

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO San Francisco 96262

AVDDH-CS

15 November 1968

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Program (MG Stone-4th Infantry Division)

TO: SEE DISTRIBUTION

Attached is Inclosure 3 (AO 41 DFB) to Senior Debriefing Program (MG Stone-4th Infantry Division).

FOR THE COMMANDER:

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4D/AGCR 5978-68-S

109901

REF ID: A6512

~~SECRET~~ ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION DIVISION FILE BASES

1. (U) General. The maps in the attached three appendixes indicate the major avenues of approach into the vital areas which I must defend. Also depicted are the fire support bases which have been constructed on the terrain controlling these approaches. In succeeding paragraphs, I will discuss the rationale for the siting of these fire bases at the locations indicated.

2. (S) DAK PEK Area. The DAK PEK Special Forces Camp has been established to enable the stationing of forces to interdict a major enemy infiltration route across northern KONTUM Province emanating from LAOS. The camp lies in a river valley surrounded by towering mountains rising to a height of over 1300 meters which command an excellent view of the camp. FSB OVERLOOK located on HILL 1328 and FSB's 4 and 6 on the slopes of the hills forming the northern valley control the valley approach from the north. The key to the defense in an attack from this direction, however, is OVERLOOK. FSB's 4 and 6 derive their value chiefly as blocking positions covered by forces on OVERLOOK. The western approach into DAK PEK is the most dangerous since it offers the most direct route from the LAOTIAN border. FSB's 3 and 5 afford the capability to position company size elements further to the west under the cover of CROWS NEST and RANGERS ROOST. FSB EAGLES NEST controls the valley approach from the south and together with CROWS NEST effectively controls any approach from the southwest. FSB EAGLES NEST is particularly important since its occupation restricts the enemy from employing anti-aircraft weapons against our resupply choppers flying in from DAK TO to the south. FSB's OUTPOST and BASTION effectively block the less significant approaches from the east and northeast.

3. (S) DAK SEANG Area. The DAK SEANG Special Forces Camp has been established to enable the stationing of forces to interdict a major infiltration route from CAMBODIA into north central KONTUM Province. The camp is located in the center of a river valley approximately six kilometers wide. It is surrounded on all sides by mountains rising to heights of 900-1200 meters. As with DAK PEK, the surrounding mountains afford excellent observation of the camp. The principal approaches into DAK SEANG are from the west and northwest. FSB 31 on HILL 925 commands these approaches from the west. To attack DAK SEANG from the west, the enemy must cross approximately 3000 meters of relatively open terrain from which he can be observed from FSB 31. Thus he is particularly vulnerable to artillery fire from this fire base, especially time fire utilizing conventional munitions or the COFRAI special munition. Because it flanks the western approach, FSB 31 also affords an ideal gun target line for the employment of artillery against an attack on DAK SEANG from that direction. The rugged mountain chain to the east of DAK SEANG makes an attack from this direction highly unlikely. FSB 31 is therefore the key to the defense of DAK SEANG. FSB 19, located on the most dominant hill mass to the west of DAK SEANG, derives its importance from the fact that it sits astride the western approach and can be used to block enemy forces attacking from the west.

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DOD Dir 5200.10

or to prevent his escape to the border after he launches an attack against the camp.

4. (3) BEN HET - DAK TO Area.

a. The logical objective of any attack in the BEN HET - DAK TO area is the Special Forces camp at BEN HET, the US installation at DAK TO (FSB 1), or the city of TANH CANH where the ARVN 42d Regimental Headquarters and two of its battalions are located.

b. A ring of hills surrounds the BEN HET - DAK TO - TANH CANH area. A series of fire support bases has been established on the dominant hills comprising this ring of mountains in order to control the main approaches into the area from the north, west, and south. Because of its importance as a fixed fire base for the employment of heavy artillery, the capture or destruction of BEN HET is necessary to any successful attack on DAK TO or TANH CANH using an approach from the west. The western approaches into BEN HET are effectively blocked by two fire support bases, 32 and 29. FSB 32 located on HILL 990, the most dominant piece of terrain overlooking BEN HET, controls both the western valley and ridge approaches from the TRI-BORDER area. The approaches from the south and southwest are effectively covered by FSB's 29 and 15. While FSB 15 provides the capability of positioning additional forces on high ground to the south of BEN HET in order to provide defense in depth, the key to defense against an attack from this direction is FSB 29. It provides excellent observation over the open ground to the west and south of BEN HET. In addition it derives added importance from the fact that any attack on BEN HET from the west or south would have to be conducted over a series of cross compartments. Thus fire from artillery located on this base adds to the enemy's difficulty in negotiating these cross compartments. FSB's 16, 20, 27 and 28 provide the capability of positioning forces further to the south to attrite the enemy as he attempts to approach from that direction. However, their occupation is not essential to the defense of BEN HET. They do, however, provide a means of jumping quickly behind the enemy if he attempts to withdraw to the southwest out of the BEN HET - DAK TO area. The key to preventing an attack on BEN HET from the north is FSB 25 inasmuch as it is located on the dominant terrain controlling the approach from that direction. FSB 25 in the hands of the enemy would permit him to interdict movement of Route 512 between DAK TO and BEN HET. FSB 18 provides the capability to position forces further to the north in order to provide a defense in depth. The occupation of FSB's 25, 32, and 29 with a 105mm battery on any one of the three provides an impregnable defense against an attack on BEN HET from any direction. When these three fire bases are occupied, FSB 13 becomes especially valuable for positioning medium artillery because of its centralized location and because it can be resupplied by road. When major enemy forces are not located in the BEN HET - DAK TO area, I can afford good protection to BEN HET through the occupation of only FSB's 25 and SWEENEY. FB SWEENEY is a particularly valuable fire base. It is on a key terrain feature which provides a commanding view to the west, north, and east. Its centralized location in the FSB complex of the BEN HET - DAK TO area enables 105mm artillery positioned on it to cover FB's 15, 29, 25, 30, 3, 6 and both BEN HET and DAK TO.

c. While the fire bases discussed above contribute to the defense of DAK TO and TANH CUNH, I have also established a series of fire bases for close in protection of these vital areas in the event enemy forces are able to bypass the firebases guarding BEN HET without being detected, or in the event an attack materializes from the TUDRONG Valley. FSB's 30 and 33 control the approach from the north. While FSB 30 is the key to the defense against an attack from the north, it is frequently necessary to occupy FSB 33 since it is used periodically as a mortar base by the enemy. The frequent use of the hill for this purpose has resulted in it being nicknamed "Mortar Mountain." Southwest of DAK TO a high ridge runs from the northwest to the southeast. Because of the enemy's frequent use of this hill mass to conduct rocket attacks against DAK TO, it has been given the nickname of "Rocket Ridge." In order to preclude such attacks, it has been necessary to construct a series of fire bases along this ridge. FSB's 5, 6 and SWEENEY not only provide the capability to defend against rocket attacks from this ridge, but block the approaches into DAK TO - TANH CUNH from the west and southwest. FB SWEENEY becomes a pivotal position against attacks on DAK TO from the west when FSB's 29 and 32 are not occupied. FSB 3 is utilized to protect the critical bridge on Highway 512 over the DAK POKO RIVER. This highway is essential to the resupply of BEN HET. FSB 3 is also an excellent base for the positioning of artillery.

d. The fire bases on the high ground ringing the BEN HET - DAK TO area afford a significant capability for insuring mutual fire support by artillery. By using care in the selection of fire bases on which to locate 105 and 155 batteries, it is possible to insure that excellent gun target lines exist to maximize mutual support.

5. (S) KONTUM - POLEI KLENG Area.

a. The provincial capital, KONTUM City, has historically been the target of large scale enemy offensive operations, highlighted by the battle of DAK TO in November 1967, the TET Offensive in late January 1968, and a two divisional thrust in May and June 1968, operations which cost the enemy over 3000 killed. The city of KONTUM is situated in a bowl, surrounded by mountains to its north and east and fairly open approaches from the south and along the DAK BLA River to the west. The major attacks against KONTUM have occurred along this western approach.

b. The key to the defense of KONTUM City is the high ground surrounding the POLEI KLENG Special Forces Camp, located approximately 20 kilometers west of KONTUM. The camp itself is located in a pronounced bowl, surrounded on the north, west and south by high mountains. The terrain to the east toward KONTUM is relatively flat and open. The DAK BLA and KRONG POKO Rivers, which run along a north-south axis between POLEI KLENG and KONTUM, constitute a fairly major obstacle, particularly during the monsoon season. When conducting operations in the POLEI KLENG area, I have bridged this obstacle at POLEI KRONG, and have thus been able to resupply by road as far west as the POLEI KLENG camp, which is connected to KONTUM by a passable unimproved road, Route 511.

c. I have defended KONTUM by a series of three complexes of fire bases. To the immediate west of KONTUM and east of the DAK BLA and KRONG POKO Rivers, FSB's INGRID, IRMA J, MURIEL and THUNDER block the immediate approach to the

city from the open area to the west. I have generally occupied one or more of these fire bases during the monsoon season after removing my float bridge at POLEI KRONG. Any attempt to cross the swollen rivers at this time of year would be a major enemy undertaking and easily detectable from the dominating terrain of INGRID and IRM J, both of which have an unobstructed view and are within 105mm artillery range of the KRONG POKO Valley.

d. The dominating terrain around the POLEI KLENG camp is the ridge line running generally northwest to southeast some 6-8 kilometers from the camp. The series of FSB's I constructed on the peaks of this ridge line stretching from BUNK AK HILL and BRILLO P.D in the southeast to MILLE HILL and DOT in the northwest were the key to my successful defense of POLEI KLENG against the 3250 NV. Division in May and June 1968. With artillery selectively positioned on this complex of fire bases, I was able to dominate not only the approaches along the LA RAY, DAK DRUH and YA KREI river valleys to the west, but also to observe and bring fire upon any enemy forces attempting a ground attack on POLEI KLENG to the east. Finally, FSB's SWINGER and PAUSE further to the west offer the opportunity to jump infantry battalions and supporting artillery behind enemy forces attempting to maneuver against POLEI KLENG, and to block enemy escape routes to CAMBODIA. I have never occupied all of these fire bases in the POLEI KLENG area at any one time. The availability of so many fire bases, however, provides me the flexibility to occupy mutually supporting fire bases closely tailored to the tactical situation.

e. Minor approaches to KONTUM City also exist from the northeast and southwest. In the northeast, trail networks and excellent cover and concealment provide the enemy the capability of approaching to within three or four kilometers of the city without detection. This route was used by the 24th NVN Regiment when it moved against KONTUM during TET. FSB's 5 and 3 in this area block this approach to KONTUM from the northeast. The relatively flat and open area to the southwest of KONTUM is covered by CIDG elements operating from the excellent PLEI MRONG Special Forces Camp, whose ably-led operations I have discussed elsewhere in this report. FSB C.RMEN northeast of PLEI MRONG was constructed to accommodate a 155mm artillery battery. From C.RMEN 155mm artillery fire can cover the PLEI MRONG Camp, the brigade base camp at LZ MARY LOU, and the entire area north of PLEI MRONG bounded by the DAK HUA River as it runs north and then turns west at POLEI KRONG.

6. (3) PLEIKU - CAMP ENARI - OASIS Area.

a. The Special Forces camps of PLEI MRONG, PLEI DJERENG, DUC CO and PLEI ME sit astride the northwestern, western, and southern approaches from CAMBODIA into the PLEIKU - CAMP ENARI - OASIS area. The importance of these Special Forces camps in detecting and interdicting enemy forces moving along these approaches makes them prime targets for enemy attacks, not only for military purposes but for political purposes as well. PLEI DJERENG and DUC CO are particularly vulnerable to an attack from CAMBODIA, because of their close proximity to the border. To provide the capability to control these approaches and protect the above mentioned Special Forces camps, numerous fire bases have been built on commanding terrain between the CAMBODIAN border and HIGHWAY 14. I can therefore rapidly position forces to block any enemy threat which

develops against the camps and by occupying a series of selected fire bases I can conduct a defense in depth to counter attacks along a single or multiple avenues of approach against the vital areas of PLEIKU, CAMP EWARI, and QASIS. In the paragraphs that follow I will discuss these fire bases beginning with those in the north and proceeding clockwise to those located in the south.

b. FSB LILLY commands the northwestern approach into the city of PLEIKU. It is located on a dominant knoll that overlooks the relatively flat and open ground which extends to the north and west of the city. The positioning of artillery on this fire support base affords a significant capability to break up any attack on PLEIKU CITY emanating from the high ground to its north and west.

c. FSB BETTY provides the key to the defense of PLEI DJERENG by controlling approaches from the north and west. The hill on which this FSB is located affords a commanding view of the PLEI DJERENG camp and dominates the direct western approach from CAMBODIA and the northern approach along the L. GR.I River. Thus it would be necessary for the enemy to neutralize FSB BETTY before he could launch an effective attack on PLEI DJERENG. The series of fire bases located to the north, west, and south of the DUC CO Special Forces Camp effectively control the approaches from the west and south into this camp. The pivotal base is FSB MARY S, since it sits on the most dominant terrain feature in the DUC CO - PLEI DJERENG area. FSB KAREN affords an excellent back-up to MARY S, for it is an ideal fire support base for the positioning of artillery. Not only does artillery positioned on this base effectively protect MARY S but it also affords an excellent gun target line for the employment of fires against forces attacking FSB JEAN and DUC CO from the west. FSB KAREN affords the capability to detect and block enemy forces attempting to attack DUC CO from the north. It also assists in controlling the western approach from CAMBODIA into PLEI DJERENG. FSB JEAN is located on a key terrain feature which sits solidly astride the western approach into DUC CO and which completely dominates HIGHWAY 19W all the way to the border. It affords an excellent location for the positioning of radars and observation posts for surveillance of the NVN base area just across the border in CAMBODIA. Any attack on DUC CO to be successful would require the neutralization of JEAN. FSB JOUR located adjacent to the DUC CO Special Forces Camp provides the capability of augmenting the forces within that camp but serves principally as a forward base to support operations in the DUC CO area. FSB's LINE and VER4, although located on relatively flat terrain, provide the capability to block enemy forces attempting to attack DUC CO from the south. They are particularly valuable for the positioning of forces to conduct SRP operations along the southern approach to DUC CO.

d. The DUC CO area is one of the most suitable areas for the employment of enemy armor in all of Vietnam. HIGHWAY 19W and the flat terrain to the south offer an excellent high speed armor approach into DUC CO. The terrain stretching from DUC CO and PLEI DJERENG to the east of PLEIKU and CAMP ENRI is ideally suited for the conduct of armor operations. Thus the threat posed by an armored attack in the DUC CO area has been of constant concern to me, particularly during the non-monsoonal period. For this reason, whenever I have indications of any sizeable build-up across the border from DUC CO, I

ensure that forces occupying FSB's to the south and west of DUC CO are reinforced by anti-tank weapons. I habitually employ my armor and mechanized forces in the area to the west of PLEIKU and CAMP ENARI between HIGHWAYS 19W and 509 because the enemy usually has forces operating in this area to conduct harassing attacks against EDAP ENANG and the district headquarters at TANH AN, and because it is the most suitable terrain in my AO for the employment of such forces.

e. The historic route of advance into the PLEIKU - CAMP ENARI - OASIS area has been the IA DRANG RIVER Valley. To control this approach, a series of fire support bases providing for defense in depth have been constructed. These FSB's consist of VIRGINIA LEE, CHIEF, LAURA, SHARMAINE, PUMA, ROBIN, and MARTHA. The key to blocking an attack along this route is FSB SHARMAINE which is situated on the most dominant terrain to the southwest of OASIS.

7. (S) BAN ME THUOT - DUC LAP Area.

a. DARLAC Province is normally not a part of the 4th Infantry Division AO. Operations of the division in DARLAC Province have been confined to periods when a major threat to the city of BAN ME THUOT has developed. Because of this and the fact that the terrain in the vicinity of BAN ME THUOT is relatively flat and open, no extensive fire base complex has been constructed in the BAN ME THUOT area. During the period July through October 1968, when the division conducted extensive operations in the BAN ME THUOT area, US forces operated for the most part to the west and north of the city while ARVN forces operated to the south and east. Thus the few fire bases portrayed on the map in the vicinity of BAN ME THUOT are all located to the north and west of the city. Of these, only FSB's ROSA and DAVID are located on high ground. While numerous fire bases were established for the defense of BAN ME THUOT to block enemy approaches from the west and north, for the most part their construction consisted of little more than clearing fields of fire. As a consequence there was no necessity to number or name them for future reference. Those to the west and north of a more permanent nature are depicted on the map; however, in the absence of key terrain, practically all of them merely provide a means to position forces astride the enemy's routes of approach from the west and north. The relatively flat terrain with no dominant high ground enabled me to place my fire bases wherever they were best suited in terms of the enemy situation and the location of other friendly forces. As an exception, FSB ROSA does command the western approach into the city in that it provides excellent observation for a considerable distance to the west and northwest.

b. Fire support bases depicted on the map in the DUC LAP area have been constructed primarily to prevent an attack on the DUC LAP Special Forces Camp and the DUC LAP district headquarters. These fire support bases were constructed primarily to locate headquarters of battalions and task forces and to position artillery. Operations are conducted from a series of forward patrol bases positioned to block enemy avenues from the northwest, west, and southwest leading to the camp and the district headquarters.

3. Appendixes

- 1 - Map showing FSB's in DAK PEK, DAK SEANG, BEN HET - DAK TO, and POLEI KIENG - KONTUM Areas (C)
- 2 - Map showing FSB's in PLEIKU - CAMP ENARI - OASIS Area (C)
- 3 - Map showing FSB's in BAN ME THUOT - DUC LAP Area (C)