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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, 198th Infantry Brigade, 23d Infantry Division
APO San Francisco 96374

AVDF-BCC

14 October 1971

SUBJECT: Operational Reports-Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 198th Infantry Brigade, period ending 18 October 1971, RCS CS FOR-65 (R3).

Commanding General
23d Infantry Division
ATTN: AVDF-HL
APO San Francisco 96374

1 (a) Section I Operations: Significant Activities: Omitted.

2 (C) Section II Lessons Learned: Commander's Observations, Evaluations, and Recommendations.

a. Personnel. None

b. Intelligence:

(1) VIP turn-in of ordnance.

(a) Observation: The 1-6 Inf has received more than 13- 175mm HE, 2- 8in HE, 5- 155mm HE, 43- 105mm HE, 10- 81mm or 82 mm HE, 65- 60mm HE, 66- M79 HE, 27 Claymore mines, 206 fragmentation grenades, and 40 or more miscellaneous recoilless rifle, tank/anti-tank, and artillery rounds during the past five months for the VIP payments. Most of these payments have been made to a single boy who has organized his friends into search teams for ordnance.

(b) Evaluation: Although the loyalty of the youthful leader was doubted, apparently the group of children gathering explosives have done so with no ideological motivation.

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105

File
JH

GROUP 4

Downgraded at 3 year intervals
Declassified after 12 years.

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(c) Recommendation: That the VIP program receive command emphasis and be encouraged and considered the valuable program it is, to deny the enemy ready access to ordnance in populated areas.

(d) Command Action: Continue to emphasize the VIP program by making more funds easily available to those units who have had success with the program.

(2) Employment of sniper teams.

(a) Observation: Snipers should no longer be handled at the battalion level, but should instead revert to company control.

(b) Evaluation: Under normal circumstances utilization of snipers at battalion level is an excellent idea, because the individual battalion retains the flexibility to insert teams at will along the known enemy routes of travel. However, due to the present personnel shortages, it has become increasingly difficult to take personnel from line units to provide security for the snipers in the role for which they are best suited. Correspondingly, we have reached the point where it is no longer feasible to fill monthly allocations to the Division Sniper School.

(c) Recommendations: Because of the rapidly dwindling troop levels within the battalions of the division, it is felt that control of snipers should revert to individual company size units. While continuing in an active role as snipers, the individuals concerned would be reassigned to their former companies and would be at the disposal of the company commander and subordinate leaders, to use as they see fit. Manpower

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shortages make it much more practical to leave the use of snipers to the discretion of the company commander, consistent with existing terrain conditions and situational requirements.

(d) Command Action: The present system will remain in use by this battalion until such time as another program may be initiated.

(3) Utilization of Kit Carson Scouts:

(a) Observation: Kit Carson Scouts have proved to be valuable assets to units in the field, when the scouts are available for duty.

(b) Evaluation: Kit Carson Scouts have been an invaluable aid to line units in the detection of booby trap indicators, interpretation of signs and warnings written in Vietnamese, and in the immediate interrogation of detainees. In one particular case, such questioning led to the capture of a VC, armed with an AK-47 rifle, by the reconnaissance platoon. Despite these obvious assets, the majority of the scouts tend to be poorly motivated and quite unreliable, apparently choosing to work only when they feel compelled to do so. The number of monthly AWOLs is entirely out of proportion to the total number of scouts assigned to this battalion. While it may be argued that these incidents evolve from a failure on the part of GIs to establish the proper rapport with the scouts, this does not appear to be the case. Apparently, subtracting money from the monthly paychecks of these individuals is not sufficient to deter them from absenting themselves from duty.

(c) Recommendations: A more comprehensive and concentrated

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course of instruction in the English language should be administered to the Kit Carson Scouts prior to their field assignments. This would facilitate greater understanding between GIs and scouts and would also enhance the scouts translation and interrogation capabilities. By the same token, some consideration should be given to alternative means of punishment for unauthorized absences.

(d) Command Action: Continued utilization of Kit Carson Scouts to the utmost will remain the rule in this battalion.

c. Operations:

(1) Use of Scout Dogs on permanent positions.

(a) Observation: Scout dogs have been used successfully in static positions for early warning.

(b) Evaluation: Use of scout dogs has proven successful for early warning at static positions. On several occasions, the dog's alert signal has been verified by radar or starlight scope sightings. The dogs have been used at both stationary and roving guard positions. The dogs have been used to detect the enemy, not to attack intruders, like a sentry dog.

(c) Recommendations: That scout dogs be used at small static positions during high threat periods and low illumination periods for early warning.

(d) Command Action: None.

(2) Extraction of personnel from booby trapped and mined areas.

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(a) Observation: On 30 May, A Co, 1st Bn, 6th Inf, was combat assaulted onto a suspected enemy mortar position. Immediately after the troops were inserted, a "bouncing betty" mine was detonated, seriously wounding four men. Additional unexploded devices were located during the medevac process. The element was immediately extracted and re-inserted at another location.

(b) Evaluation: Past experience has indicated that the enemy frequently employs multiple mines and booby traps in the TAOI. In two previous operations, units in similar circumstances like those encountered by A Co. were ordered to move out of the area on foot, suffering thirty additional casualties during such a move. Painful experience such as this dictates that units trapped within a heavily booby trapped area should be extracted immediately.

(c) Recommendation: Troops trapped in heavily booby trapped areas should be extracted by helicopters. Extraction by APC would cause additional casualties.

(d) Command Action: None.

(3) Ambush employment.

(a) Observation: Lack of organization in setting up of night ambush position.

(b) Evaluation: In the accidental death of one individual in 1st Bn, 6th Inf, on 270110 August 1971, an apparent lack of organization existed in maintaining a good line type ambush position.

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(c) Recommendations: Great care should be taken in the employment of the individual members of an ambush element to insure that fields of fire are clear of friendly elements. Unit integrity should be maintained with good communication between members, so that each is aware of the location of the other members of his element.

(d) Command Action: Command emphasis should be placed during training, in the proper organization of ambush positions.

(4) Use of Gunships in close support role.

(a) Observation: Inadequate coordination between ground commander and gunship pilot.

(b) Evaluation: Two recent incidents involving the use of gunships with resulting US casualties indicates the need for better coordination between ground elements and aerial support units. One incident in particular, that of an element from B Co, 1st Bn, 6th Inf, on 021447 September 1971, while working in heavy vegetation, had four US wounded; caused by a rocket which exploded in the trees above their position.

(c) Recommendation: Units employing gunship support take extreme care in marking their ground locations to insure that their position is accurately identified by the gunship. This marking can be done with either colored smoke or aerial flares depending upon the terrain and vegetation of the area. Additional training classes concerning the use of close gunship support be given so that all members of a unit fully understand the necessity of proper procedures in gunship use.

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(d) Command Action: Command emphasis should be placed on the proper employment procedures of armed helicopters during training cycles.

(5) Opening a closed fire base.

(a) Observation: This battalion re-opened FSB Professional after absence of any permanent occupancy for a period of 8 months. The purpose was to provide artillery support and capabilities of quick reaction force for elements operating around Professional.

(b) Evaluation: Areas of great concern initially were clearance of mines in and around the outer barrier of the fire base. The building of bunkers and living quarters that would give proper drainage, and sturdy enough to withstand severe storm conditions, replacing old wire and bunkers with new and improved ones. The debris left behind when the base was closed caused numerous problems in preparing the base for occupation. Prior to construction of any facilities, the battalion first had to clean up the mess that was plowed under and left behind.

(c) Recommendations: Never re-open a closed permanent-type fire base. If the tactical situation requires a fire base to be re-opened, then consideration should be given to the initial plans. Fighting positions for living Bunkers, mess hall, fighting positions, and arms storage areas should not be lived in; only ammunition, land lines and perimeter guards should be permitted. Bunkers should have three layers of sandbags. Constant police and frequent collection and burning of debris is necessary.

*1. Setting positions
for living Bunkers, mess hall, fighting positions, and arms storage areas*

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(d) Command Action: Improvements in tactical wire, bunker reinforcement, drainage, base defense, sanitiation, and police are areas requiring constant consideration and attention on FSB Professional. This battalion will continue to place emphasis on these categories and make necessary improvements in all phases of fire base construction and defense.

(6) Effective employment of mechanical ambushes.

(a) Observations: Those units who consistently use mechanical ambushes in an offensive manner at least 300-400 meters from their locations invariably produce more enemy casualties. The mechanical ambush can also be used as a deadly early warning device when employed within 75 meters of an element's NDP.

(b) Evaluation: Mechanical ambushes should be employed 300-400 meters from the element's location and placed along recently used, likely avenues of advancement by the enemy. Thus making the mechanical ambush a separate ambush from the element deploying the mechanism. With the unit 300-400 meters from the MAP, the possibility of compromise by sight, smell, or noise is eliminated and the chances of the enemy being caught unaware in the mechanism are increased. The defensive mechanical ambush gives the element additional security and reduces the possibility of enemy penetration.

(c) Recommendation: That commands concerned, place increasing emphasis on employing mechanical ambushes, both offensively and defensively.

(d) Command Action: This unit requires that classes on the

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proper employment of mechanical ambushes be given each time a unit is available for training.

d. Organization: None.

e. Training: None.

f. Logistics: None.

g. Communications: None.

h. Material:

Deficient M-113 Anti-personnel Mines (Claymores).

(1) Observation: Six different mechanical ambushes have failed to achieve results due to incomplete detonation. The instances were separated by three months time, and the claymores did not have the same lot number. In each case, the blasting cap detonated, scattering chunks of C-4 and plastic. However, in each case, the claymore did not detonate. No such failure to detonate has been noted in command detonated mines.

(2) Evaluation: A defect exists in the quality control measures enforced for manufacture of the claymore mines.

(3) Recommendation: That careful scrutiny be given to manufacturers quality control.

(4) Command Action: Quality control emphasis.

i. Other:

Weather:

(1) Observation: Generally weather has not been a significant factor affecting operations, until recently. The daily hard copy weather

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forecast is received by this headquarters at 2100 hours, and is effective from 1800 hours until 1800 hours on the following day. For current weather forecasts, this headquarters calls DTOC for an update.

(2) Evaluation: The normal system of receiving weather forecast confirmation is untimely, since the hard copy forecast is received three hours after the start of the forecast.

(3) Recommendation:

(a) That the daily 24 hour weather forecast be sent by radio to brigade TOCs, as soon as they are available to DTOC.

(b) That during good weather periods, an updated forecast be sent by radio to brigade TOCs at 0630 hours, 1200 hours, and 1800 hours. During marginal and bad weather periods, forecasts should be updated by DTOC to subordinate units hourly.

(4) Command Action: None.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

RONALD B. FITCH II
1LT, IN
Asst Adjutant

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