

A  
 FILE / SUBJ.  
 DATE / SUB-CAT.  
 10/69

1. COUNTRY: CB; VS	8. REPORT NUMBER: 6 029 1377 70
2. SUBJECT: (U) OB of the 9th Sapper Bn	9. DATE OF REPORT: 6 Jan 71
3. ISC NUMBER: 735.200	10. NO. OF PAGES: 11
4. DATE OF INFORMATION: Oct 69 to Aug 70	11. REFERENCES: 1G3n, 1J13 MACV ICP: OIR-1
5. PLACE AND DATE OF ACQ: CMIC, SAIGON, VS 14 Dec 70	12. ORIGINATOR: US Element, CMIC, USMACV
6. EVALUATION: SOURCE <u>F</u> INFORMATION <u>6</u>	13. PREPARED BY: GERALD W. WESTPHAL SP4 USA
7. SOURCE: Returnee Interrogation	14. APPROVING AUTHORITY: <i>W. H. BEARDSLEY</i> W. H. BEARDSLEY MAJ LTC, USA Dir, US Elm, CMIC USA
15. SUMMARY: (Leave Blank)	
<p>(C) This report contains OB information on the 9th Sapper Battalion, to include unit history, mission, composition, disposition, strength, weapons and ammunition, equipment, unit logistics, unit plans, unit training, combat efficiency and personalities. This report also contains limited information on the 429th Sapper Group.</p>	
<p>1. (C) Background Information:</p> <p>a. Name: TRAN NGOC BAU (TRAANL, NGOCV BAUS), aka TRAN NGOC BA (TRAANL, NGOCV BA), CMIC 3253-70</p> <p>b. Rank: CPL/Regroupee</p> <p>c. Position and Unit of Assignment: Asst Sqd Ldr, 2d Cell, 2d Sapper Section, 2d Sapper Co, 9th Sapper Bn, 429th Gp (aka J-16), Sapper High Command, COSVN</p>	

1. COUNTRY: (U) OB of the 9th Sapper Bn	8. REPORT NUMBER: 735.200	9. DATE OF REPORT: 6 Jan 71
2. SUBJECT: (U) OB of the 9th Sapper Bn	10. NO. OF PAGES: 11	11. REFERENCES: 1G3n, 1J13 MACV ICP: OIR-1
3. ISC NUMBER: 735.200	12. ORIGINATOR: US Element, CMIC, USMACV	
4. DATE OF INFORMATION: Oct 69 to Aug 70	13. PREPARED BY: GERALD W. WESTPHAL SPL, USA	
5. PLACE AND DATE OF ACQ: CMIC, SAIGON, VS 14 Dec 70	14. APPROVING AUTHORITY: <i>W. H. BEARDSLEY</i> W. H. BEARDSLEY LTC, USA Dir, US Elm, CMIC USA	
6. EVALUATION: SOURCE <u>F</u> INFORMATION <u>6</u>		
7. SOURCE: Returnee Interrogation		

15. SUMMARY: (Leave Blank)

(C) This report contains OB information on the 9th Sapper Battalion, to include unit history, mission, composition, disposition, strength, weapons and ammunition, equipment, unit logistics, unit plans, unit training, combat efficiency and personalities. This report also contains limited information on the 429th Sapper Group.

19.01

1. (C) Background Information:
- a. Name: TRAN NGOC BAU (TRAANL, NGOCV BAUS), aka TRAN NGOC BA (TRAANL, NGOCV BA), CMIC 3253-70
  - b. Rank: CPL/Regroupee
  - c. Position and Unit of Assignment: Asst Sqd Ldr, 2d Cell, 2d Sapper Section, 2d Sapper Co, 9th Sapper Bn, 429th Gp (aka J-16), Sapper High Command, COSVN

16. DISTRIBUTION BY ORIGINATOR:	17. DOWNGRADING DATA:	18. ATTACHMENT DATA:
DIA 1 cy DIRNSA 1 cy SAC 1 cy CINCPAC 1 cy CINCPAC AF 2 cys CINCUSARPAC 2 cys COMUSMACTHAI 1 cy MACJ212-2 2 cys MACJ213-1 1 cy MACJ23 1 cy MACJ231 1 cy	GROUP 3 DOWNGRADED AT 12 YEAR INTERVALS NOT AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED THIS DOCUMENT IS RELEASABLE TO REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, FREE WORLD MILITARY ASSISTANCE FORCES AND GOC	None

6: 029 1877 70

d. DPOB: 12 Mar 44; PHUOC THANG Village, TUY PHUOC District, BINH DINH Province, RVN

e. Parents' Names: Father, TRAN THUY (TRAANL, THUYL), living; Mother, TRAN THI BANG (TRAANL, THIV BANGR), living

f. Circumstances of Return. On the night of 23 Aug 70, Source and friend deserted their unit with the intention of going to PHNOM PENH to live, but en route they heard there was an ARVN unit in the area, so Source decided to rally. Source approached the ARVN unit holding a white handkerchief, and he rallied on 24 Aug 70. However, Source's friend attempted to flee and was shot and killed by the ARVN.

g. Significant Activities. Source lived with his parents at his POB, and attended the village school from 1952 to 1954. In Mar 55, he regrouped to NVN. In 1966, Source completed studies at the HANOI Construction University in architecture. On 21 Aug 68, Source joined the NVA, and on 9 May 69, he began to infiltrate to RVN, with the 2150th Infil Gp. On 10 Sep 69, Source arrived in KATUM Area, CAMBODIA, and was assigned to the new 9th Sapper Bn, 429th Gp (aka J-16), Sapper High Command, COSVN, as an Asst Sqd Ldr. Source deserted his unit on 23 Aug 70, and rallied on 24 Aug 70.

h. Additional References: CMIC PW/Rallier Exploitation Guide; Map: CAMBODIA, AMS Series L7014, Sheets 6232 II, Edition 1, dtd 1965, Scale 1:50,000

2. (C) OB of the 9th Sapper Bn:

a. Unit History. Initial formation of the 9th Sapper Battalion began in Sep 69 from approximately 215 men of the 2150th Infil Gp. The 9th Sapper Bn was subordinate to the 429th Gp (aka J-16), Sapper High Command, COSVN. The 9th Bn built a base camp in the SOC MUON Area, SROK MEMUT District, KOMPONG CHAM Province, CAMBODIA, for the purpose of reviewing sapper training. In Mar 70, the 9th battalion was divided into two elements; a forward element which consisted of approximately 16 men, drawn from all units of the battalion, was located in CHON THANH District, BINH LONG Province, RVN, and a rear headquarters which remained in the SOC MUON Area, SROK MEMUT District, KOMPONG CHAM Province, CAMBODIA. In Jun 70, the forward element was disbanded and rejoined the rear headquarters in CAMBODIA. The 9th Battalion remained here and reviewed sapper training until Aug 70, when Source rallied.

b. Mission. The mission of the 9th Sapper Bn was to review sapper training. The mission of the forward element of the 9th Bn was to attack US/ARVN forces in TAY NINH, BINH DUONG, and BINH LONG Provinces, RVN. The mission of the rear headquarters was to supply the forward headquarters with ammunition and equipment.

(1) Bn Hq. This headquarters had the responsibility of coordinating all sapper activities, such as training, date of attacks, and accomplishing the mission of the unit.



(2) Recon Plat. This platoon provided information for the battalion, concerning US/ARVN forces.

(3) Signal Plat. This platoon was responsible for communication between the forward and rear headquarters.

c. Composition:

(1) Identification of Unit:

- (a) Name/Numerical Designation: 9th Sapper Battalion
- (b) Code Names/Cover Numbers: Unknown
- (c) Type of Unit: Sapper
- (d) LENS: Unknown
- (e) Echelon/Size: Battalion
- (f) Date of Unit Designation: Sep 69
- (g) Previous Designation: Unknown, formed from 2150th
- (h) Method Used to Select Unit Designation: Unknown

Infil Gp

(2) Parent Unit:

- (a) Name/Numerical Designation: 429th Sapper Group
- (b) Code Names/Cover Numbers: J-16
- (c) Type of Unit: Command Headquarters
- (d) LENS: Unknown
- (e) Echelon/Size: Unknown
- (f) Date of Unit Designation: Unknown
- (g) Previous Designation: Unknown
- (h) Method Used to Select Unit Designation: Unknown

(3) Organization. The 9th Sapper Bn consisted of the battalion headquarters element, reconnaissance platoon, signal platoon, and three companies, designated 1st, 2d, and 3d Companies. The 1st company was added in Jun 70. (For further breakdown of the Bn, see chart on page 9)

d. Disposition of Unit:

(1) Location. At the time of Source's return, the 9th Bn was located (vic XT374978) in the SOC MUON Area, SROK MEMOT District, KOMPONG CHAM Province, CAMBODIA.

(2) Security. Source's knowledge of security measures was limited to the rear headquarters of the 9th Bn. The rear headquarters base camp was guarded by nine guards at a time. Two guards were provided from each company and the remaining guards were furnished from the signal platoon, reconnaissance platoon, and battalion headquarters element. There were three guard houses located around the perimeter of the base camp. Two guards were assigned to a bunker and the remaining three guards walked the perimeter. Each bunker was equipped with a B-40 ATGL. Each guard carried an AK-47. Guards worked in two shifts, one shift in the morning and one in the afternoon. During the night, guards were rotated every hour.

(3) Unit Facilities. All personnel of the Rear Headquarters, 9th Bn, lived in bunkers dug in the ground, three men per bunker. Each bunker was (3-5m x 2m x 1.8m). The bunkers were covered with wooden logs, topped with dirt and grass. An air vent was utilized for breathing purposes. (See page 8 for example bunker.)

e. Strength. The 9th Sapper Bn had approximately 260 men. The battalion headquarters consisted of a commanding officer, three executive officers and one political officer. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Companies each had a commanding officer, one executive officer and a political officer. Each company consisted of three sections of 20 men each. Each section had six cells of three men per cell. Each section had one chief and one assistant chief. The 9th Bn consisted of approximately 30 officers, 130 NCOs, and 100 EM. 99 percent were NVA and 1 percent was VC.

(1) Losses. Source heard of the following KIA and WIA: in Nov 69, an element of the 9th Bn fought against the ARVN somewhere in TAY NINH Province, with 11 KIA and 2 WIA. In Dec 69, an element of the 9th Bn again fought against the ARVN somewhere in TAY NINH Province, with 1 KIA and 3 WIA. In Mar 70, the forward element of the 9th Bn attacked an ARVN base camp in CHON THAN District, BINH LONG Province, with 2 WIA and 7 missing. In Apr 70, an element of the 9th Bn was bombed somewhere in KOMPONG CHAM Province, CAMBODIA by a B-52, with 3 KIA and 2 WIA. In Jun 70, the forward element fought against US forces somewhere in BINH DUONG Province, with four WIA and seven missing. Source was unable to provide a breakdown of officers, NCOs and EM that were KIA, WIA and missing. Source knew of no deserters or HOI CHANHS.

(2) Replacements. Source stated that 30 replacements for the 9th Bn were received in Feb 70, consisting of three NCOs and 27 EM from the 429th Sapper School H-11; in Aug 70, 52 NVA were received in the 9th Bn: six NCOs and 46 EM from the 2184 Infil Gp.

f. Weapons and Ammunition:

(1) The 9th Bn had the following weapons, breakdown unknown:

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Make</u>	<u>Basic load</u>
18	K-54	Chicom	Unknown

75	AK-47	Soviet	120
Four	CKC	Soviet	30
Four	K-61 (or M-61)	EAST GERMANY	Unknown
Two	K-59	EAST GERMANY	Unknown
Six	60mm mortar	NVN	30
Six	RPK	EAST GERMANY	500
10	B-40 ATGL	Soviet	Eight
Six	B-41 ATGL	Soviet	Eight
Three	82mm mortar	Soviet	12
10	DH-10	Chicom	Six
Six	Bangalore Torpedo	NVN	Unknown
Unknown	C-4 TNT	Chicom	
Two per man	Hand grenades	NVN	

The reserve load of all the above weapons was unknown to Source. Source only knew of three AK-47s that were lost (Mar 70) while he was with the 9th Bn, in the CHON THAN Post, BINH LONG Province, RVN. These were captured by an ARVN element, and in Jun 70, six AK-47s were received in the 9th Bn (NFI).

g. Equipment. The 9th Bn had an unknown amount of picks, shovels, machetes, wirecutters, pliers, and hammers.

h. Unit Logistic:

(1) Maintenance of Weapons. Weapons of the 9th Bn were maintained at the rear service section of the 429th Gp (NFI).

(2) Resupply of Ammunition. Ammunition for the 9th Bn was supplied by the rear service section of the 429th Gp.

(3) Medical Support. No medics were available for the 9th Bn. Sick and wounded were evacuated to the 429th Gp dispensary.

(4) Rations. The Rear Service Section of the 429th Gp sent money to the 9th Bn for food. Each man was allotted four riels or 20 piasters a day. The battalion adjutant did the purchasing of food. Food consisted of rice every day, vegetables and fish once a week, and meat once a month. The minimum daily diet per man consisted of 650 grams of rice.

i. Unit Plans. In the event of an air strike or artillery fire, all personnel of the 9th Bn stayed in their bunkers. During a ground attack, the men fought unless a superior force overtook them, in which event they retreated. Source had no knowledge of plans for reorganization or expansion of the 9th Bn.

j. Unit Training. While Source was with the unit, he and the rest of the 9th Battalion were taught Resolution 9 by the political officer for a period of four months. Physical training was conducted daily in the morning, for a period of fifteen minutes, which consisted of hand-to-hand combat.

k. Combat Efficiency:

(1) Combat Experience. Source heard that in Nov and Dec 69, elements of the 9th Bn successfully engaged in combat against the ARVN, somewhere in TAY NINH Province, RVN. In Mar 70, the forward element of the 9th Bn successfully attacked an ARVN base camp in CHON THANH District, BINH LONG Province, RVN. In Apr 70, an element of the 9th Bn was bombed by a B-52 strike somewhere in KOMPONG CHAM Province, CAMBODIA. Source also heard that in May 70, the forward element of the 9th Bn successfully fought against US/ARVN forces in the LAI KHE Area, BINH DUONG Province, RVN. In Jun 70, the forward element was unsuccessful against US forces somewhere in BINH DUONG Province, RVN. Source heard that the forward element engaged in three ambushes (outcomes unknown): against the ARVN, in BINH LONG Province, RVN; against US forces in the BO TUC Area, province unknown; and against the ARVN in the CHANG CHANH Area, province unknown. Source heard that all battles lasted one-half hour, approximately.

(2) Morale. It is the Source's opinion that the morale of the 9th Battalion was high due to the fact that the men believed in the Communist ideology and they were told that they were winning the war. However, Source stated that 20 percent of the 9th Bn had malaria. The only friction between the men of the 9th Bn was caused by the fact that the VC would spend money freely and the NVA would not (NFI).

l. Personalities:

(1) 429th Sapper Group:

CO: COL TU DINH (TUW, DINH) (NFI)

XO: LT COL NAM PHUC (NAM, FOWC) (NFI)

PO: MAJOR MUOI TAN (MUOWIL, TAAN); age 52, 1.60m, 60kg, light complexion, VC, pointed chin

Asst Chief of Rear Service: (Rank unknown) BA KHIEM (BA, KHIEM); age 48, 1.58, 58kg, dark complexion, VC, had buck teeth

Asst Cofs: (Rank unknown) CHIN TUNG (CHINS, TUNGL) (NFI)

Asst CofS: (Rank unknown) HOA (HOAL) (NFI)

(2) Hq, 9th Sapper Battalion:

CO: CPT NGUYEN VAN CU (NGUYEENX, VEAN CUWL); age 46, 1.62m, 48kg, light complexion, NVA, had long and pointed chin

XO: Sr LT LE VAN LAN (LEE, VEAN LAAN); age 38, 1.65m, 50kg, dark complexion, NVA, had a beard

XO: Sr LT NGUYEN VAN DIEN (NGUYEENX, VEAN DIEENL); age 40, 1.65m, 55kg, light complexion, NVA

XO: Sr LT NGUYEN VAN LUYEN (NGUYEENX, VEAN LUYEEN); age 40, 1.63m, 45kg, dark complexion, NVA

PO: CPT HOANG DONG (HOANGL, DOONGL); age 45, 1.50m, 44kg, dark complexion, NVA, had small face and big ears

worked in the Military Staff Section: Sr LT TRAN TU DO (TRAANL, TUWV DO); age 25, 1.65m, 50kg, light complexion, VC

(3) 1st Company:

CO: KIA in Jun 70

XO: LT NGUYEN DAI (NGUYEENX, DAI); age 30, 1.68m, 50kg, dark complexion, NVA

PO: LT NGUYEN SANG (NGUYEENX, SANGS); age 26, 1.63m, 45kg, light complexion, NVA

(4) 2d Company

CO: LT NGUYEN HONG THAN (NGUYEENX, HOONG THEANS); age 28, 1.60m, 52kg, light complexion, NVA

XO: LT NGUYEN XUAN THAO (NGUYEENX, XUAAN THAO); age 25, 1.65m, 50kg, light complexion, NVA

PO: LT LE VAN CUONG (LEE, VEAN CUOWNG); age 26, 1.58m, 48kg, dark complexion, NVA

(5) 3d Company:

CO: LT LUY (LUYX); age 26, 1.68m, 50kg, NVA

XO: LT CAM (CAMS); age 28, 1.60m, 50kg, NVA

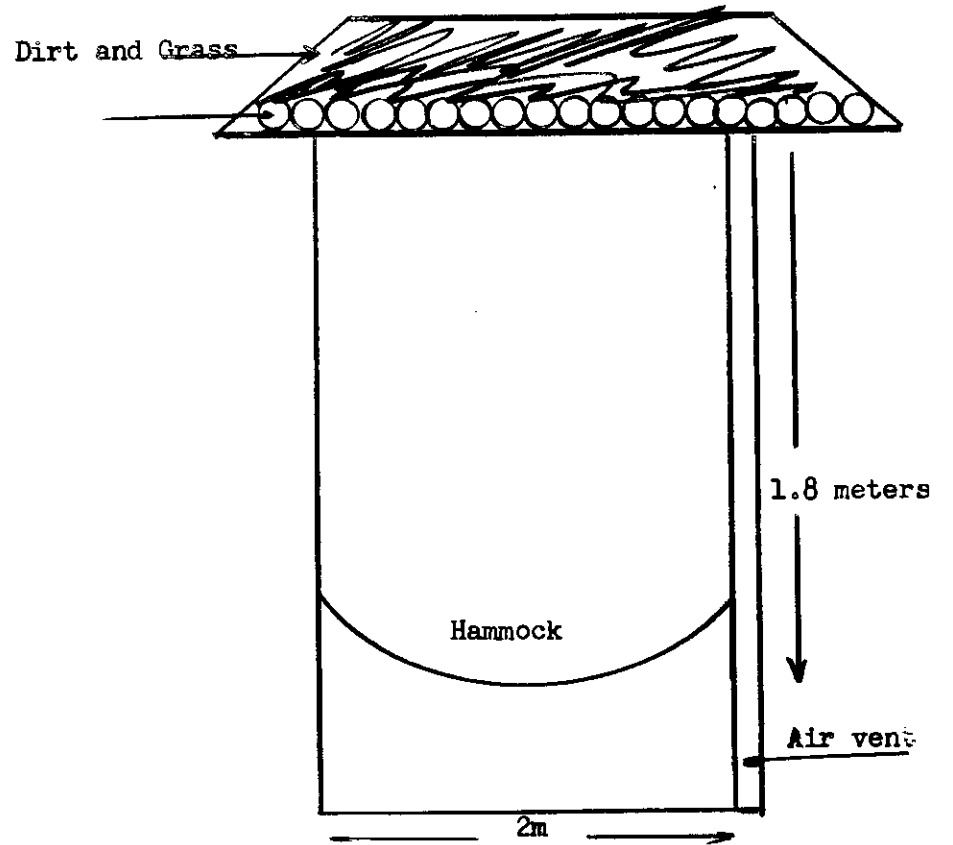
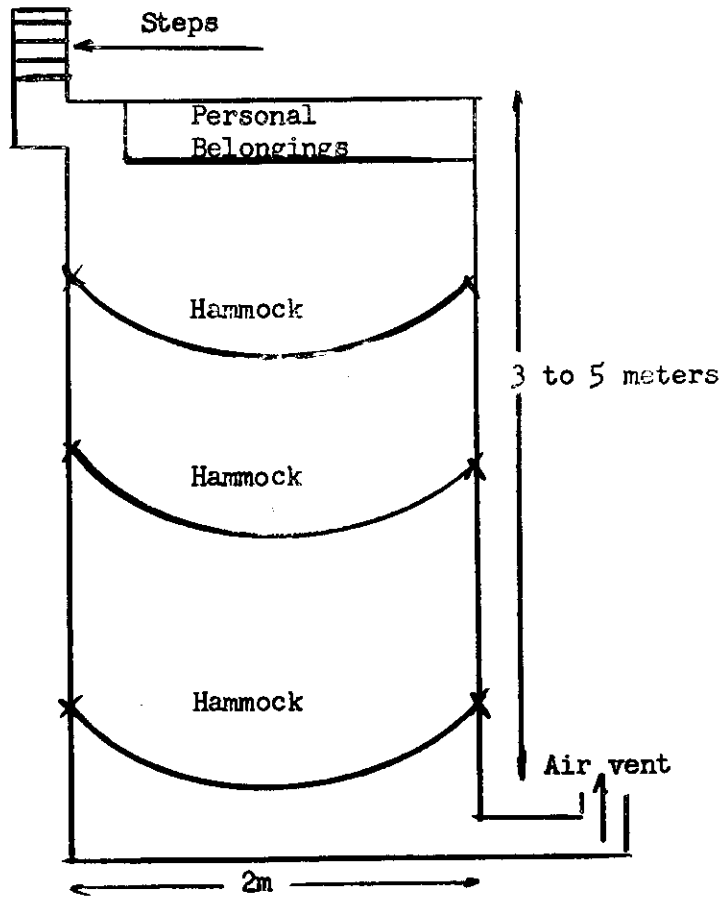
PO: LT LE THAO (LEE, THAO); age 23, 1.60m, 52kg, light complexion, NVA, was a Montagnard

(C) COMMENTS: Source appeared to be of average intelligence, and at times volunteered information.

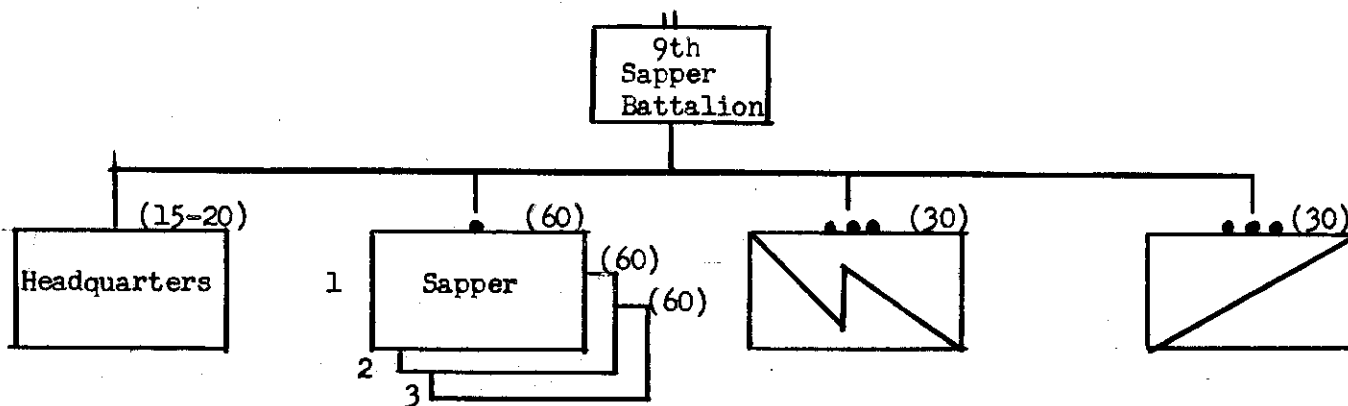
(Leave Blank)

Sketch of three-man bunker, as provided by returnee TRAN NGOC BAU  
(TRAANL, NGOCV BAUS), CMIC 3253-70 (DOI: Oct 69)

(Classification and Control Markings)

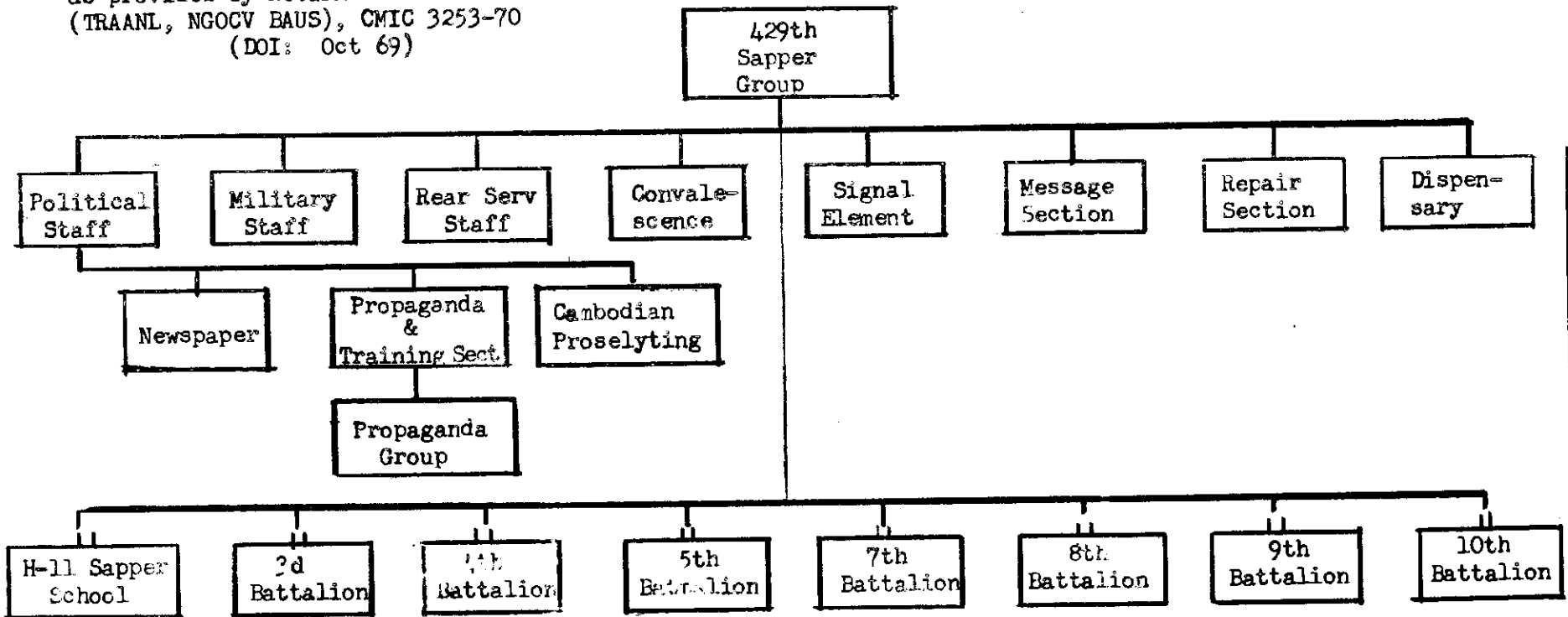


Organization Chart of the 9th Sapper Battalion, as provided by Returnee  
TRAN NGOC BAU (TRAANL, NGOCV BAUS), CMIC 3253-70 (DOI: Oct 69)

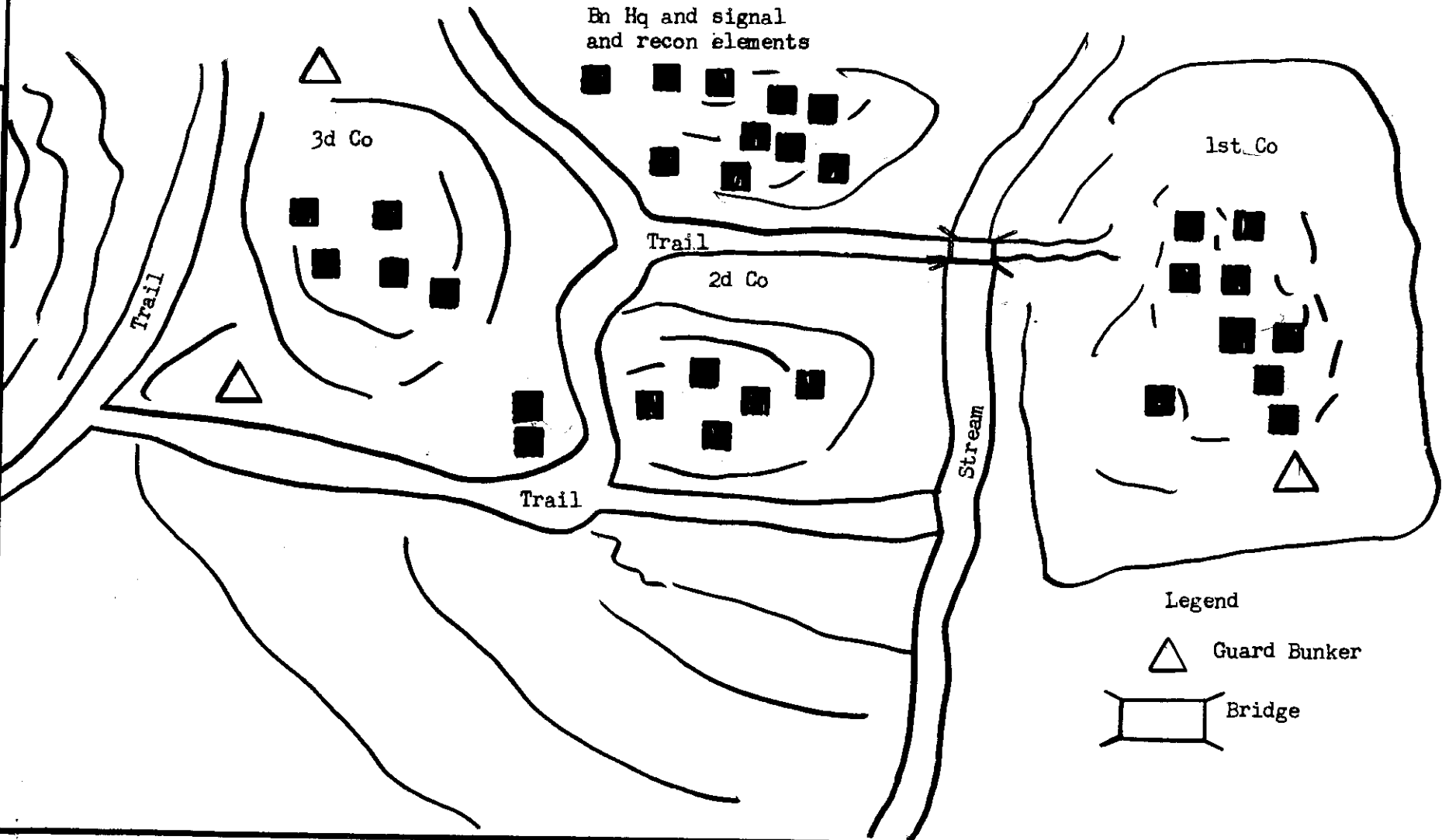


Note: Each company was divided into three sections of 20 men each.  
Each section was divided into six cells of three men each.

Organization Chart of the 429th Sapper Group  
as provided by Returnee TRAN NGOC BAU  
(TRAANL, NGOCV BAUS), CMIC 3253-70  
(DOI: Oct 69)



Base camp of 9th Sapper Bn, as provided by  
returnee TRAN NGOC BAU (TRAA NL, NGOCV BAUS);  
CMIC 3253-70 (DOI: Oct 69)



En Hq and signal  
and recon elements

3d Co

1st Co

Trail

2d Co

Trail

Stream

Legend

△ Guard Bunker

▭ Bridge