

1ST

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**CAVALRY DIVISION
(AIRMOBILE)**



**COMBAT OPERATIONS
AFTER ACTION REPORT**

**PLEIKU
CAMPAIGN**

**PLEIKU PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
23 OCT - 26 NOV 1965**

HEADQUARTERS 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)
Office of the Commanding General
APO San Francisco 96490

FOREWARD

This report summarizes the operations of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), (short title, 1st Air Cav) in the period from 23 October to 25 November 1965. These operations occurred as phases in which varying proportions of the total division's strength was brought to bear under various command arrangements. But the phases make an integral whole that may correctly be called a campaign. Certainly these operations meet these criteria of a campaign: in duration, (over a month); in size of the area of operations (40X50KM); and in the forces involved (all elements of the 1st Cav, and up to 5 bns of A-R-V-N, at various times plus very substantial additional supporting forces, A-R-V-N, U-S-A-F and US Army). The enemy forces were three regiments operating under control of a N-V-A FIELD FRONT or division, plus other V-C combat and supporting forces. This campaign included some important firsts.

For the first time, following the relief of a besieged Special Forces Camp, there was an immediate, prolonged, relentless pursuit of the enemy. For the first time a large unit operated continuously over difficult terrain, devoid of roads, and relying primarily on aircraft in every aspect of its operations, to include logistic support. For example, it was the first time tube artillery was employed in such terrain. The CH-47's made it possible both to position the artillery units and to supply them. This permitted the infantry units almost always (and the units of the Cavalry Squadron on occasion) to have tube artillery, as well as aerial rocket artillery, in support of their ground operations in a roadless, rugged region.

For the first time in the war an American unit gained contact with the enemy and maintained it over a prolonged period. This produced many important results, one of the most important of which was the generation of solid intelligence based on such tangibles as actual contact with and sightings of the enemy, prisoner interrogations, and captured documents. The resulting intelligence was of great tactical value to the 1st Air Cav; also it multiplied our firepower advantage and focused our maneuver. It permitted higher headquarters to fill many gaps in strategic intelligence.

For the first time large American units met and defeated large N-V-A units fighting as battalions and regiments under divisional control.

These operations were conducted throughout in close coordination with the US Air Force, through the Division Air LNO, and made extensive use of Air Force capabilities in the roles of reconnaissance, logistical support, and fire power support which included many B-52 strikes and interdiction strikes as well as the more normal close support. The accuracy of our acquired intelligence enabled the interdiction strikes to achieve a high degree of success as evidenced by many secondary explosions or other indications that the strikes had hit "pay dirt".

Extensive and successful use was made of psychological warfare based on a "grass roots" approach. Basic information (on actual enemy situation and the condition of his men) was converted into leaflets and loudspeaker tapes - for example, voices of actual captured N-V-A men and officers were broadcast in enemy held areas. Many enemy dead and captured carried our leaflets and safe conduct passes and a gratifying number surrendered using our passes.

Of necessity we engaged in extensive "combat" civic action in caring for all the immediate wants of the many refugees who chose to abandon their homes in areas which had been V-C controlled (and probably would be again when we left) and to move to areas under government protection. We filled the breach by supplying food, clothes and other essentials until U-S-O-M and other agencies could take over. We also evacuated these refugees using our organic aircraft.

Throughout the campaign we worked closely and effectively with various A-R-V-N units and headquarters. In addition to working with the elements of 24th Special Zone, during the relief of PLEI ME, and with the Airborne Brigade, in the fourth phase, we continually liaised with and used forces from the C-I-D-G Camps in our area. For example, a platoon from the camp at DUC CO was part of the force which staged the ambush on the IA DRANG on the night of 3-4 November. Our ability to work closely with the A-R-V-N was enhanced by establishing a division tactical C-P, co-located with the A-R-V-N II Corps Headquarters in PLEIKU. Besides simply cooperating with the A-R-V-N forces, I believe we enhanced their professional capabilities in many ways such as the techniques of employing artillery support. I feel that a boost in their morale resulted from their increased abilities and that their confidence was bolstered by seeing our power as it was applied to the enemy.

If the A-R-V-N morale was improved, I believe that N-V-A morale was severely shaken. This is borne out by information from captives and ralliers and from the fact that N-V-A units have avoided contact with us in this area on subsequent operations.

Besides the other firsts, this campaign was the first real test, not only of the "First Team", as a unit, but of the airmobile concept in combat. I believe that both the division and the concept came through with flying colors. The division learned much that has been applied since the campaign. We learned that certain changes are still in order to improve the TO&E of an airmobile division. We learned lessons that will result in improved techniques and tactics. But overall every member of the "First Team" is proud of his actions and accomplishments in the PLEIKU Campaign.

This campaign and its results would have been important at any stage of any war, but in the context of the situation that existed in Vietnam at the time of this campaign the results are believed to be of major military and, perhaps, even international importance.


HARRY W. C. KINNARD
Major General, USA
Commanding

COMBAT OPERATIONS AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR PLEIKU CAMPAIGN

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HEADQUARTERS 1ST AIR CAVALRY DIVISION
APO US Forces 96490

4 March 1966

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report

THRU: Commanding General
Field Forces Vietnam
APO US Forces 96240

TO: Commander
United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
ATTN: J231
APO US Forces 96243

1. NAME OF OPERATION AND TYPE: Operation LONG REACH; Search and Destroy. (1st Brigade: "ALL THE WAY"; 3d Brigade: "SILVER BAYONET I"; 2d Brigade; SILVER BAYONET II"; also known as the "PLEIKU CAMPAIGN.")
2. DATES OF OPERATION: 231200 October 65 to 261500 November 65.
3. LOCATION: PLEIKU Province, Republic of Vietnam.
4. COMMAND HEADQUARTERS: 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile).
5. REPORTING OFFICER: Maj. General Harry W. O. Kinnard
6. TASK ORGANIZATION: At the outset of the campaign the normal task organization of the division was as depicted below. However, because of the operational requirements during the ensuing campaign, frequent changes were made in the organization for combat and will be portrayed in detail during the development of Paragraph 11 (Execution).

<u>1ST BRIGADE (ABN)</u>	<u>2D BRIGADE</u>	<u>3D BRIGADE</u>	<u>DIVISION CONTROL</u>
H/H Co 1st Bde (Abn)	H/H Co 2d Bde	H/H Co 3d Bde	H/H Co 1st Cav Div
1/12 Cav (Abn)	1/5 Cav	1/7 Cav	191 MI Det (-)
1/8 Cav (Abn)	2/5 Cav	2/7 Cav	26 Cml Det
2/8 Cav (Abn)	2/12 Cav	1/21 Arty (DS)	13th Sig Bn (-)
2/19 Arty (Abn) (DS)	1/77 Arty (DS)	C Co 8th Eng (DS)	545 MP Co (-)
A Co (Abn) 8th Eng (DS)	B Co 8th Eng (DS)	3d Fwd Spt Elem Spt Cmd (DS)	Division Arty (-)
1st Fwd Spt Elem Spt Cmd (DS)	2d Fwd Spt Elem Spt Cmd (DS)	Plat 545 MP Co (2/17 Arty) (GS)	
Plat 545 MP Co (DS)	Plat 545 MP Co (DS)	Co (DS)	(2/20 Arty (ARA) (GS))
Tm 10th RRU	Tm 10th RRU	Tm 10th RRU	(6/14 Arty)(GS)
IPW/CI Tm, 191 MI Det.	IPW/CI Tm, 191 MI Det	IPW/CI Tm, 191 MI Det.	(3/18 Arty)(GS)
Tm 54th Inf Det, (Grnd Survl).	Tm 54th Inf, Det (Grnd Survl).	Tm 54th Inf, Det (Grnd Survl).	(E/82 Arty)(GS)
			(B/29th Arty) (Search Lite).
			Spt Command (-)
			15th Admin Co
			(15th Med Bn)(-)
			(15th S&S Bn)(-)
			(15th Trans Bn)(-)
			(27th Maint Bn)(-)

ATTACHED UNITS UNDER DIV CONTROL:
10th RRU (-)
54th Inf Det (-)

SUPPORTING UNITS:

34th QM Bn (DS/GS)
70th Engr (Const) Bn

DIVISION CONTROL

(17th Avn Co
(Caribou))
478 Flying Crane
Co
Aviation Group
(227 AHB)
(228 ASHB)
(229 AHB)
(Gen Spt Co)
1/9 Cav Sqdn
8th Eng Bn (-)

7. SUPPORTING FORCES: For the purpose of this report, supporting forces will be considered in two categories; organic and non-organic. Within those categories will be two sub-groups; combat and administrative/logistical. Statistics seem best suited to tell the story of supporting forces and so statistics, in quantity, will be used.

a. Organic. Support will be considered organic if the units providing the support were assigned or permanently attached to the 1st Air Cavalry Division prior to or during the campaign.

(1) Combat Support. Since the PLEIKU Campaign was an airmobile operation, the organic air combat support should be considered first.

(a) Division Aviation.

1. 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion. This battalion was placed in direct support of the 1st Brigade's operations at PLEI MS, in addition to its mission of positioning forces in preparation for the operation. During the campaign the battalion airlifted the equivalent of 65 infantry companies. A total of 6,066 sorties were flown in support of the 1st Brigade. Four aircraft were hit by ground fire, but none were lost due to enemy action. The 227th sustained two casualties (WIA) during the action. The battalion was relieved on station on 3 November by the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion and reverted to general support of the 1st Air Cavalry Division at the AN KHE Base.

2. 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion. This unit assumed the mission of directly supporting the division's committed brigades in the PLEI ME tactical zone and remained in direct support until 26 November. During the period the 229th airlifted the equivalent of 128 infantry companies. A total of 10,840 sorties were flown and, although 14 aircraft were hit by hostile fire, and two shot down, none were lost permanently. The battalion sustained five KIA and five WIA in ground action during 3d Brigade operations. During the heavy fighting of 14-18 November, the battalion's lift ships provided the bulk of medical evacuation under fire.

3. 228th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion. The CH-47's of this battalion generally remained in general support of the 1st Air Cavalry Division throughout the campaign with priority of lift going to the committed brigades. On occasion, elements of the battalion would be placed in direct support of committed units. The battalion provided the airlift for the tactical displacement of all artillery utilized in support of the PLEIKU Campaign. The Chinooks airlifted the equivalent of 67 artillery batteries from 24 October to 27 November or, stated in another way, a total of 22 artillery battalions. The 228th also was instrumental in sustaining the logistical support of the campaign, with a total of 6,852 tons airlifted forward of the A-L-O-C terminus. A total of 7,692 sorties were flown in support of division operations. Ten aircraft were hit by ground fire, but none were shot down. Two crew members were wounded in action during the period.

4. 11th Aviation Company (General Support). The principal combat support element of this organization is the Aerial Surveillance and Target Acquisition (ASTA) Platoon, consisting of six OV-1 (Mohawks), equipped either with side-looking airborne radar (SLAR); infra-red sensing devices; or aerial photography equipment. The A-S-T-A Platoon was utilized constantly during the PLEIKU Campaign, flying a total of 23 I-R missions; 50 S-L-A-R missions and 13 photo missions, for a total of 4,862 hours.

5. Division Aviation Statistics:

Total Tons of Cargo Airlifted	13,257.6
Total Passengers Airlifted	88,221

Total Infantry Battalion Moves 40

Total Artillery Battalion Moves 67

<u>TYPE ACFT</u>	<u>TOTAL SORTIES</u>	<u>HOURS</u>		
LOH	8,013	4,909.6		
UH-1B	11,522	7,328.9		
UH-1D	33,522	11,904.2		
CH-47	7,026	2,741.7		
CH-54	252	128.6		
CV-2B	2,210	2,531.9		
OV-1B	247	271.7		
OV-1C	<u>244</u>	<u>214.5</u>		
TOTALS	63,204	30,031.1		
<u>TYPE ACFT</u>	<u>HIT BY ENEMY FIRE</u>	<u>SHOT DOWN</u>	<u>RECOVERED**</u>	
LOH	11	3*	1	
UH-1B	15	2	1	
UH-1D	21	2	2	
CH-47	10	0	0	
CV-2B	2	0	0	

*--LOH destroyed on ground by enemy fire.

**--Indicates aircraft was later restored to flying status.

(b) Division Artillery. During the campaign every element of division artillery was utilized at some time or other, with some artillerymen fighting in the role of infantry to defend certain positions. The artillery not only provided combat support for organic elements, but fired numerous missions in support of A-R-V-N forces, both at the PLEI ME C-I-D-G Camp and for the A-R-V-N Airborne Brigade.

The importance of the artillery in this campaign cannot be over-emphasized. The ability to place artillery fire power in massive support of infantry actions by the use of airmobile techniques clearly provided one of the keys to victory at PLEI ME.

In addition, the division's aerial artillery matured and came of age during the campaign. The utilization of A-R-A to supplement and, in some cases, to substitute for, tube artillery became commonplace during the various phases of the campaign. As the infantry commanders became acquainted with the firepower potential of A-R-A in conjunction with its flexibility and immediate response, it was used with increasing frequency.

ARTILLERY STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN

(1) Total artillery rounds fired in support of campaign:

33,108 105mm Howitzer

7,356 2.75 inch aerial rockets HE.

- (2) Total missions fired in support of operations.
- | | |
|-------|----------------|
| 3,354 | 105mm Howitzer |
| 184 | ARA |
- (3) Total enemy casualties (body count and estimations) credited to Arty:
- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| KIA (BC) 562 | KIA (Est) 868 | WIA (Est) 995 |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
- (4) Total casualties sustained by artillery units during campaign:
- KIA - 2 Off; 5 EM
- WIA -10 Off; 21 EM
- (5) Number of battery-sized moves by artillery units during campaign:
- 67 by air
- 12 by ground

(c) 8th Engineer Battalion. During the PLEIKU campaign the 8th Engineer Battalion conducted continuous combat support of divisional tactical operations. All lettered companies in the battalion were committed at some point during the campaign.

Throughout the entire operation the battalion headquarters maintained close supervision of all committed engineer units besides maintaining engineer support in the division base camp at AN KHE. Continuous reconnaissance missions were performed by the Commanding Officer, S-3, S-2 section, and the A-D-E within the tactical zone of operations. These missions consisted primarily of landing zone and airfield locations and road and bridge studies.

A water supply point was set up at STADIUM and provided the tactical units with a continuous water source throughout the operation. Organic heavy engineer equipment was provided and supported many clearing, repair and construction jobs in the tactical zone. In nearly every case, where engineer units were attached to infantry units, individuals filled in defense perimeters and were committed in an infantry role. During the campaign, six members of the battalion were killed in action, and another 13 wounded.

(2) Combat Service Logistical and/or Administrative Support (Organic).

(a) Support Command. Upon initiation of 1st Air Cavalry operations in the PLEI ME area, Support Command deployed the 3d Forward Support Element to CAMP HOLLOWAY in the vicinity of PLEIKU with the mission of providing combat service support to the brigade and all other 1st Air Cavalry units operating in that tactical zone. The 3d F-S-E provided continuous combat service support to divisional elements from 24 October to 20 November, when it was relieved on site by the 2d F-S-E. That element provided support to divisional units until the conclusion of the campaign. A typical F-S-E composition includes the F-S-E control section from Headquarters, Support Command; a company of the 15th Medical Battalion; a detachment from the 27th Maintenance Battalion; a platoon from the 15th Supply and Service Battalion; a section of the graves registration platoon of the 625th Quartermaster Company, 34th Quartermaster Battalion DS/GS; and radio and wire teams of the 13th Signal Battalion.

1. During the early phases of the operation, no surface line of communication was open between PLEIKU and the 1st Air Cavalry base location at AN KHE. Movement of initial resupply tonnages from the division base to the PLEIKU area was accomplished with attached

and organic divisional aircraft. As the operation progressed, U-S-A-F aircraft were phased into the A-L-O-C and, during the latter stages of the campaign, transported the majority of supply tonnages from supporting logistical installations into the forward support location at PLEIKU. On 9 November Route 19 was opened from QUI NHON to PLEIKU and a ground line of communication was established. During the campaign forward support elements at PLEIKU had wholesale receipt of 7,554.5 tons of supplies. Unit retail distribution of 5,048.2 tons was made by divisional and attached aircraft. All supplies were received, stored and issued by supply personnel of the 15th Supply and Service Battalion.

2. Detachments of the 27th Maintenance Battalion provided direct support maintenance to divisional and attached units operating in the PLEIKU area. Maintenance operations included evacuation of equipment for repair at the F-S-E locations, and on-site maintenance. On three occasions contact teams from the detachments replaced 105mm recoil mechanisms while the tubes were in firing positions.

3. Medical clearing stations were established in the tactical zone by elements of the 15th Medical Battalion. These clearing stations treated 1,246 patients during the campaign. They were augmented as necessary by surgical teams from the parent unit in the base area. Evacuation of casualties from unit aid stations and battlefield casualty collection sites was provided by the Air Ambulance Platoon. Medical helicopters from this platoon flew 243 casualty evacuation missions in support of combat operations.

4. Direct support sections from the 15th Transportation Corps Battalion (Aircraft Maintenance and Supply) were deployed to the PLEIKU area to provide responsive direct support maintenance for committed aviation units. Their operations also included recovery of aircraft downed in battlefield sites.

5. During periods of the campaign, CV-2B aircraft of the attached 17th Aviation Company flew around-the-clock in moving combat units and supply tonnages into the PLEIKU area. The company provided continuous airborne F-M radio relay for the division throughout the operation. The unit also provided responsive transportation for emergency resupply requirements and for evacuation of casualties from the division clearing stations.

6. The 478th Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter) with its four CH-54 Flying Cranes, provided an excellent heavy lift, short haul capability to the division. In addition to moving critical high tonnage supplies into the PLEIKU area, and providing transportation for unit distribution of supplies, this company assisted in evacuation of downed aircraft.

7. The scope of the activities of the logistical support provided during this period can be seen by the following statistics:

QUANTITIES DELIVERED:

18,936 individual rations issued
69,460 gallons of AVGAS
1,478,600 gallons of JP-4
50,530 gallons of MOGAS
6,330 gallons of DIESEL
1,119,080 rounds of 5.56mm ball ammunition
14,936 40mm grenades
40,280 105mm HE rounds
8,266 rounds 2.75 inch Aerial Rockets

DOWNED AIRCRAFT RECOVERED & EVACUATED*

OH-13	5
UH-1B	8
UH-1D	5
CH-47	<u>2</u>
TOTAL	20

*--Not all Acft downed as a result of hostile fire.

MAINTENANCE STATISTICS

TOTAL JOB ORDERS 23 Oct - 26 Nov 63

	<u>RECV D</u>	<u>EVAC</u>	<u>COMPL</u>	<u>OPEN</u>
AUTOMOTIVE	106	0	104	2
ARMAMENT	69	17	60	9
ENGINEER	47	6	39	6
SIGNAL	178	19	164	7
QUARTERMASTER	2	2	1	1
SERVICE	<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>1</u>
TOTALS	410	44	375	26

(b) Other Divisional Support Activities.

1. 13th Signal Battalion. This battalion provided communications support to all units participating in the PLEIKU campaign. Most noteworthy was the overall performance of the CV-2 Airborne Relay (FM) which was utilized 24-hours-per-day on 28 of the 35 days of the campaign. It proved invaluable when it was found that the infantry units were having difficulty maintaining communications with higher headquarters because the range and terrain involved presented too great an obstacle for the AN/PRC-25 radio. The installation of a radio relay system (VHF) from Division Forward to each brigade headquarters was a definite asset and afforded each brigade with direct telephone contact with both Division Forward Tactical Operations Center and the Division Base T-O-C. Sole user circuits from Field Forces Vietnam T-O-C to the Forward D-T-O-C and from Direct Air Support Center-Alpha to the Division Air Liaison officer at the Forward D-T-O-C were installed. Equipment and personnel provided by the 13th Signal Battalion during the various phases of the campaign consisted of 29 specialized communications teams staffed by 89 personnel.

2. 54th Infantry Detachment (Radar Surveillance) provided three teams during the campaign. The mission of these teams was to detect and locate ground moving targets using AN/TPS-33 and AN/PPS-4 radar apparatus. The teams were located in the vicinity of each brigade headquarters and, at times, with the battalions.

3. 10th Radio Research Unit provided support to the division during the campaign. Although specific aspects of the support rendered and effectiveness thereof are sensitive information, an indice of the proximity of the teams to battle is the fact that five teams sustained 2 KIA and 2 WIA during the campaign.

4. 545th Military Police company provided T-O-C security during the period, both at brigade and division forward locations. Other activities included the maintaining of V-C-C enclosures, helipad guards, roadblocks, guards on captured weapons and materiel, in addition to occupation of perimeter defense when the situation so demanded.

5. 191 MI Detachment. This unit provided interrogation of V-C-C/V-C-S in support of the division. It supplied timely tactical intelligence to divisional units in addition to building up order-of-battle information for future operations.

6. Division Headquarters and Headquarters Company provided the personnel and equipment to staff the Forward D-T-O-C. Coordination with allied headquarters and maintaining communications with division headquarters could severely overtax brigade commanders conducting operations at extended distances from the division base. The 1st Air Cavalry Division solved the problem by using a CH-54 "people pod" equipped for operation as an airmobile forward command post. In the PLEIKU Campaign, the pod was co-located with A-R-V-N II Corps Headquarters at PLEIKU. Communications from the committed brigade terminated at the pod and from there information was relayed back to division base.

Because of the scope of the operations and complexities of support activities, division headquarters personnel also removed much of the logistical load from the shoulders of the brigade commanders, thus allowing them to devote full time to tactical operations.

b. Non-Organic.

(1) Combat Support. The primary non-organic combat support provided the 1st Air Cavalry during the PLEIKU Campaign was fire support rendered by the United States Air Force. A total of 741 tactical air sorties, at two tons of high explosive ordnance per sortie, were flown in support of ground combat missions of the 1st Air Cavalry. The bulk of these sorties came during the division's encounters with the North Vietnamese 66th Regiment in L-Z X-RAY and ALBANY. During the first 48-hours on 14-15 November, U-S-A-F fighter-bombers were on continuous air alert over the tactical area.

For the first time in the Vietnamese conflict, U-S-A-F strategic bombers (B-52's based in Guam) were used to extend and increase the firepower of a ground combat unit and were, in effect, placed in general support of the division's ground scheme of maneuver.

A total of 96 B-52 sorties were flown, with the first 18 on 15 November. The target area was only 5,000 meters from friendly elements. On 17 November, the target area was within a few hundred meters of a location formerly occupied by US Forces and which was vacated by ground maneuver to permit the strike to be consummated.

The initial target area had been fortified with bunkers and a trench system which, due to the heavy canopy, had resisted successfully all previous strikes by tactical aircraft and artillery. The fifty-one 750-pound general purpose bombs carried by each B-52 not only penetrated the canopy, but contained sufficient explosive force to destroy the bunker and trench system without scoring direct hits.

As the intelligence picture grew, the number and size of the lucrative targets outside the range of artillery increased significantly. Reaction time was reduced. Tactical commanders could plan for and utilize B-52 airstrikes as a part of the normal pre-planned T-A-C air missions. Thus the vastly improved firepower, beyond the range of the light artillery, was tied in with the rapid moving ground scheme of maneuver.

The original plan to employ strategic bombers in support of the division was presented by the Assistant Division Commander (ADC-A) through Field Force Vietnam Commanding General to the J-3 of US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

Another development by the division's 43-man Air Force Air Liaison Officer-Forward Air Controller team was the combined and coordinated use of division-assigned airborne forward air controllers in L-19's over the maneuver area and ground forward air controllers with each infantry battalion.

The division U-S-A-F team found that the only way to provide the requisite close air support for the fast-moving situation presented by airmobile forces was to maintain a continuous airborne alert of U-S-A-F fighter-bombers. Then, in order to insure fruitful secondary targets if close air support was either not needed or diverted, a system of primary interdiction target designation was designed.

Again, this involved close planning and coordination between the A-L-O, Division G-3 Air, Division G-2 and the Assistant Division Commander-A to insure not only that meaningful targets were designated, but that the targeting would also aid in support of the ground scheme of maneuver.

U-S-A-F aircraft that flew in tactical support of the 1st Air Cavalry Division during the PLEIKU Campaign included: F-100's; F4C's; A1E's; B-57's; F-102's. US Navy and Marine aircraft that flew in support of the division (guided by U-S-A-F Airborne controllers) included: F4B's; A4D's; A1H's.

One of the most valuable lessons learned during the campaign from the standpoint of close tactical air support was the technique of marking unit perimeters at night in order to provide supporting aircraft with not only a positive identification of the forward edge of the battle area, but a two-point azimuth for laying napalm as well. Units utilized expended artillery casings filled with sand and soaked in gasoline and fired by trip flares triggered manually. These, along with other similar expedients provided definite identification of front line traces during hours of darkness and allowed for close, continuous tactical air support of ground units on an around-the-clock-basis.

(2) Logistical Support. The primary non-organic logistical support was provided by C-123 and C-130 aircraft working in the A-L-O-C when it was the sole means of logistical support of the division. U-S-A-F aircraft delivered from logistical bases in Vietnam to the PLEIKU area a total of 6.5-million pounds of Class I, III and V supplies, primarily JP-4. In some cases, the aircraft made wholesale deliveries to forward airstrips, thus allowing the division to substantially shorten its own retail delivery lines of communication.

During the early stages of the A-L-O-C nearly all cargo was delivered at NEW PLEIKU Airstrip, and A-R-V-N and Navy-leased trucks were required to transport the supplies to the division's logistical base at CAMP HOLLOWAY.

8. INTELLIGENCE:

a. General Background. Prior to 19 October, the available intelligence indicated strong enemy involvement to the east and north-east of the division's base area. Because of the threat to the rice harvest in the coastal regions from TUY HOA to BONG SON, the emphasis on planning for tactical operations was directed to that general area.

On 18 October the enemy situation in PLEIKU Province was as depicted in Inclosure 1.

Despite recurring reports in II CORPS Tactical Zone that the PLEI ME C-I-D-G camp would be attacked (most of which were discounted) the enemy attack at 191900 October was mildly surprising. But, even with the building feeling of major enemy involvement, there still was general consensus that the coastal lowlands remained the real target area of VIET CONG efforts in the corps area.

By the 21st the intelligence advisors at II CORPS headquarters had drawn the conclusion that the PLEI ME attack was being staged by a newly-infiltrated North Vietnamese unit, probably of regimental size, and that it likely was conducting a "baptism by fire" shakedown operation enroute to a permanent base area in South Vietnam. Strength was evaluated as one V-C battalion being utilized against the camp, with two or three battalions available for use against a relief force, should one be committed.

On 22 October, however, the advisors had revised their estimates upwards sharply. Based on reports available to them, they believed there were two regiments operating in the PLEI ME area. If this strength estimate was correct, it was reasoned, the V-C were capable of mounting an attack to destroy the C-I-D-G camp while simultaneously committing sufficient forces to destroy a relief column. This second course of action was considered most valid since the enemy had committed no additional forces against the camp and, additionally, certain C-I-D-G forces that were outside the compound when the attack started were successful in re-entering the camp without difficulty.

The knowledge that the enemy had two regiments in the PLEI ME area presented the A-R-V-N II Corps Commander with a dilemma. He could neither afford not to relieve the camp and thus risk losing it entirely, nor did he have enough troop strength in PLEIKU to effect a relief.

The probability of a regimental-sized ambush was fully anticipated and it was known that reaction forces would have to be committed in sufficient strength not only to be on a par with the ambushing element, but inflict punishment on the enemy in the process.

In order to mount relief in the requisite strength, the II Corps Commander had to commit his Corps reserve forces and, in the process, strip PLEIKU of troop defenses.

This, in turn, brought the 1st Air Cavalry Division into the picture, first as a guarantor of the defense of PLEIKU, and subsequently as the reinforcer of the II Corps relief force.

b. Developing Situation. On 27 October the 1st Brigade of the 1st Air Cavalry Division commenced offensive operations west of PLEI ME to find and destroy the enemy. By this time the identity of enemy units in the PLEI ME area were known as the 32d North Vietnamese Regiment, and the 101-B Regiment, an arbitrary designator given to the unit that had been attacking the PLEI ME camp. Later this designation was officially changed to the 33d Regiment.

During the next 12 days operations by the brigade and reconnaissance-in-force sorties by the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry developed many targets, some of which resulted in fierce combat actions.

Throughout this period the vast majority of the enemy personnel encountered were North Vietnamese Soldiers, the bulk of whom were well clothed, equipped and reasonably well fed. Most had ample small arms ammunition supplies. Of those who surrendered or were captured as the campaign progressed the major causes of disenchantment appeared to be a lack of medicine or medical attention; continued sickness; lack of food and disillusionment with the empty promises and bleak future of the VIET CONG cause.

Additionally, a high incidence of malaria and malnutrition was reported among some N-V-A troops during the infiltration period.

While the results of the 1st Brigade's operations in the PLEIKU campaign will be summarized in greater detail later, it must be noted here that on 9 November division intelligence estimates indicated that 1,387 enemy personnel were lost to all causes during the 12 days of the division's involvement and that the bulk of these came from the 101-B/33d Regiment. The regiment was held at that time to be ineffective, as such, with only some 600-1,000 personnel remaining.

On 9 November the 1st Brigade was replaced by the 3d Brigade, but the division's overall concept of pursuit and destruction of North Vietnamese forces remained unchanged.

The presence of yet another newly-infiltrated N-V-A unit was revealed when a prisoner captured during a Cavalry ambush near the Cambodian border identified his unit as the 8th Battalion, 66th Regiment, which had arrived in South Vietnam only two days previously.

From the 14th through the 19th of November the 3d Brigade found and fought N-V-A units---the 66th Regiment, the remnants of the 33d, the H-15 VIET CONG Main Force Battalion and an unidentified battalion-size unit. The total estimated strength of all enemy elements on 14 November was 3,631.

Again, a detailed statistical analysis of enemy losses will be provided later, but it should be noted here that the estimate of enemy strength made by the division on 20 November was from 1,200 to 1,900 effectives remaining from all units.

The division's ground elements apparently never were in contact with the 32d Regiment, although its artillery unit, firing in support of A-R-V-N forces, contributed to the losses sustained by that regiment. These estimates reveal a reduction in effectives to 450-650.

c. Terrain and Weather Considerations:

(1) Weather. In general the weather favored airmobile operations. Sky conditions were predominantly clear to scattered with high ceilings and unlimited visibility. This applied also for nights when visibility was obstructed only by darkness. The absence of extensive precipitation also allowed unrestricted use of night terminal guidance techniques, although aviation units possessed requisite field G-C-A facilities to overcome marginal weather conditions. Average temperatures were between 76 and 86 degrees and humidity was not a deterring factor. Moonrise, moonset and phase during the period 8-17 November favored night operations and security.

(2) Terrain.

(a) General. The battlefield covered approximately 2,500 square kilometers on generally flat-to-rolling terrain. The area is drained by an extensive network of small rivers and streams whose predominant direction of flow is west and southwest. Dominant terrain features included the CHU PONG massif in the southwest corner of the division's area of operations (YA9099) and CHU GO mountain in the southern portion of the area of operations (ZA2206).

Soil, for the most part, consisted of red clay which provided excellent trafficability during dry weather.

(b) Cover and Concealment. The density of growth of forests and grasslands provided superb concealment for both friendly and enemy forces. Cover was provided by numerous folds in the ground; grassy mounds that were found in profusion throughout the battle area; ditches and paddy walls.

(c) Observation and Fields of Fire. The dense forests and lush fields of elephant grass made observation and fields of fire a critical factor in the zone of operations. The use of aircraft observer platforms, however, gave friendly forces a distinct advantage over the enemy.

(d) Obstacles. While there were no obstacles, per se, in the battle area that hampered airmobile operations (rivers and mountains are not a factor in air assault techniques) the density of forest growth presented definite problems in planning of airmobile operations and thus, in effect, became a natural obstacle. The lack of good multi-aircraft landing zones presented the most persistent planning problem during the campaign. The sharply compartmentalized terrain, with ridges and valleys running in a northeast-southwest direction, had a potential effect upon the enemy's east-to-west cross-country mobility.

(e) Key Terrain. The CHU PONG massif unquestionably was the dominant key terrain feature in the battle area. Here was a strong point, far removed from roads or trails, where the enemy could and did construct unusually strong defenses and where his vulnerability to airmobile attacks was materially lessened. Furthermore, this massif lies astride the boundary between Cambodia and Vietnam and its "back door" in Cambodia gave the enemy a valuable route over which his forces could cross the border with little chance of detection.

(f) Roads and Trails. With the exception of National Highway 14, which generally bounded the eastern edge of the division's area of operations, the National Highway 19, which traversed from east to west the northern sector, and the access road to the PLEI ME C-I-D-G camp, there were no roads in the battle area. The absence of ground lines of communication required total dependence on the A-L-O-C for movement of artillery and re-supply; a definite factor in the planning of operations during the PLEIKU campaign. Trails, however, abounded throughout the area and served to guide the movements of enemy soldiers and formations.

d. Civil Affairs. Both Vietnamese and Montagnards lived in the area of operations. The majority of the Vietnamese had fled, however, leaving the area to the Montagnards and the VIET CONG. The Montagnards belonged primarily to the Djarai-Khoam Tribe. The civilians had not been pro-VC, but with loss of government control in the area, the V-C filled the power vacuum.

The V-C not only penetrated hamlets, but set up fighting positions inside villages. It is anticipated that the civilians again will become good pro-government citizens when permanent security and stability is restored. Many C-I-D-G personnel in Special Forces camps had relatives living in hamlets throughout the area controlled by the V-C. Because future government control and support of the populace were directly affected, great importance was attached in 1st Air Cavalry combat operations to minimize non-combatant injuries and to stress good civil affairs planning.

e. Evaluation and Comments.

(1) Morale. Although there were some indications of disaffection and a desire to surrender, the relatively low number of captives in ratio to the total number of N-V-A troops engaged indicated generally good morale existed initially in the units with which the 1st Air Cavalry had contact.

Another series of indices of high morale was the determination, aggressiveness and discipline of the troops facing US elements. There seemed, however, to be a general deterioration of morale following decisive defeat on the ground. For example, one captive from the 8th Company, 8th Battalion, 66th Regiment, reported after the engagement with the 2/7 Cavalry on 17 November that his unit sustained 30 KIA, 50 WIA and, most importantly, 50 deserters. Additionally, reports from A-R-V-N forces indicates that personnel captured from the 32d Regiment in late November believed the war was lost. Another blow to enemy morale was the use of B-52 strikes in close ground support. Captured enemy soldiers reported that the raids struck terror in the hearts of N-V-A troops and there was general belief that each strike covered 20 square kilometers and that normal entrenchments were of absolutely no protection.

(2) Leadership. Throughout the campaign, enemy leadership appeared good. There were, of course, adverse reports and, in one case, a report of an officer running away under fire. Continuation of mass attacks in the face of withering protective fires indicates either an absence of flexibility or the lack of control and command facilities--- probably a mixture of both. However, immediate-action drills when surprised, and sound organization of positions indicate a high degree of professionalism.

(3) Tactics and Techniques.

(a) General. The average N-V-A unit appears organized along the same lines as the Chinese Communist Forces; that is, light infantry units armed with a preponderance of automatic weapons, reinforced by weapons companies and weapons battalions. (See organization chart of the North Vietnamese division, known as a FIELD FRONT, which is believed to have opposed the 1st Air Cavalry Division during the PLEIKU Campaign, included as Inclosure 2). Each soldier carries from three-to-five Chinese "potato masher" hand grenades. Most soldiers carried a light bedroll, consisting of a piece of waterproof plastic and hammock. Packs, which contained changes of clothing, additional first aid packets and eating utensils, generally were left in base or assembly areas before a fight.

(b) Camouflage. The N-V-A soldier is an expert at camouflage and uses every bit of cover and concealment to perfection. He attached foliage to his equipment to alter as much as possible his natural silhouette. Some soldiers also used camouflage face masks. The N-V-A soldiers habitually dig in, even during brief rest or messing stops and carefully camouflages his positions. Noise and light discipline are excellent. He also makes good use of trees as firing platforms.

(c) Offensive Tactics. Using only small arms, light mortars and anti-tank weapons, the North Vietnamese soldier attempts to close quickly with his objective area to render defensive fire support ineffective and to overwhelm and disorganize defenders. Some attacks were preceded by light mortar fire and, in some instances, rocket fire which was mistaken for mortar preparations. Attacks were characterized either by an attempt to overwhelm by mass at single decisive point or encircling maneuvers with 50-75 man groups; or by a combination of both. Other favorite offensive tactics by N-V-A forces seemed to be aggressive small-unit encircling maneuvers, and rapid assaults by small units---6 to 10---against small, isolated elements. Both ploys were worked as counters to encircling tactics employed by friendly forces.

Contrary to US forces' practice of firing mortars throughout the area, N-V-A mortar firing generally was conducted only in front of their route of attack and frequently in a creeping pattern.

At night enemy units expertly probe defensive perimeters and go to great lengths to infiltrate elements that can act as stay-behind sniping or killer groups. The close-in small arms fire of North Vietnamese regulars was characterized by unerring accuracy and determination to hit specific targets. These targets habitually were radio operators and identifiable leaders of all ranks.

It should be noted, however, that these tactics were predicated on an apparent doctrine that tactical air strikes would not be called in within 500 meters of the front line trace; and artillery fires not less than 150 meters from the foxhole positions. They discovered conclusively and fatally that 1st Air Cavalry units will not hesitate in calling both tactical air and artillery strikes within 100 meters of the front line trace if the situation warrants such action. This may precipitate a change in N-V-A offensive doctrine in future operations against American units.

(d) Defensive Tactics. In many cases defensive positions of small units were laid out in back-to-back inverted "L's" that provided enfilading fire in enlarged killing zones and tended to deceive attackers as to the exact trace of the position. The placement of crew-served automatic weapons indicated a sound knowledge of the use of grazing fire to deny utilization of avenues of approach.

(e) Miscellaneous. N-V-A troops often tried to confuse US forces during battle by shouting, "Friendly Forces" or "Friendly Troops" in conjunction with wearing captured US steel helmets and equipment. The momentary confusion caused by these stratagems sometimes allowed their users to fire first or take evasive actions.

(4) Logistics. Food supplies appeared adequate for most units except for some elements of the 33d Regiment which had been separated from their logistical base for several days. Some captured stragglers and deserters suffered from undernourishment. There were persistent reports that major re-supply depots existed in the area, particularly in the IA DRANG Valley. Small arms ammunition seemed plentiful. In fact, on the night of 14 November, elements in contact with the 1/7th Cavalry were re-supplied with 90 rounds each. A definite shortage of ammunition in larger calibers existed, particularly in mortars. Medical supplies also were a critical item for North Vietnamese forces.

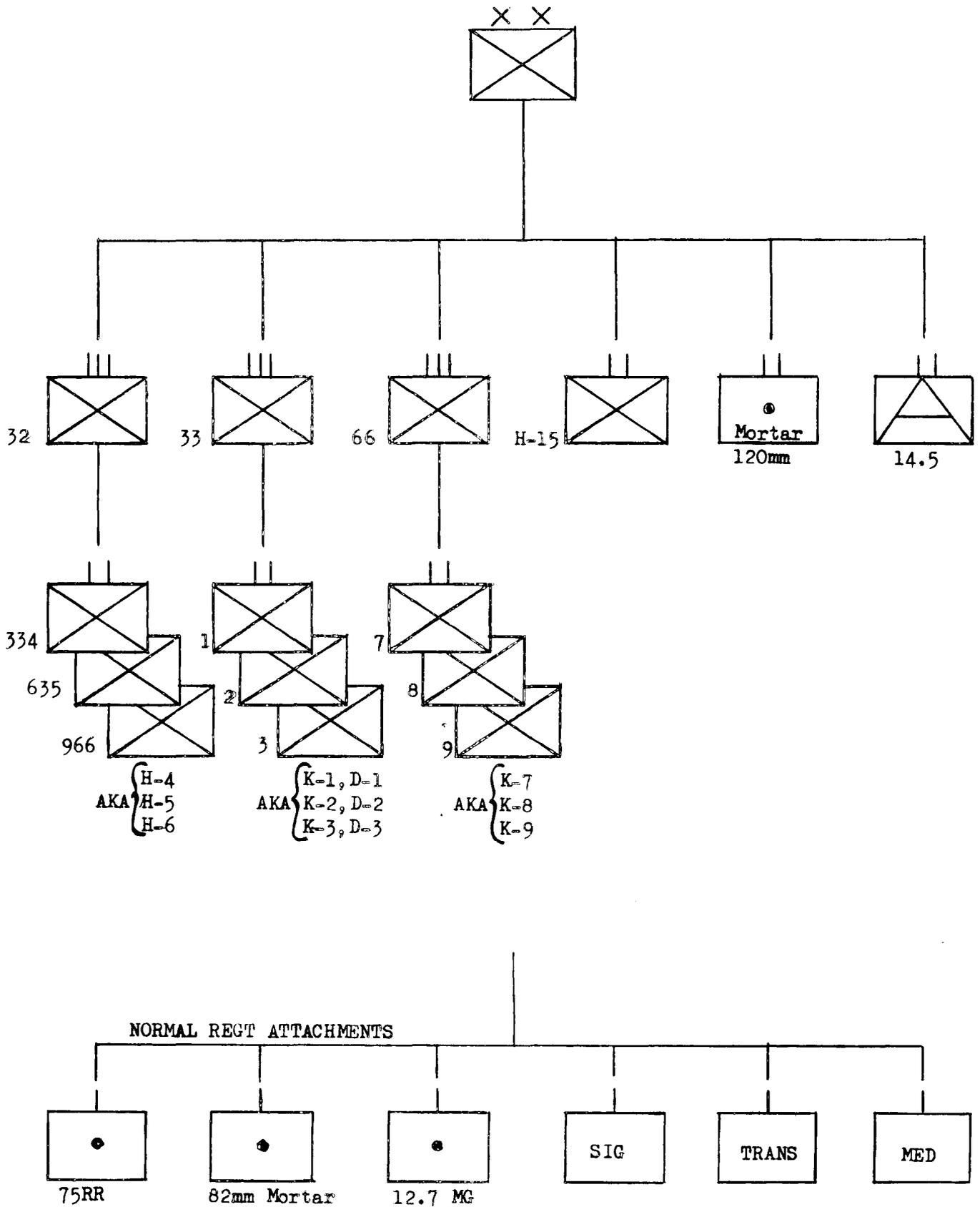
(5) Weapons. At least two occurrences of air bursts in the vicinity of aircraft were observed during the campaign. The presence of the 14.5mm twin-barrel anti-aircraft weapon, which is standard in the North Vietnamese division's anti-aircraft battalion, were reported on several occasions, but none were captured or otherwise identified.

Captured weapons ran the gamut of infantry arms employed by N-V-A forces. These included the 82mm mortar, 75mm Recoilless rifle, 12.7mm heavy machine gun, the RP46 and RPD light machine guns, the 7.62mm SKS semi-automatic carbine, and the 7.62mm AK47 assault rifle. Also captured were 7.62mm bolt action rifles and 40mm rocket launchers, which fired both 40mm and 82mm projectiles.

Nearly all weapons captured from N-V-A units were of Chinese Communist manufacture, with some coming from other Bloc countries. Weapons taken from local force V-C units along Highway 19 and in the old LE THANH District Headquarters were the assorted conglomeration of weaponry usually associated with local units.

(6) Intelligence Techniques. Special Agent Reports (SPAR) were used for targeting U-S-A-F and artillery interdiction fires. During the period of 18-23 November, there were 25 potential targets identified, of which 17 were engaged. Of these 13 were positively confirmed as targets either by observation of enemy personnel, structures, retaliatory fires or secondary explosions.

NORTH VIETNAMESE FIELD FRONT (DIVISION) ORGANIZATION



9. MISSION. The mission of the 1st Air Cavalry Division in the PLEIKU-PLEI ME area was delineated in roughly two phases. Phase I, from 23 October through 26 October, placed the division elements in a defensive, reinforcing and/or limited offensive role.

Phase II, from 27 October until 26 November, placed the division in an unlimited offensive role to seek out and destroy V-C forces in an area of operations that, by conventional standards, was immense.

The missions were assigned either by the Commanding General, Field Forces Vietnam, or by the Commanding General, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, through Field Forces Vietnam. The two primary mission statements received by this division are as follows:

PHASE I: (Message 1097 from CG-FFV, dated 221421 Oct 65, to CG, 1st Air Cav)

"SUBJECT: CONFIRMATION VOCC FFORCEV TO CG 1ST AIR CAV DIV, 22 OCT 65.

"1. (Omitted)

"2. (Omitted)

"3. COMMENCING FIRST LIGHT 23 OCT 65 1ST AIR CAV DEPLOYS ONE BN TF (MINIMUM 1 INF BN AND 1 ARTY BTRY) TO PLEIKU WITH MISSION TO BE PREPARED TO ASSIST IN DEFENSE OF KEY US/GVN INSTALLATIONS VIC PLEIKU OR REINFORCE II CORPS OPERATIONS TO RELIEVE PLEI ME CIDG CAMP."

PHASE II: (Message 1312 from CG-FFV, to CG, 1ST AIR CAV DIV, dtd 310145 Oct 65)

"SUBJECT: CONFIRMATION OF VOCC FFORCEV TO CG, 1ST AIR CAV DIV, 28 OCT 65.

"REF: A. MSG 1097 FROM AVF-GC-OP, DTD 221421Z.

B. MSG 38215 FROM MAC J311, DTD 270629Z (NOTAL).

"ELEMENTS OF 1ST AIR CAV DIV CURRENTLY DEPLOYED VICINITY PLEIKU WILL COORDINATE WITH AND ESTABLISH AN AREA OF OPERATIONS VICINITY PLEI ME CIDG CAMP AND UNDERTAKE OPERATIONS TO FIND FIX AND DESTROY VC FORCES WHICH ENDANGER THAT GENERAL AREA."

10. CONCEPT OF THE OPERATIONS:

a. Phase I. The initial concept for this operation was to deploy by air to the vicinity of CAMP HOLLOWAY a reinforced infantry battalion to provide security for US units and installations in the PLEIKU area and to provide a reserve/reaction force for the PLEIKU area.

Within a matter of hours the estimate of the situation at PLEI ME was revised and the divisional commitment expanded to a brigade task force. The concept then developed to provide limited offensive operations, utilizing air assault techniques to provide artillery fire support for the A-R-V-N Armored Task Force moving to relieve the PLEI ME Camp as well as support for the camp itself; and to provide infantry security for artillery positions, while still maintaining a reserve reaction force of not less than one battalion for the defense of PLEIKU.

b. Phase II. This phase was conducted using one brigade, with three and four battalions, to conduct search and destroy operations within sector and through coordination with U-S-S-F, C-I-D-G and sector forces to develop targets to be engaged by rapid reaction forces. All means available were utilized to gather information. Other friendly forces within the area were encouraged to participate by developing targets, providing blocking forces or other support within their capability. Battalions conducted search and destroy operations by establishing company/platoon bases and developing the situation with squad size action. Each battalion maintained a reaction force laagered with aircraft when possible. Deceptive measures were employed to confuse the enemy and constant pressure was maintained to keep him on the run.

Commencing on 1 November, forces were employed in Area I and Area II (Reference Inclosure 3) to develop targets and block the enemy escape routes into Cambodia. Each battalion was prepared to commit one company within one hour with the remaining companies following at approximately one hour intervals to strike once a target was developed. Search and destroy operations continued into Area II when targets did not develop in other sectors. Continual attention was given to the security of the force, to include command posts and logistics bases.

11. EXECUTION: Because of the complexities of the airmobile operations in the PLEIKU Campaign, and the inherent difficulties in presenting the scope of the action in conventional narrative format, the following method of unfolding the action has been chosen.

Each day will be handled separately, with an accompanying map to show the major movements of maneuver elements during that period. Flag locations are as of the evening of the day in question, when units coiled for the night. In cases where the velocity of combat increased, inclosures, consisting of blow-ups of the specific map location, will be provided to better portray the key movements that influenced the action.

Each day's summary will also include an intelligence summary, the bulk of it after-the-fact information that was obtained following the battles or the campaign. It is included because it is important to show the enemy's actual movements in connection with the movements of the division.

A day-by-day tally, when possible, of enemy and friendly casualties also will be provided.

The friendly casualties are those that division records now indicate occurred on the date in question. Individuals dying of wounds are considered to have been killed on the date their mortal wound was inflicted. Enemy casualties, in the case of a two or three day rolling action can be only approximated on a day-to-day basis.

Additionally, a detailed task organization will be provided for each operational day.

23 OCTOBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

At 191900 October 1965, the PLEI ME C-I-D-G Camp was attacked by an enemy unit of unknown strength and origin. By 22 October intelligence officers at A-R-V-N II Corps Headquarters were aware of a two-regimental threat in the PLEI ME area. On that same day, the Commanding General, Field Forces Vietnam, agreed to reinforce the PLEIKU area to allow the II Corps Commander to commit a relief force down the provincial road to PLEI ME in sufficient strength to offset the regimental force intelligence sources felt sure was set in ambush. That night TF INGRAM, consisting of one infantry battalion and an artillery battery, was ordered to airlift to CAMP HOLLOWAY at first light on 23 October. The task force began moving by air from AN KHE at 0800 and closed at CAMP HOLLOWAY at 1300. While the move was underway, the Commanding General, 1st Air Cavalry Division, sensing that the divisional involvement was certain to grow once the A-R-V-N relief column was committed, obtained permission from F-F-V to send to PLEIKU the 1st Brigade, then executing Operation SCRIMMAGE in the vicinity of BINH KHE east of the DEO MANG pass along Highway 19. The brigade, with its headquarters element, the 2/8 Cav and two firing batteries of the 2/19 Arty, extracted from the VINH THANH Valley by 1500 hours and closed by air at CAMP HOLLOWAY by 2400, when it assumed operational control of TF INGRAM.

The brigade was still charged with the security of PLEIKU, but had two additional missions: provide artillery support for Operation DAN THANG 21, which was the A-R-V-N relief of PLEI ME; and to provide a reserve/reaction force for possible commitment to PLEI ME.

The actions of that afternoon led to the two latter missions. While the 1st Brigade was moving to PLEIKU, the relief column began moving down the provincial road toward PLEI ME. The total relief force consisted of the 3d Armored Cavalry Squadron, the 1/42 Inf, the 21st and 22d Ranger Battalions, all total; 1,200 men, 16 tanks and 15 armored personnel carriers.

At 1400 hours the 22d Ranger Battalion was helilifted to a L-Z at ZA150157 from which it was to sweep east to the PHU ME-PLEI ME road, destroy any VIET CONG in the area and serve as a blocking force so that any enemy along the road would be caught between them and the attacking Armored Task Force. The official after-action report filed by the Senior Advisor for the 24th Tactical Zone is silent on the role played by the 22d Rangers in the subsequent action.

The A-P-C troops and the tank company moved along the road supported on the left by the 1/42 Inf and on the right by two companies of the 21st Ranger Bn. The trains, protected by two companies of the 21st Ranger Bn, followed approximately two kilometers behind the main attack force. At 1700 hours the main force halted at ZA1717 while a pre-planned air strike was conducted on a suspected V-C position at ZA172164. Following the strike, the main force moved forward and at 1750 hours was taken under heavy fire from the southeast and west of ZA172164. Simultaneously the trains received heavy fire from the east and west. Once the trains were pinned by mortar and automatic weapons fire, they were assaulted from the south by an estimated 2-to-3 company force. An immediate air strike was conducted on the attacking forces but not before considerable damage was inflicted on the soft skinned vehicles of the trains.

When the V-C force was repulsed, the lead element of the A-T-F pulled back approximately one kilometer to the north and established a perimeter at ZA193195. Throughout the night both positions received harassing mortar and small arms fire. Friendly materiel losses were two M8 Armored cars, two 5-ton ammo trucks, and two gas tankers destroyed; two 5-ton trucks, one M8 armored car, one bulldozer, one lowboy, two 3/4-ton trucks and two 105mm howitzers damaged. There was no report of enemy casualties.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

<u>TF INGRAM</u>	<u>FIRST BRIGADE</u>	<u>DIVISIONAL</u>
2/12 Cav	HHC/1st Bde	Div Command Elements
B 2/17 Arty	2/8 Cav	17th Avn Co
Wpns Sec, 1/9 Cav	2/19 Arty (-)	
A/8th Eng (-)	D 1/9 Cav	
2 Plt, 229	B 1/9 Cav	
Tm, 10th RRU	A 2/20 Arty	
Sqd, 545 MP Co	3d F-S-E, (Spt Cmd)	
F-A-C Tm, U-S-A-F	C/227 AHB (-)	
	B/228 ASHB (-)	

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

Cavalry units, upon arrival at PLEI ME began immediately to collect and assess intelligence. II Corps intelligence advisors had not yet "made" any of the units in or around PLEI ME, other than to correctly estimate that the total enemy strength likely was two regiments. It was also estimated that there could be a regimental sized force due west of PLEIKU. Generally, the intelligence picture on the day the 1st Air Cavalry Division entered the scene is as depicted in Inclosure 4.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

None.

24 OCTOBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The 1st Brigade began completing its mission of supplying artillery support to the Armored Task Force. B 2/12 led an air assault on Objective FIELD GOAL (ZA238255) at 0812 hours, followed by Companies C, D and the Battalion command group. B 2/17 Arty landed as soon as the L-Z was secure.

Late that afternoon, the 2/12 and B 2/17 Arty moved by road and air to Objective FIELD GOAL SOUTH (ZA202207) where artillery fired support for the A-T-F, then located about 9 kilometers south of FIELD GOAL SOUTH.

At 1600 hours, 2/8 Cav made an airmobile assault and seized without opposition L-Z SOUTH (ZA209123) with A and C companies, followed by B 2/19 Arty, which also began firing support for the task force.

B Troop 1/9 Cav Sqdn conducted reconnaissance and screening missions in the brigade's zone of operations.

All Cavalry units were closed into night positions by 1900 hours. The A-R-V-N relief column, meanwhile, had moved its main force north along the road to the trains defensive perimeter, where casualties were then evacuated.

To try to get the column moving on the 24th the 1st Brigade placed an artillery liaison party with the armored column, thus guaranteeing US artillery fire support for the task force. However, the task force commander elected to remain in that position for the night while sending back to PLEIKU for additional supplies. The artillery liaison party came into the task force on one of the incoming medical evacuation choppers late on the afternoon of the 24th.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE

HHC, 1st Bde
2/8 Cav
2/12 Cav
2/19 Arty (-)
B 2/17 Arty
A 2/20 Arty (ARA)
A/8 Eng

Tm, 10th RRU
Plt, 545 MP Co
F-A-C Tms, Air Force
3d F-S-E
C 227th AHB
B 228th ASHB

DIVISION

Div Cmd Pers
17th Avn Co

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

After the initial engagement of A-R-V-N forces the presence of the N-V-A 32d Regiment became known. Although the enemy has struck a heavy blow at the armored task force, it failed in its mission of complete fragmentation and destruction.

The enemy force still holding PLEI ME under seige had not yet been identified, but the belief was growing that it was a newly-infiltrated unit getting its "baptism by fire".

All in all, however, the intelligence picture still was hazy and full of conjecture.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 0
WIA 0
MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

No infantry contact and no estimates on artillery-caused casualties.

25 OCTOBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The Armored Task Force didn't start rolling until 1300 hours, and then not until the artillery forward observer got in the lead vehicle and literally walked the artillery fire down the road in front of the advancing column. The task force began receiving small arms fire from ZA178132, arousing fears that the enemy again was trying to ambush the column. The Cavalry artillery and tactical air strikes suppressed the fires and the relief column arrived at the PLEI ME Camp at dusk, where a defensive perimeter was established.

Meanwhile, to better support the advancing column and to provide close-in support the the camp itself, the brigade moved two batteries of 2/19 Arty, plus a control element of headquarters battery, to Position HOMECOMING (ZA217109) during the day. The position was secured by all elements of the 2/8 Cav, which had moved from either the previous night's L-Z or from CAMP HOLLOWAY. The artillery then began delivery of a heavy volume of fire in support of both the advancing task force and the PLEI ME camp.

At 1600 hours the 2/12 Cav (-) and B 2/17 Arty moved by air from FIELD GOAL SOUTH to CAMP HOLLOWAY to assume the mission of brigade reaction force and as security for the PLEIKU area.

B 2/9 Cav Sqdn was returned to squadron control at 1230 hours and the squadron (-) began search operations in the area of the LE THANH District Headquarters (ZA246245) with a Special Forces C-I-D-G "Eagle Flight" attached. The attachment, despite the aerial connotation, actually was a Montagnard ground reconnaissance group consisting of six, 5-man scout squads. The squadron also screened the flanks of the 1st Brigade's operational area.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE

No change except:

Detach B 1/9 Cav at 1230 hours

DIVISION

1/9 Cav (-)

Forward D-T-O-C

17th Avn Co

C-I-D-G "Eagle Flight"

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

With the ambush by the N-V-A 32d Regiment less than successful, a decision apparently was made by that unit to withdraw. The original plan called for the 32d Regiment to completely destroy the relief column, then, in concert with its sister element to the south, fall on the PLEI ME camp and reduce it. (Estimated time for this task was set at just one hour).

Now that the relief column had broken through the camp, the plan was spoiled and the compelling reason for the continued siege of PLEI ME vanished.

At 2200 hours on 25 October, the headquarters of the regiment which had been attacking PLEI ME ordered a withdrawal to the west, beginning the next day, with a reinforced battalion designated to continue pressure on the camp to cover the withdrawal.

All that was known to friendly forces at this time, however, was that pressure on the camp was continuing from an enemy unit or units of unknown strength.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 0

WIA 5

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

No overt contact, although artillery fires in support of the A-R-V-N unquestionably caused enemy casualties.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE
No Change except:
Add 1/9 Cav (-)

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

Intelligence officers, while now definitely identifying the unit involved in the ambush of the armored task force as the N-V-A 32d Regiment, still had no real positive identification of the unit in and around PLEI ME. There were several references by captives to the 101 Regiment, but there were dismissed because of non-agreement with current order of battle holdings.

The 32d meantime, was well underway back to its regimental base at PLEI THE (YA820070). By this time there were strong suspicions that a N-V-A divisional headquarters was controlling the enemy action. In fact, later determined that this headquarters was at this time moving from its battle location at PLEI BON GA (ZA057155) to PLEI LAO TCHIN (YA807078) where it would be co-located with the 32d.

Meanwhile, the first elements of the unit in contact at PLEI ME was beginning its movement westward to its advance base at KRO Village (Enemy designation) at (ZA089030).

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

<u>FRIENDLY LOSSES</u>	
KIA	0
WIA	4
MIA	0

<u>ENEMY LOSSES</u>
Still no significant ground contact, although the 2/19 Arty assuredly can take credit for some of the enemy casualties counted by the armored task force.

5. ADDENDUM:

October 26-27 marked the turning point in the division's operation at PLEI ME. On the 26th, General William C. Westmoreland, Commanding General, US Forces, Vietnam, visited the Brigade Forward command post at HOMECOMING. Even with the limited intelligence available at that time, it was apparent that the N-V-A effort at PLEI ME had been something more than a routine, "baptism of fire" operation. In the conference between General Westmoreland and division officers the theme was expounded that US Forces must now do more than merely contain the enemy; he must be sought out aggressively and destroyed.

So the division's scope of operations changed from one of reinforcement and reaction to that of unlimited offense. It was released from a small zone of operations and provided a tactical area of operations that covered nearly 2,500 square kilometers. It was given the mission of searching out, fixing and destroying enemy forces that provided a threat to PLEI ME, PLEIKU and the entire central highlands.

The 1st Brigade assumed the divisional mission. Its concept was to conduct an intensive search for the enemy, looking everywhere--- in the villages, in the jungles and along the stream beds. By wide-spread dispersion, made possible by excellent communications and helicopter lift, the Brigade was to sweep large areas systematically. Each battalion was to be deployed with supporting artillery and was to further disperse its companies. Vigorous and intensive patrolling from company bases was to be conducted. When contact was established, a rapid reaction force was to be assembled swiftly and lifted by helicopters to strike the enemy. Rapid air movement of artillery batteries, plus extensive use of tactical air strikes, would provide the fire support.

Here was airmobility's acid test. The next few days would reveal whether three years of planning and testing would bear the fruits of victory---for a concept and a division.

26 OCTOBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The Armored Task Force commander was given a mission order to conduct a sweep of the PLEI ME area early on the 26th. Initially the task force was to move out in two columns. The tank company and the 22d Rangers were on the right and the A-P-C troop, 1/42 Inf and 21 Ranger Bn, were on the left. Upon arrival at ZA164055, the tanks and tracks were unable to negotiate the terrain. The two columns then turn around and approached the camp from the northwest. At 1205 hours the enemy opened up with a heavy volume of mortar, small arms and recoilless weapons fire, which resulted in friendly casualties totalling 27 KIA and 80 WIA. Although the A-R-V-N wavered during the assault, immediate support by the two batteries of 2/19 Artillery at HOMECOMING enabled the task force to withstand the attack, and later move offensively against the N-V-A. Total enemy casualties reported by the A-R-V-N for that day were 148 KIA (BC) and 5 captured.

At 1315, while the task force was heavily engaged, the 2/8 Cav was alerted to move to the PLEI ME area and support efforts of A Co, 8th Engineers, in repairing the airstrip. The engineer recon team was unable to land due to the fires.

The decision was then made by the division and brigade commanders to attack the hill mass just south of PLEI ME (ZA154039). An enlarged Area of Operations was obtained and the planning begun. The brigade received the mission at 2145 hours and worked all through the night planning the assault.

One of the most agonizing decisions that had to be made was the choice of a landing zone. With enemy fire still being placed on the airstrip, that was ruled out. Moreover, the N-V-A force at PLEI ME was well equipped with heavy anti-aircraft machine guns, and had already shot down seven aircraft, including two B-57 fighter-bombers. It finally was decided that the best landing zone that offered a degree of protection against anti aircraft weapons ringing the PLEI ME camp, and yet not too far away from the objective, was a clearing north of the camp.

Meanwhile, A 2/12 Cav was attached to the 1/9 Cav Sqdn and was air-lifted to ZV115915 from whence it moved by foot to ZV105905. At this point the unit established numerous night ambush patrols.

27 OCTOBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The first offensive operations under the expanded concept took place at 1000 hours when the 2/8 Cav air assaulted to a landing zone north of PLEI ME. All commanders breathed easier when the landing was made without opposition. The battalion moved south by land to assault Objective CHERRY (ZA155038) and secured the objective without significant opposition at 1310 hours.

At 0715 B and D companies of 2/12 Cav with the battalion CP air landed on PUNT (ZA183123). C 2/12 landed at HOMECOMING at 0800 and B 2/17 Arty air landed at PUNT at 0800. All units had come from CAMP HOLLOWAY.

Their movement was made possible because the 1/12 Cav had been attached to the 1st Brigade and at 1615 hours closed at CAMP HOLLOWAY from AN KHE and became the brigade's reserve/reaction force for defense of PLEIKU. At 1730 hours, C 1/12 Cav moved by air to position DRAKE (ZA 122122), closing at 1850 hours.

At 1845 B 1/8 Cav arrived at CAMP HOLLOWAY.

The 1/9 Cav Sqdn continued its general screening of the brigade area. It returned A 2/12 Cav to its parent unit and the company closed at HOMECOMING at 1730 hours.

The 1st Brigade forward command post moved to HOMECOMING from CAMP HOLLOWAY, closing before nightfall.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE

HHC, 1st Bde
2/8 Cav
1/12 Cav
2/12 Cav
B 1/8 Cav
2/19 Arty
B 2/17 Arty
A 2/20 Arty

1/9 Cav Sqdn (-)
Tm, 10th RRU
Tm, 191 MI-IPW
Tm, 54th Inf Det
Plt, 545 MP Co
F-A-C Tm
A/8th Eng
3d F-S-E
227 AHB (-)
228 ASHB (-)

DIVISION
Fwd D-T-O-C
17th Avn Co

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

By the 27th, the N-V-A regiment responsible for the siege of PLEI ME was positively identified as the 101B or the 33d, the latter designation used almost exclusively thereafter.

By the end of the day, the lead elements of the 33d had closed on its forward assembly area, the village KRO, while its rear-guard battalion, was just beginning to break contact at the PLEI ME C-I-D-G camp. But KRO was anything but a sanctuary as increasing numbers of helicopters flew overhead.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 0
WIA 2
MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

Still no significant contact, although patrols found small quantities of rice and some bodies.

28 OCTOBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The brigade elements began spreading swiftly to the west of PLEI ME. The 1/12 Cav moved from CAMP HOLLOWAY and from Position DRAKE and made airmobile assaults on positions vicinity PLEI LOUNG YA RANG (ZA 960240) and began search and destroy operations in that area. Movement began at 0805 and all elements closed in their positions by 1300 hours.

2/12 Cav continued to secure PUNT and HOMECOMING until 1440 hours, when combat elements began search and destroy operations in the vicinity of PLEI KUENH XOM (ZA111142). All elements were closed by 1740 hours.

The 2/8 secured Objective CHERRY and the PLEI ME Camp until late in the afternoon. At 1500 hours the battalion minus moved by air to PUNT with B company going to HOMECOMING, and assumed the artillery security missions at both locations.

The 1/9 Cav Sqdn continued aggressive aerial reconnaissance and surveillance in the areas west and south of the PLEI ME camp. It was beginning to make fleeting contacts with enemy elements west of the camp and brought fire on targets of opportunity. The squadron's rifle platoons each established night ambushes from a patrol base.

The 1st Brigade command post moved from HOMECOMING to STADIUM (ZA 202341) at 1025 hours, a position in which it would remain until relieved by the 3d Brigade on 9 November.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

For the 33d Regiment, the continued pressure from armed helicopters near its advance base at the village KRO (ZA080030) was becoming more and more uncomfortable. The fear of detection had begun to split the units and now many individuals had separated from their organizations and were straggling.

The 32d Regiment had nearly closed its base on the north bank of the IA DRANG, although the exact route it took in its withdrawal from the ambush site still remains a mystery.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES:

KIA	0
WIA	0
MIA	0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA	Unk
WIA	Unk
VCC	0
VCS	0

WPNS-3 hand grenades

EQUIP-Misc field gear

29 OCTOBER

1. OPERATION SUMMARY:

The 1/12 Cav continued its company-sized search and destroy sweeps in its zone of action, with D company occupying a village and assisting in the civic action medical activities. At 1800 hours the 2/19 Arty (-) moved from HOMECOMING to CHARGER CITY (ZA958245), operating base of the 1/12.

The 2/12 Cav conducted small unit sweeps around its company bases and although there was no contact, there were numerous signs that the N-V-A units had recently been in the area.

The 2/8 Cav continued to secure HOMECOMING and PUNT.

The most significant actions of the day were recorded by the 1/9 Cav Sqn. During the night, elements of the squadron reporting fleeting contact at its patrol sites, and throughout the day, the reconnaissance-by-fire techniques of the squadron were getting results. The scout sections spotted and fired upon isolated groups of enemy, drawing fire in some cases. The squadron's gun ships made several firing passes at a suspected strong point at about 1400 hours at ZAO403 and the squadron's rifle platoons followed up, but no contact was made on the ground between infantry elements. At 1800 the squadron set three ambushes on Highway 19 to prevent movement from south to north.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE
No change

DIVISION
No change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

The withdrawal of the 33d Regiment was rapidly becoming a nightmare. More and more armed helicopters began striking units of the regiment. So close were these attacks pressing to the advance base that by noon of the 29th the regimental cadre decided to keep the unit on the move to the west, seeking sanctuary. This time it was headed for its "home" prior to the attack on PLEI ME. This was ANTA Village N-V-A designation) at YA940010, located at the foot of the CHU PONG Massif. It was here during early October, that the 33d had conducted drills and rehearsals of its attack on the PLEI ME C-I-D-G camp.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES
KIA 0

WIA 2

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES
KIA Unk

WIA Unk

VCC 0

VCS 0

WPNS 0

EQUIP 0

30 OCTOBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

Giving the maneuver battalions huge chunks of real estate to cover (Areas SHOE, EARL and JIM) the 1st Brigade continued its push to cover the areas west of the PLEI ME camp.

The 2/12 Cav moved by foot and air to new company bases of operations, generally north and west of their initial positions, continuing search and destroy sweeps. A 2/12 engaged briefly but sharply upon landing in its L-Z and inflicted casualties upon the enemy.

A 2/8 Cav began moving by foot at 0740 hours from PUNT to Objective MAGGIE (ZA143073) just south of PLEI ME. The area was reported to have been receiving enemy fire. The company closed on the objective without opposition late in the afternoon. B 2/8 Cav screened with two platoons south from HOMECOMING. The remainder of the company stayed at HOMECOMING. C 2/8 Cav and 2/8 CP group (Fwd) moved by air from PUNT to Objective DOT (ZA909172), closing at 1600 hours. They were joined by A 2/19 Arty, moving from CHARGER CITY.

In its area around CHARGER CITY, the 1/12 Cav continued its company-sized searching sweeps, maintaining at least one platoon as a reaction force.

The 1/9 Cav Sqn moved its command post to PLEI RING DO (ZA218345) just adjacent to the 1st Brigade C-P, and provided added depth to its defense. From this base squadron scouts swarmed over the woods and streams of the rolling country west of PLEI ME and made numerous contacts, drawing heavy automatic weapons fire in most instances. Fire habitually was returned by the scout and weapons ships, but in most instances there was no way of assessing accurately the results of firing passes. But it was obvious that the enemy was being kept stirred up and on the move. That night the squadron again put its rifle elements in night ambush positions on Highway 19.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE

No change

DIVISION

No change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

Maintaining unit integrity was becoming increasingly difficult for many elements of the 33d Regiment as Cavalry helicopters seemed to be everywhere, firing into carefully camouflaged positions and causing individuals to either break and run or reveal positions by returning the aircraft fires. And a new element of danger had been introduced. Infantry units began air assaults in widely separated points throughout the general area through which the 33d must pass.

At times these landings were far enough from regimental units so that battle could be avoided, but in other cases, the cavalymen found retreating elements and sharp fire fights, always costly to the N-V-A. would result. And with each such engagement, further fragmentation of N-V-A units would occur.

As the small unit actions increased, the Cavalry obtained its first North Vietnamese captives and more and better intelligence concerning the enemy forces was becoming available to commanders.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 0

WIA 1

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA - 6(BC) 11(Est)

WIA - 21 (Est)

VCC 8

VCS 0

WPNS - 9x Chicom
Assault Rifles
18x hand grenades

EQUIP - 150 rounds
7.62 mm ammo

3 Indiv issues
clothing and
equip

1500 pounds of
rice

31 OCTOBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The general movement westward continued for the 2/8 Cav. At 0815 hours B company moved from HOMECOMING to Position CON (ZA945175), closing at 1120 hours. A 2/8 was moved from MAGGIE to CON, and D company and Battalion CP moved from DOT.

At CHARGER CITY the 1/12 Cav continued its series of company-sized sweeps with little enemy contact.

In its zone the 2/12 Cav continued sweeping operations. The CP group along with companies B and D and B 2/19 Arty were located at ZA057214. A company was at ZA068159 with one platoon at ZA042139. The platoon engaged a N-V-A force of estimated platoon size at 0710 hours and, with the assistance of a cavalry squadron weapons team inflicted 2 KIA and 1 WIA on the enemy before he broke contact. Before nightfall the battalion CP displaced to ZA075219.

The 1/9 Cav Sqdn continued its first light and last light reconnaissance missions on the brigade's flanks in addition to its recon-by-fire missions throughout the zone of action. The fires by the scout and weapons ships brought numerous air-to-ground engagements. Prior to darkness, two rifle platoons occupied ambush sites on Highway 19. The other rifle platoon established a platoon ambush and patrol base at ZA145173.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

The constant harrassment from the air and the sudden and unexpected landing of infantry troops at points throughout the area was causing consternation in the enemy ranks. Elements continued to disintegrate and fragment into small parties or, in some cases, individual stragglers. Many of these, left to fend for themselves, soon fell into the hands of Cavalry units. Contributing to the problems of the 33d was the acute shortage of food and medicines since many units could not reach their pre-stocked supply caches because of the sudden thrusts of the helicopter-borne troopers.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 1
WIA 0
MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA - 2(BC) 17(Est)
WIA - 10 (Est)
VCC 1
VCS 0
WPNS - 1 Assault Rifle
1 Carbine
3 hand grenades

1 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The morning of 1 November began normally enough, but at 0720 1/9 Cav Sqdn B Troop scouts spotted about a dozen N-V-A soldiers at ZA036021. They were taken under fire and B Troop rifles were dispatched to the area. Meanwhile C troop scouts had spotted another 30 enemy soldiers a little further to the northeast. At 0808 hours B troop rifles were on the ground and moving to contact, with the scout ships acting as a screen and guides. Closing into a stream bed at ZA042028 the rifle platoon engaged a N-V-A element, killing 5 and capturing 4 more. Moving on, the 30 man rifle platoon then captured an aid station, believed to be at least regimental in size, with all supplies and equipment. The fight around the hospital site continued and at 0955 another 15 enemy soldiers were killed and an additional 15 captured. This occurred at approximately ZA045032 (See Inclosure 5 for detailed positions from 0800-1400).

Scout ships were sent aloft to drop surrender leaflets in the area to further demoralize the enemy. As the fight went on, all captured equipment was evacuated by helicopter, thus denying the enemy any chance of recovering vital medical supplies. Due to the size and importance of the target, it required the commitment of the two remaining rifle platoons of the squadron.

At about 1410, scouts, who had continued their screen of the battle area, reported a battalion-size enemy force moving from the northeast toward the squadron's positions. (Inclosure 6)

The enemy was taken under rocket and machine gun fire from the scout and weapons ships but continued to close to the squadron's defensive positions. From 1420 hours until 1800 hours the three platoons of the 1/9 Cav Sqdn were heavily engaged by the N-V-A element. Time and again assaults were repulsed with just the organic weapons of the three platoons, since the enemy had pressed so close so as to preclude the use of tactical air or aerial rocket artillery support. The position was, of course, well out range of tube artillery.

Re-supply and evacuation took place simultaneously in a small and exposed landing zone. During the operation a total of seven aircraft were hit by hostile fire.

Reinforcement in the form of a platoon each from the 1/12, 2/12 and 2/8 Cav were airlifted into the battle area late in the afternoon, to be followed by two more platoons from A 2/12 Cav. (Inclosure 7)

At 1700 hours B 1/8 Cav was relieved of its brigade security mission at STADIUM and committed to the battle. By 1830 the commanding officer of 2/12 Cav had control of the battle area and by 1937 hours the Cavalry Squadron elements, which had found and fixed the enemy for the infantry, were extracted and returned to the squadron base.

By evening the N-V-A element had broken contact and withdrawn.

In other areas, the remaining companies of 2/12 Cav continued search and destroy operations in their respective zones.

2/8 Cav CP Group and A 2/19 Arty airlifted into Position CAVALAIR (ZA975035). A company was lifted from DOT to CAVALAIR to help secure the artillery base. B company was lifted to YA948125 except for the one platoon sent to the hospital fight. C company moved to YA900172 and established ambush sites in that area.

The 1/12 Cav, meantime, developed an interesting action in its zone of operations. It moved two companies by foot during darkness to a ready position around the village of PLEI XOUN (YA895305) while a C-I-D-G Strike Force from DUC CO began moving northeast. At daylight the companies moved to blocking positions and the C-I-D-G companies entered the town and searched it. Leaflets provided by a Psy War team were dropped in the village emphasizing US and Vietnamese aims and appealing to the enemy to surrender. The village was well protected with man traps and punji stakes. The battalion's recon platoon was committed to the fight with the 1/9 Cav at the hospital.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE

No change except:

attach 1/8 Cav (-)

2 companies C-I-D-G Strike Force

DIVISION

No change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

The 33d Regiment sustained a major blow with the loss of its regimental aid station. Many of the patients were captured, along with many of the defenders and, more importantly, medical supplies already in critical short supply

By now the regimental headquarters had reached the base at ANTA village, but the bulk of the regiment was still strung out between PLEI ME and CHU PONG. And these elements continued to draw aerial rocket and machine gun fire throughout the withdrawal. Also the heavy bombing and strafing attacks by U-S-A-F aircraft were directed against regimental positions with increasing accuracy as the secondary target detection systems of the 1st Air Cavalry Division began to click.

The precision of the strikes was so upsetting that regimental cadre held a conference in an attempt to discover what was allowing the US forces to make such repeated, accurate air strikes. It was concluded that only spies within the ranks could be furnishing the location and movement of of the regiment's elements.

The capture of the aid station was a major find for the division and besides the opportunity it provided for destruction of N-V-A forces, it also yielded documents, including one particularly valuable map, that revealed enemy supply and march routes. These, in turn, were converted into intelligence that led to further interdictory bombings by the Air Force.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 11

WIA 47

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA - 99(BC) 183 (Est)

WIA -208 (Est)

VCC 44

EQUIP - Regimental aid station with all supplies
300 pounds of rice

WPNS- 3x75mm RR rifle

1x82mm mortar w/sight

37 Indiv weapons

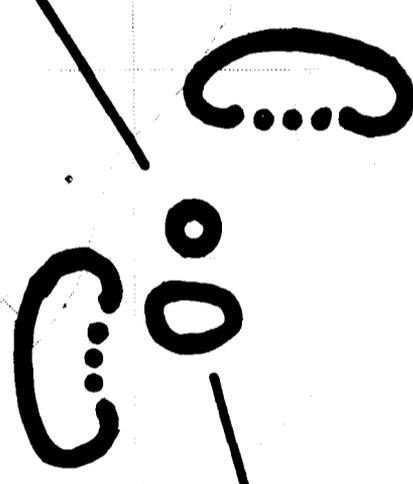
20 hand grenades

10 bangalore torpedoes

35x75mm rounds

30x82mm rounds

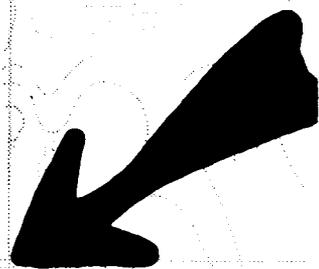
**PAVN
HOSPITAL**



**I A/C
LZ**

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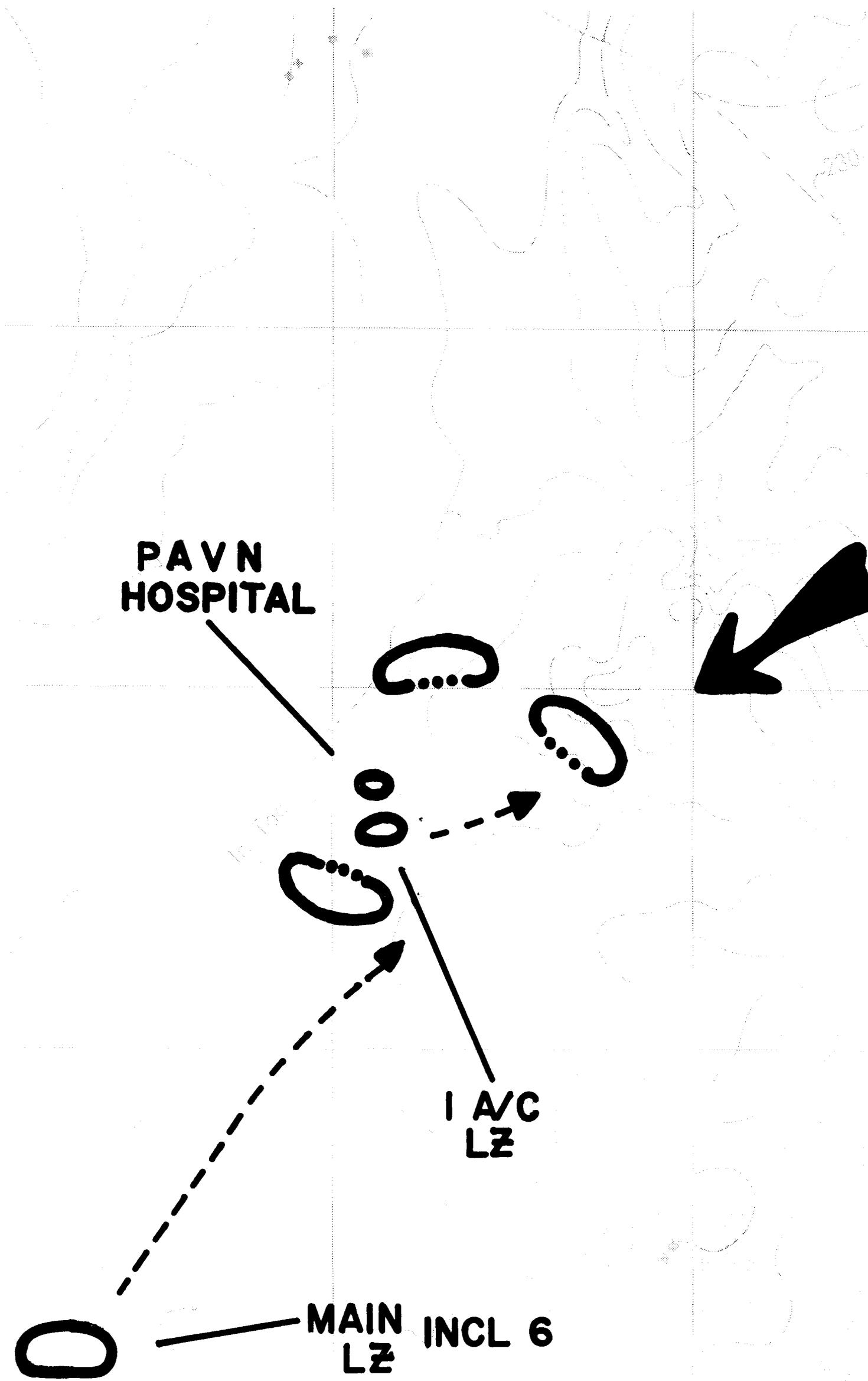
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HOSPITAL**



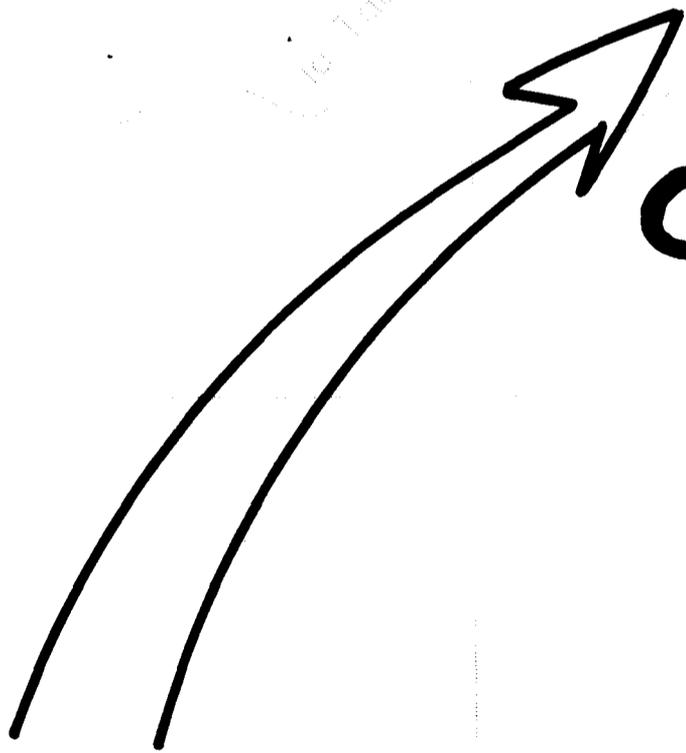
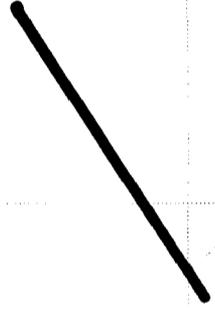
**1 A/C
LZ**



**MAIN
LZ INCL 6**



HOSPITAL



**MAIN LZ
INCL 7**

2 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The 2/12 Cav pulled all its companies into the hospital battle area and began to fan out to the northeast in search operations. Company A found 29 large containers of medical supplies at ZA045038, following a brisk encounter with a small enemy unit. At 1430 all three rifle companies attacked to seize OBJECTIVE-H in the vicinity of ZA 065055 and captured 6 N-V-A soldiers.

The 2/8 CP and A company maintained positions at CAVALAIR while B company moved from NAN (ZA945125) to a position at YV9899. The platoon of B company that had been committed to the hospital battle the day before was extracted and returned to its parent unit.

In the 1/12 area, companies A and B continued search and destroy operations. At the village of PLEI XOUN, some 500 refugees were evacuated to the LE THANH refugee camp. The remainder of the battalion searched from bases in the vicinity of CHARGER CITY.

A company and CP group of 1/8 Cav began arriving at STADIUM and had closed by 0945 hours. B company returned to STADIUM from the hospital operation. C company 1/8 remained at TUY HOA in support of TF AMOS.

1/9 Cav continued its first and last light recons and provided the brigade with flank screens. The remainder of the squadron was coiled at its location near the brigade CP at STADIUM. It was detached from brigade control at 0840. The maps captured the day previously that depicted trails and movement all headed toward the CHU PONG - IA DRANG complex made the division commander and his assistants anxious to get something going close to the Cambodian border. The Cav Squadron was ideally suited for the task and this was to be its next mission.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE

No change except:

Detach 1/9 Cav (-) at 0840 hours

DIVISION

No change except:

Gain Op Con 1/9 Cav (-)

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

The 33d Regiment now received orders to head deeper into the CHU PONG sanctuary. By 0400 on the 2d, the regimental CP had arrived at Hill 732 (YA885106). But while the head of the column had comparative safety, the body and tail, still stretching back to near PLEI ME, was anything but safe.

Meanwhile, the N-V-A division headquarters (FIELD FRONT) had a bright spot in an otherwise gloomy picture. The last of its three regiments was due to arrive soon in South Vietnam and begin moving into assembly areas in the CHU PONG-IA DRANG area.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 0

WIA 4

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA - 3(BC) 15(Est)

WIA - 13 (Est)

VCC 18

EQUIP-Quantities of hospital and surgical equip

WPNS-7 indiv weapons
215 hand grenades

AMMO-20x75mm RR rounds
35x82mm mortar rounds
600 12.7mm rounds
60,000 7.62mm rounds

3 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The biggest action of the day came late in the evening. The 1/9 Cav Sqdn, which had once again picked up attachment of the Special Forces C-I-D-G "Eagle Flight" along with A Co 1/8 Cav, moved its operations to the DUC CO C-I-D-G camp and began a reconnaissance in-force south along the Cambodian border to the CHU PONG-IA DRANG complex. B troop, reinforced by the rifle platoons of A and C troops, and the Eagle Flight, established a patrol/ambush base at YA 834061, where a five-ship landing zone was available. There, ambushes were staked out at YA823071, 835071 and 834054. It was at the latter location that blood was drawn. At 1930 hours this southernmost ambush position sighted a large, heavily-laden N-V-A unit of estimated company strength moving along an east-west trail. The column elected to take a break just 100 meters short of the ambush site and loitered just outside the killing zone for a full hour-and-a-half. At 2100 hours the N-V-A unit formed up and moved confidently and noisily along the trail to the west. The platoon leader allowed the first element to pass through and sprung the trap on the weapons platoon, whose men were carrying machine guns, mortars and recoilless rifles. At 2105 hours eight Claymore mines set along a 100-meter kill zone belched fire and steel and troops blazed away with M-16's for two minutes. Simultaneously, Claymore's sited both up and down the trail pumped death into the enemy column. There was no return fire. (Positions at the time of the ambush depicted in Inclosure 8).

The ambush patrol returned quickly to the patrol base and helped establish a perimeter defense. The perimeter was assaulted at 2230 hours by an estimated two to three companies of enemy troops. The patrol base leader had called in his other outposts, but elected to leave the "Eagle Flight" personnel outside the perimeter for the night rather than risk trying to get them in during a firefight at night when recognition might be difficult. (The Eagle Flight wore different uniforms and, of course, spoke Vietnamese and Montegnard). At midnight the perimeter was under heavy seige and in grave danger of being overrun, but reinforcements were on the way. (Inclosure 9)

In other actions in the battle area, the 1/8 Cav (-) continued to secure the division logistic base at CAMP HOLLOWAY and was alerted to prepare to reinforce the 1/9 Cav battle area at first light on 4 Nov.

The rifle companies of 2/12 Cav continued search and destroy operations in the vicinity of OBJECTIVE-H (ZA061056) and discovered a large quantity of medical supplies which were evacuated to PLEIKU. A company made contact with a N-V-A platoon at 1450 hours and killed one. The battalion CP and D company remained at ZA073222.

2/8 Cav was at CAVALAIR with C company closing by air at 1652 hours. B company moved by foot to ZA032037 and A 2/8 moved to Position PARIS (YA025057), closing at 1405 hours.

The 1/12 Cav continued to operate in the vicinity of CHARGER CITY and evacuated another 250 refugees from PLEI XOUN. C company moved to an intermediate L-Z then moved northeast to MISSISSIPPI (ZA060155). B company was lifted to a L-Z at ZA076190 and then moved to TEXAS (ZA082167). A company made a similar air and ground move to OKLAHOMA (ZA102169).

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE

No change except:

229 AHB elements
replaced 227 AHB elements.

DIVISION

No change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

The confidence of the newly-infiltrated 66th Regiment was badly shaken by the audacious ambush sprung by the Cavalry Squadron in the very heart of the CHU PONG-IA DRANG complex. The 8th battalion had gotten itself bloodied before it had been in country for two days and, by losing a prisoner, tipped off its presence in South Vietnam.

The 33d Regiment, meantime, was still trying to pull its bruised and battered tail into the the CHU PONG sanctuary. But it became just another day of constant harrassment from the air and ground marked by the loss of still more medical supplies and ammunition.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 4

WIA 30

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA 73(BC) 37(Est)

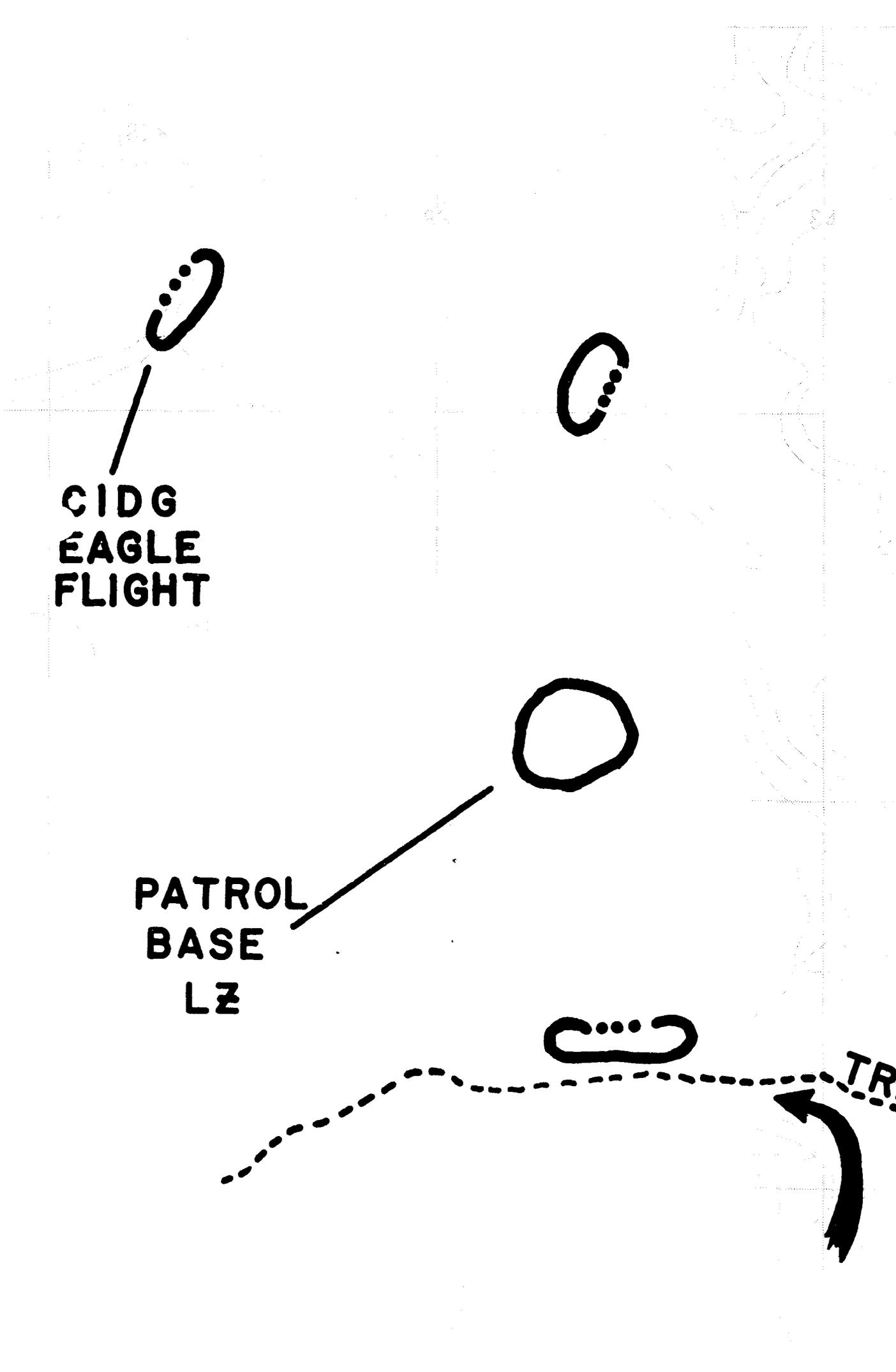
WIA 65 (Est)

VCC 1

EQUIP-Several boxes of
medical supplies

WPNS-1x75mm RR rifle
1x82mm mortar
1 barrel for 12.5mm
MG

AMMO-2,240 rds 7.62mm
ammo
34 grenades
3x82mm mortar rounds



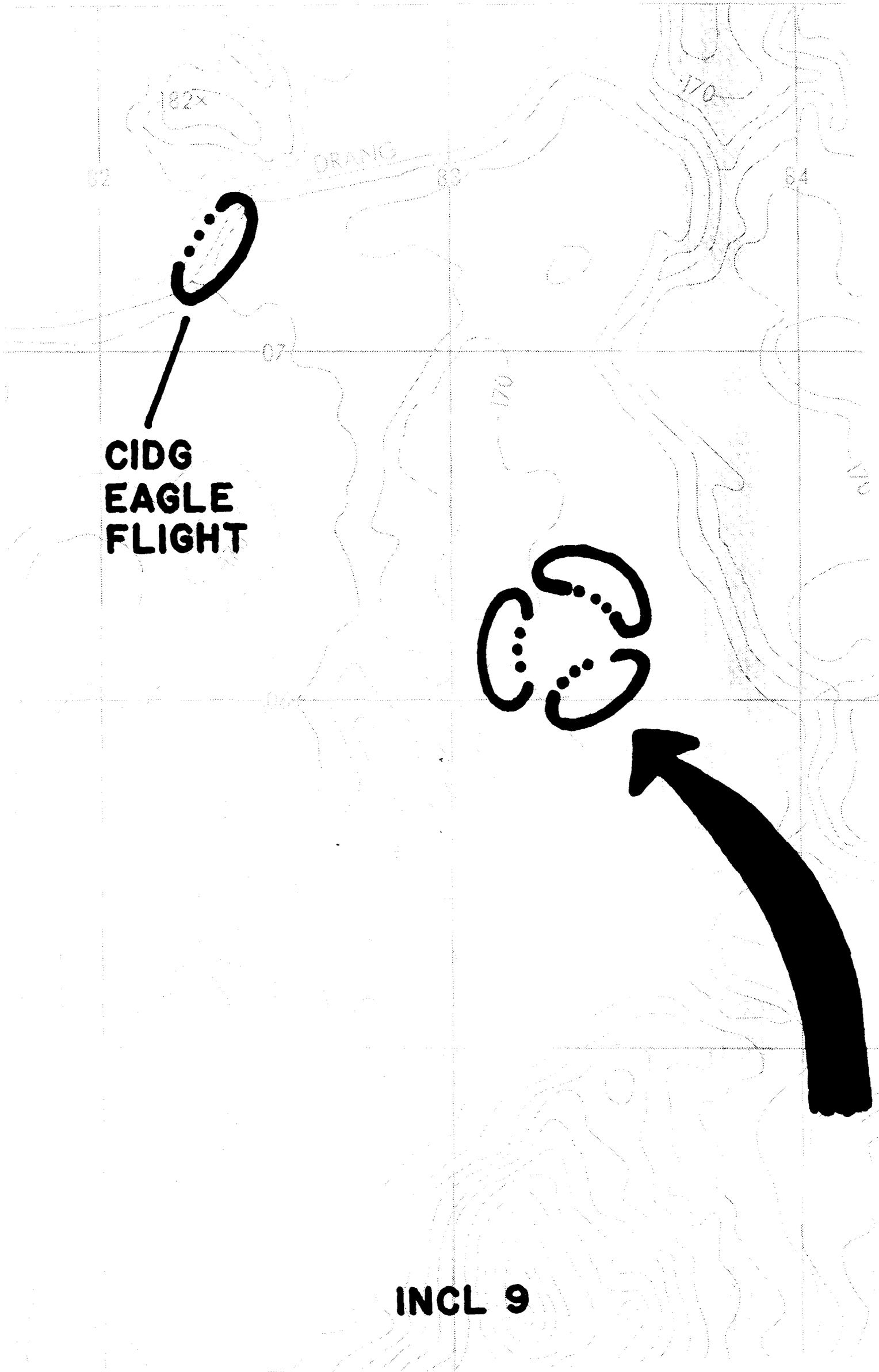
A hand-drawn map on a grid background. It features several hand-drawn shapes: a teardrop shape with three dots inside at the top left, a teardrop shape with three dots inside in the upper middle, a large circle in the middle, and a teardrop shape with three dots inside at the bottom. A dashed line with an arrow points from the bottom right towards the teardrop shape at the bottom. A solid line points from the text 'PATROL BASE LZ' to the circle. Another solid line points from the text 'CIDG EAGLE FLIGHT' to the teardrop shape at the top left.

**CIDG
EAGLE
FLIGHT**

**PATROL
BASE
LZ**

TRAIL

INCL 8



**CIDG
EAGLE
FLIGHT**

INCL 9

4 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

With the original force in the ambush base established by B Troop 1/9 Cav Sqdn insufficient to withstand the repeated assaults by the aroused N-V-A battalion, it became necessary to effect an immediate reinforcement. Shortly before midnight the rifle company standing by at DUC CO, A 1/8 Cav, was alerted for commitment into the ambush site. Since the landing zone could handle only five ships at a time, it was decided to reinforce by platoon. The first platoon was on the ground at 0040 hours, followed by the remainder of the company in platoon lifts, closing by 0245 hours. It was the first time that a perimeter under heavy fire had been relieved at night by heliborne forces. It was also the first time the Aerial Rocket Artillery was employed at night and in very close support (50 meters) of friendly positions. (Inclosure 10)

By dawn the attacks by the enemy had slackened and incoming fire had diminished to occasional sniping from surrounding trees. At first light the remainder of the 1/8 Cav began moving into the L-Z and the 1/8 Cav assumed control of the position. Cav Squadron elements were extracted on outgoing lift ships. (Inclosure 11)

The 1/8 Cav conducted search and destroy screens in the vicinity of the L-Z until late afternoon, and then was lifted back to STADIUM to secure the brigade base. B 2/19 Arty was lifted to an L-Z at YA 841091 to support the 1/8 Cav, and was lifted from there to a position vicinity of ZA173100.

For the 2/8 Cav, the day started routinely enough. B company began movement toward Objective AMY (ZA040048), closing at 0950 hours. At 0800 C 2/8 was airlifted east to an L-Z vicinity of ZA092092 to secure a position for B/2/19 Arty and closed that area at 0855 hours. At 1130 hours Recon platoon was conducting search and destroy operations out of CAVALAIR when it made contact with an estimated two companies of North Vietnamese in the vicinity of ZA978050. Two platoons of A company were committed to the fight at 1210 hours and continued pressure on the enemy. Artillery and tactical air was called in and, after taking punishing blows, the N-V-A force broke contact, leaving 12 captives and 4 KIA on the battlefield. A large number of enemy dead were carried away. Two platoons of C company were recalled to relieve the A company elements, which closed back into CAVALAIR for the night. B 2/19 Arty, meanwhile, was directed from the 2/8 location and sent further east.

At 0800 2/12 Cav began a sweep operation in Area POP with B and C companies moving by foot and with A company airlifted to an L-Z at ZA 131030. B company made contact with a sizeable force of enemy soldiers at ZA087066. The company, supported by artillery fire, maneuvered to overcome the enemy by 1500 hours. The company uncovered a large arms cache (ZA086065) and buried 7 N-V-A soldiers.

Working in Area SNAP, the 1/12 Cav remained in position until the afternoon. A company began a search and destroy operation toward Objective ARKANSAS (ZA131158). At 1625 hours C company commenced a search and clear operation from ZA060152 to ZA048137. B company began movement at 1700 hours and closed for the night at ZA082152. Battalion CP and D company remained at ZA077214.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change Except Add:
6/14 Arty (+) (Prov)
3/18 Arty (-) (Prov)

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

After failing to overrun US positions on the south bank of the IA DRANG, the 8th Battalion, 66th Regiment, broke off the attack and pulled its dead and wounded back from the site of the engagement. The apparent discovery by Cavalry forces of a new N-V-A infiltration unit would cause the FIELD FRONT to re-evaluate its tactical position and begin looking for ways to counteract the continued pressure.

An immediate action was to order the 33d Regiment out of its base at Hill 732, which it had hardly reached, and onto the eastern slopes of CHU PONG in the vicinity of YA922010 with its battalions (when they closed) to take up positions from Hill 732, down through ANTA Village (940010) to the north bank of the IA MEUR (980000).

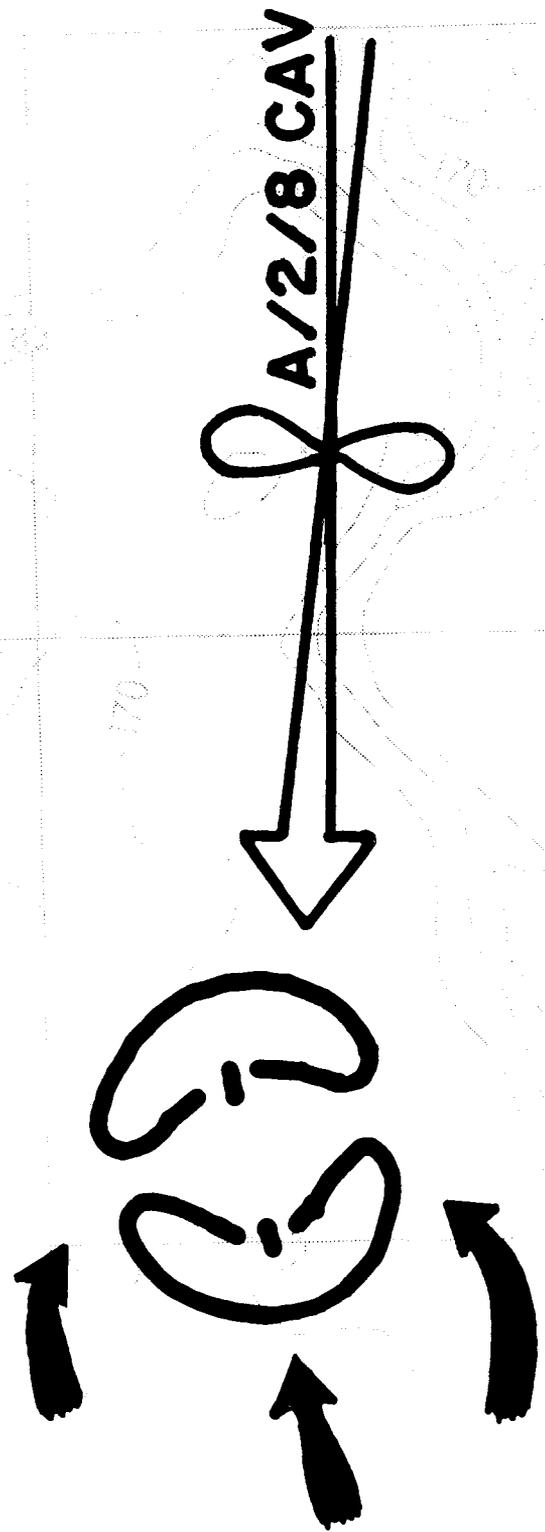
The fragmented bits and pieces of the regiment were still making their way in a generally westward direction, clinging to stream beds, utilizing all available concealment to avoid detection by the ever-present Cavalry helicopters. There still was one unit reasonably intact---the battalion that had acted as rear guard. Starting later and moving more slowly than the rest, it was still east of main Cavalry positions.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES
KIA 10
WIA 34
MIA 0

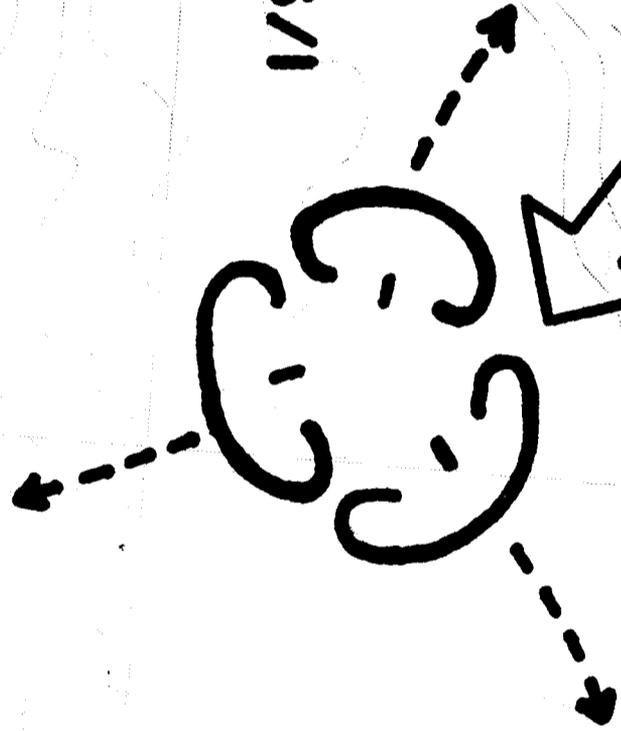
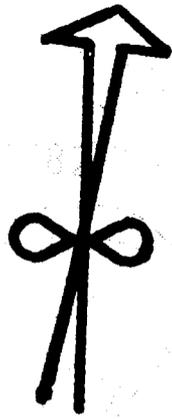
ENEMY LOSSES
KIA - 39(BC) 55(Est)
WIA - 47 (Est).
VCC - 21
EQUIP - 2 night light devices
4 recoilless rifle sights
4 mortar sights
WPNS - 15 rifles
2x82mm mortars
3x75mm recoilless rifles
4xAR (Chicom)
1xlight machine gun
1 flare pistol
AMMO - 100,000 rounds
7.62 ammo destroyed in place
20,000 rounds 7.62 ammo evac
63x82mm mortar rounds
45x81 mortar rounds
44x75mm RR rounds
19 hand grenades

**CIDG
EAGLE
FLIGHT**



INCL 10

**CIDG EAGLE
FLIGHT**



INCL II

5 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The 1st Brigade continued to maintain pressure on the enemy in areas SNAP, CRACKLE and POP in a maneuver designed to squeeze the N-V-A forces into a nutcracker.

In the 2/8 Cav sector (CRACKLE) A company moved by air at 1000 hours from CAVALAIR to PARIS (ZAO25057) and conducted search and destroy operations in that sector. The one platoon remaining of C company joined the company in a search of the 4 November battle area (YA978058). At 1415 hours Charlie company started movement toward Position AMY (ZAO42046) by foot, but were picked up enroute and moved by air to FALCON (ZAO21031). B company moved north from AMY on foot to a position at ZAO45068. The battalion CP, D company and supporting artillery closed on FALCON at 1800 hours.

2/12 Cav continued operations in POP, and, more particularly, in the vicinity of the arms cache (ZA086064) that had yielded considerable quantities of arms and ammunition. There was so much materiel at this site, in fact, that it took until 1500 hours of 5 November, to complete the evacuation. The battalion coiled for the night with the companies well dispersed in the battalion area.

The 1/12 Cav conducted search and destroy operations in area SNAP with A company moving south to ZA062123. By 1800 hours, however, all units had halted for the night and established company bases. The CP was located at ZA082154.

The 1/8 Cav (-) continued to secure the brigade forward CP at STADIUM for the entire period with one company maintaining a 30-minute alert as a brigade rapid reaction force.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change except:
Detach C-I-D-G Eagle Flight

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

The day brought little change to the intelligence picture. The 66th Regiment continued to close into assembly areas in the CHU PONG sanctuary and the 33d Regiment waited for its shattered forces to rejoin the parent unit. The 32d Regiment and FIELD FRONT, meanwhile, remained untouched and untroubled north of the IA DRANG and adjacent to the Cambodian frontier.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 5

WIA 3

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA - 4 (BC) 18 (Est)

WIA - 19 (Est)

VCC - 3

EQUIP - None

WPNS - None

AMMO - 7 grenades

2 magazines of 7.62 ammo

8 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

As in other previous actions, the day began routinely enough. 2/8 Cav remained in its overnight positions until 0730 when C company began moving from FALCON toward Position SUE (ZAO20058). B company began platoon search and clear operations to the west of its position (ZAO45068) and at 1000 hours a platoon made contact with an estimated squad of enemy. (Inclosure 12). Contact was broken by the N-V-A immediately and the platoon pressed on. By 1200 hours all elements of the company had hit what appeared to be an entrenched enemy company and became heavily engaged.

The fire fight increased in intensity and some elements of B company were pinned down and enemy fires were hindering efforts at consolidation and aerial rocket artillery and tactical air strikes were called in to support the B company effort. As the platoons continued to attack, the enemy made a determined effort to split two of the attacking platoons. This was repulsed, but the N-V-A unit, now believed to be at least a battalion, began to surround B company. (Inclosure 13)

C company, which had been enroute to SUE, was ordered to counter-march and attack the rear of the N-V-A element. The company moved by foot through the dense jungle approaching a stream from the west. When it crossed the stream the company came up on the left rear of the enemy unit and then tried to work to the northeast in an attempt to flank it. C company then became heavily engaged as it began to press the attack. Air and artillery strikes were called for in large numbers but neither B or C company were able to build up enough fire power from their own positions to maneuver decisively against the N-V-A positions.

As darkness approached, both friendly and enemy forces began to disengage; C and B companies to prepare positions for the night and the N-V-A to slip away. The enemy left forces in contact, however, and these elements continued to pour automatic weapons fire into the Cavalry positions. (Inclosure 14)

By 1900 hours C company linked up with B company and established a defensive perimeter at ZAO42638 and effected evacuation of dead and wounded. Two platoons of A company were lifted into FALCON as reinforcement. Sporadic sniper fire was received into the night, but there was no further heavy engagement.

Meanwhile, 1/8 Cav (-) moved from STADIUM by helicopter to Position RED (ZAI48115) in order to prevent any enemy movement back to the east.

The 1/12 Cav remained in its overnight positions until daybreak at which time companies continued search and destroy operations in area SNAP. Units closed for the night with B company at ZAO65100; A company at ZAO98108; C company at ZAO59109; and CP and D company (-) at ZAO74214.

B Troop 1/9 Cav Sqdn continued screening operations and reconnaissance on the east and west flanks of the brigade.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

There was little change in the N-V-A situation as the 33d Regiment still awaited closure of its rear guard battalion into the regimental base. On the morning of the 6th the battalion was the only cohesive fighting force the enemy had east of the IA DRANG. By night-fall it had ceased to exist as an effective unit.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 26

WIA 53

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

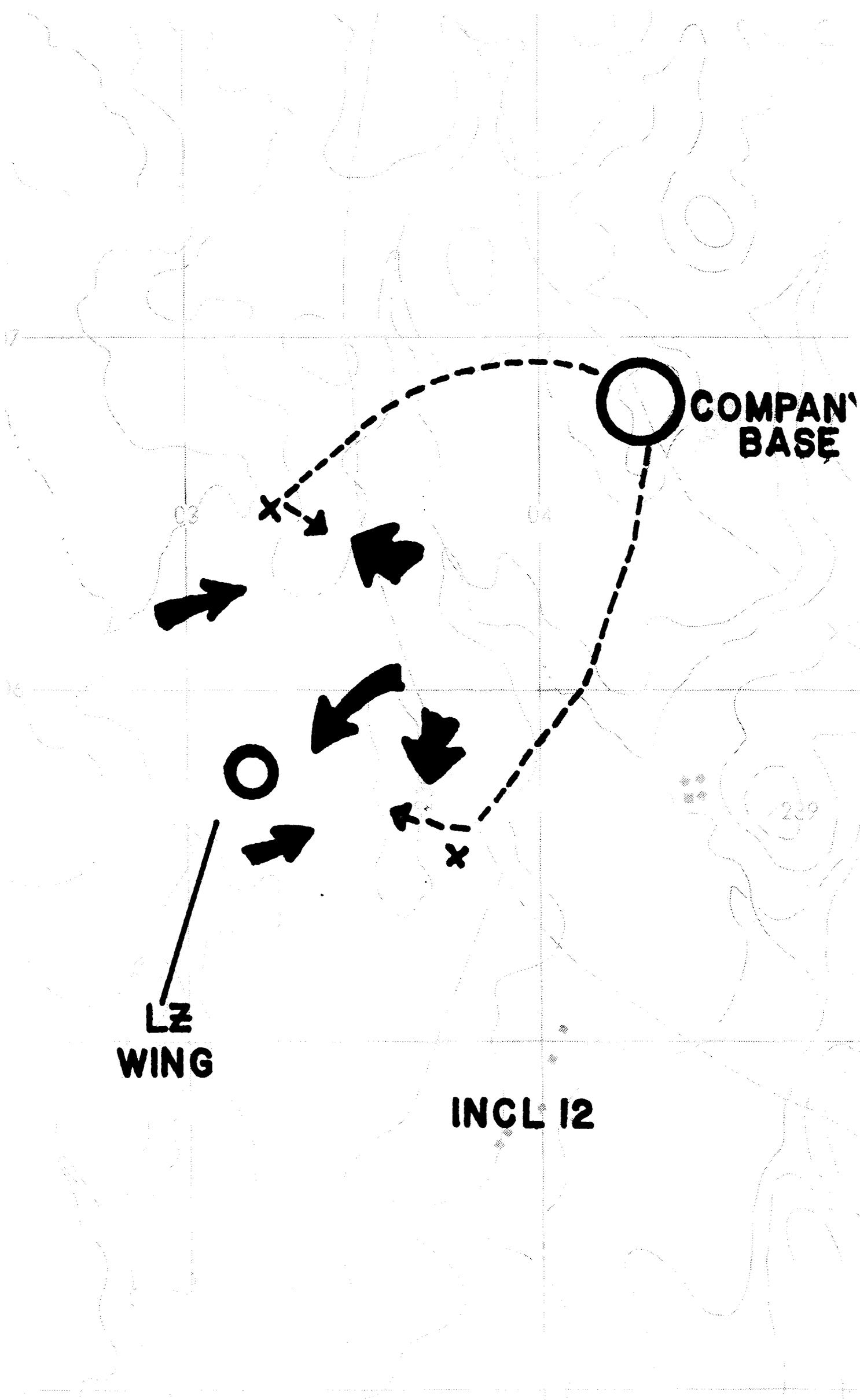
KIA - 77(BG)121(Est)

WIA - 271 (Est)

VCC - 1

EQUIP - 45 Indiv packs
and kits

WPNS - 3 heavy machine
guns
3 light machine guns
2 automatic rifles
23 carbines or assault
rifles
1 rocket launcher
AMMO - 10,000 rounds 7.62
ammo
2 anti personnel mines
100 hand grenades.



**COMPAN'
BASE**

**LZ
WING**

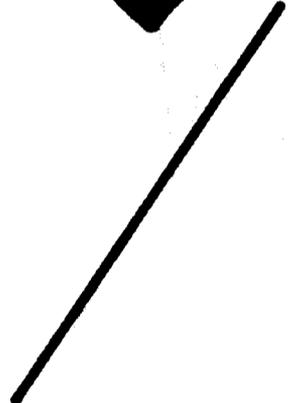
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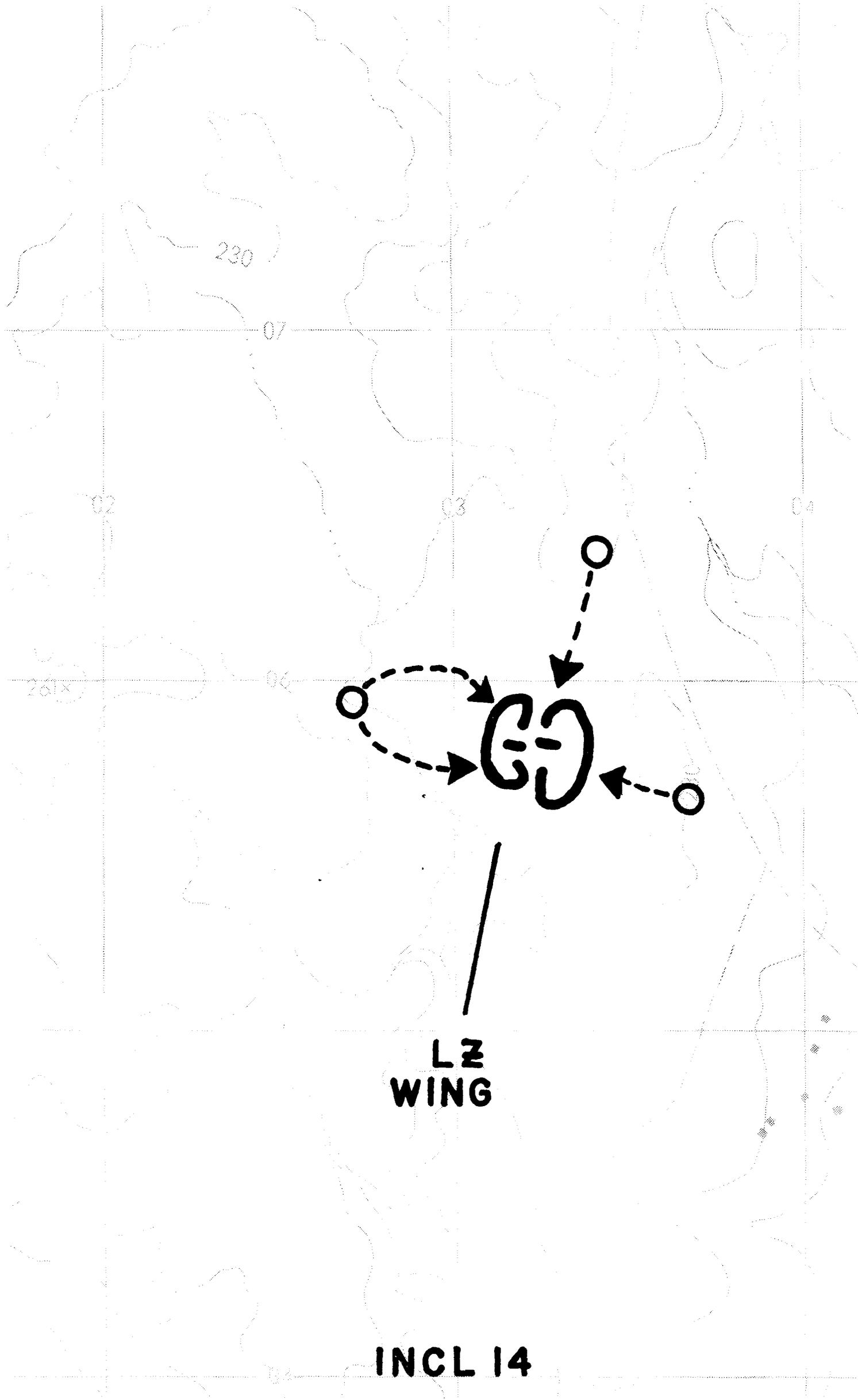
C/2/8 CAV



**LZ
WING**

INCL 13





230

07

02

03

04

2018

06

**LZ
WING**

INCL 14

7 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The 1st Brigade commenced a movement designed to squeeze the enemy into a nutcracker. 2/8 moved to and occupied Position A (ZA028060) to (ZA029071); 2/12 Cav moved to and occupied blocking Position B (ZA061067) to (ZA061058); and the 1/12 Cav attacked to seize Objective MAPLE (ZA040075).

2/8 Cav was in position at 1100 hours with B and C companies. Both units remained in position until just before dark at which time they moved to Position WING (ZA031061) where they remained for the night. A company remained on FALCON, along with D company and the CP.

2/12 Cav moved by helicopter to Position B, closing at 1255 hours. Companies A and C occupied their positions until 1515 hours when both units began shifting to the south to keep the blocking position on the east flank of the attacking battalion.

The 1/12 Cav conducted an attack toward MAPLE at 0805 with B and C companies. The battalion was then directed to move through MAPLE and pass between 2/8 and 2/12 Cav and pursue the withdrawing enemy. Boundaries were adjusted accordingly. Retreating small N-V-A units were hit during the movement.

At 1430 hours A 1/12 was airlifted to an L-Z at ZA028088, and B and C companies continued movement south toward Position WING where they remained overnight. D company and the CP did not move.

The 1/8 Cav, meanwhile, had no action at its position and after the main action was completed to the west, began moving from RED to the AN KHE base. The move was not completed until the following day.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

In the CHU PONG sanctuary the depleted 33d Regiment licked its wounds and waited for its stragglers to come in. The remainder of FIELD FRONT forces were quiet.

In the battle area there was diminishing activity. One N-V-A soldier surrendered with a safe-conduct pass.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 0

WIA 2

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA-9(BC) 19 (Est)

WIA-48 (Est)

VCC-12

EQUIP-None

WPNS-8 automatic rifles

5 carbines

1 heavy machine gun

1 light machine gun

AMMO-55 hand grenades

4 Claymore mines

8 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The 1st Brigade continued search and destroy operations in its sector while preparing for relief by the 3d Brigade. This included movement of maneuver elements out of the battle area while still maintaining pressure on the enemy.

1/12 Cav began operations with C company moving southwest from WING to ZA993051. A company moved by helicopter to an L-Z in the vicinity of ZA980053. Several small unit contacts were made by both companies during the day. At 0700, B company left one platoon to secure WING and moved to FALCON. 1/12 units closed into FALCON where they remained for the night.

2/12 Cav commenced movement toward FALCON at 0700 hours, closing at 1125 hours, where the entire battalion remained overnight.

1/8 Cav completed its movement from RED to AN KHE.

2/8 Cav moved from FALCON to STADIUM and assumed the mission of defending the Brigade forward CP.

B Troop 1/9 Cav continued to screen and recon-by-fire to the flanks of the brigade, with particular emphasis on the area to the west and south of FALCON.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

1ST BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

Only fragmented units and stragglers remained east of the CHU PONG - IA DRANG complex as the 33d Regiment began to assess its losses.

Friendly intelligence at this point still was not really sure that the entire 33d Regiment withdrew to the west. One prisoner taken at PLEI ME stated positively that after the battle his unit was to walk for two nights south and east. In addition, there was strong suspicion that elements of the 32d Regiment may have slipped off to the east after the ambush. By this time Field Force Vietnam had asked the division to consider moving its operations east of PLEI ME if it appeared that was no further contact imminent in the west.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 0

WIA 5

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA-2(BC) 10(Est)

WIA-23 (Est)

VCC- 7

WPNS-1 light machine gun

1 carbine

2 assault rifles

1 rocket launcher

AMMO-2 hand grenades

9 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

1st Brigade commenced movement of its command post from STADIUM to AN KHE, yielding control of all units left in the field to the 3d Brigade, which moved its forward CP to STADIUM. The time of changeover was 1100 hours.

Meanwhile, 2/12 Cav moved for FALCON to CAMP HOLLOWAY to prepare for movement to AN KHE.

2/8 Cav remained at STADIUM during the day.

1/12 Cav remained at FALCON, running small patrols out from the base during the day and securing artillery units there.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

<u>1ST BRIGADE</u>	<u>3D BRIGADE</u>	<u>DIVISION</u>
HHC, 1st Bde	HHC, 3d Bde	Fwd D-T-O-C
B Troop, 1/9 Cav	2/8 Cav(-)(091100 Nov)	229 AHB
A Co, 8th Eng	1/12 Cav(091100 Nov)	228 ASHB
1st Plt, 545 MP Co	2/12 Cav(091100 Nov)	17th Avn Co
Sig Spt Tm, 13th Sig	C 1/9 Cav Sqdn	
Tm, 54th Inf Det	C 8th Eng	
Tm, 10th RRU	1/7 Cav	
IPW/CI Tm, 191 MI Det	1/21 Arty	
	C 2/20 Arty (ARA)	
	6/14 Arty (Prov)	
	2/19 Arty(-)(091100 Nov)	
	3d Plt, 545 MP	
	Sig Spt Tm, 13th Sig Bn	
	IPW/CI Tm, 191 MI Det	
	Tm, 10th RRU	
	Tm, 54th Inf Det	
	3d F-S-E (091100 Nov)	

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

The 33d Regiment gathered in the last of its organic units and began to count noses. There were many missing. The regimental muster brought these casualty figures:

<u>UNITS*</u>	<u>APPROX STRENGTH PRIOR TO PLEI ME</u>	<u>PERCENT OR NUMBER OF CASUALTIES</u>
1ST BATTALION	500	33% KIA
2D BATTALION	500	50% KIA
3D BATTALION	500	33% KIA
REGT MORTAR COMPANY	120	50% KIA
REGT ANTI ACFT COMPANY	150	60% KIA
REGT SIGNAL COMPANY	120	4 KIA-16 MIA
REGT TRANSPORT COMPANY	150	50% KIA
REGT MEDICAL COMPANY	40	80% KIA or MIA
REGT ENGINEER COMPANY	60	15 KIA or MIA
REGT RECONNAISSANCE CO	50	9 KIA

*Does not include Regimental 75mm Company. Figure were not available or obtainable.

In total, the headcount showed 890 men of the original 2,200 killed, with more than 100 missing and still more suffering from incapacitating wounds. Materiel losses were also heavy with the Regimental Anti-Aircraft company losing 13 of its 18 guns and the Regimental mortar company losing 5 of its 9 tubes. Six more mortars were lost by the battalions, along with most of the recoilless rifles. The ammunition, food and medical supply losses also had been crippling.

At FIELD FRONT headquarters north of the IA DRANG, it was a day of situation analysis. Incl 15 depicts the intelligence picture as it appeared to commanders on 9 Nov.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

<u>FRIENDLY LOSSES</u>		<u>ENEMY LOSSES</u>	
KIA	0	KIA	0
WIA	4	WIA	0
MIA	0	VCC	2
		WPNS	0

10 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The 3d Brigade continued to move fresh maneuver elements into the battle area, replacing old units and laying out the ground work for a systematic search operation in the area north, east and south of PLEI ME. Each battalion was to have an area and conduct careful search and destroy operations in sector.

2/8 Cav secured the Brigade CP until 0800 and began movement to AN KHE, closing by 1900.

1/7 Cav moved by return flight to STADIUM and began moving immediately into Area WHITE for search and destroy operations.

2/12 Cav remained at CAMP HOLLOWAY with one company on one hour alert.

1/12 Cav had a small ripple of action at FALCON, wounding two N-V-A and capturing another with a safe conduct pass on his person. The battalion began moving to HOMECOMING, closing with the artillery elements at 1645 hours.

C Troop, 1/9 Cav Sqn screened the eastern flank of the brigade.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

3D BRIGADE

No Change except:

Detach 2/8 Cav 102300 Nov

DIVISION

No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

There was little or no change in the situation as the transition between brigades continued. The movement and shift in emphasis from west to east was to further stimulate a forthcoming decision from the A-V-N division headquarters.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 0

WIA 1

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA 0

WIA 2

VCC 1

WPNS 0

EQUIP 0

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

3D BRIGADE

DIVISION

No Change except:

No Change

Attach 2/5 Cav

Detach 2/12 Cav

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

FIELD FRONT headquarters, after evaluating the situation, had reached a decision. With American units seemingly withdrawing to the east of PLEI ME, the decision was to attempt to regain its early advantage with an attack. The target once again was the PLEI ME C-I-D-G Camp. The division headquarters set the date for attack at 16 November, and issued orders to its three regiments.

The 32d Regiment, of course, remained a cohesive fighting force, despite the casualties sustained during the ambush of the A-R-V-N Armored Task Force on the road to PLEI ME.

The 33d, as has been seen, suffered tremendous losses in its attack of and subsequent withdrawal from PLEI ME, but it still was to be committed again. With a view toward its future commitment, the 33d's cadre began reorganization of the depleted battalions into a composite fighting unit.

The real cutting edge for the attack, however, was the newly infiltrated 66th Regiment, fresh from North Vietnam and spoiling for a fight. It would be in the van of the three regimental effort against PLEI ME.

The disposition of the 66th on 11 November had its three battalions, the 7th, 8th and 9th, strung along the north bank of the IA DRANG (center of mass Vic 9104).

The 33d Regiment still maintained its positions vicinity ANTA Village (YA940010).

The 32d Regiment was still north of the IA DRANG (YA820070).

To add punch to the attack, FIELD FRONT also decided to commit a battalion of 120mm mortars and a battalion of 14.5mm twin-barrel anti-aircraft guns. These two units were enroute down the infiltration trail and were scheduled to arrive in time for the attack. The next five days were to be spent in preparation for and movement to the attack.

Thus, for the first time, a full N-V-A division would be committed offensively against a target in South Vietnam.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 0

WIA 2

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

No significant ground contact

11 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

1/12 Cav continued search operations in Area GOLD without contact. B and D companies moved to STADIUM to provide brigade security.

1/7 Cav continued to operate in Area WHITE using squad-size saturation patrolling techniques.

2/5 Cav closed STADIUM from AN KHE and was immediately airlifted to Area RED to begin search and destroy operations. The battalion closed at 1500 hours.

2/12 Cav was lifted back to AN KHE base.

C 1/9th Cav Sqdn continued screening and reconnaissance missions.

12 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

2/5 Cav conducted squad-size patrols in Area RED and discovered numerous punji stakes on trails. Psy War teams conducted orientations in local villages.

1/7 Cav continued small unit search and destroy operations in Area WHITE with no contact.

1/12 Cav and 2/19 Arty (-) moved back to AN KHE base.

C 1/9 Cav Sqdn continued screens of the brigade flanks.

2/7th Cav arrived from AN KHE and was airlifted to three Landing Zones south of PLEI ME in the vicinity of CHU DON Mountain to begin search and destroy operations in that area.

The most significant action came almost at the day was ended. At 2323 hours, an estimated battalion sized force of either N-V-A or Main Force VIET CONG staged a violent attack on the Brigade base at STADIUM. Nearly 100 rounds of 82mm and 60mm mortar shells were pumped into brigade position in addition to a heavy volume of small arms and automatic weapons fire. The attack was concentrated against engineer positions, the aviation refueling complex and the brigade command post. By a few minutes after midnight the attack had been beaten off and all firing ceased. More than 100 demolition charges were recovered when the attack area was screened.

Yeoman duty was performed by the aerial rocket artillery ships that were laagered at STADIUM. All seven aircraft were airborne within five minutes after the attack started and it was their combined fires that stopped the mortar attacks.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

3D BRIGADE

No Change except:

Attach 2/7 Cav

Detach 1/12 Cav

Detach 2/19 Arty (-)

DIVISION

No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

FIELD FRONT units continued preparations and rehearsals for the scheduled attack on PLEI ME.

There was little or no activity in the area where maneuver elements were operating.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 7

WIA 23

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA-6(BC) 22(Est)

WIA-No est

VCC- 0

WPNS- 0

EQUIP-100 demolition charges

13 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The 3d Brigade continued its search and destroy missions in the zone east of PLEI ME, but set the stage for a sudden thrust to the west by pre-positioning artillery.

2/5 Cav air assaulted to L-Z FALCON (ZAO21031) and established an artillery base with no opposition.

1/7 Cav moved by air from Area WHITE to Area MAROON and established company patrol bases without opposition. B Co was detached and sent to STADIUM to assist in security of the brigade base.

2/7 Cav continued search and destroy operations in Area BLUE south of PLEI ME.

C 1/9 Cav Sqn continued to screen the brigade's flanks.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

3D BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

FIELD FRONT forces began staging in the CHU PONG-IA DRANG area in preparation for movement to PLEI ME and the projected 16 November attack. Some recon parties and transportation units already had moved out.

In the east, however, there was minimum contact.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

<u>FRIENDLY LOSSES</u>		<u>ENEMY LOSSES</u>
KIA	0	No significant enemy ground contact.
WIA	2	
MIA	0	

14 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

Few units that have a rendezvous with destiny have an inkling of their fate until the historical moment touches them. So it was with the 1/7 Cav on the morning of 14 November. It was to be a routine operation, in so far as any operation deep in enemy territory can be routine. B company had moved back to the battalion positions near PLEI ME to prepare for the lengthy airlift into an area adjacent to the CHU PONGS.

At 1050 hours the first company, Bravo, had landed at L-Z X-RAY (YA 935010) and by 1210 hours, the bulk of the battalion had closed. With C company securing the L-Z, B company was moved north and west toward a finger extending down from the CHU PONG hill mass. At 1245 hours the company became moderately engaged and by 1330 hours was being attacked by at least two companies of N-V-A infantry. The westerly platoon of B company was cut off in the violence of the first enemy assault and remained an isolated island of resistance until it was retrieved the following day.

Simultaneously with the engagement of B company, a few rounds of mortar fire began to fall on the L-Z and on B company. Rocket fire also was experienced in several sectors. A company was moved up to the left flank of B company and immediately became engaged with a company-sized N-V-A force that was driving toward Bravo's left rear. Fire was then coming into the landing zone itself, and aircraft bringing in the balance of the battalion had to be waved off. Thus far, all the action had occurred to the west and northwest of the L-Z in heavy jungle and tall grass. (Inclosure 16)

Then C company, which had moved off the L-Z to the east was attacked by a two-company force of enemy. Elements from D company were moved to reinforce and, combined with the tactical air, aerial and tube artillery support called to within a 100 meters of friendly positions, the attack was beaten off and the eastern portion of the L-Z then became secure and relatively free of fire.

In learning of the intensity of the fight, the brigade commander alerted B co, 2/7 Cav, which originally had been slated for brigade security duty at STADIUM, to move directly to X-RAY.

The remainder of the 1/7 battalion, including the Recon Platoon, landed by 1500 hours and were fed into positions on the eastern fringe of the landing zone. Attempts to retrieve the isolated platoon by Bravo and a platoon of Alpha company had failed and both companies were instructed to pull back and tighten up their interior lines. (Inclosure 17). Communication was maintained with the isolated platoon throughout the fight. By then it was apparent that the battalion had engaged a force of at least 600 men.

By 1800 hours B 2/7 Cav landed in the L-Z and initially was placed in reserve as a battalion reaction force. Later, one platoon of B 2/7 reinforced C 1/7 and the recon platoon was pulled back to join the reaction force. The perimeter for the night of 14 November was generally as depicted in Inclosure 18.

Throughout the night the N-V-A attempted to crack the perimeter of the isolated platoon, but intensive artillery protective fires that ringed the position broke up every attack. The main perimeter was also subjected to repeated probes, and these too were repulsed. The two artillery batteries at FALCON pumped more than 4,000 rounds of high explosive in close support of X-RAY. Tactical air flew missions throughout the night and the Air Force flare ship maintained constant illumination of the battle area. Pilots of the lift ships braved the dangers of the fire-swept L-Z to bring in reinforcements and re-supply and carry out wounded and dead.

Meanwhile, brigade had alerted the 2/5 Cav for commitment to X-RAY. The battalion extracted two companies from patrol positions south of FALCON and flew them to L-Z VICTOR (YV964994), with the CP and D company moving in from FALCON.

B company, on a search mission north of FALCON, fell back to that position at night fall and was prepared to join the battalion at first light. The battalion was to move by foot into X-RAY the next morning.

2/7 Cav continued its operations south of PLEI ME, with C company and D company, while A company was moved to STADIUM to be a reaction force for the night.

C Troop, 1/9 Cav Sqdn made visual reconnaissance of the immediate battle area in an effort to pinpoint movement of N-V-A forces.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

3D BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

Some of FIELD FRONT's assault elements had gotten under way before dawn on the 14th, bound for PLEI ME. At noon, when Cavalry helicopters disgorged troopers at the foot of the CHU PONGS, absolute surprise had been achieved. Instead of launching a divisional attack on PLEI ME and possibly regaining tactical initiative, the N-V-A division found itself engaged in a struggle to defend its own base.

The CHU PONG mountains and IA DRANG valley long had been a sanctuary for the VIET CONG and N-V-A forces. It was one of the numerous so-called "secret" bases which provided the insurgents with a secure area in which to store supplies, conduct training, carry out administrative functions, manufacture and repair arms and equipment and provide an operating base for combat units.

Since 1954 at the latest no Vietnamese government units had penetrated the CHU PONG massif. Undisturbed, VIET CONG units had enjoyed years of safety in the mountains and their sheltered valleys. It was from the sanctuary and the supply bases in the IA DRANG valley that FIELD FRONT and the 32d and 33d Regiments had moved on PLEI ME on 19 October. Now the sanctuary was threatened.

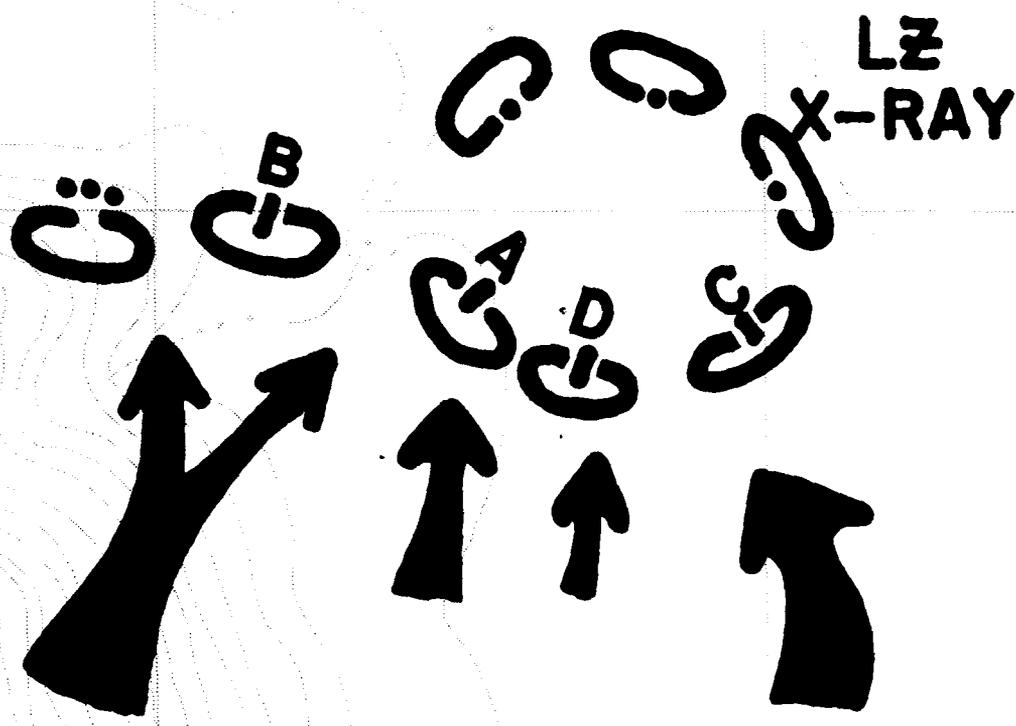
Reacting swiftly to the Cavalry landings, FIELD FRONT ordered the 66th Regiment to attack the landing zone. Strong elements of the regiment were established on the ridgeline overlooking the landing zone to provide a base of fire. The 9th and 7th battalions of the 66th and a composite battalion of the 33d (formerly the 2d and 3d battalions) provided the initial assault forces.

The attacks came in company and multi-company force and were pressed with great determination. They continued throughout the day and into the night. Despite the elan of the attacks, the regiments were unable to overrun the position. The attacking elements tried to maintain as close contact as possible, not only to exert the maximum pressure, but also to prevent tactical air and artillery from being used to help the defenders. Despite this tactic, US aircraft slashed repeatedly at the N-V-A ranks, coming within 100 meters of the Cavalry's front lines. Murderous artillery barrages were called in very close to friendly lines, breaking up the attacks and taking a terrible toll of men and equipment.

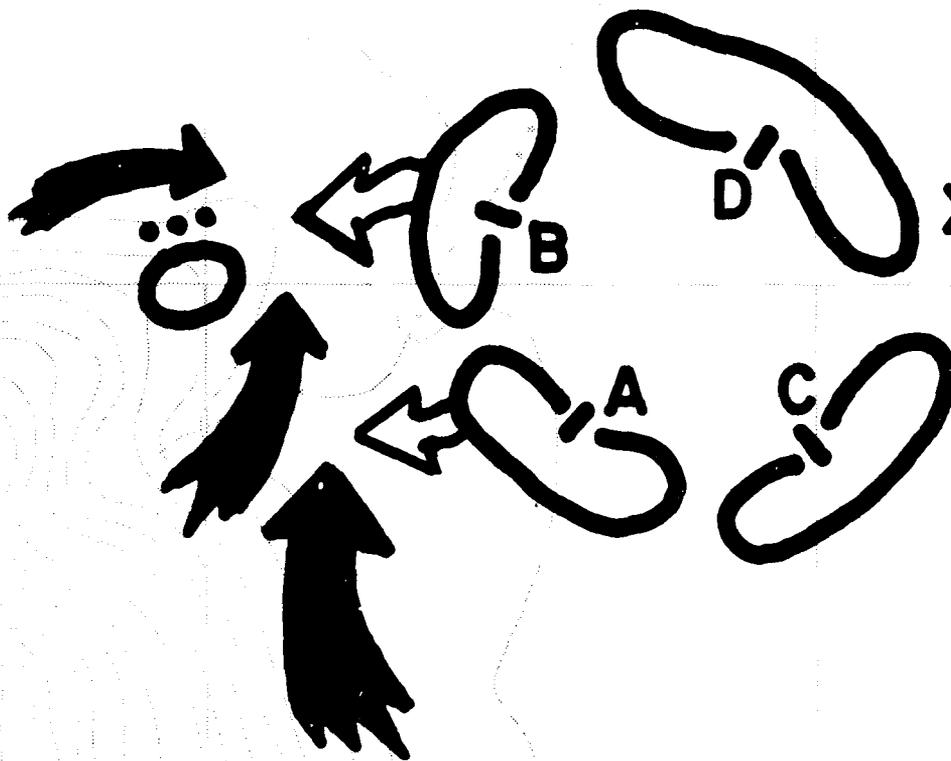
4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES
KIA 6
WIA 49
MIA 0

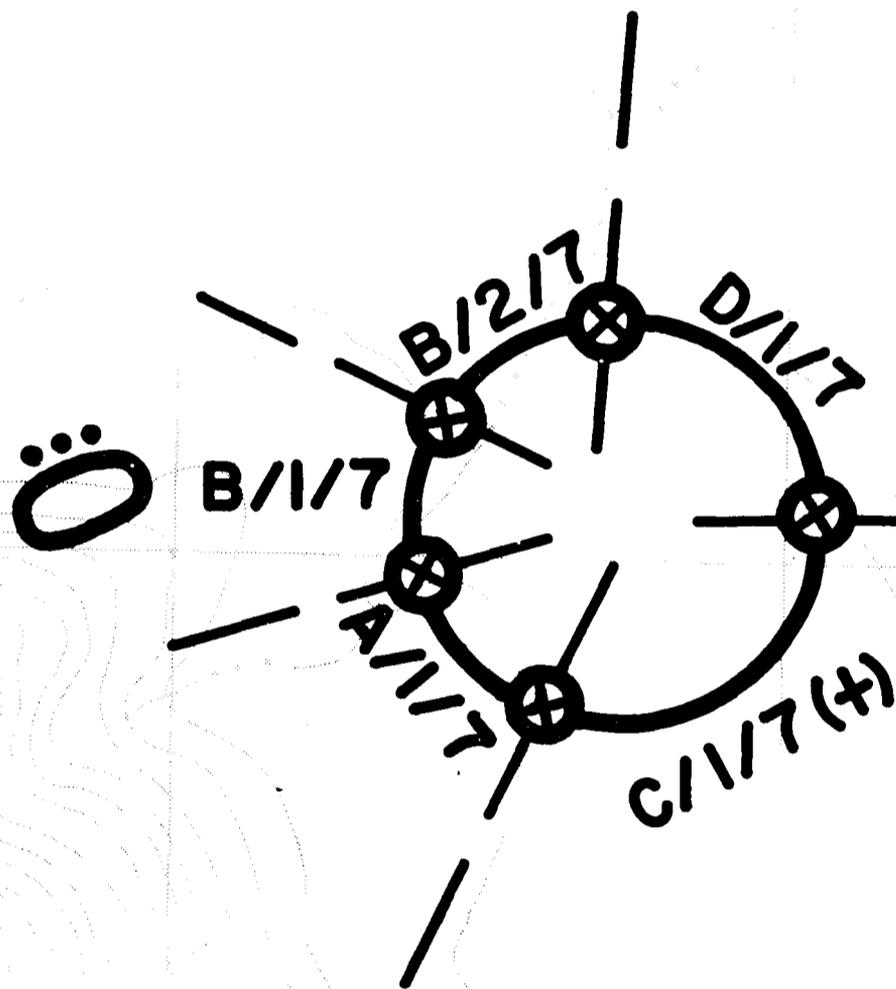
ENEMY LOSSES
Because of the intensity and continuity of the action, the enemy losses will be summarized on the report of the 16th.



INCL 16



LZ
X-RAY



INCL 18

15 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

Unlike other days in the campaign, this one began and ended with violence. At first light the companies in the perimeter sent recon parties to screen a distance of about 200 meters in front of their positions. At 0650 hours, the two left platoons of C company (one the south and southeast) began receiving heavy fire. A N-V-A force of more than two companies were thrusting at that portion of the perimeter. Despite intensive air strikes, tube and aerial rocket artillery missions, the enemy elements closed to hand-to-hand combat range of C company. While this violent combat was ensuing, the east portion of the L-Z also came under heavy attack. This was at about 0715 hours. D company had the task of stopping the N-V-A attack and did so with the aid of the air strikes and artillery. At about 0800, the A company sector to the south and west came under attack and grazing fire criss-crossed the perimeter and landing zone. Although A 2/7 Cav was poised to come in by chopper, the L-Z was too hot at the time. (attacks and positions depicted in Inclosure 19)

The portion of B company 2/7 Cav that had been held in reserve was committed to the C 1/7 sector to throw back the enemy assault. The front lines were marked by colored smoke and air strikes and tube artillery strikes were brought to within 50 meters of the trace. The curtain of steel finally broke the back of the attack, leaving the field strewn with N-V-A bodies. By 0900 the fire into the landing zone itself had slackened to the extent that it was possible to air land A 2/7 Cav and throw the reinforcements into key defensive positions. (Inclosure 20)

Help was on the way in the form of the 2/5 Cav, moving by foot from L-Z VICTOR across the ridgeline to the southeast of X-RAY and into the perimeter, scooping up two prisoners along the way. (Inclosure 21)

The battalion closed at 1245 hours and immediately was given the mission of sweeping to the northwest to spring loose the isolated platoon of B 1/7 Cav. The attacking echelon included A and C companies of 2/5 Cav and B 1/7 Cav. The surrounded platoon was reached without undue opposition and all forces returned to the perimeter by 1600 hours. (Inclosure 22)

The forces in X-RAY all under operational control of the Commanding Officer, 1/7 Cav then formed a tight perimeter for the night. (Inclosure 23) The remainder of the night was marked by repeated small unit probes of the perimeter that were of little or no consequence in context with the major enemy effort of the day. The N-V-A had thrown his best into a major effort that morning and had failed.

The 3d Brigade continued to reinforce and support the battle at X-RAY. The 2/7 Cav (-) was moved first to L-Z MACON (YA935052) to provide an artillery base, but found the soil unsuitable. The artillery position, manned by B 1/21 Arty and the 2/7 Cav (-) moved to L-Z COLUMBUS (YA974036).

Meanwhile, the 1/5 Cav (-) closed at STADIUM and A 1/5 Cav was air-lifted to COLUMBUS to reinforce 2/7 Cav, which already had provided two companies to the cauldron at X-RAY. B and C companies 1/5 Cav went to FALCON to provide security for artillery units there.

C Troop, 1/9 Cav Sqdn continued screening and reconnaissance missions in the IA DRANG valley and D Troop secured the brigade base at STADIUM.

The Air Force, during the first crucial 40 hours at X-RAY had tactical air constantly on station with a fighter-bomber on a target run on an average of one every 15 minutes throughout the period.

Tube artillery fired more than 6,000 rounds of high explosive into the defense perimeter area and aerial artillery contributed nearly 2,000 rockets to the fire barrier.

CH-47 (Chinooks) of the 228th ASHB flew continuous re-supply missions into FALCON and COLUMBUS to keep the artillery in shells, and the lift ships of the 229th AHB flew medical evacuation and re-supply in and out of the besieged landing zone throughout the period, in most cases at grave risk to pilots and crew.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

3D BRIGADE

No Change except:

Add 1/5 Cav

Add D 1/9 Cav Sqdn

DIVISION

No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

Despite the heavy losses sustained on the 14th, the N-V-A division headquarters ordered continuation of the attacks on the little position at the foot of the mountain. The 7th and 9th Battalions of the 66th had been bearing the brunt of the assaults along with what was left of the 33d. The 8th Battalion of the 66th was moved south from its position north of the IA DRANG to bring pressure against the eastern fringe of the L-Z. And FIELD FRONT summoned the H-15 Main Force VIET CONG Battalion from an assembly area well south of the battle area.

The N-V-A effort unquestionably was hampered by the unexplained delay in getting the heavy mortar and heavy anti-aircraft battalions off the infiltration trail and into the battle zone. Neither has there been an explanation for the failure to commit the 32d Regiment which apparently held its positions 12-14 kilometers to the northwest on the north bank of the IA DRANG.

The 15th also marked the introduction of a new weapon by the American forces and one which struck terror in the hearts of even the most hardened enemy soldier. Shortly after noon a large area in the vicinity of YA8702 suddenly erupted with hundreds of thunderous explosions that moved across the ground like a giant carpet being unrolled. The B-52 bombers had struck. For the next five days the big bombers systematically worked over large areas of the CHU PONG Massif. The N-V-A soldiers lived in fear of these attacks because they believed each raid covered a 20 kilometer area and they were told that ordinary trenches and foxholes were of no protection.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

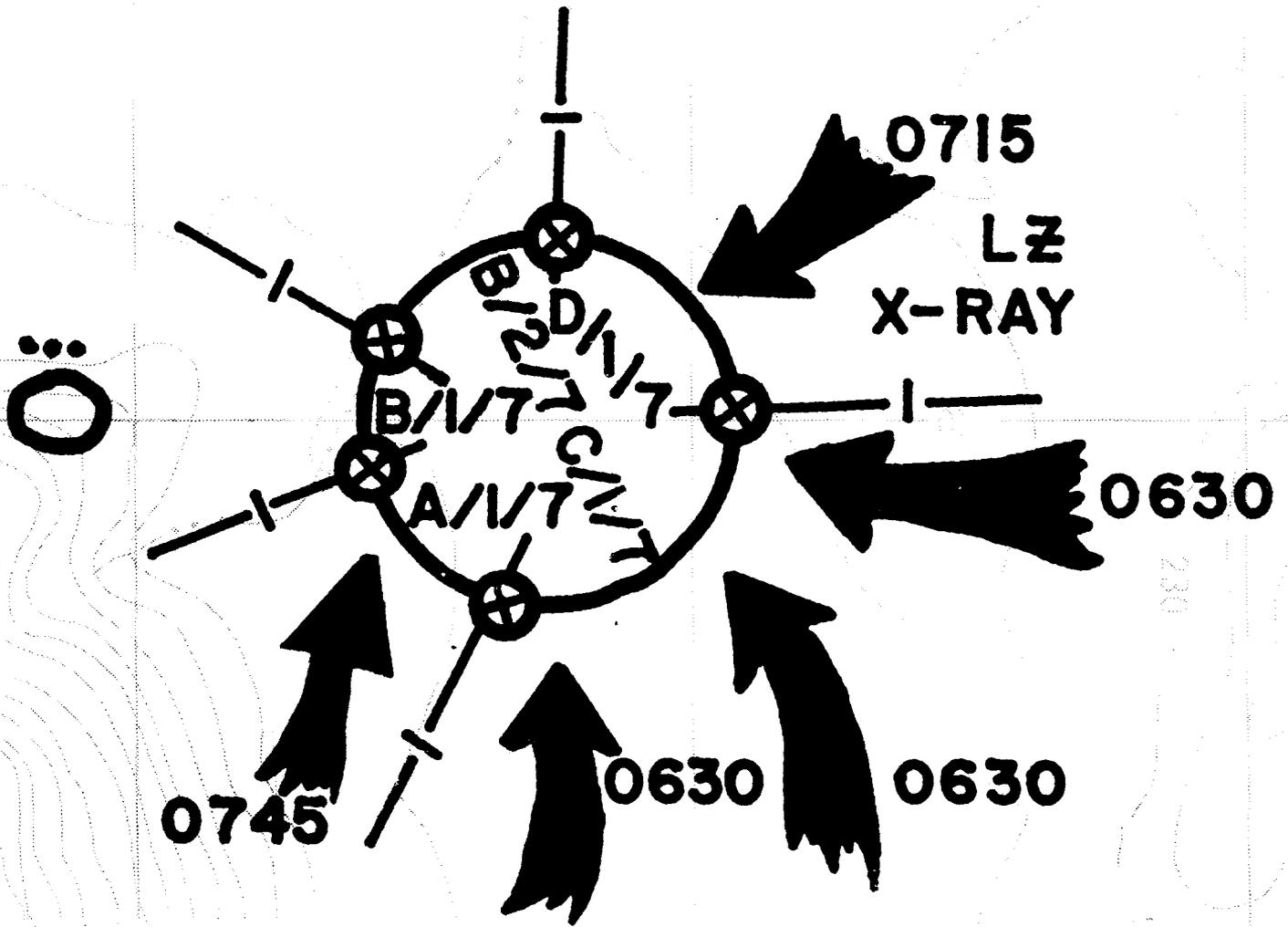
KIA 67

WIA 68

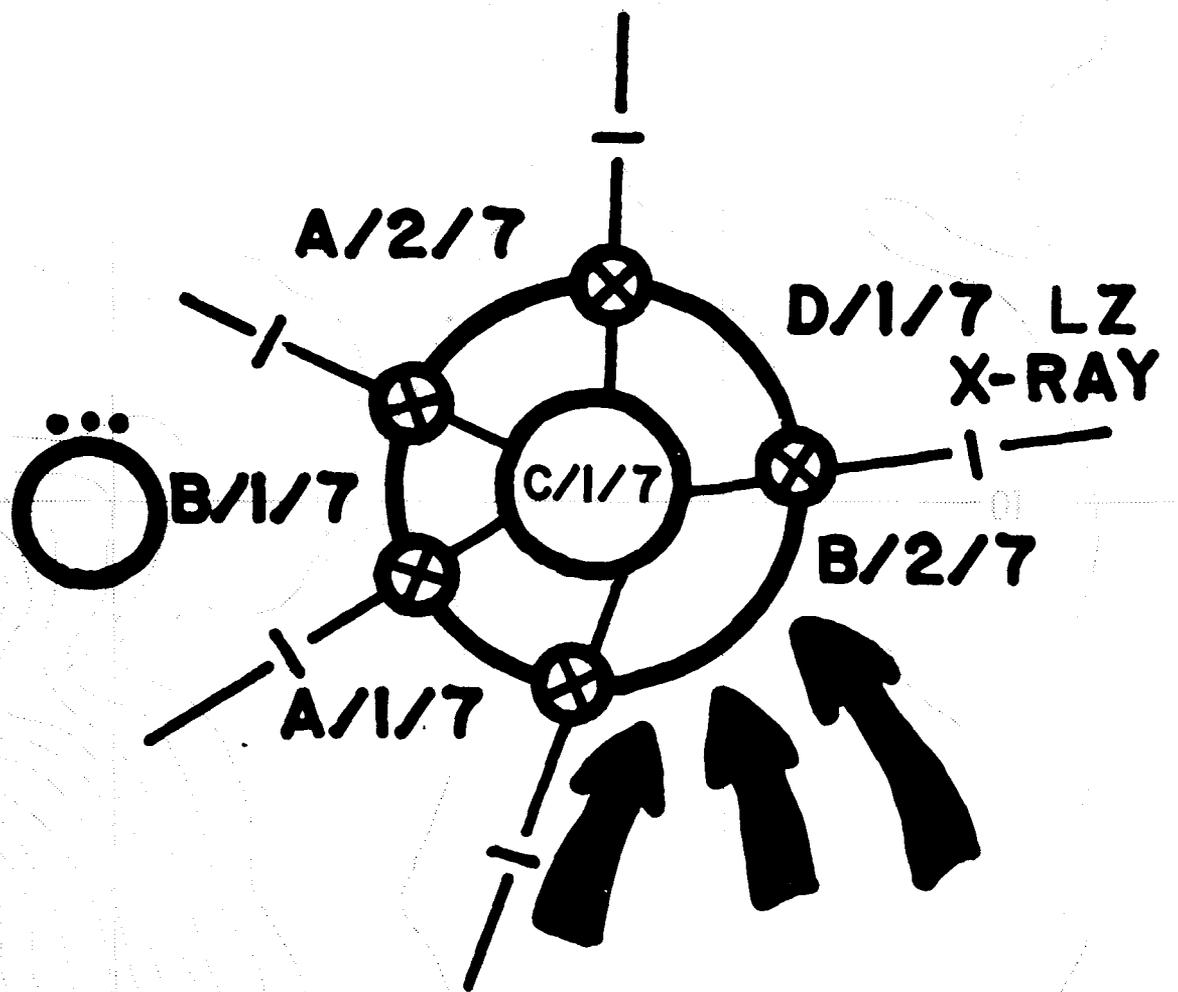
MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

Summary of all losses on the recapitulation of the 16th.

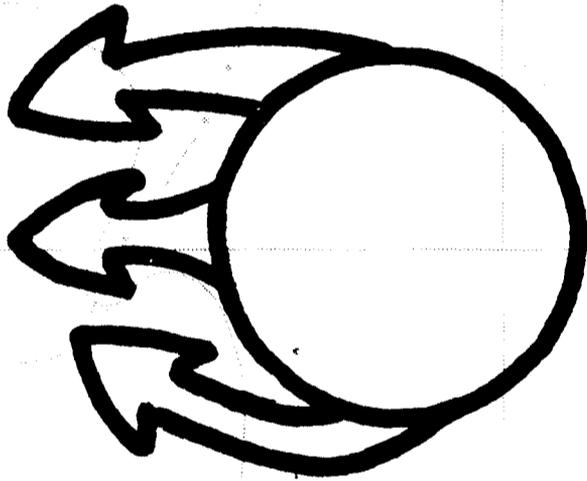


INCL 19

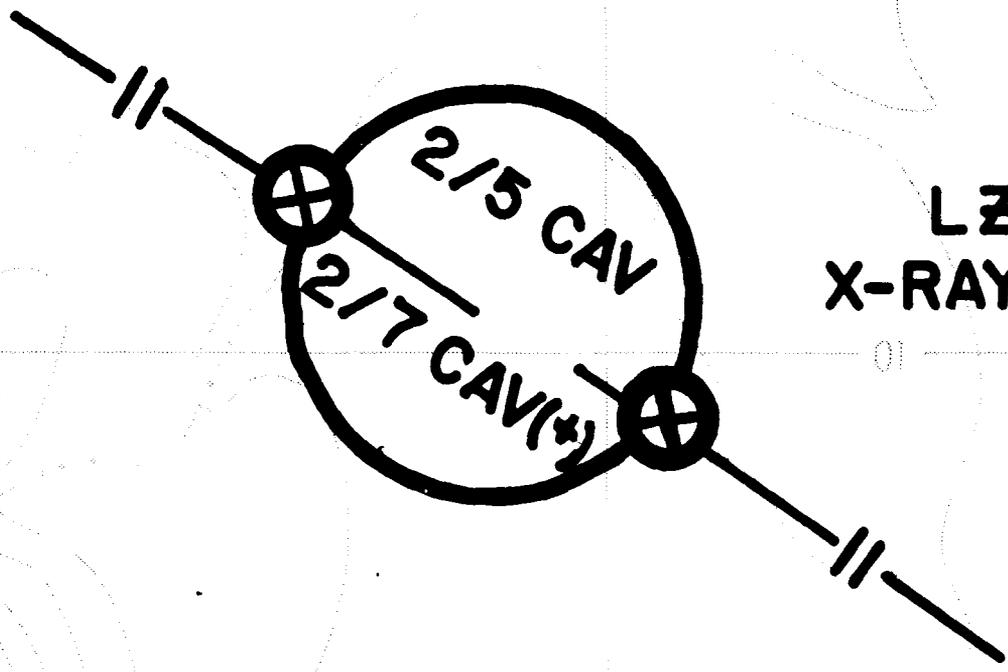


**LZ
X-RAY**

Ö



INCL 22



LZ
X-RAY

INCL 23

16 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

At approximately 0400 hours, the N-V-A infantry began light probing attacks at various places on the perimeter with elements ranging from squad to platoon strength. At 0430 hours a two company attack was directed against the southeast portion of the perimeter, now manned by B 2/7 Cav. This was beaten back by small arms and artillery fires under illumination provided by "Smokey" the Air Force flare ship. A second attack by a company-sized element also was repulsed. At 0600 a company-sized assault was directed against the northeast portion of the L-Z, manned by elements of the 2/5 Cav. It too was smashed by accurate defensive fires. At 0627 still another attack was launched from the north, and again without success. (Inclosure 24)

At 0655, all positions in the perimeter opened up with small arms and machine guns. They systematically sprayed trees, bushes and anthills to their front. This had the salutary effect of prematurely triggering a 40-man N-V-A assault element directly in front of A 2/7 Cav. The unit had been creeping forward, using high grass and bushes for concealment. The technique also accomplished its primary function by bringing down several snipers that had climbed trees close to the perimeter during the night.

At 0910 hours, all units began a sweep to their front to a depth of about 500 meters, utilizing covering artillery fire, and policed up the battle area. The first elements of 2/7 (-) with A 1/5 Cav attached began closing into X-RAY after a foot movement from COLUMBUS. The battalion completed its move by 1200 hours, and at 1400 hours, the 1/7 Cav, plus B 2/7 Cav and a platoon of A 2/7 Cav were relieved on station and moved by helicopters to CAMP HOLLOWAY for rest and reorganization.

Sporadic sniper fires marked the rest of the day at X-RAY and both the 2/5 and 2/7 battalions made plans for movement out of the area on the following day. The L-Z was located along the path of a projected target area for a B-52 strike and it was necessary to move the units outside a three kilometer safety limit.

To reinforce the units in the battle area, the remaining units of the 1/5 Cav moved by chopper to COLUMBUS, where that battalion remained over night

The 1/9 Cav Sqdn elements continued close surveillance of the battlefield and the routes leading into it and, early in the afternoon, one of its scout-gun ships (UH-1B) was shot down in the jungle north of the IA DRANG. Heavy fire from the area prevented the immediate recovery of the ship and the crew was carried as missing.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

3D BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

Early on the morning of the 16th, the N-V-A elements had another go at X-RAY---and again there was a blood bath. The nu? was too tough to crack. But if this position was too strong, what about the artillery bases, from whence came so much of the N-V-A misery? Might they not be less well protected? Strong elements were set under way toward both COLUMBUS and FALCON. These included portions of the 66th Regiment and the H-15 VIET CONG Battalion.

Also, once the attacks on X-RAY were broken off, a general movement of units began north and west along the base of the mountain and in the IA DRANG valley.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 6 (79 Cumulative)
WIA 8 (125 Cumulative)
MIA 0 (0 Cumulative)

ENEMY LOSSES

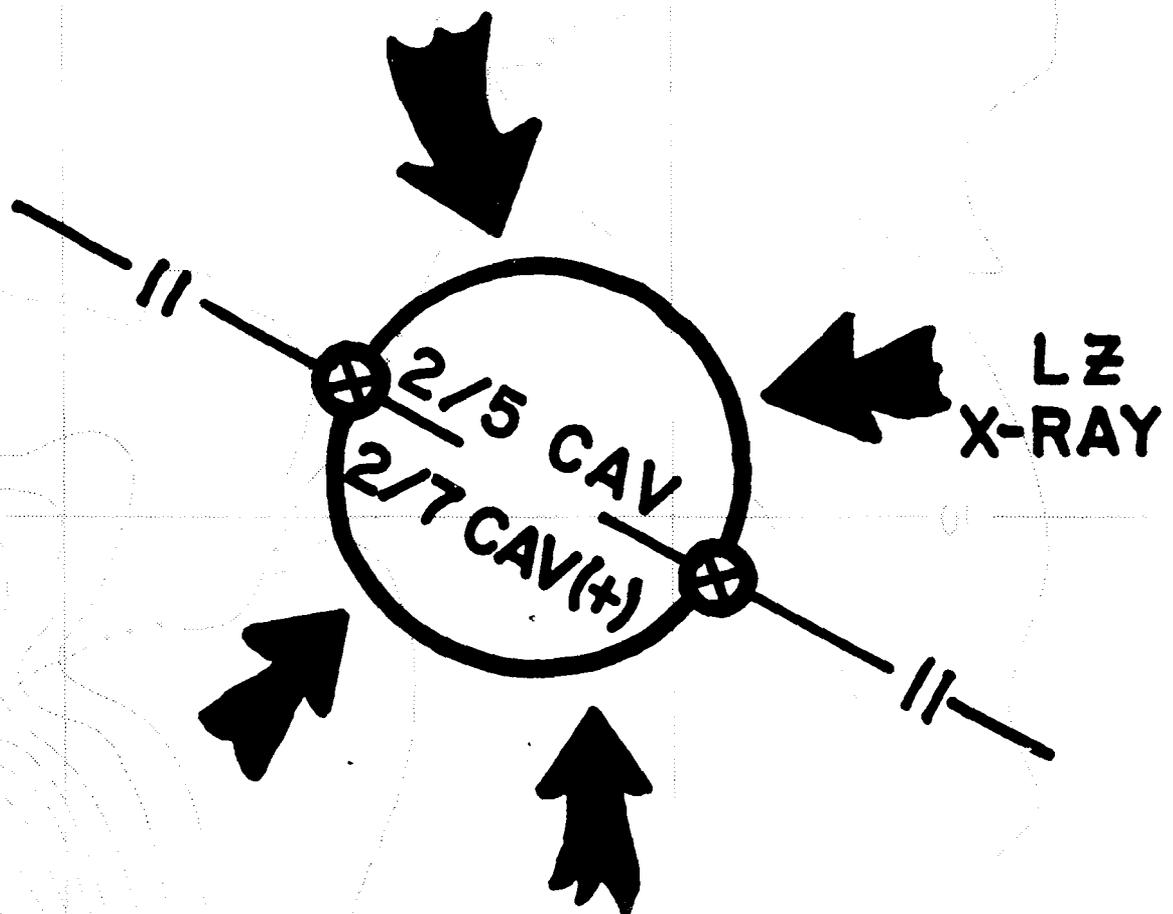
(14-15-16 Cumulative)
KIA -834 (BC) 1,215 (Est)
WIA -No estimates made
VCC -6

WPNS & EQUIPMENT DESTROYED IN POSITION:

Crew Served and Indiv Wpns 100
Anti Tank Rockets 9
Hand Grenades 300-400
Assorted 7.62mm Ammo 7,000 rounds
Entrenching Tools 100-150
Assorted Packs, Uniforms, etc.

WPNS & EQUIP EVACUATED:

Assault carbines 54
Assault rifles 57
Automatic rifles 17
Heavy machine guns 4
Rocket launchers 5
Pistols 2
82mm Mortars 2
Medic Kits 6



INCL 24

17 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

For the first time in the Vietnamese conflict, Strategic Air strikes were to be used in direct support of the ground scheme of maneuver. The strikes of the past two days had been in a supporting role, but today the ground forces would be moving in direct relation to the impending strike.

Accordingly, both battalions still occupying the landing zone, 2/5 Cav and 2/7 Cav, moved off with a mission to sweep to the north, with the 2/5 Cav inclining slightly to the east and heading for COLUMBUS. The 2/7 Cav, which was minus its B company and a platoon of its A company, but reinforced by A 1/5 Cav, was to follow the 2/5 Cav long enough to put a 3,000 meter safety margin between it and the B-52 target area, then was to sweep to the west and northwest toward a map location that appeared it would make a possible landing zone. The map location (YA945043) was named ALBANY.

The 2/5 Cav closed at COLUMBUS at 1140 hours without incident.

The 2/7th Cav was about to undergo its ordeal by fire. The battalion set out behind the 2/5 with A company 2/7 in the lead, utilizing the battalion Recon platoon in lieu of its own missing platoon; followed by C company, D company, CP group. At the rear of the battalion column was A 1/5 Cav. (See Inclosure 25 for route of march and formations)

After clearing the 3,000 meter limit, the battalion swung westerly and made its way through the dense jungle toward ALBANY. About 300-500 meters short of its objective area, the lead element captured two prisoners without any resistance. As the lead element passed through the clearing that was to become ALBANY, it began receiving extremely heavy fire from its left and right front and from its right flank. Initial surprise had gone to the enemy, but the troops of the battalion reacted quickly and courageously. The fight quickly became a general melee as each individual fought his personal battle.

The brunt of the flanking move by the N-V-A was borne by C and D companies, and in some cases the enemy thrust penetrated through the ranks of the column. D company and part of the headquarters element began moving to the east to link up with the lead elements of A 1/5 Cav, which also had taken heavy enemy fire. Remnants of C company, along with the battalion command group, fought their way westward to the clearing where A company and Recon platoon were making their stands. (Inclosure 26)

Initially, the inability to precisely locate individual units in the battle precluded the use of supporting artillery and tactical air. It was an infantryman's battle for several hours. By mid-afternoon the pieces were sorted out and heavy supporting fires began falling in among N-V-A elements still pressing the attack. The first strikes in were by aerial artillery, followed by a tactical air napalm run, which broke up a N-V-A company-sized attack that was just forming against the westward edge of the forward perimeter.

By 1825 hours the fire around the clearing had slackened to the point where it could be used as a landing zone to bring in B 2/7 Cav from CAMP HOLLOWAY, where it had been placed on alert as soon as word of the fight reached brigade headquarters.

Although the enemy kept pressure on both perimeters during the night, he did not try heavy assaults against the positions as he had earlier at X-RAY. Illumination by Air Force flare ships and a continuous ring of artillery shells and tactical air strikes kept the enemy at bay and allowed units from both perimeters to make repeated forays out from the positions to bring back friendly casualties. At approximately 2200 hours, B 1/5 Cav marched overland from COLUMBUS and linked up with the eastern perimeter, giving it needed reinforcement. It was decided that the units should not try to fight their way further in the darkness and the two perimeters were maintained for the night. (Inclosure 27)

There was no activity of any type at either COLUMBUS or FALCON.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION

3D BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

The 8th Battalion, 66th Regiment was on the move and had reached a point in the jungle, just east of the IA DRANG (YA8404) during the morning. The column had halted, dug in hasty positions and generally was in a relaxed posture (some soldiers were eating their noon rice) when outposts brought word that a large American column was headed directly toward them. The battalion commander had little choice but to organize hasty positions and prepare for a meeting engagement at close quarters in the dense jungle. In some cases his machine guns had to be fired from unprotected positions and many soldiers were thrust into battle still wearing their heavy forage packs.

When the fight came it was marked by its bitter intensity; first of the hand-to-hand conflict, and later by the sheer weight of the US artillery, aerial rocket and tactical air strikes. By nightfall only a handful of the original force remained organized in a combat posture. If this battalion had been destined for an assault on an artillery position, it would never reach the attack position.

Meanwhile, the other battalions of the 66th and 33d Regiments, depleted by the vicious combat of the past four days, began their gradual movement toward the northwest and the Cambodian sanctuary. Due west, over CHU PONG would have been faster, but the daily B-52 strikes had brought death and terror to the N-V-A forces and there was no alternative but to skirt the base of the mountain.

Those troops still remaining in the now-deserted X-RAY area suddenly learned of the reason for the exodus of the Cavalry. A B-52 strike had been called in virtually on top of the old positions.

The artillery base at COLUMBUS was still considered a target for N-V-A and Main Force VIET CONG elements in the IA DRANG valley, and these units steadily moved toward that objective.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 151*

WIA 121

MIA 4

*Includes those who later died of wounds inflicted on this date, and those originally carried MIA and now changed to KIA

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA-403(BC) 100(Est)

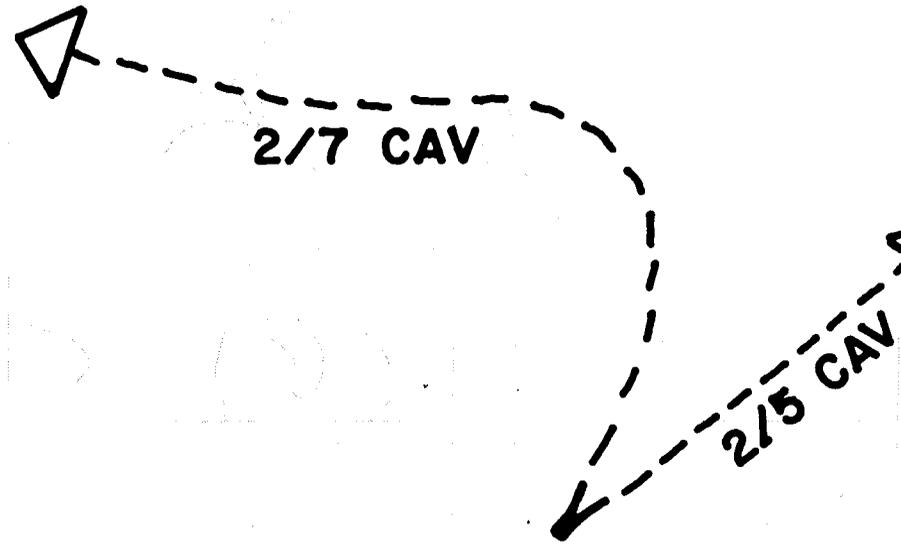
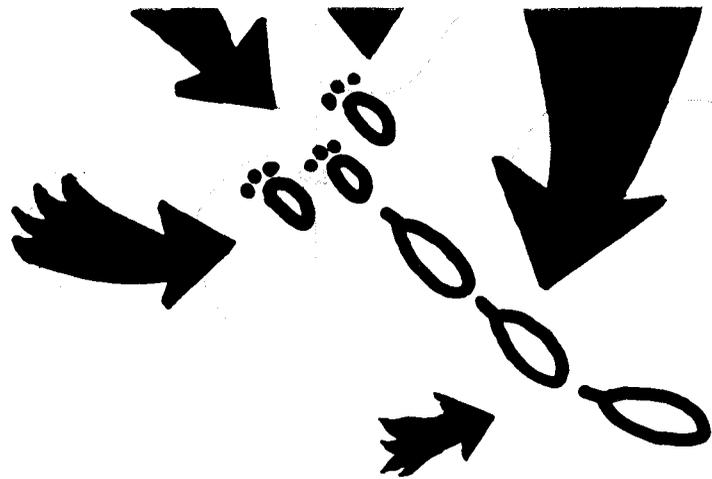
WIA-No estimates made

WPNS AND EQUIP EVACUATED:

Assault rifles/carbines 112
Light machine guns 33
Heavy machine guns 3
82mm Mortar tubes 4
Mortar Tripods 5
Rocket Launchers 4
Mortar sights 2
Mortar fuzes (Cases) 3
Packs, w/equip 21
Rice & medical supplies

WPNS AND EQUIP DESTROYED

Assault rifles/carbines 100
Light Machine Guns 6
Rocket launchers 4
82mm mortars 2
Rocket launcher ammo (cases) 3



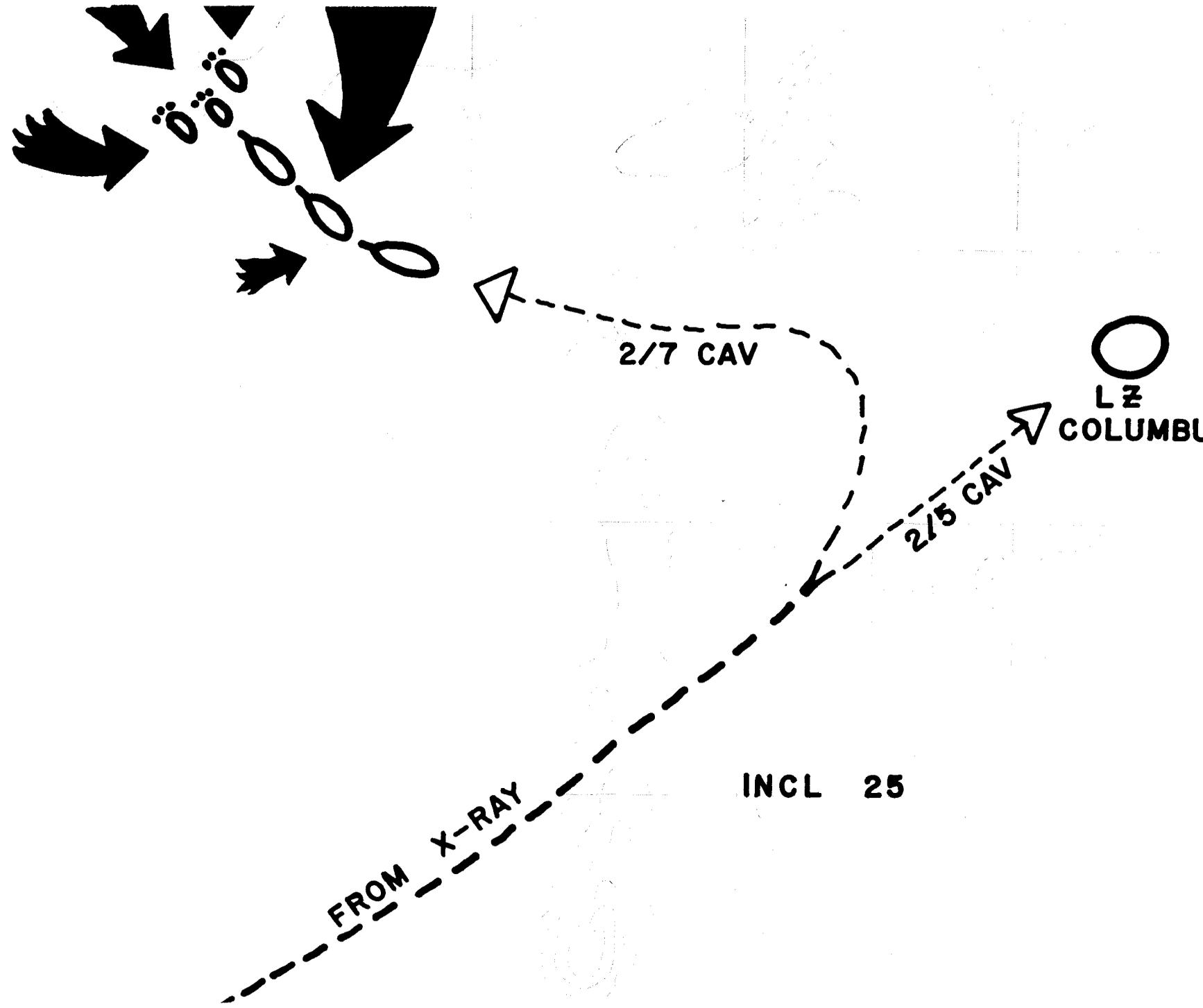
2/7 CAV

2/5 CAV

LZ
COLUMBU

FROM X-RAY

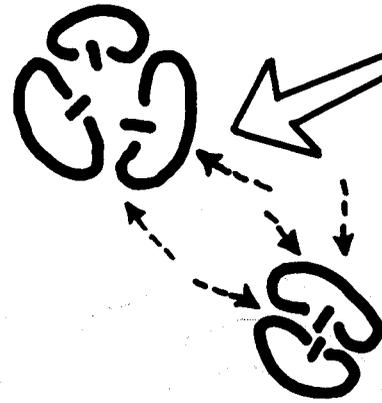
INCL 25



INCL 25

LZ
ALBANY

B/2/7 CAV



LZ
COLUMBUS

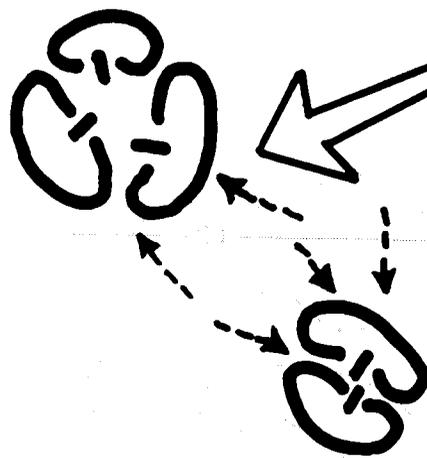
B/1/5 CAV

INCL 26



LZ
ALBANY

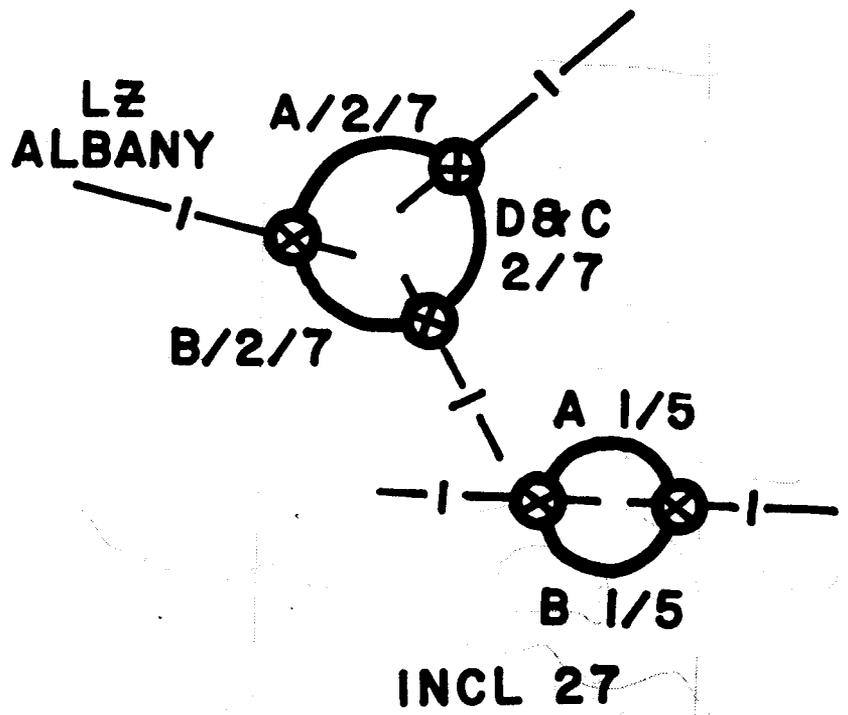
QB/2/7 CAV



LZ
COLUMBUS

B/1/5 CAV

INCL 26



2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

3D BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

Once again the enemy found that US defensive fires make assaults very costly affairs. The attack on COLUMBUS was the last enemy offensive effort of any consequence against American positions in the IA DRANG.

By late evening the major contact had been broken and thereafter, the only contact throughout the CHU PONG-IA DRANG complex was with scattered N-V-A elements of squad or platoon size that had been flushed out and chased by Cavalry heliborne or foot patrols.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES
KIA 2

WIA 31

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES
KIA-27(BC) 46(Est)

WIA-100 (Est)

WPNS-Light machine guns 4
Heavy machine guns 2
Assault rifles 7
Carbines 6
Rocket launchers 1

18 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

From midnight to dawn there was sporadic sniper firing at the sites of both perimeters near ALBANY, but the major threat was over. At first light A and B companies 1/5 Cav moved from their overnight positions and screened to the west and linked up with the western-most perimeter and the remainder of the 2/7 Cav at 0900 hours. The entire battalion patrolled out from the perimeter and recovered dead and wounded personnel and friendly and enemy equipment and weapons. The intermingling of US and N-V-A dead testified that much of the action had taken place at point blank range.

At 1400 hours, A and B companies 1/5 Cav reverted to their parent battalion control and marched to COLUMBUS. The 2/7 Cav remained on ALBANY for the night.

At COLUMBUS, the 1/5 guarded the artillery positions. At 1735 an outpost at the northern portion of the battalion perimeter engaged the lead elements of an enemy unit moving into an attack position. Within ten minutes the battalion perimeter was under heavy mortar and automatic weapons fire. Air strikes dropped ordnance to within 100 meters of the perimeter foxholes. The artillery units at COLUMBUS were used in a flat trajectory fire support role.

At approximately 2100 hours the attack lost momentum and subsided into small arms fire that continued sporadically throughout the night.

Just prior to the attack, the 2/5 Cav, moving to the west to a blocking position, air assaulted into L-Z CROOKS (YA875125) along with an artillery battery. The battalion conducted patrols from the new base and during the night received light probes and harrassing small arms and mortar fire.

The 3d Brigade CP was maintained at STADIUM and the 1/7 Cav continued rest and reorganization at CAMP HOLLOWAY.

19 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY

As activity diminished in the ALBANY-COLUMBUS-FALCON area, the 3d Brigade continued moving elements westward, both for further search and destroy operations as well as to work in conjunction with the A-R-V-N Airborne Brigade which was sweeping from DUC CO south along the Cambodian border.

2/7 Cav was lifted out of ALBANY during the afternoon and the battalion closed at L-Z CROOKS by 1430. The battalion assumed responsibility for a portion of the L-Z security along with 2/5 Cav, which continued security for the artillery positions as well as conducting company-sized sweeps in the immediate vicinity of the landing zone.

The 1/5 Cav linked with two artillery batteries at COLUMBUS and then lifted to L-Z GOLF (YA841094), closing by 1850 hours.

Elements of the 1/7 moved to STADIUM to secure the brigade base, while the remainder of the battalion stayed at CAMP HOLLOWAY.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

3D BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

The remnants of the 33d and 66th Regiments began moving in small groups toward the Cambodian border, utilizing the cover of the IA DRANG. There was little contact with the Cavalry units.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 0

WIA 2

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA - 5(BC)

WIA - 12(Est)

EQUIP - 0

WPNS - 0

20 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

The 3d Brigade moved its combat elements to Landing Zones CROOKS and GOLF, which fitted in with the scheme of maneuver of the 2d Brigade, which was assuming control of combat elements in the battle zone. After turning over control of units in the field, the 3d Brigade began movement back to AN KHE base with the 1/7 Cav and other attached and organic elements. For the 3d Forward Support Element, it was the first relief since the campaign had started on 23 October.

The 2d Brigade planned to use DUC CO Special Forces Camp (YA840252) as an operating base for its forward CP, and closed during the afternoon. The 1/5 Cav conducted patrolling from L-Z GOLF, and 2/5 Cav patrolled from L-Z CROOKS.

1/9 Cav Sqdn screened the entire brigade sector after moving to and establishing a base at 19th HOLE.

The 2/12 moved by truck convoy from AN KHE to STADIUM, marking the second time this battalion was committed during the campaign. During the night some 60mm mortar rounds fell on STADIUM but there were no casualties.

Division artillery units at GOLF and CROOKS continued to give fire support to A-R-V-N airborne forces to the west. Most noteworthy was the fires delivered in support of the 3d and 6th battalions of the airborne brigade when they struck an estimated battalion of the 32d Regiment, N-V-A.

The division artillery units were credited by the airborne brigade commander with having been responsible for 127 KIA by body count during the time the artillery supported the A-R-V-N.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

2D BRIGADE

1/5 Cav (201200)
 2/5 Cav (201200)
 2/12 Cav
 1/8 Cav (201400)
 1/77 Arty
 1/21 Arty (201200)
 2/17 Arty (201200)
 B 2/20 Arty ARA
 B 8 Eng
 2d FSE
 2d Plat, 545 MP Co
 Sig Spt Tm, 13th Sig
 Tm, 10th RRU
 IPW/CI Tm, 191 MI Det
 TM, 54th Inf Det
 1/9 Cav Sqdn (-)

3D BRIGADE

No Change except:
 Detach: 1/5 Cav
 2/5 Cav
 1/21 Arty
 2/17 Arty
 6/14 Arty
 3/18 Arty

DIVISION

No Change except:
 Add: 6/14 Arty(-)
 3/18 Arty(-)

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

Artillery support continued to pound at positions of the 32d N-V-A Regiment north of the IA DRANG, while all other units pressed for the Cambodian border.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 1
 WIA 0
 MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA - 5(BC)
 WIA - 7 (Est)

21 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

2/12 Cav moved from STADIUM to GOLF by air and assumed part of the responsibility for the security of that position.

1/8 Cav made its second appearance in the campaign when it moved from AN KHE to STADIUM.

2/5 Cav conducted patrol actions around CROOKS. B company conducted a sweep to YA878016 and made contact with an estimated enemy platoon.

1/5th Cav conducted sweeps around its base at GOLF and secured the artillery units there.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

2D BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

Contacts were becoming more and more meager as the N-V-A division fled for the Cambodian sanctuary, leaving the IA DRANG valley to the 1st Air Cavalry Division and the A-R-V-N Brigade.

4. ACTIVITIES SUMMARY:

FRIENDLY LOSSES
KIA 1

WIA 8

ENEMY LOSSES
KIA - 1(BC)

WIA - 0

22 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATION SUMMARY:

2/12 Cav moved out from GOLF and seized Objective TEE. No enemy contact was made, however one sniper was killed and another escaped.

2/5 Cav conducted four platoon sized patrols in addition to defending CROOKS.

1/8 Cav lifted from STADIUM to CROOKS and assumed part of the defensive mission.

1/5 Cav continued to defend GOLF.

1/9 Cav Sqdn screened the brigade sector without contact.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

REF ID: A66666

2D BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

None.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 0

WIA 1

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA - 1 (BC)

23 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

2/5 Cav crossed its L-D at 0800 bound for Objective PAR. The mission was to search and destroy enroute to the new objective. The battalion moved artillery fire support ahead of it during the march. Upon seizing the objective, 1/8 Cav relieved 2/5 Cav, and the battalion airlifted back to CROOKS. G 2/5 Cav deployed to CAMP HOLLOWAY as the Brigade reaction force.

2/12 Cav conducted patrols from TEE with no contact.

1/5 Cav patrolled from GOLF with no contact.

1/9 Cav Sqdn continued reconnaissance in sector without contact.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

REMARKS:

2D BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

None.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

ENEMY LOSSES

KIA : 2

None

WIA : 14

MIA : 0

24 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

2/12 Cav moved to seize Objective GREEN and LADIES TEE and then returned to Position TEE. No enemy contact was made.

2/5 Cav moved from CROOKS to CAMP HOLLOWAY.

1/8 Cav seized 18th HOLE and returned to CROOKS with no contact.

The action of the day came when a scout ship of 1/9 Cav Sqn sighted a soldier waving a T-shirt in a jungle clearing. YA945038. After Ascertain-
aining that he was friendly, the scout ship dropped down and picked him up.

The individual, identified as PFC Toby Braveboy, A Company 2/7 Cav had been wounded in the leg and hand and had been evading capture since the night of the 17th when he was separated from his unit. He was evacuated to CAMP HOLLOWAY, where emergency surgery was accomplished, and then further evacuated to a hospital in QUI NHON.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

2D BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

None.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

KIA 0

WIA 2

MIA 0

ENEMY LOSSES

None

25 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

- 1/5 Cav moved from GOLF to CAMP HOLLOWAY.
- 2/12 displaced from TEE to 19th HOLE.
- 1/8 conducted local patrols from CROOKS with still no contact.
- 2/5 continued as the brigade reaction force at CAMP HOLLOWAY.
- 1/9 Cav Sqdn continued to provide reconaissance in the brigade sector, vainly seeking contact with the enemy.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

2D BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No. Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

None

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

None

ENEMY LOSSES

None

26 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

It was all over. The N-V-A division clearly had left the field and escaped back to the Cambodian sanctuary. There was little left for the Cavalry elements to do but move back to base and wait until the enemy made his next move.

1/5 and 2/5 Cav moved by truck from CAMP HOLLOWAY to AN KHE.

1/8 Cav and 2/12 Cav closed on CAMP HOLLOWAY for movement back to base camp.

1/9 Cav Sqdn covered the withdrawal and then closed in to CAMP HOLLOWAY.

2/17 Arty (-) displaced to DUC CO to provide artillery fire support for the A-R-V-N Airborne Brigade in the last phases of that operation.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION:

2D BRIGADE

No Change except:

Detach 2/17 Arty

1/9 Cav Sqdn

DIVISION

No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

None.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES

None

ENEMY LOSSES

None

12. RESULTS: Meaningful assessment of the results of the 35 days of airmobile operations that swept across the rolling plateau country west and south of PLEIKU should be made only in context with the actual or potential involvement of enemy forces, the danger posed, and the ability of A-R-V-N forces to resist that threat.

What were the goals of North Vietnam's invasion army at the outset of its adventure at PLEI ME? How serious was the threat, not only to the installation in the immediate path of that force, but to all of the Central Highlands as well? Could that threat have been stopped without the 1st Air Cavalry Division?

Too, when results of any action or campaign are assessed, statistics must be utilized. In many cases it is the only way results can be shown in a tangible manner and, therefore, readily grasped. So the statistical breakdown showing casualties inflicted upon the enemy, casualties sustained by the 1st Air Cavalry, and the arms and materiel captured from the enemy is included as Inclosure 28.

Even standing alone and without explanation, these statistics depict significant results. The total of confirmed and estimated enemy kills were in excess of any figures previously reported in the Vietnamese conflict.

But there are many intangible elements that cannot be portrayed by statistics. Indeed, the most significant aspects of victory can be discussed only in speculative terms based, of course, upon certain vital statistics and reasonable assumptions.

The battle at PLEI ME was not a haphazard engagement, generated by local enemy forces. Rather it was clearly the outgrowth of a master plan--- a campaign to secure and dominate a major portion of South Vietnam. Entitled the WINTER-SPRING CAMPAIGN of 65-66, the plan reportedly envisioned the establishment of a North Vietnamese Army Corps of three divisions in South Vietnam. The corps was to operate in an area bounded on the north by the 17th Parallel; on the south by a line running generally along the southern boundaries of PLEIKU, PHU BON and PHU YEN Provinces; on the east by the South China Sea; and on the west by the Laotian and Cambodian borders. Control of the corps was to remain within the high command in Hanoi.

Within the frame work of the LONG XUAN (Winter-Spring) CAMPAIGN 66-65, there were three FIELD FRONTS (a designation considered to be interchangeable with the term DIVISION) that were to conduct a series of lesser campaigns. One of these was the TAY NGUYEN (Western Plateau) CAMPAIGN which had as its objective the seizure of National Liberation Front provinces of B1 (KONTUM) and GIA LAI (PLEIKU Province and parts of BINH DINH and PHU BON Provinces). Specific objectives of the TAY NGUYEN CAMPAIGN were the Special Forces camps of PLEI ME, DAK SUT, and DUC CO; the new LE THANH District Headquarters; and PLEIKU.

The strike at PLEI ME was the opening gun of the campaign. The FIELD FRONT selected to control the attack correctly estimated the strength and capability of G-V-N forces in and around PLEIKU. That estimate counted on the II Corps Commander being capable of committing not more than one infantry battle group and an armored cavalry squadron to the relief of the PLEI ME camp. It also estimated that US forces could or would place two battalions in reserve at PLEIKU. Based on this estimate, the FIELD FRONT commander deployed two regiments; more than enough to accomplish the desired mission of destruction of both the relief column and the C-I-D-G Camp.

The lure and the ambush at PLEI ME was the beginning of the struggle for the highlands. Had it been successful, FIELD FRONT's courses of action could either have been to repeat the same tactic on other peripheral outposts---DUC CO, PLEI DJERANG, DAK SUT, DAK TO---or to maintain its initial momentum by moving directly to attack PLEIKU. But whether by the long or the short route, the target remained the same. To control PLEIKU is to control the highlands.

The question then remains: could the threat have been stopped without the 1st Air Cavalry Division? In arriving at the answer, several factors should be considered.

Regardless of potential reinforcement by US forces, the II Corps Commander was obligated to commit a force to the relief of PLEI ME or risk the destruction of the camp.

Without reinforcement, the Corps reserve at PLEIKU could not be committed without endangering the security of that strategic center. Moreover, it is unlikely that A-R-V-N reinforcements, already committed in other sectors of the Corps area, could have been brought to PLEIKU in time to mount an effective relief.

There is strong evidence that, regardless of a US pledge to defend PLEIKU, the available G-V-N forces there would have been committed on 23 October piecemeal and in no greater strength than anticipated and planned for by the N-V-A commanders. In a planning conference the night before the relief column was to be committed, the II Corps Commander indicated he wanted to airlift one Ranger Battalion southeast of PLEI ME, leave one infantry battalion in PLEIKU as a reserve, and move down the road to the camp with only one Ranger Battalion and the armored cavalry squadron. That this concept was developed well after the Commanding General, Field Forces Vietnam, had promised a 1st Air Cavalry Division battalion task force for the security of PLEIKU indicates the existing tactical frame of mind. US advisors at the conference dissuaded him and the relief column was dispatched with sufficient strength to avoid defeat in detail.

After the initial meeting engagement on 23 October between the armored task force and the North Vietnamese 32d Regiment, there was more than a little reluctance on the part of the TF commander to get his column rolling toward PLEI ME. It was only after the guarantee of fire support from the 1st Air Cav artillery units and the actual placement of an artillery liaison party from the 1st Cav artillery in the column that the task force once again got moving to the C-I-D-G camp.

On 26 October, when the task force began a sweep outside the PLEI ME camp and was struck hard by the 33d Regiment, it again was the fire power of the 1st Brigade's artillery units at HOMECOMING and PUNT that saved the force from a severe mauling.

These were factors involved in the immediate defense of PLEIKU and the relief of PLEI ME. Despite the casualties taken by the N-V-A regiments at the ambush site and at the Special Forces camp, both units withdrew in order and as tactically cohesive and effective units. The danger to PLEIKU was only temporarily allayed.

The pursuit of the North Vietnamese 33d Regiment by the battalions of the 1st Brigade and the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry introduced the enemy to a new concept in warfare. His retreat from PLEI ME to CHU PONG must surely have been a nightmare. The enemy was routed from his hiding places, hounded and pursued, fragmented and destroyed in terrain he had believed would be his protector. Certainly nothing in the enemy's background or training had prepared him to cope with the full effects of an unleashed airmobile pursuit.

The actions of the 3d Brigade in the CHU PONG-IA DRANG complex revealed to the North Vietnamese Army how individual combat skills and massive supporting fire could be used to achieve an objective. The combined combat power brought to bear on the newly-infiltrated 66th Regiment and the remnants of the 33d Regiment resulted, as the statistics clearly indicate, the near annihilation of both regiments.

This left the 32d Regiment and, although the A-R-V-N Airborne Brigade made the infantry contact, it again was the Cavalry's artillery that furnished the real killing blows. When the regiment finally reached its Cambodian sanctuary, it had not more than 1,000 able-bodied men remaining, making it something less than an effective regiment.

In sum, then, the 1st Air Cavalry Division achieved two things during the PLEIKU Campaign. It countered the immediate threat to PLEIKU, and it seriously disrupted the enemy's longer-range plans for the highlands.

The results of the campaign were well summed up in the statement made by the Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara when he visited the 1st Cavalry base at AN KHE, on 29 November 1965. He termed the total campaign an "unparalleled achievement" and declared that there would be "more air cavalry divisions."

Many fruits of victory or defeat are psychological in nature. The victory achieved at PLEI ME has had the noticeable effect, at least in PLEIKU Province, of stimulating an optimistic attitude toward the struggle. After the VIET CONG raid on U-S/G-V-N installations in PLEIKU in February, and the attacks on Special Forces camps throughout the year, culminating in the regimental-sized seige and ambush at DUC CO in August, there was little cause for optimism anywhere.

US advisors too have become more optimistic, not so much about the eventual defeat of the VIET CONG, but that the A-R-V-N commanders will be more receptive concerning adoption of concepts that heretofore have been belittled or rejected. For example, advisors with the A-R-V-N Airborne Brigade are confident that that the dramatic demonstration of what close support artillery can do for infantry will go far to convince the brigade of the desirability of training officer forward observers (at the time of the engagement, not a single officer F-0 was assigned to any of the 32 rifle companies in the A-R-V-N Airborne Brigade).

Conversely, what was the impact of the defeat upon the North Vietnamese forces? The invasion army of North Vietnam found itself beaten in land combat for the first time in 15 years and by an Army that its propagandists claimed was weak, ineffective and decadent. Beyond these points, the total impact can be only a matter of sheer speculation or fond assumption.

It perhaps suffices to assume that since victory for the U-S/G-V-N forces has brought some joy and optimism to that side, then, assuredly, defeat must have brought some measure of despair and pessimism to the enemy.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

1. CASUALTIES INFLICTED UPON THE ENEMY (By Major Unit)

	1st Bde 23		3d Bde 10		2d Bde 21		1/9 Cav* 23		TOTALS
	Oct-9	Nov	Nov-20	Nov	Nov-26	Nov	Oct-26	Nov	
VC(NVA)	216		1,224		7		72		1,519
KIA (BC)									
VC(NVA)	610		1,388		20		24		2,042
KIA (EST)									
TOTAL KIA	826		2,612		27		96		3,561
VC (NVA)									
WIA (EST)	780		251		0		147		1,178
VC(NVA)									
CAPTIVES	138		19		20		0		157

*Denotes period when cavalry squadron operated directly under divisional control and casualties were not figured in brigade totals.

2. CASUALTIES SUSTAINED BY 1ST AIR CAVALRY UNITS (By major unit)*

	1st Brigade	3d Brigade	2d Brigade	TOTALS
KIA	57	239	4**	300
WIA	192	307	25*	524
MIA	0	4	0	4

*Includes 1/9 Cav Sqdn Casualties.

**2 killed and 11 wounded by premature burst of defective mortar round.

3. ARMS AND MATERIEL CAPTURED FROM THE ENEMY (By Major Unit)*

	1st Brigade	3d Brigade	2d Brigade	TOTALS
Individual Weapons	127	768**	2	897**
Crew Served Weapons	26	100	0	126
Materiel	#	#	#	#

*As noted in Paragraph 8, weapons captured during this period primarily were of Chinese Communist manufacture, were of good quality and were well maintained. Sheer weight of numbers precludes detailed listing of all captured arms.

**400 weapons were destroyed in place in L-Z X-RAY and L-Z ALBANY due to the inability to evacuate them. A similar fate befell substantial amounts of ammunition and grenades.

#During the campaign a N-V-A hospital was captured along with \$40,000 of surgical equipment and supplies. Most of the supplies were turned over to the PLEIKU Hospital, or to the division-sponsored refugee dispensary at AN KHE.

#Nearly 300 pounds of enemy documents, many of them bearing "top secret" labels, were captured and processed through divisional and II Corps intelligence channels, and about 30 pounds were evacuated to higher headquarters.

#Substantial quantities of ammunition and grenades were captured and either evacuated or destroyed. Following is a representative listing of materiel losses sustained by the enemy during the campaign:

250,000 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition, linked and individual rounds.
 500 grenades, primarily CHICOM potato mashers.
 114 rounds of 82mm mortar ammo
 45 rounds of 81mm mortar ammo
 85 rounds of 75mm recoilless rifle ammo
 40 rounds 40mm rocket launcher ammo

#A quantity of individual field equipment was captured during the campaign. But materiel such as packs, shovels, picks, rain jackets, eating utensils, other such items quickly found its way into the hands of the troops as war souvenirs.

(Inclosure 28 to Combat Operations After Action Report)

13. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

a. General. The defeat administered to the enemy forces in the PLEIKU campaign was the direct result of combat power, precisely and overwhelmingly applied. Behind that combat power, however, lay administrative and logistical planning that began three years ago when this airmobile concept began its testing. It was culminated with the successful support of combat forces in the campaign.

In fact, were it not that the logistical plans were so well developed and prepared for any contingency, the magnitude of supplying the division solely by means of air lines of communication could have slowed or halted the offensive machine. That this division not only could transport its combat elements over distances of more than 65 kilometers at times, but could supply them with food, water, fuel and ammunition, indicates the adequacy of the logistical organization and planning.

(1) Adverse situations and solutions.

(a) The bulk of supplies delivered by Air Force aircraft during the early periods of the A-L-O-C were received on large pallets with which organic mechanical handling equipment was unable to cope. Logistic bases were notified that all supplies must be placed on 4-by-4 pallets prior to loading on Air Force 463L pallets. However, this procedure was not effective until the late stages of the A-L-O-C.

(b) Since the A-L-O-C terminus was at NEW PLEIKU Airfield, supplies had to be off-loaded, palletized and hauled by road to CAMP HOLLOWAY where the division's combat service support units were located, a distance of approximately 7 miles (by road). This meant double handling of all supplies received by air---6.5 million pounds total. A-R-V-N and Navy-leased trucks were requested to assist in transporting supplies from one field to the other. They responded and, without their cooperation, the division would have been hard pressed to move this massive amount of supplies.

(c) Special coordination effected. Coordination was made with II Corps Headquarters on use of A-R-V-N trucks to move supplies. Coordination was made with the 315th Air Division on Air Force aircraft landing at forward landing zones such as at CATECKA PLANTATION and at DUC CO. The Commanding Officer of NEW PLEIKU Airfield was contacted for permission to use that site for sling-loading of 500-gallon fuel bags. Permission from the Commanding Officer, CAMP HOLLOWAY, was obtained to use his facilities for the division's forward support element operations, as well as for use by the combat elements as a staging area. The amount of coordination required to support the campaign points up the need for divisional personnel to relieve the brigade commander of all but tactical duties.

(2) Maintenance. The maintenance of aircraft during the PLEIKU Campaign merits comment, not only because of the superb job that was performed, but because the successful accomplishment of the maintenance mission during that campaign proved, as much as anything, that the concept of air mobility was a success. Aircraft that sit on the ground because of maintenance problems do not provide mobility. It is noteworthy then that division maintenance personnel were actually putting into the air more mission-ready aircraft than were being dead-lined for combat, operational or maintenance reasons. During the peak operational period of 14-19 November, when the division was severely pushing its aviation resources in providing logistical resupply, maintenance was proving that it could meet the challenge.

But one point should be made at this juncture. This maintenance was performed with existing stocks of P-L-L and A-S-L repair parts, and the rate of fill of repair parts did not keep up with demands during this period. Had the operations continued on for any appreciable period of time with the same degree of intensity, both ground and aircraft maintenance could not have met unit demands.

(3) Combat loads appeared to be adequate, but unit commanders are persistent in their recommendation for a pre-filled, disposable M-16 magazine. Small unit after-action reports are replete with references to the potential danger that is courted when rifle-men attempt to re-charge magazines during heated engagements. Insofar as aerial resupply of disposable magazine in lieu of loose rounds is concerned, there would be a slight increase in bulk, but not enough to be a significant logistical factor.

(4) Medical services as planned by the division were more than adequate, as were medical evacuation facilities. During sharp engagements when friendly casualties were heavier, helicopters from the division's lift battalions were utilized extensively for evacuation. This, however, is a planned adjunct to the evacuation capability. The division's tactical S-O-P, indeed, the airmobile concept requires extensive use of lift aircraft for evacuation as well as logistical back-haul. The reaction time for medical evacuation by the air ambulance platoon was sometimes increased during the initial stages of airmobile assaults due to lack of familiarity by medical evacuation pilots with the pick-up and landing zones being used by specific units. It was found by having air ambulance ships follow major troop lift formations during initial assaults, pilots were quickly oriented and able to provide speedy evacuation to the initial assault elements during that critical period.

X (5) Casualty reporting as a whole was excellent, but difficulties were met when the division operated at extended distances and when the lines of communication were overburdened. This problem was overcome by the use of air couriers and by placing personnel from the AG Casualty Reporting Section directly with the brigades. The problem since has been more fully resolved by establishing a secure Radio-Teletype station at division rear casualty reporting. The station operates on the D-7 Administrative/Logistics net. The forward casualty reporting teams, located with the forward support element at brigade, have ready access to this secure communications system.

14. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUES: Because of the uniqueness of the initial contact between a US airmobile force and North Vietnamese regular army units, virtually every phase of the campaign and every facet of combat movement, combat support and administrative support represented a new technique in this particular environment. Following are the ones that would seem most significant.

a. Throughout the campaign, aerial fire support was used to repulse enemy attacks at night. In most instances no prominent terrain feature existed that could be used as a reference to mark the friendly positions. The use of C-ration cans, ammo boxes or artillery cannisters filled with sand and saturated with fuel provided a simple method of marking the trace of friendly positions. The containers were emplaced around the perimeter and ignited on order by using a wire to ignite a trip flare positioned over the container. The necessary fuel was delivered to the unit when it was resupplied at its night location.

b. The technique of vectoring of aerial rocket artillery was refined during the campaign. The most effective procedure developed was to select a distinct terrain feature and give the pilot an azimuth and direction from that location. In the absence of distinct terrain features, smoke grenades were used. Similarly, the night marking techniques used for tactical air also were employed in vectoring aerial artillery ships.

c. The use of airmobile techniques in providing close, continuous artillery support in mass to widely separated infantry units, and without regard to conventional terrain considerations, received and passed the combat test. In connection with the use of artillery, a number of techniques were developed that merit discussion.

(1) Simultaneous ground and aerial observation. In rugged or heavily wooded terrain ground observers frequently encounter difficulty in locating and adjusting the initial rounds. The aerial observer cannot always see the target. If both observers are monitoring the same radio frequency, desired results are most efficiently obtained by combining the capabilities of both observers. The aerial observer "walks in" the adjusting fires until the ground observer can assume control for the close-in-adjustment.

(2) Adjustment of illumination. Frequently close-in defensive fires must be adjusted under illuminating rounds. A technique was developed to greatly reduce the expenditure of illuminating and HE marking rounds. The observer requests and adjusts the illumination in the normal manner except that he announces "best light" to the Fire Direction Center when the round best illuminates the target. The F-D-C controls the firing so the adjusting rounds impact at the time previously determined to be the "best light".

(3) Artillery in support of ground movement. During this campaign this technique was re-discovered. Operations revealed the potential of artillery in dispersing or preventing possible ambushes and assisting personnel to maintain direction while moving through dense terrain. The use of artillery fires to probe suspected enemy positions permits friendly forces to gain definite intelligence with minimum exposure to personnel. For units moving through dense jungle the use of air bursts was helpful in maintaining a "fix" on location and direction.

(4) The importance of having mutually supporting artillery positions became evident during this campaign when two artillery emplacements were attached simultaneously. When an emplacement is surrounded by dense vegetation the 105mm howitzer cannot be used in the direct fire role without causing casualties to troops on the perimeter. On several occasions in order to attain proper mutual support, it was necessary to organize an artillery battalion into four "skinny" batteries instead of the customary three.

d. Deceptive air reconnaissance. Excessive reconnaissance of a proposed landing zone is a sure signal to the enemy. One technique used with apparent success was to fly past the area of interest on a high pass, to a distance of 5-to-10 kilometers and then return past the area at a low altitude, from a different direction.

e. Reconnaissance by fire. Particularly during the pursuit of the 33d N-V-A Regiment from PLEI ME to CHU PONG it was found that reconnaissance-by-fire in open or semi-vegetated areas is a valuable air cavalry technique. Scout helicopters, during one period, initiated recon-by-fire in 105 instances, and received return fire from the ground 37 times. These areas were then fixed and provided lucrative targets for aerial artillery and tactical air strikes, if not for infantry maneuver elements operating in the area. The ability to flush out hidden enemy elements was a large factor in the fragmentation and destruction of the 33d Regiment. A refinement of this technique put the cavalry squadron's riflemen aloft in an "Eagle Flight" or airborne reaction force able to respond at once when the scouts found a target. The capture of the N-V-A hospital on 1 November was a prime example of this technique.

f. Reconnaissance in force. This technique, employed by the division's sky cavalry squadron, was particularly effective on several occasions during the campaign. Most noteworthy was the action on 3 November on the Cambodian border. When combined with an instantly-responsive airmobile infantry reaction force, the technique demonstrated its worth beyond question. During the action of 3 November, it was also proved that a perimeter under fire at night could be reinforced by helicopters. This was done by means of violent fire from the perimeter itself, along with close-in (50 meters) rocket fires from aerial rocket ships just prior to the setting down of lift ships. The violence of the fires prevented the enemy from reacting, not only when the lift ships were unloading troops, but while they were loading wounded for a medical evacuation back-haul.

g. Counter-sniper action. Pre-planned, systematic small-arms fires by personnel on the F-E-B-A, with emphasis on saturation of trees in bushes in the fire zone had the salutary effect of killing tree-climbing snipers and discouraging infiltrators, particularly when the fires were delivered at first light. Additionally, a "mad minute" can aid in prematurely triggering enemy assaults, thus rendering them more vulnerable to defensive fires.

h. Target detection and destruction. Operations by the division in the PLEIKU area refined a previously tested technique of detecting and reacting to enemy targets of opportunity. The D-T-O-C received direct S-L-A-R and infra-red (I-R) reports from the aerial surveillance and target acquisition platoon (OV-1 Mohawk) and U-S-A-F sources, plus reports from the Radio Research Unit. These reports were evaluated immediately and were reacted to as follows:

(1) Information on any target confirmed in the vicinity of maneuver elements was passed on to the controlling brigade headquarters. The brigade reacted by maneuvering forces to engage the target, by firing artillery, by directing supporting tactical air strikes, or by any combination of these actions.

(2) If a target was of no immediate threat to maneuver elements, the D-T-O-C recorded the target for strike by close air support aircraft which had run out of stay-time over the tactical zone. If within range, it also was scheduled for H&I artillery fires. During the period 18-22 November, for example, 22 targets were recorded. Thirteen of these were engaged by T-A-C air resulting in four secondary explosions in addition to the destruction of military structures. On four occasions the aircraft drew return ground fire. This technique is ideal for use in sparsely populated areas, which allow freedom in the use of tactical air and artillery.

i. Tree climbing techniques. During the campaign many units placed infantry and artillery observers in trees to improve observation. Although tree climbers work fine, few are available in a tactical zone, and so an expedient was devised. Two short lengths of rope were used. One section was passed around the tree and held in each hand. The second length was tied to each boot after being passed around the trunk, leaving about 12-20 inches between the boots. By using the two ropes in conjunction with the knees, even inexperienced climbers could easily negotiate a tall tree.

15. ADVISOR/COMMANDER ANALYSIS:

a. Lessons learned.

(1) Many friendly casualties have been caused by punji stakes; by snipers firing from trees; and by lead elements tripping booby traps. The use of two-man teams operating on the "buddy" system greatly reduced the occurrence of these incidents. One man watches primarily for punji stakes and booby traps, while his buddy searches the trees and the area to the front and flanks for snipers.

(2) Search and destroy operations where the enemy and innocent civilians are intermingled continues to present problems. If an operation is imminent, women and children normally will hide in holes for protection against artillery and small arms. In areas where it is suspected that innocent personnel are involved, a recommended solution is to have Vietnamese interpreters call into holes before clearing them. Smoke and/or C-S is effective in clearing holes and tunnels, where small arms are not particularly suited.

(3) Experience indicates that troop landings for search and destroy operations should begin, when feasible, on high ground and extend toward blocking forces located at the base of the hills. The downward movement preserves the strength of personnel, allows for complete coverage of the terrain and prevents the enemy from using the hills as an escape area.

(4) Pathfinders should always be included in the initial lifts into landing zones to assume responsibility for navigational assistance and L-Z control. The pathfinders are particularly useful in directing the aircraft into and out of the L-Z between enemy and friendly fires, both during daylight hours and in darkness. The pathfinders are equipped with beacons to assist in night resupply and are also used as a reference for U-S-A-F flare ships in support of night tactical operations.

(5) Despite the fact that many aircraft receive hits by enemy ground fire when flying at low altitudes, experience indicates that there are times when the best chance to successfully complete a mission is when assault altitude (50 feet absolute or lower) is used. The situations which favor the use of assault altitude are:

(a) When weather limits altitude to less than 2,000 feet absolute height.

(b) Minimum restriction to friendly support fire is desired.

(c) Maximum surprise is required.

(d) Vector control aircraft are available.

(6) When aircraft from many units must be pooled to execute a mass lift as well as several ancillary missions, it is best to execute a mass lift initially and then allow specific units to revert to their separate missions. Except when cogent reasons dictate contrary actions, it is especially important that air assault be accomplished by a minimum number of multiple lifts, scheduled into the landing zone at the maximum rate that the L-Z will accommodate. These procedures greatly reduce the exposure time of aircraft and assure placing maximum combat power on the L-Z in the minimum time, while providing the enemy with the least chance to react to the landing.

(7) Density altitudes in excess of 3,000 feet reduce considerably the maximum allowable loads. For example, a CH-47 departing AN KHE (1,500 feet) to QUI NHON (sea level) can safely transport 9,000 pounds. The same aircraft departing AN KHE to PLEIKU (2,500 feet) can safely transport only 7,000 pounds. All aircraft loads for divisional aircraft had to be recomputed for each area of operations and the information disseminated. This became a particular problem when UH-1D loads

were recomputed, reducing the infantry loads from seven to five combat troops.

(8) Time is the essence when helicopters are loading or unloading under enemy fire. Vehicles which are loaded in a secure area and are destined for a "hot" landing zone, should be backed into the aircraft for a speedy exit. Vehicles picked up at a "hot" pick-up zone should be driven on forwards for speedy loading.

(9) The importance of having supplies pre-palletized cannot be over-emphasized. For example, the normal loading time for 200 rounds of 105mm howitzer ammunition into a CH-47 was about one hour. The same load on 4-by-4 pallets could have been loaded internally in 20 minutes. The same load in a cargo net, could have been moved in minutes when slung externally. Because both UH-1D and CH-47 aircraft can sling load, the pre-palletizing is limited to 1,200 pounds per pallet, thus allowing flexibility in scheduling retail deliveries to smaller units.

b. Civil Affairs. The 1st Air Cavalry Division, since arriving in the Republic of Vietnam, has had a firm policy of treating civil affairs/civic action as a vital adjunct to combat actions. The PLEIKU Campaign was no exception to this standing procedure. All division, brigade and battalion operation plans and orders contained civil affairs annexes that spelled out in detail all available intelligence concerning the indigent population, in addition to plans for handling the people affected by combat actions.

Approximately 2,700 refugees from VC dominated villages were taken to the new LE THANH District Headquarters, where a new village had been established. This movement, from four locations and, in many cases, with farm animals and household goods, required a total of 40 sorties by CH-47 helicopters. Food and clothing was drawn by the division from United States Operations Mission and distributed at the refugee camp. In addition, 600 other residents of PLEIKU Province were given medical assistance at daily sick calls and several thousand pounds of rice that had been captured from the enemy were distributed to the hungry. The medical supplies captured at the N-V-A hospital were in turn given to the hospital in PLEIKU and the dispensary in AN KHE.

c. Psychological Warfare. The division made extensive use of psy war teams attached to the division or made available through II Corps. In one case, the cavalry squadron followed up a combat action with a leaflet drop within hours of initial contact. Loudspeaker systems, mounted on helicopters, were utilized urging the enemy to give up. In many cases the voices were provided by surrendered N-V-A personnel.

16. SUMMARY. During the period 23 October to 25 November 1965, elements of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) supported by U-S-A-F and other US Army Units and in cooperation with A-R-V-N forces, conducted a highly successful campaign against major enemy forces in PLEIKU Province. This campaign destroyed major elements of three N-V-A regiments and had the strategic importance of interrupting the planned future operation of the N-V-A in the central highland region of Vietnam.

The PLEIKU Campaign was the first real combat test of the First Team" as a unit, and for the airmobile concept. The results clearly indicate that both came through with flying colors.