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FIRST ENDORSEMENT on CG, XXIV Corps ltr AVII-GCT of 27 August 1969

From: Commanding General, Third Marine Amphibious Force
To: Commanding General, United States Military Assistance Command,
Vietnam

Subj: Combat After Action Report (APACHE SNOW)

Ref: (a) MACV Dir 355-8

1. Forwarded in accordance with reference a.
2. Contents noted.

R. L. Reed

R. L. REED
BY DIRECTION

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, XXIV CORPS
APO San Francisco 96308

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27 August 1969

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SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report (RCS: MAC J3-32) (KI)

THRU: Commanding General
III Marine Amphibious Force
FPO US Forces 96602

TO: Commanding General
United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
ATTN: MAC J343
APO US Forces 96222

1. (U) CODE NAME: Operation Apache Snow.
2. (U) DATES OF OPERATION: 100001H May 1969 to 072400H June 1969.
3. (U) LOCATION: Nam Hoa District, Thua Thien Province and southwestern Quang Tri Province astride the southern Da Krong Valley. Map reference: Vietnam, 1:50,000; Series L7014; sheets 6341, I; 6342, II; 6441, I-IV; 6444, III.
4. (U) CONTROL HEADQUARTERS: XXIV Corps.
5. (U) REPORTING OFFICER: LTG Richard G. Stilwell.
6. (C) TASK ORGANIZATION:

3d Bde, 101st Abn Div (AM) - Joseph B. Conway Jr, COL, Inf

- 1st Bn, 506th Inf
- 2d Bn, 506th Inf
- 3d Bn, 187th Inf
- 3d Sqdn, 5th Cav ✓
- A-2d Sqdn, 17th Cav ✓
- B-326th Engr (DS)
- A-158th AHB (DS)
- B-158th AHB (DS)
- 2d Bn, 319th Arty (DS)

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GROUP 4
DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERV
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C-2d Bn, 11th Arty (GSR)
 C-2d Bn, 94th Arty (GSR)
 C-1st Bn, 83d Arty (GSR)
 58th Sct Dog Plat
 TACP 20 TASS

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1st ARVN Regt - LTC Diem

1-1 ARVN Bn w/FO Party
 2-1 ARVN Bn w/FO Party
 3-1 ARVN Bn w/FO Party
 4-1 ARVN Bn w/FO Party
 Battery 34 ARVN Arty (GSR)
 Battery 11 ARVN Arty (DS)
 1 LNO Party

3d ARVN Regt - COL Hoa

1-3 ARVN Bn w/FO Party
 2-3 ARVN Bn w/FO Party
 3-3 ARVN Bn w/FO Party
 Battery 12 ARVN Arty (DS)

9th Marines 3d Marine Div - E. F. Danowitz, COL, USMC

1st Bn (Rein), 9th Marines
 Det, Hq Co, 9th Marines
 Det, Scout Dog Plat, 3d MP Bn
 2d Bn, 9th Marines
 Det, Hq Co, 9th Marines
 Det, Scout Dog Plat, 3d MP Bn
 2d Bn, 12th Marines
 Btry D (6-105mm, Towed)
 Btry E (6-105mm, Towed)
 Btry F (6-105mm, Towed)
 Mortar Btry (6-107)
 2d Prov How Btry (3-155mm, Towed)
 3d Prov How Btry (4-155mm, Towed)

7. (S) SUPPORTING FORCES:

a. Artillery:

(1) Forces: See Task Organization.

(2) Employment and Effectiveness:

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(a) Units provided support for LZ's prior to insertions, units in contact, H&I fires, and direct fire in defense of bases under ground and sapper attack.

(b) The artillery support was provided by utilizing a series of mutually supporting fire bases which were established prior to D-Day. Artillery after D-Day was provided by shifting artillery units to additional fire bases as required by troop disposition.

b. Air Support:

(1) Tactical Air: 777 FAC and 128 CSS sorties (905) were delivered by Air Force, Navy and Marine aircraft during Apache Snow. A total of 1,387.9 tons of bombs and 221.5 tons of napalm were dropped by tactical air. Sorties flown were as follows:

Air Force	129
Navy	52
Marines	724

Bomb damage assessment credited the air sorties with 482 structures destroyed, 29 enemy killed, 72 secondary fires and 87 secondary explosions.

(2) Arc Light:

(a) Number of Arc Light strikes:

1. Preplanned	18
2. Diverts	1

(b) There were 7 Arc Light strikes in preparation for Operation Apache Snow and 12 during Apache Snow.

(c) The following is the available BDA.

1. Damage or Destroyed: Numerous trenches, bunkers, huts, trails, and canopy were destroyed or damaged.

2. Fires and Explosions: There were approximately 25 secondary explosions from 1 to 30 times normal size. Several large sustained (white smoke) fires were also observed.

3. Enemy Casualties: A mass grave containing 40 bodies, believed to be NVA killed by 6 strikes, was discovered in one target box.

4. Enemy Equipment: During operations in the target areas subsequent to the Arc Light strikes, Allied forces found large quantities of enemy equipment and munitions to include the following:

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20 Russian trucks	UNCLASSIFIED	16 cases and 3000 rds of 60 and 82mm mor
50 bicycles		100 122mm arty rds
500 truck headlamps		4 82mm mortar base plates
6 bulldozers		2 60mm mortar base plates
1 jeep		2 Cal .50 MG
2000 kg rice		6 12.7mm anti-aircraft MG
5000 meters of commo wire		2 LMG
Unknown type of auto tools		3 M60 MG
3000 lb TNT		45 SKS rifles
50 fuzes		40 AK47's
2000 ft det cord		82mm mortar aiming stakes
10,000 anti-aircraft rds		1 East German MG
5000 SA rds		4 K43 rifles

8. (S) INTELLIGENCE:

a. Estimate of Enemy Strength, Location, Disposition and Situation

Anticipated in Objective Area Prior to Operation: Order of Battle holdings prior to Operation Apache Snow showed at least two and probably three NVA Infantry Regiments, the 6th, 9th and one other Regiment, astride the northern end of the A Shau Valley along with an unknown number of smaller rear service and combat support units. The 6th and 9th Regiments had been recalled or pushed by the pressure of two earlier operations, Dewey Canyon and Massachusetts Striker, to draw closer to the present terminus of the enemy line of communication (LOC) from Laos in Base Area 611. It was anticipated that the enemy had sufficient strength in and around Base Area 611 to offer significant opposition to an Allied penetration of the northern A Shau Valley if he elected to stand and fight for the supplies undoubtedly cached there and for the laboriously constructed LOC which would be interdicted by Operation Apache Snow.

b. Enemy Strength and Situation Actually Found As Operation Was Conducted:

While the elements of the 3d Marine Division met only light and sporadic opposition in the southern Da Krong Valley, elements of the 101st Airborne Division (AM) and 1st ARVN Division met considerable enemy resistance in the northern A Shau Valley. In the early morning hours of 13 May 1969, FSB Airborne was attacked by a large enemy force which was identified by a PW as the entire K6 Battalion (AKA 806th Battalion), 6th NVA Regiment. On 16 May 1969, 3/1 ARVN Battalion captured a map and several documents, including a battle plan dated 22 April 1969, which indicated that the enemy force charged with the mission of protecting transportation routes and road junctions in the northern portion of the A Shau Valley was the 37th Battalion (possibly AKA 3d Engineer Battalion), Binh Tram 42. These same documents indicated the presence of the 45th Battalion (possibly AKA 4th Engineer Battalion), Binh Tram 42, which was responsible for the routes and road junctions in the southern A Shau Valley. While these units were not confirmed by contact, other documents provided additional evidence that rear service units of the 559th Transportation Group were active in the Apache Snow area of operation (AO). The 3d Battalion, 187th Infantry established contact with a well entrenched and determined enemy force of the 29th NVA Regiment immediately following their combat assault

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into an LZ near Dong Ap Bia - Hill 937. A PW captured on 20 May 1969 stated that the 7th and 8th Battalions and the Regimental Headquarters of the 29th NVA Regiment had arrived at Dong Ap Bia only 15 days earlier. He further stated that his company, which had arrived in the area with 100 men, was now able to muster only 20 men. Captured documents and other PWs confirm this data.

c. Enemy Units Identified and Other Significant Intelligence: During Operation Apache Snow, units of the 6th and 29th NVA Regiments and 559th Transportation Group were identified. The 806th Battalion and K12 Sapper Battalion, 6th NVA Regiment, were identified in the attack at FSB Airborne while the 7th and 8th Battalions, 29th NVA Regiment, were identified in contact on Dong Ap Bia. Documents captured in the northern A Shau Valley outlined the mission and operations of the 37th and 45th Battalions, Binh Tram 42. Tenuous evidence indicates that elements of these and other service and support units were contacted during the operation. It was also learned that elements of the 9th NVA Regiment had occupied the area just prior to Operation Apache Snow, but could not be identified in contact.

d. Description of Terrain, Obstacles, Critical Features, Observation and Avenues of Approach: The Apache Snow AO is comprised of two rugged terrain compartments: on the northwest, the multiple valleys and streams which are the headwaters of the Da Krong River; and to the southeast, the upper end of the A Shau Valley. These compartments are divided by a watershed running southwest to northeast and defined fairly accurately by the boundary between Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces. The area is dominated by a mountain chain on the east which includes Dong Ngai (1774m), the highest peak in the XXIV Corps AO.

e. Weather: The weather during Operation Apache Snow was primarily influenced by the Southwest Monsoon. Skies were generally fair and most cloudiness was caused by isolated afternoon and evening thunderstorms. Ceilings in the vicinity of the thunderstorm activity were 1500 to 3000 feet and visibilities were temporarily reduced to 2 to 5 miles in rain showers. The weather conditions associated with thunderstorm activity were generally of short duration as the thunderstorms moved through the area. The surface winds of the Southwest Monsoon were frequently of moderate intensity during the afternoons with gusts of 20 to 30 knots. Isolated gusts of 40 knots were reported. During the period 26 - 28 May, a weak cold front moved through the area with wide spread low cloudiness and rain. Ceilings lowered to obscure the mountain tops but improved by the morning of 29 May.

f. CA-PSYOPS:

(1) PSYOP activities in support of Apache Snow were primarily leaflet dissemination and aerial loudspeaker broadcasts.

(2) The 3d Mar Div supported the operation with the dissemination of 2,042,000 leaflets (Anti-NVA and Chieu Hoi) and aerial broadcasts totalling 2 hours and 55 minutes of standard tapes. Also utilized during the operation was the newly developed "Early Word" system, on 13 May 1969, which resulted

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in 17 Bru being located. Two were Hoi Chanhs and the remaining 15 were innocent civilians. The Bru assisted in guiding the marines to several small enemy caches and reported that the enemy had been ordered to avoid contact with the marines.

(3) The 101st Airborne Division (AM) supported the operation with the dissemination of 5,310,000 leaflets (Anti-NVA and Chieu Hoi) and aerial broadcasts totalling 47 hours and 40 minutes.

(4) Total leaflet dissemination by both divisions in support of Operation Apache Snow was 7,352,000 while aerial broadcasting time totalled 50 hours and 35 minutes.

(5) Captured food-stuff: A small percentage of the food-stuff captured during Apache Snow was destroyed due to its condition. The remainder was distributed to the people of Phung Dien, Quang Dien, Hueng Tra, and Nam Hoa Districts.

9. (S) MISSION:

Commencing D-Day, XXIV Corps, in coordination and cooperation with the 1st ARVN Division, conduct operations in northern A Shau Valley - southern Da Krong Valley to destroy enemy forces and installations in the AO.

10. (S) CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS:

a. General: On D-Day, elements of participating divisions will conduct combat assaults into their respective assigned areas of operations (AO's). Routes within their respective assigned areas of operations will be interdicted as closely as possible to the Laotian border. Subsequent operations will be characterized by meticulous search for enemy forces, base areas, and supply caches. Divisions will be prepared to support or reinforce adjacent units as required.

b. 3d Marine Division:

- (1) Occupy southern Da Krong Valley on D-Day.
- (2) Block enemy escape into Laos along Da Krong Valley Road. Concurrently, interdict Route 922 by fire.

(3) Conduct operations in zone to destroy enemy forces and installations.

c. 101st Airborne Division (AM): In coordination with 1st ARVN Regt:

- (1) Occupy northern A Shau Valley on D-Day.
- (2) Block enemy escape into Laos along Route 922 and interdict Route 548.
- (3) Conduct operations in zone to destroy enemy forces and installations.

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d. Coordinating Instructions:

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(1) The operational nickname for this operation is "Apache Snow".

(2) Effective on Corps order, "Apache Snow" AO will be established as follows: From YD 018200 to YD 222200, to YC 475970, to YC 305970, thence north west along the Laotian border to YD 018200. The boundary between 101st Airborne Division (AM) and the 3d Marine Division will be as follows: From YC 160985 north along grid line 16 to YD 160037, north to YD 165057, northeast to YD 180078, north to YD 180093, east to YD 195097, northeast to YD 245150, then northeast along stream to AO boundary at YD 263161.

(3) The road running northeast from YD 076025, crossing the Da Krong at YD 153097, then to YD 245151, then south generally following stream to YD 25 is temporarily designated as Da Krong Valley Road.

11. (C) EXECUTION:

a. Prior to D-Day, 10 May 1969, the 1st and 3d ARVN Regiments and the 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, established three forward mutually supporting fire bases at FSB Bradley (YD 278122), FSB Airborne (YD 355070) and FSB Currahee (YC 399949). The 3/5 Cavalry, ORECON 3d Brigade, assumed security of three existing fire bases, FSB Blaze (YD 535020), FSB Bastogne (YD 620095) and FSB Cannon (YD 473029) and provided security for engineer forces upgrading Route 547 from Hue to the A Shau Valley. Three US Infantry Battalions, one ARVN Infantry Battalion, and one ARVN Infantry Company (Rein) were staged into a marshalling area in the vicinity of FSB Blaze. In the northern portion of the AO the 9th Marine Regiment (-)(Reinf) staged two battalions in the upper Da Krong Valley north of the 16 E-W grid line and established FSB Razor (YD 143186). On D-Day, six maneuver battalions (3 US Army, 1 USMC and 2 ARVN) made a combat assault into six separate LZ's along the Laotian border in the A Shau Valley and Da Krong Valley. After searching and clearing the immediate LZ areas, these six battalions along with 2/9 Marines began extensive RIF operations away from the LZs to locate and capture or destroy enemy forces and supplies and to interdict Route 548 and the Da Krong Valley Road. On D-Day, additional fire support bases were established at FSB Erskine (YD 164107) and FSB Turnage (YD 245090), completing a chain of mutually supporting fire bases. On D+1, another ARVN Infantry Battalion made a combat assault into an LZ along the Laotian border and commenced RIF operations. The 3/5 Cavalry continued to provide security for the fire bases and engineer forces along Route 547 and prepared for armored cavalry operations in the A Shau Valley upon completing of the road construction.

b. D-Day (10 May 1969), after extensive coordinated air and artillery preparations, the combat assault began: At 0730H, 1/506 Infantry (-) combat assaulted vicinity YC 312949; at 0801H, 3/187 Infantry combat assaulted vicinity YC 320988; at 0918H, 1/9 Marines combat assaulted into FSB Erskine; at 1001H, 2/501 Infantry (-) combat assaulted vicinity YD 288015. At 1020H, 4/1 ARVN

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Infantry Battalion combat assaulted vicinity YD 250042 and at 1300H a reinforced Infantry Company of 2/1 ARVN Infantry Battalion combat assaulted into FSB Turnage. Small arms fire was received during the combat assaults by 4/1 ARVN, 2/1 ARVN and 1/9 Marines. At FSB Turnage, a CH-47 was downed on the LZ with no casualties and minor damage. At FSB Erskine, a CH-46 received fire and crashed resulting in 7 friendly KIA's and 5 WIA (EVAC). Concurrent with the combat assaults, 2/9 Marines conducted RIF operations vicinity and south of FSB Razor while 3/2 ARVN Infantry Battalion conducted RIF operations immediately south of the AO boundary vicinity Ta Bat.

D+1 (11 May 1969): 3/1 ARVN Infantry Battalion combat assaulted vicinity YD 197044 with negative contact. At 1625H, B/3/187 Infantry began to receive SAF and MG fire vicinity YC 325982 which marked the beginning of the battle for Dong Ap Bia Mountain. Details of this battle are covered in Inclosure 1.

D+2 (12 May 1969): The operation continued generally as planned, with minor contact, except for 1/506 and 3/187 Infantry enjoined in the battle of Dong Ap Bia Mountain.

D+3 (13 May 1969): The first deviation to the original plan occurred on this date after A/2/501 Infantry and artillery at FSB Airborne received a heavy sapper attack at 0335H. 2/501 Infantry (-) was extracted from PZs along the Laotian border to the vicinity of FSB Airborne and began extensive RIFs to pursue and destroy the enemy in the area.

D+4 through D+7 (14 May 1969 - 17 May 1969): The operation continued generally as planned with heavy contact on Dong Ap Bia Mountain.

D+8 (18 May 1969): In the battle for Dong Ap Bia Mountain, the 3/187 Infantry fought its way to the military crest on the north while the 1/506 Infantry assaulted up the slope from the south. The 3/187 Infantry began to receive heavy fire from both flanks and, with little daylight remaining, the decision was made to reinforce for the final assault. At 1830H A/2/506 Infantry was combat assaulted vicinity YC 320989 and became OPCON 3/187 Infantry.

D+9 (19 May 1969): At 1317H 2/3 ARVN combat assaulted vicinity YC 338974 and at 1515H 2/501 Infantry (-) combat assaulted vicinity YC 332922. 3/5 Cavalry, providing security along Route 547A, was chopped OPCON to the 2d Brigade reducing the span of control for the 3d Brigade.

D+10 (20 May 1969): 3/187 Infantry (Reinf), 2/501 Infantry, 1/506 Infantry and 2/3 ARVN successfully assaulted and drove the 7th and 8th Battalions of the 29th NVA Regiment from the mountain stronghold and began a detailed search of the area.

D+11 (21 May 1969): 3/187 was chopped OPCON to the 2d Brigade and moved to the coastal area of the division AO while 2/506 became OPCON to the 3d Brigade and the Battalion (-) moved to and commenced RIF operations

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vicinity FSB Airborne. 1/506, 2/501 and 2/3 ARVN continued to search Dong Ap Bia Mountain.

D+12 (22 May 1969): The remainder of 2/506 moved to FSB Airborne and began extensive search of the Warehouse 54 area.

D+13 through D+17 (23 - 27 May 1969): 2/501 Infantry, 1/506 Infantry and 2/3 ARVN Infantry continued clear and search of Dong Ap Bia Mountain with 1/506 moving south, 2/3 ARVN moving southwest, and 2/501 continuing to search on the crest. During this period, engineers with the 9th Marine Regiment completed a series of four cuts and blocks of the Da Krong Valley Road to deny the enemy immediate future use of the road.

D+18 (28 May 1969): The 9th Marine Regiment began withdrawal from Operation Apache Snow with 1/9 Marines lifting to Vandegrift Combat Base and the closing of FSB Erskine.

D+19 (29 May 1969): The 9th Marine Regiment withdrawal continued with the lift of 2/9 Marines (-) to Vandegrift Combat Base.

D+20 (30 May 1969): The 9th Marine Regiment withdrawal continued with the lift of artillery elements to Vandegrift Combat Base.

D+21 (31 May 1969): The remainder of the 9th Marine Regiment lifted to Vandegrift Combat Base and 3d Marine Division participation in Operation Apache Snow terminated at 311800H May 1969.

D+22 through D+25 (1 - 4 June 1969): The 3d Airborne Brigade and 3d ARVN Regiment continued operations, with 1/506 Infantry and 2/3 ARVN Infantry continuing RIF operations southwest to FSB Currahee and vicinity. The 2/501 Infantry conducted RIF operation northeast toward the A Shau Valley floor.

D+26 (5 June 1969): The 4/1 ARVN Infantry was extracted from vicinity YD 278066 to La Vang and terminated their participation in Operation Apache Snow.

D+27 (6 June 1969): Operation continued vicinity FSB's Currahee, Airborne, Bradley and Turnage and northeast of Dong Ap Bia.

D+28 (7 June 1969): The 3d Airborne Brigade and 3d ARVN Regiment terminated Operation Apache Snow effective 072400H June 1969.

12 (C) RESULTS: The objectives of Operation Apache Snow were successfully carried out. A series of mutually supporting fire support bases from FSB Currahee on the south to FSB Razor on the north was established. The multi-battalion combined operation in the south was a campaign in which the enemy was found, fixed and methodically destroyed. The 9th Marine Regiment successfully blocked on the north, thus denying the enemy reinforcing entrance or withdrawal from the A Shau Valley along the Da Krong Valley Road, and interdicted the road to deter enemy use of it in the future. The result of this operation

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was the destruction of the combat effectiveness of the maneuver battalions of the 29th NVA Regiment and its Headquarters and Technical Units, which forced the broken elements to retreat across the border into Laos. It also denied them use of the northern A Shau Valley as either a staging area for attack or as a storage area for supplies.

ENEMY LOSSES

	<u>US</u>	<u>ARVN</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA	792	229	1021
PW	6	0	6
WPNS: IWC	273	340	613
CSWC	41	100	141
SA Ammo	215,451	340,000	555,451
CS Ammo	2,426	5,000	7,426
Mortar Ammo	3,346	5,000	8,346
RPG	835	540	1,375
Other	15,202	10,800	26,002
Grain (lbs)	44,751	11,735	56,486
Demolitions (lbs)	200	14,275	14,475
Documents (lbs)	10.25	37	47.25
Vehicles	13	40	53
Bunkers	1318	257	1575
Structures	425	306	731

FRIENDLY LOSSES

	<u>US</u>	<u>ARVN</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA	90	31	121
WIA	582	137	719

13. (C) ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: UNCLASSIFIED

a. Supply: The resupply to troops in the field was accomplished exclusively by helicopters from Vandegrift Combat Base and Camp Evans for Marine Corps units and from Camp Eagle, Camp Evans or FSSE at FSB Birmingham for Army units. Resupply by US to ARVN units was accomplished by 101st Airborne Division (AM) helicopters.

(1) Quantity of supplies provided to combat units by class:

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>US ARMY (S/TON)</u>	<u>US MARINE CORPS (S/TON)</u>
I and Water	1572	415
II	12	-
III	2238*	12**
IV	669	71
V	4311	736
Other	900	111

* Includes all Class III and IIIA

** Does not include IIIA

(2) Logistical aviation requirements by sorties:

<u>TYPE HELICOPTER</u>	<u>US ARMY</u>	<u>US MARINE CORPS</u>
CH-46	-	247
CH-47	1568	95
CH-53	-	276
CH-54	-	5

XXIV Corps Headquarters established an interservice support agreement between 101st Airborne Division (AM) and 3d Marine Division to provide additional CH-47 helicopter support to Marine Corps units and for the Army to issue munitions from Army stocks at Camp Evans to Marine Corps units on a reimburseable basis. 3d Marine Division would credit USMC ASP at Quang Tri where the Army picked up the munitions and transported them to Camp Evans. The CH-47's lifted supplies from Camp Evans to Marine Corps combat units. By lifting supplies from Camp Evans, the 101st Airborne Division (AM) controlled the use of the helicopters but provided helicopter support to 3d Marine Division units in the Apache Snow area of operation.

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b. Maintenance: No significant maintenance problems were encountered.

c. Treatment of casualties, evacuation and hospitalization:

(1) The handling of casualties during Apache Snow was considered satisfactory. Evacuation of and care for Marine personnel followed normal channels, see Inclosure 2. The large number of casualties in Army personnel required a change in normal aeromedical evacuation channels from site of wound to hospital. The 101st Airborne Division (AM) met this requirement by:

(a) Establishing a forward triage and resuscitative medical facility at FSB Blaze utilizing UH-1H Dust Off and LOH helicopters to evacuate from site of wound to C Company at FSB Blaze.

(b) Evacuating casualties from FSB Blaze to hospitals with CH-47 and non-medical UH-1 helicopters.

(2) Due to the large number of casualties during Apache Snow, Corps medical personnel operated a Forward Medical Regulating Office (FMRO). This office insured that all available medical facilities were used and prevented overcrowding of one facility while others were idle. During Apache Snow the FMRO accomplished its mission by use of telephone. This required the hospital selected to receive casualties or the unit whose aircraft was transporting the casualties to notify the aircraft at which hospital to land. This method, although not satisfactory, did accomplish the mission during Apache Snow. For satisfactory operation the FMRO should be equipped with a radio to make direct contact with the evacuation helicopters.

d. Transportation: No significant problems were encountered.

e. Communications: Communications support provided throughout the operation, over and above organic divisional assets, consisted of a 12 channel VHF system installed from Camp Eagle (HQ, 101st Airborne Division) to FSB Berchtesgarden (HQ, 3d Brigade (FWD), 101st Airborne Division). XXIV Corps OPLAN 10-69 (Division Support Communications Contingency Plan) was implemented prior to the operation to commit the necessary assets. On 10 May 1969, equipment and personnel of the 63d Signal Battalion, 12th Signal Group, were helilifted to FSB Berchtesgarden and the system (FFH-58) was activated. This 12 channel system provided the required command, control and fire direction communications between HQ, 101st Airborne Division, 3d Brigade (FWD) at FSB Berchtesgarden and 3d Brigade (REAR) at Camp Evans. Organic C-E equipment of the divisions provided the normal tactical radio communications. The 3d Marine Division installed a 4 channel VHF system from Vandegrift Combat Base to FSB Razor (HQ, 9th Marine Regiment) to supplement the radio nets. 101st Airborne Division installed 4 channel systems from FSB Berchtesgarden to FSB Blaze, FSB Currahee, and FSB Eagle's Nest to complete the multi-channel system installed within their AO of Apache Snow. 1st ARVN Division installed an AN/TRC-1 system from Hue Citadel

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to FSB Bradley (HQ, 1st ARVN Regiment FWD) for the command and control communications of participating ARVN units.

f. Medical Evaluation: The system of medical evacuation used by the 101st Airborne Division proved so successful that they are going to continue this practice. The 326th Medical Battalion is planning to incorporate LOH helicopters into its air ambulance platoon. They found on Apache Snow that the LOH was able to land and pick up casualties in areas where the large UH-1H would have to use a sling. The use of the LOH also increased the speed of the evacuation of casualties.

14. (U) SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUES:

a. Rigger and Rappelling:

(1) Discussion: Several times during Operation Apache Snow, aircraft were downed in hostile terrain where easy access was impossible. At times the only feasible way riggers could get to the aircraft in order to rig it for extraction was through the use of rappeling techniques from UH-1H helicopters

(2) Solutions: Realizing that this method of entry is not a normal technique for riggers, or infantry security elements, experience shows that, as a minimum, a basic course of instruction, to include actual helicopter rappeling, is needed in all infantry and rigger units.

b. Chest Plate Protector:

(1) Discussion: Units of both the 1/506 and 2/506 Infantry Battalions employed aircraft crew member ceramic vest plates for their point men. This body armor, while heavy and cumbersome, saved the lives of three men who were struck by SA at close range.

(2) Solutions: The possibility of adapting this aircraft type body armor to use by field troops should be investigated by every infantry unit engaged in operations in which contact is felt to be imminent.

c. Powder Cannisters: Extensive use of powder cannisters as supplementary water containers was made throughout the operation. Cannisters are not subject to leakage and may be discarded, eliminating the need for extraction and retrograde to supporting LSA's.

d. Rations Supplement: As a supplement to the normal supply of rations and water, extensive use was made of canned fruit juices by the Marine units. Normally four cases (12 cans per case) were included in each company load. The extensive use of juices, by those units operating in the field, contributed significantly to the reduction of heat casualties and dehydration.

15. (U) COMMANDERS ANALYSIS:

a. Operation Apache Snow was a highly productive, interservice, international, undertaking with an end product of a high order of teamwork. This

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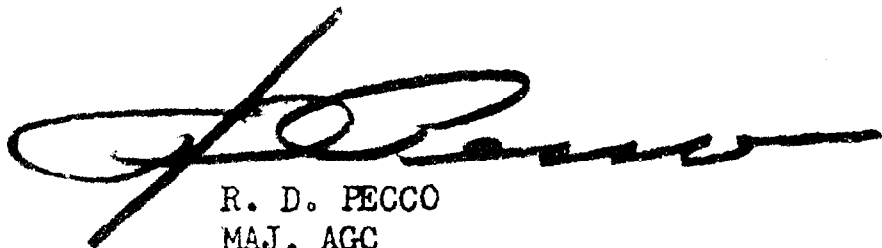
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teamwork involved Army, Marine and two regiments of the 1st ARVN Division.

b. The operation focused on interdiction of enemy lines of communication and search for enemy forces, supply caches and base areas. To this end, Operation Apache Snow was successful with the destruction of two enemy battalions (630 KIA) on Dong Ap Bia Mountain, Hill 937. In addition, the A Shau Valley infiltration route was closed to the enemy and large quantities of ammunition and equipment were destroyed or captured.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



R. D. PECCO
MAJ, AGC
Asst AG

2 Incl

- 1 - Battle of Dong Ap Bia
- 2 - Medical Evacuation Chart

CF:

- III MAF 1 - 15
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a. The battle to defeat the 29th NVA Regiment dug in on the slopes and summit of Dong Ap Bia Mountain was an intense and brutal conflict. "Hamburger Hill" as Dong Ap Bia has come to be called, was captured in the traditional infantry manner, by assault. That this victory was obtained with so few Allied casualties can be attributed to the teamwork and near perfect coordination between ARVN and US, as well as US Air Force, Artillery, Aviation, and the Infantry.

b. The movement toward Dong Ap Bia immediately encountered a well dug in enemy, who fought hard to prevent penetration of his base area. The enemy appeared to be well dressed and was well supplied with weapons and ammunition. He made good use of his concentric rings of fortified positions and employed RPG and automatic weapons extensively.

c. Between 10 and 16 May 1969, the 3-187th Infantry employed heavy tactical air and artillery fires to reduce the enemy positions and clear away the jungle undergrowth. Forces were then maneuvered to apply further pressure on the enemy and cause him to dispose his forces to additional air strikes and artillery fires. From all indications, the enemy was reinforcing his positions nightly from Laos. By 15 May, after a week of heavy close-in fighting, the enemy complex on Dong Ap Bia was well developed and an additional battalion (1-506 Inf) maneuvered towards Hill 937 from the southwest. On 19 May 1969, the 2-501st Inf and the 2-3rd ARVN were deployed into the area to apply pressure from all sides. On 20 May, after further artillery and tactical air strikes, the battalion objectives were secured astride Dong Ap Bia ridge.

d. During the operation two enemy battalions (7th and 8th) of the 29th NVA Regiment were identified from captured documents found in the area and it appears that regimental and other supporting units (anti-aircraft, heavy weapons and engineer) were also involved. These units had not been identified in-country since the fall of 1968 and it appears that they had just recently returned, presumably to increase enemy military activity in Thua Thien Province. Confirmed total body count of 630 enemy killed accounts for about one-half of the total enemy force. In addition to these confirmed enemy killed, there were substantial enemy casualties which could not be counted directly, but which significantly reduced the effectiveness of the 29th NVA Regiment. A PW stated that only 20% of the two companies with which he was familiar survived the Allied attack. In addition to enemy casualties, a major base area was neutralized and significant quantities of enemy supplies were captured including 177 weapons.

e. The effectiveness with which fire power and maneuver were combined is shown by the 10 to 1 enemy to friendly kill ratio that was achieved, despite the rugged terrain, dense vegetation and the enemy's use of prepared positions. B-52 strikes and tactical air strikes were placed on bases and infiltration routes to inflict further casualties on the enemy forces attempting to reinforce or escape from the Dong Ap Bia area.

f. As a result of their losses, it is estimated that two enemy battalions

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involved in this operation are no longer combat effective and that the ability of the newly arrived 29th NVA Regiment to conduct offensive operations in the immediate future has been severely limited. Thus, a major threat to Thua Thien Province has been removed.

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2. (C) Narrative description of action around Dong Ap Bia, Hill 937. (10-24 May 1969).

a. On 100844H May 1969, the 3-187th Infantry combat assaulted into an LZ in the vicinity of YC314988 just west of Dong Ap Bia. D/3-187 immediately made contact with an unknown size enemy force. Approximately two hours later while moving from the LZ, B/3-187 made contact, returned fire and killed two NVA. Initial impressions were that the NVA were probably trail watchers, but after sustaining three wounded the battalion concluded that the firing was too well controlled and that stiffer resistance might be encountered. (The following morning 2 more enemy bodies were found in the underbush).

b. On 11 May, the 3-187th placed artillery and TAC air on a large bunker complex located astride their axis of advance. RIF operations followed the strikes as the 3-187th moved to the southeast toward Hill 937. While searching the hut and bunker complex, the 3-187th found 5 NVA bodies killed by the artillery/TAC air preparation. A significant discovery in the area was a group of documents identifying the unit as the 29th NVA Regiment. The documents showed that the 29th NVA Regiment had returned from North Vietnam in April and had been conducting reconnaissance operations between BA 611 in Laos and Route 548 in the A Shau Valley.

c. On 12 May the 3-187th continued their push along the rough, canopied ridges. By 0905H they made heavy contact with a well disciplined force estimated at two companies dug in about 200 meters to their front. They maneuvered against the force and killed 3 NVA. The battalion called in ARA and artillery fire in order to dislodge the enemy from his fortified position. The enemy held fast, however, and throughout the day the 3-187 received heavy automatic weapons and RPG fire and limited mortar fire. Heavy TAC air and artillery fires were placed on the enemy positions.

d. The situation remained unchanged on 13 May as the enemy stayed in bunkers and employed small arms, RPG, automatic weapons and mortars against maneuvering elements of the 187th. The 3-187th returned fire and employed additional artillery and TAC air.

e. On the morning of the 14th, B, C, and D companies of the 3-187th once again began slow and deliberate maneuver under artillery, TAC air and gunship support. Under this heavy attack the enemy fell back. Contact terminated about 1700 and the 187th swept the bunker area to find 13 NVA killed in action by artillery, 47 NVA killed by small arms fire and 29 killed by air strikes.

f. The 187th continued its drive along the ridges to Hill 937 on the morning of 15 May. As the line companies maneuvered toward their objective they discovered 14 NVA bodies from the previous day's contact. By 1500H they were in heavy contact and realized the force was more than a normal NVA battalion size element. Rates of fire were extremely heavy and the enemy troops skillfully employed command detonated Claymore mines in large quantities. Enemy reinforcements were being brought into the contact zone. The new troops had

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fresh haircuts, clean uniforms, and new weapons. The enemy was deployed in concentric rows of bunkers which afforded maximum utilization of the terrain available. The intense bunker to bunker fighting left 62 more NVA dead and the 1-506 Infantry was directed to move north to reinforce the 3-187 in order to take Hill 937.

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g. At 160110H May C/3-187th Inf began receiving grenades, satchel charges, and small arms fire on their position. Spooky (Air Force C47 flare ship with miniguns) was employed from 0200-0600 resulting in three secondary explosions. A first light check revealed 14 NVA killed. The 1-506 was maneuvering north to effect its link-up with the 187th when it received heavy fire from Hill 916 (YC3196). The 1-506th continued their movement toward the 187th with the support of air strikes.

h. On 17 May, the 187th occupied an overwatch position and directed CS gas strikes. The 1-506 continued to maneuver to reinforce the 187th. Although the enemy had gas masks, the CS attacks were effective and caused him to leave some of his bunkers.

i. By 180715H May B/1-506th Inf began closing on the southern base of Hill 937. A and C/1-506th Inf closed in on either flank. At 1330H, the 3-187th Inf, having been under continuous fire, took up positions NW of Hill 937. Artillery, TAC air, ARA and gunships then proceeded to pound the hill. A/2-506th Inf was alerted and deployed to FSB Blaze (ID5302), to be available if required.

j. On the morning of 19 May, with the 1-506th Inf on the south and the 3-187th Inf on the north, the enemy positions were subjected to continuous artillery and TAC air fires. The 2-501st Inf and the 2/3d ARVN were alerted to prepare to assist in the final sweep of the enemy's fortified positions surrounding the entire ridge line. By late afternoon an additional 175 enemy bodies had been accounted for.

k. Late in the morning of 20 May, 4 battalions executed a coordinated assault on Hill 937. The 3-187th Inf, with A/2-506th Inf attached, assaulted the hill from the north; the 1-506 Inf from the south and southwest; the 2/3d ARVN from the southeast; and the 2-501st Inf from the northeast. The 3-187th swept up the hill from the north, while the 1-506th and the 2-501st blocked possible routes of escape. The 2/3d ARVN moved onto Hill 937 from the south. By 1200 hours battalion objectives on the Dong Ap Bia Ridge were taken. The determined enemy resistance disintegrated as friendly forces overran enemy positions resulting in a total body count for 20 May of 109.

l. On 21 May 1969 Allied forces swept over the hill to check the enemy base area in detail. After ten days of hard fighting the 3-187th Inf had earned a well deserved rest and returned to the coastal plains. The 1-506th Inf secured the abandoned enemy positions while the 2-501st Inf conducted RIF operations to the west. The 2/3d ARVN conducted RIF operations to the east. Friendly reconnaissance of the area encountered only isolated and sporadic resistance. An additional 59 enemy killed were discovered and 89 weapons were captured.

m. The Dong Ap Bia operation cost the enemy a total of 630 NVA KIA. In addition to these confirmed casualties, a PW captured during the operation indicated that the units in his area suffered 80% casualties. On 22 May the

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2-501st Inf and the 2/3d ARVN continued search operations in the vicinity of Hill 937, accounting for 72 NVA killed and 3 crew served weapons captured. The search operation continued on the 23d of May with the 1-506th Inf finding 10 more NVA bodies and the 2-501st Inf finding 3 bodies. On 24 May the 1-506th discovered 51 individual weapons and the 2-501st Inf found 1 NVA KIA, thus ending the battle of Dong Ap Bia Mountain, Hill 937

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