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 By **AB/NARA** Date **11/27/02**

*Attacks on LZ IKE  
 17-20 June 1969*

*June 1969*

1. (G) INTRODUCTION: During the nights of 17-18 and 19-20, the 2d Battalion 5th Cav, 1st Cav Div, in the defense of its forward fire base, LZ TEE (XT338719), became engaged in close heavy combat with large sapper and infantry elements of the 1st NVA Division. This report records the principal events and results of these two actions and attempts to define some of the lessons learned.

2. (G) GENERAL:

a. Influencing Factors:

(1) Division Mission: At the time of the attacks, the 1st Cav Div had all battalions deployed in a band of mutually supporting fire bases across the southern edge of War Zone C. The fire bases extended from LZ ST BARBARA (XT 274680) on the west and just north of NHI RA DEN to LZs LORI (XT 607621) and BETTY (XT 666745) to the east of the Saigon river. The Division mission, which was analogous to a Corps Covering Force mission, was to detect, delay/disorganize, and, to the extent possible, defeat the enemy forces north of this line as they attempted to infiltrate south towards the Saigon-Lang Binh-Binh Hoa complex. Major elements of the 1st and 7th NVA had been identified in the area between the line of bases and the Cambodian border to the north.

(2) 2-5 Cav Mission: On 20 April, 1969, the 2-5 Cav combat assaulted into the area NE of LZ ST BARBARA (XT 338719) with the mission of establishing a forward fire base (LZ IKE). The location of LZ IKE was selected in response to usually reliable intelligence which indicated that a regimental size base area was located six to eight kilometers to the northeast. The LZ was positioned northeast of the RACH SANE DOI valley, a known infiltration route to the Saigon river corridor. The battalion mission was to interdict all the movement through the area

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and to find and destroy the NVA units and base camps.

(3) Terrain and Weather: The LZ is centered in a cleared area 400 x 300 meters (TAR A). The distance between the barn and the thick jungle woodline ranges between 175 and 200 meters all the way around the LZ. However, the eastern and northwestern side of the clearing contains a great deal of shrubbery, small bamboo clumps and miscellaneous trees up to a point 75 meters from the barn. The weather during the period was warm and cloudy. The percent of illumination on the two nights was 17% and 11% respectively. It rained during the late afternoon of both days prior to the attacks but not enough to interfere with foot movement in the area.

(4) Opposing Forces:

(a) Enemy: The prisoners captured after the sniper attack on 18 June indicated that the 1st and 2d Companies of the 428 Snapper Battalion, 1st NVA Division were involved in that attack. Prisoner interrogation after the big ground attack on 20 June indicated that the 2d Battalion, 18R Regiment, the H-12 unit of the 950 Regiment and supporting elements of the 1st NVA Division Rocket Artillery ~~units~~ executed that attack.

(b) Friendly: 2-5 Cav had five line companies in the field during this period. B and C Company were conducting combined operations to execute a series of ARC LIGHT strikes in the vicinity of VT337280. The companies were not within supporting distance of LZ IKE. Company A was conducting reconnaissance in force and trail interdiction operations in the same general vicinity (VT 388780) and was within mutual supporting distance of B and C Company. LZ IKE was defended by D Company and E Company (Support) Company. The fire base housed A Battery, 1-77 Artillery and the Battalion Tactical Operations Center.

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(c) Co D, 2<sup>nd</sup> Div had a present for duty strength on 17 June of 91 men (including attachments); Company E had a present for duty strength of 69 men on the same day. Co D was organized into three rifle platoons and a company CP. Each rifle platoon had three M-60 MGs (one per squad) and the standard TO&E equipment. E Co used their Recon Platoon (with 3 M-60 MGs) on the bunkers and the mortar platoon manned four 81mm mortars. One 50 caliber machinegun was used as part of the base defense and <sup>was</sup> manned by personnel from the rifle company. Adequate ammunition for all weapons was prepositioned in the bunkers and mortar pits.

(d) Non-organic fire support for the LZ included four batteries of tube artillery: A/2-32 Arty (175mm - 8"), A/2-19 Arty (105mm), and 1/B/1-30 Arty (155mm) at LZ ST BARBARA (XT 274680); C/2-19 Arty (105mm) and 2/B/1-30 Arty (155mm) at LZ GRANT (XT 387623). Additionally, one battery of aerial rocket artillery (A/2-20 Arty) was located at TAY NIGH. Spooky, Moonshine and YAG AIR were also available on the normal troops in contact basis.

b. Chronological Sequence of Events - LZ IKE had been opened <sup>for</sup> seven weeks; Co D was in its second day on the LZ on 17 June 1969.

17-18 June (TAB B)

171700H - CO, Co D (Base Defense Company) dispatched four LP patrols composed of 12 personnel each. Patrols were to move to the designated LP locations (See TAB B for LP locations) and then continue forward 200 meters. At this point they executed a clover-leaf and returned, dropping off the six man LP as they passed through the LP/OP positions. The LPs had instructions to dig in and did so. (NOTE: During the 60 days the base had been opened so many LPs had gone out that several were now in the

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habit of using the old LP holes).

- 172000H - A program of alternately firing 81mm mortar and artillery illumination at irregular intervals began.
- 172300H - AN/PPS-5 radar picked up movement 450m NW of the LZ. The movement appeared to be moving away from the perimeter and was located at a range of 500m at 172355H.
- 172400H - Defensive perimeter brought to 100% alert. This alert was not in response to the radar target but was previously planned and was to be the third night in a row of 100% alert between 2400 and 0400. The alert was ordered by the Battalion CO in response to an intelligence build-up which indicated the probability of an attack during this period.
- 180150H - Guard on bkr #14 (B Company) (BFCI TAB B) heard wire cutters being used in front of his position. He requested illumination and spotted one sapper cutting the inner wire 30 meters to his front. (See ① on sketch at TAB B). He requested and received permission to engage the target with SA.
- 180150H - As bkr #14 engaged with M-60 and M-16 fire, the enemy opened fire with mortars, impacting rounds on the berm around bkr #3, #4, #5. Simultaneously, sappers blew the inner wire in front of bkr #14 and attempted to crawl a large force through the opening. The first three sappers were killed immediately and the remainder pinned down.
- 180510H - Concurrent with the discovery of the sapper element on the east side, 30 sappers were spotted 30 meters in front of bkr #4. They blew the inner wire immediately. Two sappers had already crawled up to the berm between Bunkers #3 and #4 and were seen for the first time when they rose up and began throwing C-4.

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grenades into the perimeter. (There were 15 grenade caps found on top of the base the next morning).

180155H - Bunker #4 was knocked out with one 60mm mortar round and one Chinese grenade. Bunkers #3 and #5 were neutralized at the same time. Friendly casualties in these bunkers were three KIA and six MIA. One of the Chinese grenades was thrown inside the 1st Platoon OP, wounding the Platoon Leader and five additional MIA.

180200H - Cpt DeMay, CO, Co B, deployed one squad from 2d and 3d platoon respectively to the first platoon area to restore the perimeter and drive out the sappers. The sappers pulled back after engaging in a strong fire fight with the counter attacking squads. (NOTE: The company commander estimates that there was a period of 10 minutes after bunkers #3, #4, and #5 were neutralized in which the sapper force could have entered the perimeter with little resistance. Friendly fire in this sector had died down to a trickle. The 60mm mortar rounds were still landing in this area but not in a heavy enough volume to prevent their movement. Apparently, this group of sappers had not planned to penetrate the perimeter). When the two squads arrived, the sappers began pulling back to the inner wire taking their wounded and dead with them. The situation in this area then stabilized into a fire fight.

180220H - (approx) The LPs made it back into the perimeter (Note: Although SPOCKY had been on station for 15 minutes, he could not expand because the four LPs were still out. The presence of the LPs outside the wire also restricted the use of direct fire

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and special operations of the auxiliary battery).

191700 - [Illegible text]

191710 - [Illegible text]

191720 - [Illegible text]

191730 - [Illegible text]

191740 - [Illegible text]

191750 - [Illegible text]

191760 - [Illegible text]

191770 - [Illegible text]

191780 - [Illegible text]

191790 - [Illegible text]

191800 - [Illegible text]

191810 - [Illegible text]

191820 - [Illegible text]

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191890 - [Illegible text]

191900 - [Illegible text]

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191920 - [Illegible text]

191930 - [Illegible text]

191940 - [Illegible text]

191950 - [Illegible text]

191960 - [Illegible text]

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the clearing. (Note: Six of the seven IRs killed and 11 of the 13 wounded resulted from these 107mm rockets).

200100H - The heavy enemy preparation began to lift and three groups of infantry were observed, one of 70-100 personnel on the NW woodline (ARTS W1 on sketch of TAG 0), one of the 75 personnel on the NE woodline (ARTS W2), and the third of 60-75 personnel on the east side (ARTS W3). One 5mm R/R position had been dug in at the outer wire adjacent to the Axis #1 (see ① on sketch of TAG 0).

200100H - Axis #2 (Main Attack) - Bunker #5 was unoccupied and bunker #1 had received a direct hit from a 107mm rocket, wounding all four of the occupants. When the enemy was first sighted they were moving forward in a tight group on the northwest side of the log pad. They could not be engaged with WEAP FIVE because the LPs were still out. The enemy force was initially engaged as they were even with the log pad. Extensive bazooka and mortars were used to breach the wire in several places and the enemy charge carried them to the berm line in front of bunkers #5 and #3. The enemy was stopped cold at this point. Five or six got inside the area behind the bunkers #1 and #5. One was engaged and killed in hand to hand combat by one of the wounded personnel from bunker #1. A 50 Cal machinegun mounted on bunker #3 placed very effective fire on the main enemy force and was primarily responsible for stopping them at the berm. At 200120H the LPs finally got back inside the perimeter by making a dash across the log pad and through the gate firing as they ran. All made it safely. The arrival lifted the re-

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restriction on the use of supporting fire which had prevented the full use of ARA, SPOKY and other artillery. As soon as the LPs arrived inside the perimeter, the acting company commander, LT O'Connor, organized them into a reserve and dispatched them to retake the berm line around bunker #1. By 2000H this area stabilised into a heavy exchange of fire as the enemy attempted to retrieve his wounded and dead and pull back. The overwhelming fire power brought to bear on his exposed personnel. After the LPs cleared the axis, forced him to pull back or perish on the spot. AXIS #2 - The 7 personnel on this axis were spotted and engaged with 81, M-79 and flame mortar as soon as they moved out of the woodline. They managed to blow a hole in the outer wire but were immediately pinned down. They made no more forward progress during the rest of the action. Several small groups were spotted attempting to slide laterally across the front between the inner and outer wire in an attempt to join the more successful personnel on AXIS #1. Very few of them made it and most were found the next morning lying between the wires.

AXIS #3 - This group made less progress than either of the other two. The enemy when initially spotted was estimated at 60-75 personnel and was located outside the outer wire. They breached the outer wire but never got as far as the inner wire. They were taken under heavy small arms, M-79 and machinegun fire. This axis also contained many of the fire support weapons used to support the assault. A 57mm R/A position had been placed just behind the LP and in front of the outer wire at this location. Additionally, two RPV machinegun positions were

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placed to support this axis. At least two of the 107mm rockets were fired from this area.

200200H - SPOOKY, AR4, and organics continued to engage the area as the enemy attempted to police the battle field. Three M1 Cal machineguns engaged the support helicopters 300 meters north of the LZ. All three were suppressed by air to ground fire.

200620H - Co A, 2-7 Cav airlifted into LZ TXR to assist in the search of the battle field.

Friendly losses: 7 US KIA and 29 WIA.

Enemy losses: 20 NVA KIA, 5 NVA WIA (PWS) and 3 RPV MW.  
5 B-41 R/LA, 5 B-40 R/LA, 23 AK 47s, 8 SKS rifles, 27,62 pistols, 10 57mm RR rounds, 27 B-41 rounds, 32 B-40 rounds, 2,150 AK-47 rounds, 400 chicom grenades, 42 satchel charges, 17 handlaow Torpedoes, and 6 Chicom claymores.

### 3. (C) CONCLUSION:

#### a. Observations:

Certain facts stand out concerning the two actions, and form the basis for possible lessons learned.

(1) The enemy Sapper attack on the morning of the 18th was a reconnaissance action to determine the weak spots in the LZ defenses.

(2) The main effort attacked the weak spots found by the Sappers (i.e. east side opposite bkr #14 and the north side opposite bkrs #3, #4, #5).

(3) On both occasions, the majority of the enemy force was passed through the LZ screen without detection. In fact, the enemy was



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100% alert. the radar was operational and manned, and everyone expected an attack. The second night, the enemy prepared to move a 600 man force into attack positions, to set up 25 to 30 107mm rockets and to emplace his supporting crew served weapons all of these around a small clearing only 400 meters in diameter--and he was not detected. It was obvious after the first attack that the LP system was ineffective and a detriment to the defense, yet the same system was employed on the night of the 19th of June. An obvious lesson was not learned here.

(b) RECOMMENDATIONS:

1 A long, hard look needs to be taken at the bettelien policy of utilizing LPs and requiring them to dig in. There are several benefits to the system of the 12 man patrols dropping off a six man team after sweeping the area forward of the LP position. Nevertheless their system is obviously ineffective either because of the technique itself or because of the motivation of the personnel executing it, or possibly both.

2 Specifically, consideration should be given to sending the LPs out after dark, requiring them to move to their designated location by an indirect route requiring them to move to new positions during the night, and to move further out than the edge of the clearing. The real value of having them dig in versus moving should be re-examined. If the LPs do their job properly they will not have to be protected from the friendly fires from the perimeter.

(2) SAPPERS ARE PENETRATING THE CONCERTINA BY CRAWLING UNDERNEATH.

(a) DISCUSSION: The sappers, once again, crawled up to our wire, simply lifted it up, propped it on short bamboo stakes, and moved underneath to continue with their mission.

(b) RECOMMENDATION: Stake the wire down.

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(3) FAILURE TO LEVEL THE GROUND AROUND THE PERIMETER.

(a) DISCUSSION: The area between bunkers 13, 14, and 15 and the woodline was covered with piles of brush, fallen trees and small dirt mounds, so much so that 50 percent of the area beyond the inner wire <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ dead space to direct fire and observation from the berm. The enemy took advantage of this approach in both attacks.

(b) RECOMMENDATION: The solution is obvious and does not represent a lesson learned so much as a requirement for emphasis on the clearing of fields of fire and observation. A great deal of work in this area could have been done with hand tools and the known labor available on the LZ.

(4) FAILURE TO BURY CLAYMORE AND COMMO WIRES.

(a) DISCUSSION: The first night the sappers cut the claymore wires they encountered. The second night the rocket and mortar fragments cut a large number of claymore wires not to mention all of the telephone wires to the base defense GP.

(b) RECOMMENDATION: The LZ had been open for two months, plenty of time to have buried the wires concerned. The Company Commander started a program of burying the claymore wires after the sapper attack but had not implemented it by the night of the second attack.

(5) MALFUNCTION OF WEAPONS BECAUSE OF DIRTY AMMUNITION.

(a) DISCUSSION: Both of the M-60 machineguns in the third platoon were inoperative 15 minutes after the fight started on the second night. LT O'Connor, the acting company commander of D Co after the second attack, estimated that five of his nine M-60 machineguns and an unknown number of M-16s malfunctioned because of dirty ammunition. It was not failure to clean the ammunition before the fight, but rather, in the case of the machineguns, not using a loader and consequently

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dropping and dragging the ammunition to the rear during firing and changing positions. The natural tendency for the riflemen is to drop the M-16 magazines on the ground when they are empty. The riflemen found themselves reloading magazines picked up out of the sand as the fight progressed. The dirty magazines, of course, caused malfunctions.

(b) RECOMMENDATION: This is a training problem and should be addressed by the company commander as such.

(6) FAILURE TO REORGANIZE AFTER SUSTAINING CASUALTIES.

(a) DISCUSSION:

1 The personnel strengths and bunker assignments of the rifle platoons of B Co after the night of the sapper attack were as follows:

	PERSONNEL	BUNKER ASSIGNMENT
1st Platoon	19	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, (6 bunk)
2nd Platoon	26	7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, (6 bunk)
3rd Platoon	36	13, 14, 15, 16, 17 (5 bunk)

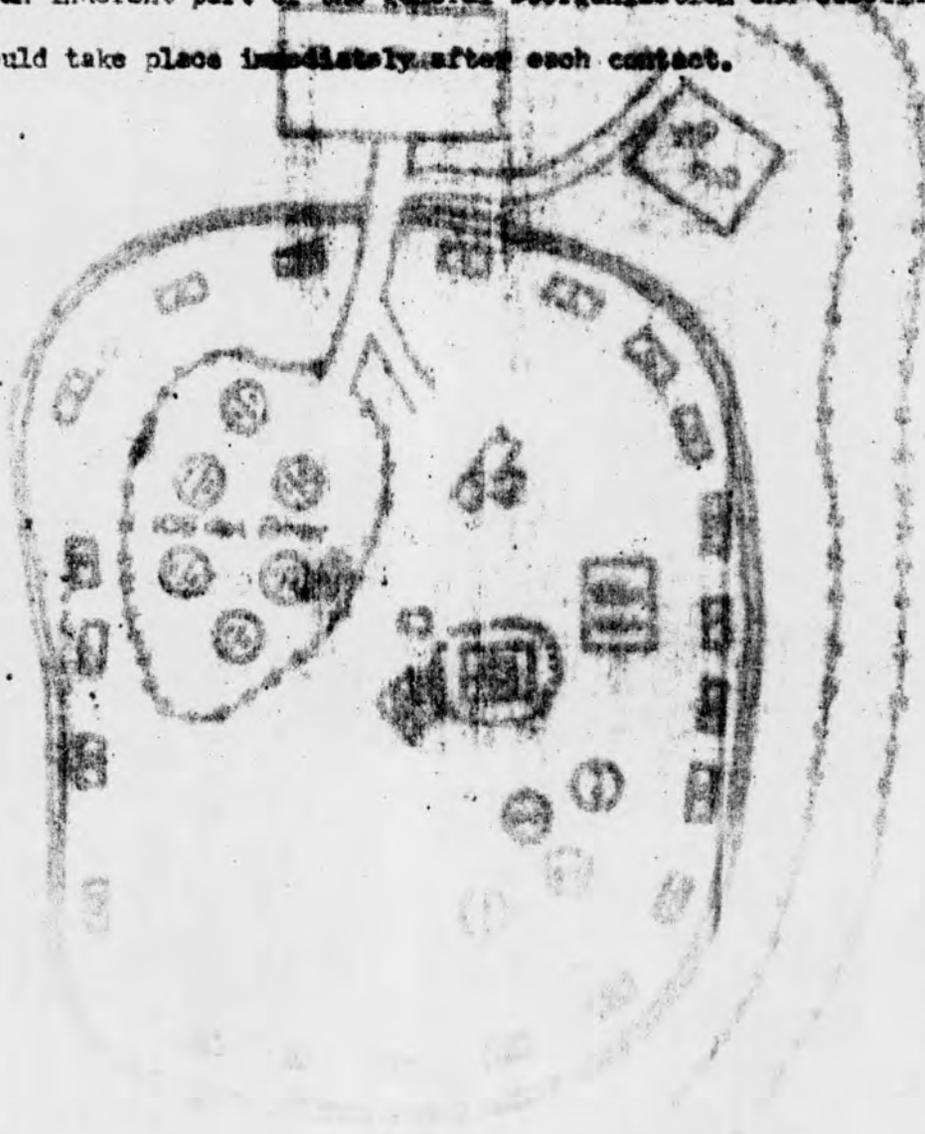
2 The first platoon sustained 14 casualties during the sapper attack on the night of the 17th of June. The first thing the company commander should have done the following morning was to shift personnel assets to the 1st platoon or to reallocate bunker assignments based on personnel strength. Neither was done and the 1st platoon found themselves with six bunkers and a 50 Cal position to man with only nine personnel (six were on LP and three were in the CP). Eight additional personnel had been given to 1st platoon from the Headquarters Company elements in the LZ for the night. The company commander and the 1st platoon leader decided not to man bunker number 5 because of the shortage. This was an unfortunate choice because this bunker was to be the center target for the enemy's main attack the night of the 19th. Suff-

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L2 KE  
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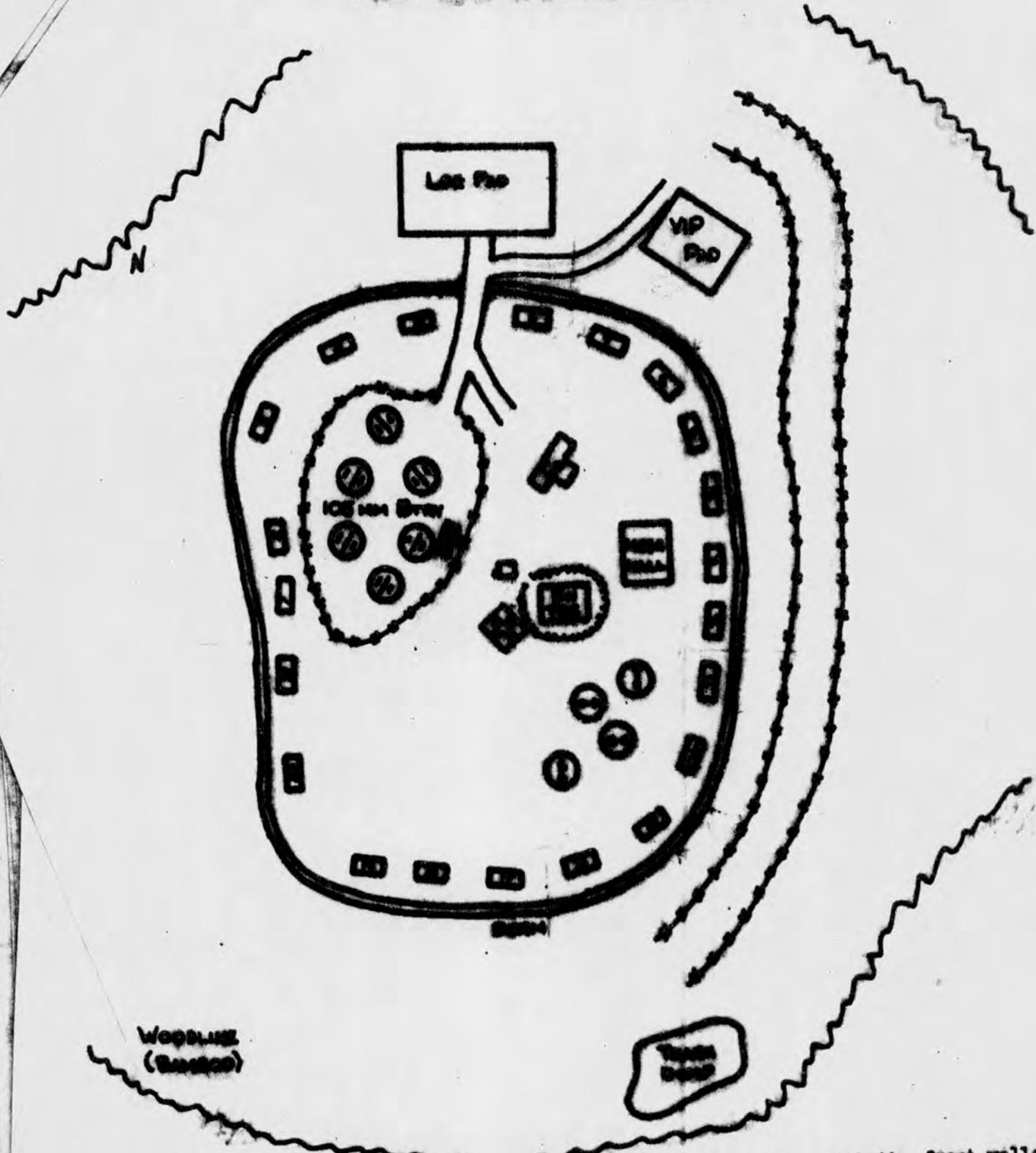
icient support personnel assigned on the L2 to man the bunker but the  
COMBAT commander failed to ask for them.

(b) RECOMMENDATION: The reallocation of bunker assign-  
ments is an inherent part of the general reorganization and consolidation  
which should take place immediately after each contact.



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# LT I KE 18-20 JUNE 1969



NOTE: The bunkers on the perimeter have the berm built between them with the front walls as part of the berm line. There are two rings of triple concertina around the VP and Log pad only part of which appear on the diagram.

700 A