

AVDF-ATPO

27 April 1971

SUBJECT: Operational Report of 1st Battalion, 82d Field Artillery, for the period ending 30 April 1971.

Commanding Officer  
23d Infantry Division Artillery  
ATTN: S-3  
APO San Francisco 96374

SECTION 1, OPERATIONS:  
SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES

A. Command:

1. Background. The 1st Battalion, 82d Artillery continued to provide artillery support throughout the southern half of the division Tactical Area of Interest during the reporting period. The battalion underwent several changes both in key personnel and unit structure during the last period. The 1st Battalion, 82d Field Artillery was honored to have been the first artillery unit from the 23d Infantry Division to participate in Operation Lam Son 719.

2. Command and Staff Changes.

a. LTCs: LTC William P. O'Bryan assumed command of the battalion on 5 December 1970 from LTC Ralph F. James.

b. MAJs:

1. Major Harold L. Shellabarger assumed duties of Battalion Executive Officer, vice Maj Benjamin Jackson on 11 January 1971.

2. Maj Howard S. DeWitt assumed duties of Battalion S3, vice Maj James D. McGowan on 14 February 1971. Maj McGowan was medivaced from Fire Support Base Vendergrift due to illness during Operation Lam Son 719. (This entry noted in this report for purpose of continuity).

3. Distinguished Visitors.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>PERIOD</u>
MG James L. Baldwin	CG, 23D Infantry Div	5 Dec 70
BG Theodore C. Mataxis	ADGM, 23D Infantry Div	25 Dec 70
Col Jack R. Sadler	CO, 23D Infantry Div	5 Dec 70
		29 Jan 71

B. Personnel, Administration, Morale and Discipline:

1. The battalion had two deaths occur during the reporting period (excluding Operation Lam Son 719).

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- a. One EM By MN ASDA Date 12/1/71 in an unauthorized area on 28 Jan 1971.
- b. One EM died immediately due to accidental discharge of weapon on 2 Nov 1971.
2. Total KIA and WIA, hostile and non hostile, which occurred during Operation Lam Son 719 will be discussed in a separate report.

C. Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence: The battalion was placed in the unique position to realize the benefits of counter-intelligence planning related to Operation Lam Son 719. Information that a move was imminent was disseminated to a select few and reduced the possibility of local civilians, and enemy agents/informers gaining knowledge of who, where, when and what was to occur. As stated by the Commander in Chief, this secrecy, though not immediately understood by the troops, allowed for minimal enemy harassment when units did move to participate in the operation.

D. Operations, Plans, Training and Organization:

1. The 1st Battalion, 82d Field Artillery provided general support reinforcing fires for the southern half of the AO (Iron Mountain, Nantucket Beach, and Geneva Park Operations), with the battalion headquarters and operations center located at Hurricane (BT 537 033).

a. A 1/82 Artillery reinforced the fires of 1/14 Artillery from Fat City (BT 440077) with four howitzers, and from Dottie (BS 680853) with two howitzers.

b. B/82 Artillery provided reinforcing fires to both 1/14th Artillery and 6/11 Artillery, with its headquarters and four howitzers at Snoopy (BS 708610) to two howitzers at Stinson (BS 539824).

c. C 1/82 Artillery reinforced the fires of 6/11 Artillery, with its headquarters and four howitzers at Liz (BS 757432) and two howitzers at Debbie (BS 869319).

d. D 1/82 Artillery (8-Inch) provided support to both 1/14 and 6/11 Artillery from Dottie (BS 630853) and Bronco (BS 812396).

(1) Battery D(-) with two 8 inch howitzers participated in an overnight artillery raid, moving by road from Dottie to Fat City.

(2) Two 8 inch howitzers from Battery D participated in a one day artillery raid, moving by road from Bronco to Dragon. Targets were bunkers, tunnels and fighting positions located in a mangrove swamp.

(3) Battery D(-) moved the two 8 inch howitzers from Dottie to Bronco to add additional fire support for a Combat Assault by the 4th Battalion, 21st Infantry in the vicinity of Lz Don, but was cancelled due to an extended period of inclement weather. However, the weapons did fire scheduled and unobserved fires in the vicinity.

(4) During the reporting period the Battalion Maintenance Section in conjunction with 596th Ordnance personnel were required to install four 8 inch howitzer tubes.

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(5) On 19 Jan 1971 Battery D was informed that two of their 8 inch tubes were to be replaced by 175mm tubes thus giving the battery two 8 inch tubes and two 175mm tubes. The announced change occurred on 20-21 Jan 1971. Battery D in its new configuration left its positions at Dottie and Bronco and proceeded to LZ Ross on 23 January 1971. The Battery was attached to 3/18 Artillery on 23 January 1971, by general order number 1737. The move was accomplished during daylight hours, by road.

e. Battery C at Liz fired a demonstration mission consisting of 16 rounds ICM for the Commanding Officer, 11th Brigade, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion 20th Infantry and other infantry personnel.

f. Battery A at Fat City provided an AN/PPS-5 radar for utilization for the Division Artillery Signal Officer in conducting a one month radar operators course for the ARVN artillery.

g. The CO, 2d ARVN Division Artillery, visited Liz and Snoopy for the purpose of establishing a firing platoon at each site.

h. Battery A at Fat City fired periodically in support of the Division Artillery FO/LNO school during the reporting period.

i. All Fire Support Bases had survey completed for declination of their organic aiming circles as well as the location of three observation posts for purposes of conducting High Burst Registrations.

j. Battery B firing a contact mission for a MACV advisor and a ground element was forced to fire one thousand meters from a position due to first round proximity to a village. The Scare Rounds caused the unknown size enemy force to cease firing, permitting the ground unit to leave the area with the wounded personnel.

k. On 23 January 1971 the battalion received notification that it would displace and to begin preparations for an extended stay in a field location. The battalion immediately set about the task of preparing to leave its home bases. Some difficult moments were experienced during the preparation period in areas of maintenance, procurement of equipment, and assignment of personnel. It must be noted that morale was generally high. This was attributed to anticipation of a change of normal daily routine and the excitement of participation in a major operation. Within three to five days the maintenance problems were on a diminishing trend, equipment requested through various channels made its way into the battalion, personnel assignments were being ironed out. Battery A from Fat City, Battery B from Snoopy and Battery C from Liz closed in the Chu Lai area during late afternoon on 25 January 1971 and closed into preselected staging areas for maintenance and final preparation.

(1) On 27 January 1971 the Battalion Commander and S-3 Officer departed the battalion area for further briefing, coordination and reconnaissance of positions. During that period the battalion under the control of the Executive Officer completed the preparation and was determined ready to move.

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(2) The first Battalion vehicle passed through gate 1, Chu Lai Installation at 1605 hours on 29 January 1971. Each driver was given a route strip map and this marked the first time any battalion personnel, other than a selected few, knew of the final destination. Just prior to departure the Division Artillery Commander briefed the battalion personnel as to the mission and approximate span of the time involved.

(3) The move was by road march with the later two thirds occurring during the hours of darkness. Several restrictions were imposed on the unit for the conduct of the road march such as total radio silence, continuous movement to include no assistance stops, and extended periods of travel between rest halts. The imposed radio silence made convoy control extremely difficult. That, coupled with a no assistance-stop policy, complicated matters in ascertaining the ultimate whereabouts of disabled vehicles and their maintenance problems. This situation was alleviated by having tow steps pre-attached to each vehicle which enabled running vehicles to hook up in a minimum of time to a downed vehicle.

(4) Overall maintenance efforts proved to be good as the number of vehicles which did not make the entire trip successfully was substantially low. The Hai Van Pass was a critical point during the road march and was the ultimate test in the battalion's maintenance efforts. Continuous rain and cold winds engulfed the battalion as it went through the pass and persisted for much of the remainder of the march. This made driving extremely hazardous going through the pass and placed an additional strain on the vehicle, through continuous braking and gearing.

(5) The battalion closed in Dong Ha at 0300 hours on 30 January 1971 at which time it became detached from the 23d Infantry Division and attached to the 1st Brigade, 5th Mechanized Division.

NOTE: The period of detachment, from 0300 hours 30 January 1971 thru 0800 hours 8 April 1971 is covered in a separate report. This report continues from the time of rejoining 23 Infantry Division following:

1. On 8 April 1971 at approximately 0800 hours the 1st Bn, 82d Fld Arty was detached from the 101st Airborne Division and released to the 23d Infantry Division. This also marked the initiation of the road march back to Chu Lai and ultimately LZ Hurricane. The return trip was marred by long delays, one death and serious injury. An enlisted man assigned to Battery C died of injuries sustained when he fell from a vehicle, and a second enlisted man assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battery sustained head and upper extremity injuries when he fell from a moving vehicle. Moving during daylight hours, especially through populated areas proved to be an encumbrance almost insurmountable. There was an apparent lack of coordination and/or aggressiveness on the part of Military Policemen which caused massive traffic jams congestions and confusion. Allowing for these incidents and situations the battalion finally closed into Chu Lai at 0030 hours on 9 April 1971.

(1) Maintenance and inventory was the first order of business. The firing batteries moved into their previously designated staging areas. Advance parties had made preparations for hot meals, showers, Post Exchange access privileges, billeting and the establishment of priorities.

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(2) On 10 April 1971 two howitzers from Battery 6 were moved to Debbie. On 11 April, Battery A stationed two howitzers at Dottie. The Battalion FDC and Battery C, FDC were operational on 11 April at 110 hours. Batteries A and C emplaced the remainder of their tubes in position on 13 April; Battery B set four tubes up for action at Snoopy on 13 April and two howitzers at Stinson on 14 April. The remainder of the battery FDC's were operational on 12 April.

(m) On 20 April 1971 the battalion received notification that two howitzers, belonging to Battery C and located at Debbie, would be moved to Bronco due to the closing of Debbie as a fire base. The move was made at 1100 hours on 22 April and closed at Bronco at 1230 hours the same day.

**SECTION 2, LESSONS LEARNED:  
COMMANDER'S OBSERVATIONS, EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A. Personnel: Omitted

B. Operations and Training:

1. Road Movement

a. Observation: Battery D participated in all of the moves on rather short notice; however these moves were marred by mechanical failure. In addition, the latter road movement was hampered by the absence of bridge classification and an Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge that was being operated by inexperienced personnel who would not allow a M578 with a M110 howitzer in tow to cross even though this was a safe load.

b. Recommendation: That all units be permitted to road march with the self-propelled howitzers, as required, to insure that when the tactical situation requires they are prepared to move. While it is impossible to determine with precision the exact material problems that can occur, common parts normally expected to be replaced should be transported on the maintenance vehicles. Recommend that engineer mark the proper bridge classification as they are constructed to allow them to be used with a feeling of confidence.

2. Procurement and Installation of 8 inch howitzer tubes:

a. Observation: The 8 inch howitzer tubes required replacement prematurely due to cracks. Three tubes were obtained in Da Nang, one tube was obtained from the 3/18 at Tien Phouc. Considerable delay in returning these howitzers to operational status was caused by difficulty in obtaining tubes.

b. Recommendations: More 8 inch howitzers tubes be stock piled by support maintenance as condemnation may occur immediately after installation. When a tube is required immediately, only a CH 54 Aircraft should be utilized in transporting it.

3. Training of ARVN AN/PPS-5 Operators:

a. Observation: The training began on 17 November 1970, and was completed on 19 November 1970; however, the ARVN Artillery operators must have a radar set to maintain their proficiency.

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Recommendation: That an AM/FPS-5 be made available to the ARVN trained as soon as feasible and furthermore, that refresher training be conducted on a periodic basis.

4. Operational Procedures for High Burst Registration:

a. Observation: In the absence of aerial observation the resumption of High Burst Registration techniques has allowed the determination of current and valid registration data.

b. Recommendation: That this procedure be considered by other artillery battalions who do not presently utilize it. Further, that there be additional emphasis upon more firing positions utilizing a Division Artillery Air Observer for purposes of registration.

5. Scare Rounds:

a. Observation: The MACV advisor felt that lives were saved by artillery firing into an area one thousand meters from enemy snipers.

b. Recommendation: That a grid be cleared nearest to any operation and be fired as a "scare round" in an attempt to silence enemy weapons.

6. Preparation for and Convoy Movement:

a. Observation: 1/82d Artillery was required to road march from Chu Lai to vicinity Calu for participation in Operation Lam Son 719. The time span between notification and move and departure was very short. Much had to be done to get all of the battalion's vehicles road worthy, in addition to procuring many items of equipment and material not on hand. The number of vehicles allocated the battalion was proven to be not sufficient for the amount of equipment that must be transported to operate for an extended period in the field. The battalion, having been in a stationary posture on a fixed installation for a long period of time, had the additional task of dismantling much of its communications and FDC equipment permanently and semi-permanently installed for fixed operations. Radio silence and a no assistance stop policy imposed on the battalion caused several problems during the conduct of the march as well as at its completion.

b. Recommendations:

1. That all units be required to road march with that equipment and material necessary for operations away from home base. This would insure that the unit has good loading plans and sufficient vehicles on which to carry all required items plus personnel. At minimum a load out in place should be conducted at least quarterly to test loading plans.

2. Equipment designated for mobile operations should not be permanently or semi-permanently installed on fixed installations so as to facilitate movement in future field operations.

(3) Due to an imposed radio silence and no stop policy many vehicles that had to drop out of the convoy for maintenance problems could not be

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or accounted for upon the detachment's arrival at its final destination. Recommend that at least two radios be authorized to break silence for the purpose of ascertaining the location and specific maintenance problem when a vehicle has to drop out of the convoy. These radios, on a specific operating frequency, would be utilized by, at minimum, officers in grade of O3 or higher for the purpose as mentioned above and convoy control. A procedure used to get many disabled vehicles off the road was to pre-tie tow straps to the front of every vehicle. This enabled a disabled vehicle to be hooked up and towed in a matter of seconds. This procedure brought many vehicles to the final destination that would otherwise have been left sitting on the road. It is further recommended that unit commanders make and have in their possession a list, indicating what personnel and equipment is physically located in every vehicle. This will aid in determining what personnel and items of equipment he is short immediately upon arriving at the final destination.

WILLIAM P. O'BRYAN  
LTC, FA  
Commanding

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