the 2/7 Marines will begin moving from BT 040307 to BT 000273 in an effort to trap the enemy between the 2 American forces.

B Co/1-46 Inf picked up 10 US MIA of B Co/4-31 Inf from action on 18 Aug 69 and will secure them until they can be removed.

B Co/2-1 Inf was OPCON to 4-31 Inf, airlifted to LZ Karen, and prepared to link up with Co B/1-46 Inf and Co C/4-31 Inf on 21 Aug 69.

21 Aug 69 (See Attached Overlays-Annex A)

At 0510 hours a trip flare on the perimeter of D Co went off and was engaged with mortars and small arms fire. At 0625 the enemy fired RPG's but they fell short of the perimeter. At 0630 C Co/2-1 Inf engaged 1 NVA and killed him also capturing 1 AK-47. At 0655 Co C/2-1 Inf reported two more NVA KIA's and 1 AK-47 captured along with 2 full magazines and 6 Chicoms. At 0700 hours, Blue Ghost came on station and received small arms fire and at 0800 hours Co D broke contact. D Co/4-31 Inf was airlifted to LZ West and A Co/4-31 Inf was inserted into D Co's previous location.

At 0845 hours Co B/2-1 Inf moved to Co C/4-31 Inf to effect a link up which was successfully completed at 1000 hours.

At 0900 and 1055 hours LZ West received 5 incoming 122mm rockets with negative damage.

The 3rd Bn 7th Regt Marines continued to move westward in grids AT 9628, AT 9626 and AT 9622. The Marines made heavy contact with automatic and small arms fire. Results unknown.

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B Co/1-46 Inf and C Co/4-31 Inf secured OBJ M (AT 940279) and OBJ N (AT 942276) resulting in 103 NVA KIA. B Co/1-46 Inf, B Co/2-1 Inf and Co/4-31 Inf set up a combined NDP at AT 921259.

At 1600 hours A Co/4-31 Inf and C Co/2-1 Inf became OPCON to 3/21 Inf and 3/21 Inf assumed control of the battle with the 31st NVA Regt to the SE of LT West.

22 Aug 69 (See attached Overlays-Annex A)

At 0615 hours Co B/2-1 Inf, Co C/4-31 Inf and Co B/1-46 Inf began their move from AT 935258 to AT 920259, left at staggered intervals, and began sweeping to the northwest in the attack. All companies departed phase line blue (from AT 935258 to AT 920259) at 1005 hours under cover of artillery fire. No contact was made as the companies swept through their areas until Co B/2-1 Inf received mortar and small arms fire from AT 942273 at 1230 hours. Gunships and Artillery were called in and Co B/2-1 Inf suffered 12 WIA's and 1 KIA. At 1325 hours a dustoff was effected and contact was broken. All companies closed to their NDP at 1700 hours in order to set in adequate defenses.

Intelligence reports from Hiep Duc indicated a probable sapper attack on 13 Siberia and artillery was fired on the reported grids, 4 secondary explosions were reported. Monitored enemy radio transmissions indicate a large amount of supplies are being shipped from the north. It is estimated that we are in contact with 2 regimental size forces.

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27 Jan (See attached Overlays-Annex A)

At 0640 hours Task Force 4-31 Inf consisting of Co B/1-46 Inf, Co C/1-46 Inf and Co B/2-1 Inf departed Hill 118 (AT 92059) moving west. At 0710 hours the 81mm mortars from Co E/4-31 Inf on Hill 118 received about 10 rounds of incoming 82mm mortar rounds resulting in 4 minor WIA's. The 81mm mortars returned the fire using the grids picked up by the counter-mortar radar on LZ West (AT 990251). Hill 118 continued to receive sporadic incoming mortar fire throughout the day.

At 1010 hours 2/7 Marines were located in a blocking position from AT 97279 to AT 97260 and they are conducting patrols to the west.

At 1400 hours an element of the Task Force 4/31 Inf, Co B/1-46 Inf made contact with an estimated platoon of NVA. They received heavy small arms fire, automatic weapons and RPG fire resulting in 2 US WIA's. B Co killed 11 NV during this encounter and an urgent dustoff was called to evacuate the wounded. The dustoff was completed at 1525 hours.

At 1600 hours Hill 118 again came under enemy mortar fire and Blue Force spotted possible mortar grids and engaged them with unknown results.

At 2020 hours LZ West received 6 incoming direct fire rounds (82mm Recoilless Rifle) resulting in 1 US WIA. It was decided it was a direct fire by observing the flash and time of flight before impact. Fire was returned by the 155's from LZ West and the 4.2 inch mortars and the firing ceased.

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21 - 60 (See attached Overlays-Annex A)

All elements of the Task Force 4-31 Inf moved from their IDP's continuing their push to the northeast to find and destroy the enemy to their front. No contact was made until 1215 hours when Co B/2-1 Inf engaged a force of 20 NVA resulting in 2 NVA KIA and 1 AK-47 captured. At 1300 hours Co B/2-1 Inf received incoming mortars but sustained no casualties.

The 2/7 Marines are located at AT 968279 and will secure from there 300 meters SW. They will be acting as a blocking force and security force.

At 1300 hours, Co C/4-31 Inf recovered 10 bodies of MIA at AT 940275, belonging to Co B/4-31 Inf (these bodies had been secured earlier but lost during contact). Co C evacuated these bodies to Hill 118 where they were extracted to Graves Registration at LZ Baldy. At 1500 hours Co B/2-1 Inf began receiving incoming small arms and mortar fire at AT 942270 and they suffered 8 US WIA and 1 US KIA. Mortars from Hill 118 fired in support of Co C and the enemy firing ceased. At 1750 hours Co B/2-1 Inf engaged 2 NVA killing them and capturing 2 AK-47's.

At 1600 hours, Co D/1-46 Inf was airlifted to LZ Karen and OPCON to 4/31 Inf for operations on 25 Aug 69. At 1810 hours Rattler 27 (R/S Bird) received small arms fire while leaving an LZ after having resupplied Co B/1-46 Inf. The fire came from grid AT 937261 and the bird went down at AT 967255 either from enemy fire or mechanical problems. An element of Co 4/31 Inf was immediately lifted to the site to secure the bird and the helicopter was extracted by a CH-47. The crew suffered no casualties.

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21 August 1969 (See attached Overlays-Annex A)

At 1000 hours, Co B/2-1 Inf received small arms fire and the 81mm were fired from the forward CP on Hill 118. At 1025 hours Co B started receiving incoming mortar fire in vic AT 941266. The 81mm engaged this target also. At 1030 hours, Co B/1-46 Inf began receiving enemy fire as they maneuvered to the east to assist Co B/2-1 Inf in attacking the enemy located at AT 941266. Co B/1-46 Inf reported 6 US WIA and 12 NVA KIA. At 1115 hours, Co B/1-46 Inf were still receiving mortar fire and artillery was fired on the suspected enemy locations. At 1245 hours, Co B/1-46 Inf began receiving small arms fire after having advanced about 200 meters. The enemy attempted to surround this element but was halted by artillery and mortar fire.

At 1215 hours, Co B/4-31 Inf was airlifted from LZ Siberia to Hill 118 and will begin moving forward and will become part of the Task Force 4/31 Inf. 1/46 Inf Bn took responsibility for the defense of LZ Siberia and the close in defense of Hiep Duc.

At 1500 hours, Co C/4-31 Inf received small arms fire from some snipers at AT 932265. At 1500 hours, Co B/1-46 Inf received sniper fire resulting in 4 US WIA's who were returned to Co C/4-31 Inf's location for extraction. As the elements advanced numerous bunkers, trenches and spiderholes were discovered indicating it will be a slow process rooting the enemy out.

At 1530 hours, Co D/1-46 Inf made heavy contact while moving east at AT 950267 and suffered 6 US WIA's. A medevac was effected and Co D/1-46 Inf again attempted to move on. They immediately made heavy contact and again took incoming small arms and mortar fire. Co D pulled back to regroup and they suffered 14 US WIA. The dustoff was called and the ship took extensive small

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arms fire but suffered no hits.

At 1600 hours the mortars from Co E/4-31 Inf received AK-47 fire from the west end of Hill 118. It was thought that this fire was delivered in order to stop our mortars from shooting in support of the maneuver elements. The mortars received small arms fire until approximately 1800 hours. At 1920 hours, Co D/1-46 Inf engaged and killed 1 NVA at their NDP at AT 945264.

A summary of the day's actions showed that Co B/2-1 Inf had killed 25 NVA, captured 3 AK-47's, documents, 1 AK-50 and also destroyed 20 bunkers which were 6 X 6 and had overhead cover. Co B suffered 17 US WIA.

Co B/1-46 Inf reported 30 NVA KIA. 2 US M-16's recaptured, 1 SKS, 2 AK-47's, 1 AK-50 and destroyed 17 bunkers. Co B suffered 12 US WIA.

Co D/1-46 Inf reported 19 NVA KIA and 5 bunkers destroyed. They suffered 20 US WIA.

Total for the day was 74 NVA KIA, 10 weapons captured and 42 bunkers destroyed. Contact was broken at 1755 hours and the companies moved to NDP's. 26 August 1969 (See attached Overlays- Annex A)

Co B/4-31 Inf moved, on order today, to secure objectives 9 at AT 946269 and then effect a link up with the Marines at AT 950268. Co B made no contact until 1310 hours when they received incoming mortar rounds and they suffered 4 US WIA and 1 US KIA.

Co B/1-46 Inf followed Co B/4-31 Inf to objective 10 at AT 946268 and established an LZ to be used for resupply and evacuation of all casualties and reinforcements.

Co B/2-1 Inf attacked, on order, to secure objectives 1 at AT 936268, and continued on to objective 2 at AT 936272. Co B made no contact until

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1110 hours when a sniper wounded 1 man. B Co secured their objective without any further enemy resistance.

Co C/4-31 Inf attacked on order to secure objective 7 at AT 944270, at 0930 hours, they received M-79 fire and at 0950 hours, they were stopped by enemy small arms and mortar fire. Mortars and artillery fire was called in and the enemy fire ceased. C Co then moved on to secure objective 8 at AT 942273 and they again received sniper fire which resulted in 2 US WIA and 2 US KIA. At 1150 hours, Co C again ran into sniper fire and suffered 5 US KIA's.

Co A/4-31 Inf was released from OPCON of 3/31 Inf and prepared to be airlifted to join Task Force 4/31 Inf on 27 August 1969.

All elements closed their MDPs at approximately 1900 hours and set in their night defenses.

27 August 1969 (See attached Summary - Annex A)

At 0700 hours, Co C/4-31 Inf was airlifted from the field to LZ West and Co A/4-31 Inf and Co D/4-31 Inf were lifted to the field. Co B/1-46 moved to Hill 118. Co B and Co D/1-46 Inf was released from OPCON of 4/31 Inf to control of 1/46 Inf Bn for close-in security of Hiep Duc.

It was learned from POWs taken by Delta 1-7 Marines that the 1st and 3rd Regiments (ARVN 31st Regt.) of the 2nd NVA Division are definitely the enemy units of contact. The Marines reported 2 NVA KIA and 2 weapons captured. 2-7 Marines reported a large amount of personal equipment and 3 weapons captured at AT 959268.

Co A/2-1 Inf was OPCON to 4/31 Inf, airlifted to LZ West, and prepared to move to the vicinity of AT 950258 on 28 August 1969.

All companies conducted detailed searches and they made no contact with

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the enemy nor were there any US casualties.

28 August 1969 (See attached Overlays- Annex A)

Co A/4-31 Inf moved to Objective 1 at grid AT 938266 and they encountered no enemy contact. They discovered 1 NVA KIA and destroyed a number of bunkers.

Co B/4-31 Inf moved to Objective 8 at AT 940260 without making any contact and moved on to Objective 3, AT 944262, at 0835 hours. Co B found 1 US steel pot, 2 US bodies and 1 M-16 rifle. The remains were believed to be members of Co C/4-31 Inf. At 0840 hours they received sniper fire from approximately 2 snipers. At this location they received sniper fire and suffered 1 US WIA and 1 US KIA. At 0930 hours, Co B found 1 PRC-25, 5 M-16's and 1 M-60 believed to belong to Co D/1-46 Inf. At 1240 hours Co B made contact with an enemy machinegun position and suffered 3 US WIA's. They destroyed the position and machinegun and killed 5 NVA.

It was learned that the Marines had captured 2 12.7mm anti-aircraft guns at AT 952275 and AT 950265.

29 August 1969 (See attached Overlays- Annex A)

At 0030 hours, AT 945269, a trip flare went off on the perimeter of Co B/2-1 Inf's WDP and 2 NVA were observed carrying what appeared to be mortar rounds and grenades. They were engaged with small arms fire. A search in the morning turned up 20 60mm mortar rounds. At 1910 hours Co B recovered 1 US MIA.

Co A/4-31 Inf linked up with the Marines, who were using tanks, and proceeded to search their area. They had negative contact or findings.

At 1430 hours Co B/4-31 Inf discovered the body of 1 US MIA at AT 944263. In this area Co B also found 4 reinforced bunkers, numerous spider traps, a 60mm mortar base plate, 2 NVA packs, 1 carbine, and some 17 60mm rounds which along with the bunkers were destroyed.

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Co B/4-31 Inf moved to Hien Duc CPZ in preparation to be released to
 1/46 Inf and to secure LZ Siberia on 30 August 1969.

At 2200 hours, all elements closed their NDP's and set up defenses
 for another night.

At 1500 hours, the Marines discovered 7 VN civilians apparently assass-
 inated by the NVA at AT 952278. Also in the area were large bunkers connected
 by tunnels and all the bunkers had overhead cover and were capable of holding
 100 men. The marines destroyed the entire complex.

30 August 1969 (See attached Overlays-Annex A)

Co A/4-31 Inf left their NDP at AT 933267 and moved NE. At 0830 hours,
 they discovered 7 large bunkers at AT 939276 and destroyed them. At 1010
 hours, Co A engaged 1 VC in a spider hole and killed him at grid AT 939276.

All elements conducted detailed search and destroy operations in their
 designated areas resulting in numerous bunkers being destroyed. No US casual-
 ties were suffered today.

31 August 1969 (See attached Overlays- Annex A)

Co A/4-31 Inf conducted detailed search and clear operations and at
 0730 hours, they discovered 6 fresh graves. At 0800 hours, Co A found 1 VN
 female who had gunshot wounds. She was evacuated to LZ West for questioning.
 Three small children were also found at AT 939276 and were extracted to LZ West.

Co A/2-1 Inf found and destroyed structures at AT 964244 and AT 965240.
 They had negative contact with the enemy and suffered no casualties.

Co D/4-31 Inf found and destroyed 3 bunkers and 1 booby-trap at AT
 922272. They also engaged two VC at AT 919271 with negative results.

Co B/2-1 Inf moved an element to Hill 118 to secure the forward mortars.
 At 1900 hours, the forward mortars from Co E/4-31 Inf spotted 1 VC approaching
 the perimeter and he was taken and killed.

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1 September 1969 (See attached Overlays- Annex A)

Co A/4-31 Inf moved from their NDP at AT 92826. At 1015H, AT 941271, Co A found 3 US helmets and an AK-47 containing a magazine of rounds. At this same location they destroyed 15 bunkers and found 4 graves containing NVA soldiers KIA. At 1220H, at AT 935274, A Co found 1 US MIA believed to be from Co C/4-31 Inf. The body was extracted to LZ Baldy by the C-26C helicopter. A Co, at 1350H, AT 960248, engaged 10 NVA at a distance of 300 meters resulting in 4 NVA KIA, and 2 NVA WIA who were evacuated by dustoff. Co A/2-1 Inf at 1700H, observed 8 NVA in green uniform, AT 949233, and processed artillery resulting in 3 NVA KIA and one hut destroyed.

There was no further contact during the days activities, and there were no US casualties sustained.

2 September 1969 (See attached Overlays-Annex A)

1-46 Inf was released from the responsibility of the security of Hiep Duc CPZ and LZ Siberia, and the TAC CP of 1-46 Inf departed the AO.

B/4-31 Inf was released from OPCON of 1-46 Inf and returned to control of 4-31 Inf. They then assumed the security of LZ Siberia.

B/2-1 Inf was released from OPCON of 4-31 Inf and was airlifted to LZ Baldy under control of their parent unit.

There was no contact and no casualties during the patrolling operations of 2 September 1969.

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3 September 1969 (See attached Overlays-Annex A)

A/2-1 Inf was released from OPCON of 4-31 Inf and returned, by a rlift, to control of its parent unit.

There was negative contact or casualties in the 4-31 Inf TAOR this date.

(c) Various Techniques Utilized:

(1) Generally, ranges of engagement were less than 100 meters. This made it difficult or dangerous to utilize effective artillery or air support. However, helicopter gunships proved very effective since their fires could and were brought within 25 meters of friendly positions. In the final analysis, the only effective weapon was the infantryman; closing with and digging out of holes, the enemy by the use of small arms and M-26 hand fragmentation grenades.

(2) Aerial broadcasts were attempted, however, the enemy's use of 51 caliber anti-aircraft weapons discouraged the lower level flying required for the broadcast to be understood. (under 3000 feet).

(3) Two Marine Medium Gun Tanks were used on 29 August 1969 in order to close with and destroy 4 reinforced machine gun bunkers. On the 18th of August, the Bn Cmdr, Lt Col Henry, made a verbal request for at least a platoon of tanks. This request was turned down. The use of tanks in conjunction with Infantry on 29 August showed that effectiveness with fewer friendly casualties could have been attained if the tanks had been made available earlier.

(4) The Bn Cmdr's use of available forces was decisive during this action. Offensive pressure was constantly placed on the enemy by rotating anywhere from 2 to 6 companies in and out of contact with at least 2 relatively fresh companies in the vicinity of contact at all times.

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(5) The use of all supporting fire means was extremely effective as shown in the amounts of artillery and air delivery used. Not only were contact missions fired and flown, but the available support was used as a blocking force, both to stop retreating enemy forces, and/or destroy them as they attempted to escape during the hours of darkness.

12 (C) RESULTS:

a. Friendly US:

- KIA- 39
- WIA- 142
- Radios Lost- 7 (4 Destroyed)
- M-16 Lost- 22
- Ruck Sacks Lost- 59

b. Enemy:

- NVA KIA- 415
- NVA Captured- 10
- Individual Weapons Captured- 30
- Crew Served Weapons Destroyed- 12
- Bunkers Destroyed- 93

13 (C) ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

a. Supply: This operation was supported from three locations. All Class I, some Class V, and special items were sent forward from the battalion rear area in Chu Lai. Class V, water and POL were sent forward from elements of our Support Platoon on LZ Baldy. All resupply was forwarded to the

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(3) Class III: All resupply was shipped from LZ Baldy to LZ West. The approximate amounts are as follows:

Mogas- 7,000 gallons

Disel- 1,000 gallons

(1) Class V: With only a few exceptions, all Class V was drawn from LZ Baldy and shipped to LZ West. From the Forward Distribution Point it was forwarded to company field locations on an as requested basis. Special requirements such as 90mm RR rounds, bounding M-79 rounds and WP Smoke grenades that were not available at LZ Baldy were drawn in Chu Lai and shipped to LZ West. There was one tactical emergency of 81mm mortar ammunition shipped from Chu Lai which required two (2) CH-47 sorties. Total resupplied amounts of high expenditures are as follows:

5.56--	92,400
7.62--	26,400
M-79 (all types)	2,748
M-26	600
81mm (all types)	3,984
4.2 in (all types)	2,336

(5) Water: Due to the intense heat and the tactical situation whereas the enemy controlled the wells and streams in the operational area, water resupply was a major problem. In order to resupply all companies in the field, LZ West was placed on water ration. For eleven days, there was no shaving or bathing. The mess hall was closed and C-Rations were consumed in an effort to conserve this now precious liquid. At the height of the problem when we were resupplying

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nine infantry companies, 1100 Marines were flown into LZ West without water. They too were resupplied. For the entire period of eighteen days, 73 sorties of water, amounting to some 525,800 gallons, were flown into LZ West. During the eight day period from 21 August to 28 August alone, 41 water sorties were flown in with 9 sorties being flown on 25 August, amounting to some 5,000 gallons.

(6) CH-47 Sorties: During this eighteen day period, 125 total sorties were flown into LZ West from LZ Baldy and Chu Lai with a total weight of approximately 1,125,000 pounds. The breakdown is as follows:

Chu Lai--- 23 Sorties-- 207,000 pounds

LZ Baldy-- 102 Sorties-- 918,000 pounds

(7) Major Problems Encountered:

(a) Aircraft: Undoubtedly the largest problem was the lack of available aircraft on a timely basis. It was not unusual to receive all scheduled CH-47 sorties and then be unable to obtain a UH-1D to resupply companies in the field locations. When UH-1D's were available for only a short period of time it was a near impossibility to resupply five to nine companies in the time allotted.

(b) The initial lack of 500 gallon water blivits and a water storage point on LZ West. A water point where blivits can immediately be drained in order to be backhauled is a necessity for future operations of this nature.

(c) The lack of insulated food containers did not permit us to feed all companies in the field locations "A" rations when the tactical situation permitted.

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(d) At the outset of the operation, the Forward Distribution Point was not prepared to provide support for the number of troops actually involved. As soon as the requirements for nine companies were known, all supply requirements for the nine companies were filled.

(e) The final problem was that the battalion rear area was in the process of relocating itself from LZ Baldy to Chu Lai. The movement was completed on 17 August however the adjustment to resupplying from the new location took two additional days.

b. Medical

(1) During the operation from 17 August to 3 September the 4-31 Inf Bn sustained 39 KIA and 142 WIA which were evacuated. In addition there were 62 minor wounds and 19 heat casualties treated that were not evacuated.

(2) Medevac helicopter pilots performed skillfully as they flew a total of 27 missions. On three occasions the command and control ship and resupply ship also extracted wounded men. Many of the extractions were met by heavy enemy ground fire. Several lives were saved by the prompt extractions and evacuation; although at times, B, C, and D Company had seriously wounded patients who waited up to 18 hrs prior to extraction. No ships were able to land due to the intense enemy fire.

(3) The great majority of the severely wounded were taken to the 23rd Medical Company at LZ Baldy. Flying time from the battlefield was approximately 10 minutes. After stabilization by blood, intravenous fluids, and emergency surgical procedures, these patients were sent to the 95th Evacuation Hospital in Da Nang or the 27th Surgical Hospital in Chu Lai.

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(4) Patients who sustained minor wounds or heat injuries were taken to the Bn Aid Station on LZ West. They were evaluated and treated. Some were returned to duty within 24 hours, others remained as a security force on the firebase. A few were evacuated to the rear. Several with minor wounds were returned to the respective firebase of their own battalion.

(5) By 20 August, seven medics had been wounded and one killed. Four of the wounded were serious. They were evacuated. Three stayed in the field. The remainder of the medical platoon was ordered to LZ West. Experienced medics were sent to replace the wounded.

(6) Problem Areas:

(a) The main problems encountered were those of supply and identification of gear. For the initial three days, we obtained emergency resupply for the firebase and field from the 23rd Medical Company by dustoff ships. Due to the intense enemy fire, supply to the field was, for a while, impossible. Shirts were employed by D Company when the supply of field dressings was exhausted. The situation eased when an entire connex of medical supplies was airlifted from Chu Lai to LZ West.

(b) This operation involved 9 companies from 3 different Bn's. Identification of gear became very difficult when wounded of different companies and battalions arrived on the same dustoff. When these men were evaluated and quickly evacuated, their gear was tagged and returned by personnel representing the different battalions.

14. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUES:

a. Strobe Lights: A great deal of the resupply and medical evacuation was conducted during the hours of darkness. The heavy contact during the day and the intensity of the enemy fire made night resupply imperative. In this regard, the availability and use of strobe lights (Light Marker Distress SDU-5/E)

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were essential. All other means of lighting landing zones proved ineffective or very difficult for pilots to pick up. However, each company had only one strobe light, and in one company it was destroyed when the person carrying it was wounded. Resupply and medical evacuation at night was much more efficient and reliable by the use of the strobe lights, when available.

b. 90mm Recoilless Rifle: This weapon proved extremely valuable when units were required to attack bunkers and built-up parapits. The IAW proved ineffective because it did not have enough explosive force to destroy the bunker. We fired 73 IAW's at one bunker complex trying to destroy a machine-gun position resulting in little damage to the bunker and no damage to the occupants. On the other hand, a 90mm Recoilless Rifle was lifted into the field location and one round destroyed the bunker, the machine gun, and killed the enemy personnel. Although the weapon is too heavy and cumbersome to carry everyday in the field, it can be lifted ~~in~~ when targets present themselves and used with great effectiveness.

c. Armor: Although armor has its limitations as far as maneuverability is concerned, the direct firepower provided by its armament proved extremely useful. B Company suffered numerous casualties in an attempt to neutralize several mutually supporting machinegun positions, and they suffered more casualties in an attempt to extract their wounded. With the use of Marine Medium Gun Tanks the next day, the positions were easily overrun with no casualties.

15(S) COMMANDERS ANALYSIS:

a. General: During the recent actions by the 4-31 Inf, 17-29 August 1969, there developed many weaknesses, lessons learned and relearned, and solutions to problems that should be analyzed and discussed. The attack on LZ West the

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night of 11-12 August is considered by higher headquarters to be part of the overall campaign. However, at Battalion, it is viewed as a separate action and therefore covered by a separate analysis. (See Annex B)

b. Finding and Fixing the Enemy: Fortunately, there were two companies that were not tied down to a particular piece of terrain just prior to this action. These companies were operating in widely dispersed areas and were assigned reconnaissance missions. Co D was looking for any signs of the enemy force that conducted the attack on LZ West on the night of 11-12 August. Co B had the mission of locating a rice cache reported to be in the foothills northeast of Hiep Duc. Regardless of the missions, both units were required to move some distance from their patrol bases. A lot of luck was involved in encountering both major enemy units before they were ready to attack. However, it points out the fact that when fighting an elusive enemy, it is a must to cover as much of the units assigned area with mobile forces as possible, even though their speed is only 2 km per hour. Another important lesson is that during a meeting engagement with NVA forces, if the friendly forces are outflanked, they have encountered a numerically superior enemy force. This fact should be self-evident and was at battalion level, but this battalion could not react immediately as there were no additional forces immediately available for commitment.

c. Span of Control: Initially, the method of reinforcing this Battalion was to attach companies to the Battalion. At the high point of this battle this Headquarters controlled seven maneuver companies in the field and had four separate and distinct missions. These missions were: (1) Protect the refugee village of Hiep Duc; (2) Secure the fire base at LZ West and LZ

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Siberia; (3) Engage and defeat the enemy forces southeast of LZ 1est; (4) Engage and defeat the enemy forces northeast of Hiep Duc. With these missions and the number of units involved, it was difficult for the Battalion to concentrate its efforts or to adequately supervise any of the separate actions. Higher Headquarters acted quickly to bring two additional control headquarters into the picture and this overexpansion of the span of control was remedied. Many of the other problems areas to be discussed are directly related to this overexpansion of span of control.

d. Use of Appropriate Forces: As soon as the enemy situation was developed northeast of Hiep Duc, it became apparent that at least one company of tanks could be used to advantage. The enemy was in strongly fortified positions and equipped primarily with machineguns, rifles, and M-79's. These positions were vulnerable only to direct hits from airstrikes or artillery. The terrain, although not ideally suited for armor operations, would provide trafficability and maneuver room to employ tanks against these strongly fortified positions. The verbal request for armor was denied as there were none of these units readily available.

e. Communications: Prior to this battle, two radio nets were in operation for intra-battalion communications. These nets were the Admin/Log net and the Battalion Command. No problems were experienced in the operation of the Admin/Log net. However, the Battalion Command net became so overcrowded that at times it was virtually useless. The net was barely capable of accommodating the normal stations at the peak of activity. Superimposed on this net were the FAC's, gunships, visitors, and other units operating in conjunction with this unit. The problem was alleviated to some degree by having the FAC and gunships switch to company net for control. It seemed as if

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everything happened at one time requiring time on the net. During periods of heavy contact, the units were passing information and requesting assistance, the FAC's and gunships would check in to assist, and adjacent units would call and request information. Air warning data was disseminated over the net for each fire mission as it was initiated and then separately to each aircraft entering the area of operations. At times there were as many as five fire missions from three separate locations in progress concurrently. Thought should be given to establishing a separate net for the control of aircraft and disseminating air hazards in future operations of this magnitude.

f. Logistics: The greatest potential problem in this entire operation was logistical support. When the supply operations for the period 17 August to 3 September are analyzed this is readily apparent. I realized that any interruption in the flow of supplies would render this unit ineffective in a matter of hours. However, Brigade and Division immediately established priority of supply and transportation to this unit. The weather was good throughout the period and did not hamper helicopter operations. The two proceeding circumstances compiled with the dedicated personnel in the entire logistical channel from Division to and in this Battalion insured a continuous flow of supplies.

g. Visitors: Visitors are always welcome to the 4th Bn, 31st Inf and LZ West. However, the volume and frequency of visits to this unit by VIP from and outside the Division plus numerous members of the press caused an undue hardship on this Battalion. There was an average of five VIP visitors daily, each of which required about 30 minutes briefing and discussion with the Battalion Commander or the S-3. Members of the press also were given a briefing and questions were answered as time permitted. During one day, 6

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... site the Battalion. These facts, coupled with the fact that
 ... of the S-3 was at the tactical CP, consumed a considerable
 amount of valuable time that could have been devoted to supervision. In
 future operations of this importance and scope, a small team from Brigade
 to take over the briefing and welcoming responsibilities of the commit-
 mission. Not only would this free the Commander and S-3 to perform their
 primary duties but would facilitate the passing of information and reports
 at headquarters.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a. In order to provide effective and consistent lighting for resupply and
 tactical evacuation at night from field locations, strobe lights should be
 issued to field units on a basis of one per squad.
- b. Upon making contact with a bunkered enemy, consideration should be
 given to the immediate insertion of 90mm Recoilless Rifles. When a unit is
 in a fixed position for a number of days, the 90mm Recoilless Rifle
 should also be utilized in its anti-personnel role with the Bee-hive round.
- c. Squad, platoon, battalion and lower, should saturate areas with platoon,
 squad, and fire team size missions when seeking out the enemy. In conjunction
 with these saturation missions, a reaction force should be available, either
 at the division or higher level, to immediately reinforce (within two hours) one
 of the small units that makes contact.
- d. Care must be taken in not expanding on battalion by insertion of
 additional maneuver units beyond the bounds of the battalion's capability
 of control. Too many maneuver units under one Headquarters is as inefficient
 as demanding a headquarters of all its units.

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e. A tank team or larger tank task unit should be available to each Brigade Headquarters for use, when feasible, within the Brigade AOR. This team could be held at a centralized location and used in conjunction with infantry as the need arose and terrain permitted.

f. Communications nets should be broadened to include a common net for dissemination of such information as air warning data, information to incoming visitors, and coordinating information to and from adjacent units. Command nets should not be entered by personnel or elements outside of the normal chain of command.

g. A liaison team from Brigade S2/S3 section should have been set up at 12 West in order to free the Battalion to maneuver its units rather than spend half its time briefing visitors, sending reports, and conducting liaison with the numerous adjacent and supporting units. This liaison team should have separate communications nets on which to work and be set up within the Bn tactical operations center. In this way, reports would have been more complete, accurate, and on time; PIO would have been more effective; and the maneuver battalion would be free of outside administrative burdens in order to concentrate on fighting the battle.

h. Training should be conducted at all levels in order to instill the importance of security of equipment. Sensitive items such as radios, secure equipment, SOI extracts, and etc should not be abandoned in an area of contact if at all possible. If it must be abandoned, radios should be thrown off frequencies, and all other sensitive equipment should be destroyed. This can be done easily, even from a distance, by shooting the equipment and/or

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calling distract artillery fire missions on top of it. If for some plausible reason, equipment cannot be destroyed when abandoned, this fact must immediately be reported through the chain of command. When reported, steps must be taken by higher headquarters to negate the information possibly attained by the enemy. A Company FO with this battalion lost an SOI carried by a S KIA, and it took nine (9) days for a new SOI to be issued, even though it was known that the enemy was monitoring our radio nets through the use of the lost SOI.

i. A system should be devised with all supporting units so that high performance air, army air, and artillery could be used concurrently. At the present time, any of the forementioned support cancels out each other when employed. Air support requires a check fire on all artillery, not only the area where they are working, but in wide adjacent areas also. Some type of corridors could easily be established and many times, army air could easily work underneath artillery being fired at different locations. Coordination needs to be made in order to establish a mutual confidence in this type of concurrent supporting fires.

j. Training in the small unit tactics of fire and maneuver, and fire and movement needs to be stressed. Even though this battalion has consistently stressed these basics, it was learned from this action, that units cannot be over-trained; and not until the basics become automatic reaction, do units even begin to be proficient. Individual soldiers seem to believe that this war is drastically different from past conflicts. This is true in some technical aspects, but the small units tactics have not changed in the slightest.

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k. When up against an enemy strength of the magnitude engaged by this battalion, it is recommended that all available fire support be used initially rather than trying to overcome the enemy by ground attacks. Units should even be pulled back far enough to facilitate a B-52 strike, if available. This would drastically cut down on friendly casualties, and inflict a devastating blow upon the enemy, especially since exact enemy locations were known, and he showed no indication to flee the area of contact.

Cecil M. Henry
 CECIL M. HENRY
 LTC Infantry
 Commanding

ANNEXES:

- A- Operations Overlays and Map
- B- Combat After Action Report dated 12 October 1969

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