

COMBAT OPERATIONS REPORT

1. At 210640 August 1968 company C, 1st Bn (Mech), 5th Infantry departed Dau Tieng base camp with the mission of sweeping from Dau Tieng to XT 420445, staying approximately 1000 meters to the south of route 239. The scout platoon, with the 3rd brigade crip and two twin 40mm self propelled weapons attached departed Dau Tieng at 210655 August 1968 to sweep and outpost the MSR from Dau Tieng to XT 374424. The two units were to move abreast on parallel routes in order to provide additional security for the units.

2. At 0813 hours the scout platoon was located at XT 463468. Company C had moved to the south and at XT 473456. Both units reported no enemy contact. Company C was moving with two rifle platoons abreast. The 1st platoon on the right was led by SSG Lang, while the 3rd platoon on the left was led by 1LT Cook. Each platoon's personnel carriers followed the dismounted elements of the platoon. The company commander, 1LT Snodgrass, moved on foot, and alternated his position between the lead platoons. Inclosure 1 shows the detailed formation of the unit.

3. At 0831 hours the scout dog with the point element of the company alerted. The handler stated that he thought that there might be a large number of personnel to the southwest. The battalion S-3 in an OH-23 helicopter made a low VR of the area concerned but could locate nothing unusual. It was concluded that the dog had probably alerted to the presence of the civilians in the village at XT 464448. The company commander then adjusted 81mm mortar fire into the rubber plantation to the front, with negative results.

4. Two enemy soldiers were engaged by the security elements of company C at 0906 hours. The enemy soldiers were at a range of 200 meters and withdrew to the south without returning fire.

5. At 0913 hours the scout platoon was located at checkpoint 80 and was conducting a search of the village at XT 464448. This search netted nothing except for the information that three buildings in the southern edge of the village had been used by the enemy for barracks and classrooms.

6. Company C located and destroyed a mine at XT 476444 at 0914 hours. The company then shifted to the west to move out of the open area into the rubber. The company continued moving south until it made a turn to the west astride the trail leading from XT 476444 to XT 464448. The company moved to the west with one lead platoon on each side of the trail. The scout dog with its security element was moving ahead of the platoon security by approximately 30 meters. The weapons platoon and 2nd platoon shifted to the left as shown on inclosure 2.

7. At 1012 hours, the 1st platoon and the 2nd platoon cluster in the vicinity of the village at XT 46240. The 3rd platoon continued searching the village at XT 46248. At 1015 hours company C called in a negative situation report and gave XT 462440 as the current location of the unit.

8. At 1110 hours, company C reported receiving sniper fire at XT 462440 and reported one US KIA and one US WIA. The report stated that the fire was coming from the west and southwest. The unit requested gunship support. At this time the unit and security elements were approximately 20 meters west of the road which extends south from route 239 to XT 463440. At this point, the lead platoons were crossing the road while the personnel carriers were still approximately 30 meters east of the road. The second platoon and the mortar platoon were following the 3rd platoon, south of the east-west trail.

9. As the enemy increased their volume of fire, the lead elements returned the fire, and remained west of the north-south road for approximately ten minutes. The enemy continued to advance, with elements attempting to move along the south flank of company C. The enemy advanced from the west on the dismounted elements of company C. Most of the enemy soldiers were wearing green and camouflaged uniforms, and were moving from tree to tree in short rushes, and advancing rapidly toward the north-south road, while some of the enemy were occupying camouflaged positions. The volume of fire initially was low, but soon reached an extremely high rate. During this period, SSG Lang, the 1st platoon leader was killed.

10. The company commander, realizing he could not effectively employ his 50 machineguns over his own troops, withdrew his troops to the line of personnel carriers, now dispersed along the east side of the north-south road. Further, since enemy soldiers had been observed while attempting to envelop his right flank, the company commander ordered his reserve, the 2nd platoon to displace to the right rear of his 1st platoon. He then displaced his mortars to the rear to obtain overhead clearance in order that they could be employed. During this period the unit employed all available weapons, to include M-72 laws to breakup the enemy attack.

11. At 1135 hours the battalion S-3 urgently requested the gunships, which had been previously requested but had not arrived. The artillery on the ground was attempting to get required clearances to employ artillery. At this time company C marked the unit position with purple smoke, and a few minutes later with yellow smoke. The unit at this time was still defending along the road with the troops deployed with the troops personnel carriers. The company continued to fire in this position for approximately 30 minutes.

12. During this 30 minute period the scout platoon deployed along route 239 with the lead element at XT 461448. The scout platoon leader observed enemy troops moving to the southeast in the vicinity of XT 458446, and took these units under fire with cal. 50 machineguns and small arms. Shortly he moved a twin 40mm weapon into a firing position and this weapon fired in excess of 300 rounds. The scout platoon was soon engaged by small arms and RPG fire. At 1145 the scout platoon leader observed and reported at least an enemy company moving southeast out of the village at XT 450450.

13. Company C continued to remain in position along the north-south road until approximately 1150 hours, at which time 3 personnel carriers on the left side of the company position, were hit by RPG weapons. The weapons were apparently fired from extremely short range. The company commander then decided to withdraw approximately 150 meters and organize another defensive position. The unit withdrew taking with it the wounded personnel and the body of SSG Lang. During this period, more men were killed.

14. Upon order the 1st and 3rd platoon withdrew. This movement disposed the company with three platoons abreast, since the 2nd platoon held in place. At this time eight personnel carriers were on line, and all cal. 50 machineguns were operating. In addition, dismounted personnel were firing individual weapons and M-72 laws. At this time the 81mm mortars were firing, with their rounds impacting near the 2nd platoon. The artillery forward observer, LT Ranney, was adjusting the artillery which was impacting 200 meters west of the friendly elements. At this time, three of the remaining personnel carriers sustained RPG hits. These RPG hits killed the 81mm mortar forward observer and one of the company radio operators and wounded the company commander, the artillery forward observer and the remaining company radio operator. The last transmission from LT Ranney, the artillery forward observer, was that the rounds were landing 200 meters east of LT Ranney, they were landing on the troops of Company G, thus the FDC checked the artillery. Several minutes passed prior to the artillery resuming fire.

15. At 1154 hours the forward air controller reported an estimated time of arrival of 20 to 25 minutes for the first airstrike, and the 1st Brigade announced an ETA of 15 minutes for a light fire team. This light fire team arrived at 1201 hours and was immediately employed along the northern flank of the unit.

16. Now commanded by 1LT Cook, company C reported at 1200 hours that the situation was extremely critical and that he planned to withdraw. All wounded were loaded on personnel carriers and the unit withdrew over the same route taken on the advance.

The last element to withdraw was the 2nd platoon. The company moved to and secured an landing zone at XT 473455.

17. At 1200 hours the scout platoon was heavily engaged from the south, and observed an estimated enemy platoon maneuvering to block route 239 to the north of the scout platoon. At this time the scout platoon was ordered to move east through the village at XT 463448 and to link up with company C at the landing zone. This movement resulted in a short advance by the enemy, followed by a halt of his advance. Following the medical evacuation of casualties, all units were ordered by the commanding officer 1st brigade to return to Dau Tieng to regroup and prepare to return to the Ben Cai plantation to continue the contact. The scout platoon was subsequently ordered to return to the eastern side of the rubber. At 1600 hours all elements were ordered to return to Dau Tieng.

I N C L O S U R E

Map of area of contact, showing routes of company C and the scout platoon.

Formation of C Co while moving south.

Formation of C Co while moving west.

Initial contact and immediate deployment.

Defensive formation.

Defensive formation.

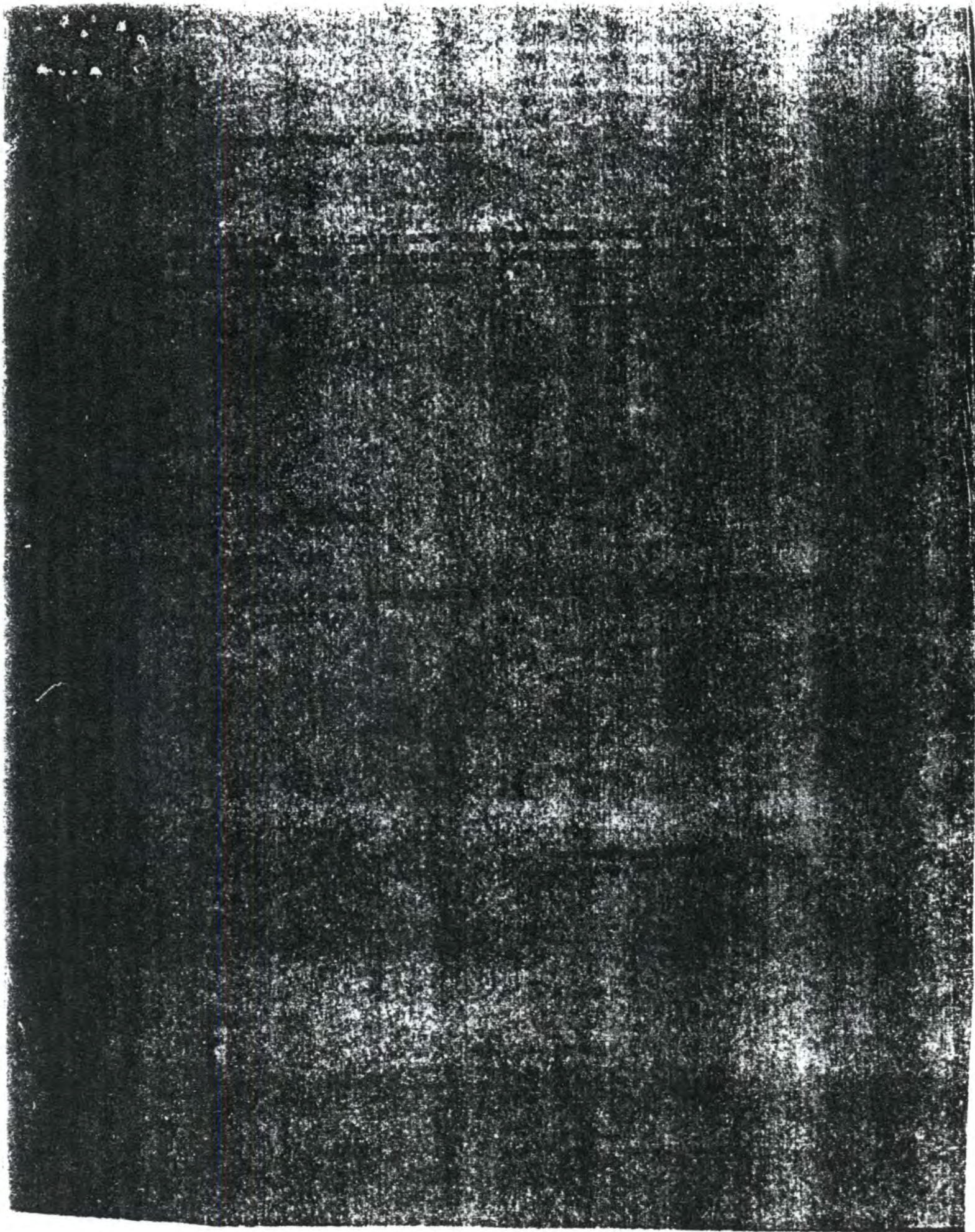
Routes of withdrawal.

Plot of area of engagement.

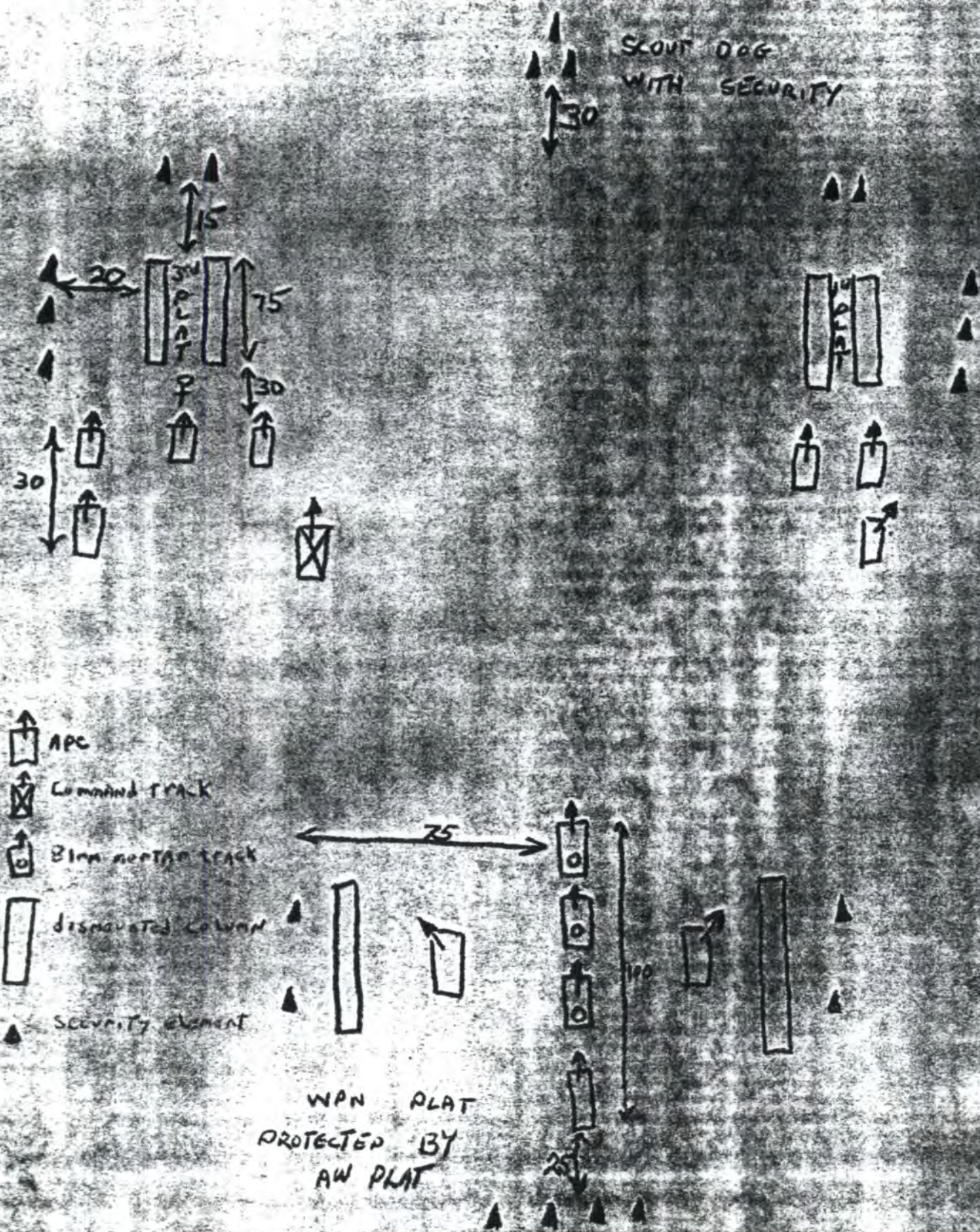
Location of US KIA.

Estimated enemy casualties.

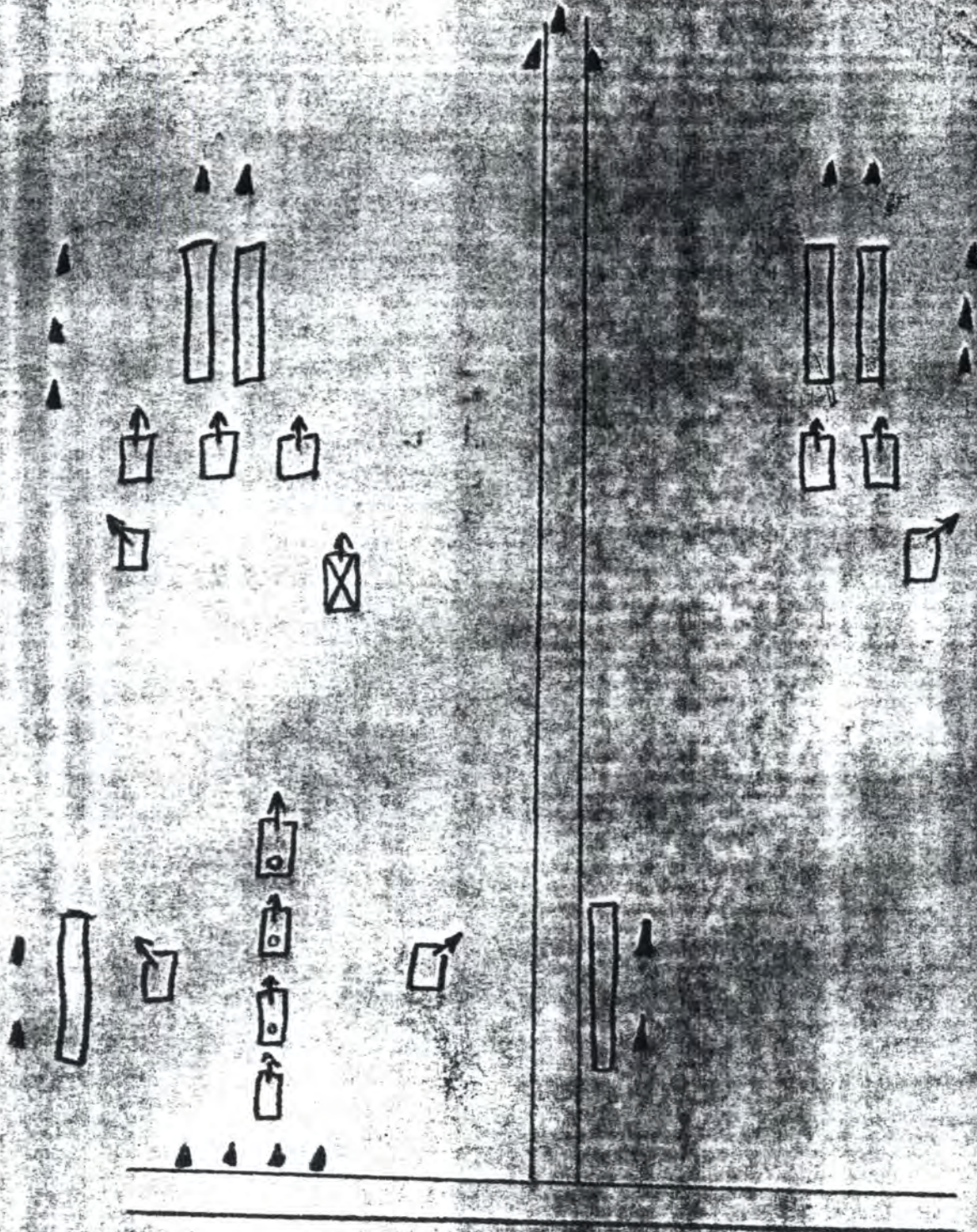
Photos of company C personnel taken by battalion FIC on 21 Aug 68.



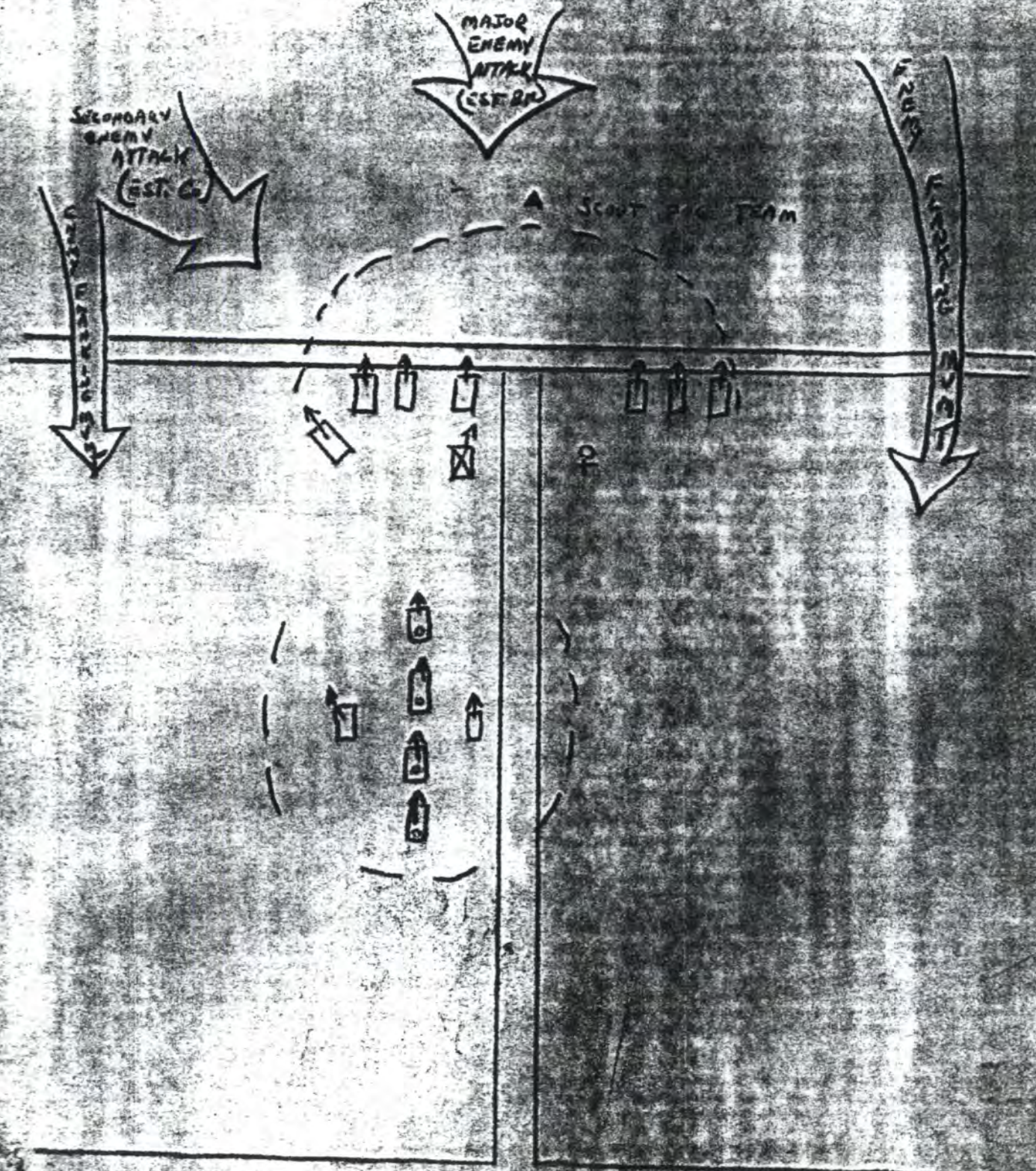
Incl 2- Formation of C Co while moving South



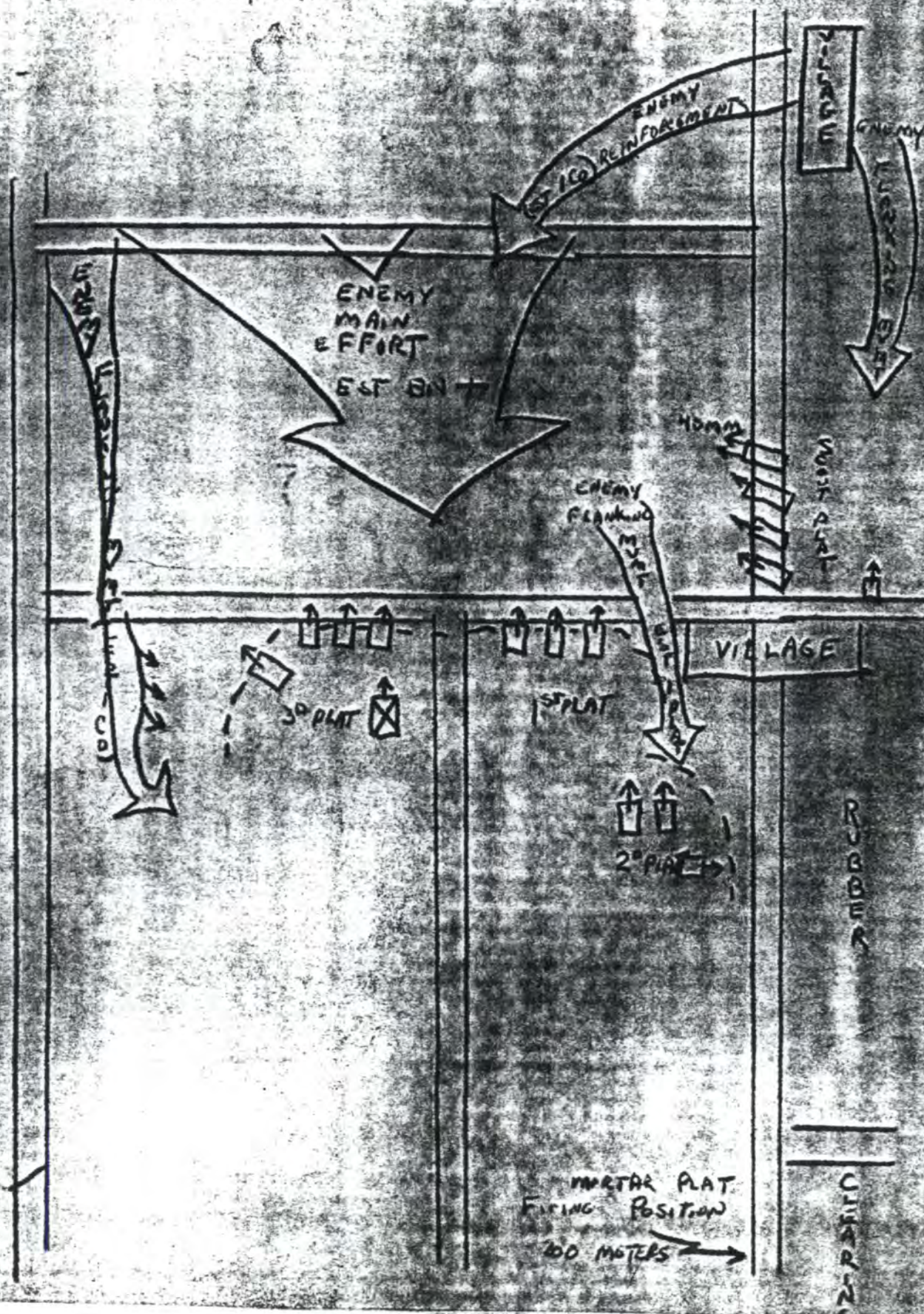
Incl 3-Formation of C Co while moving west



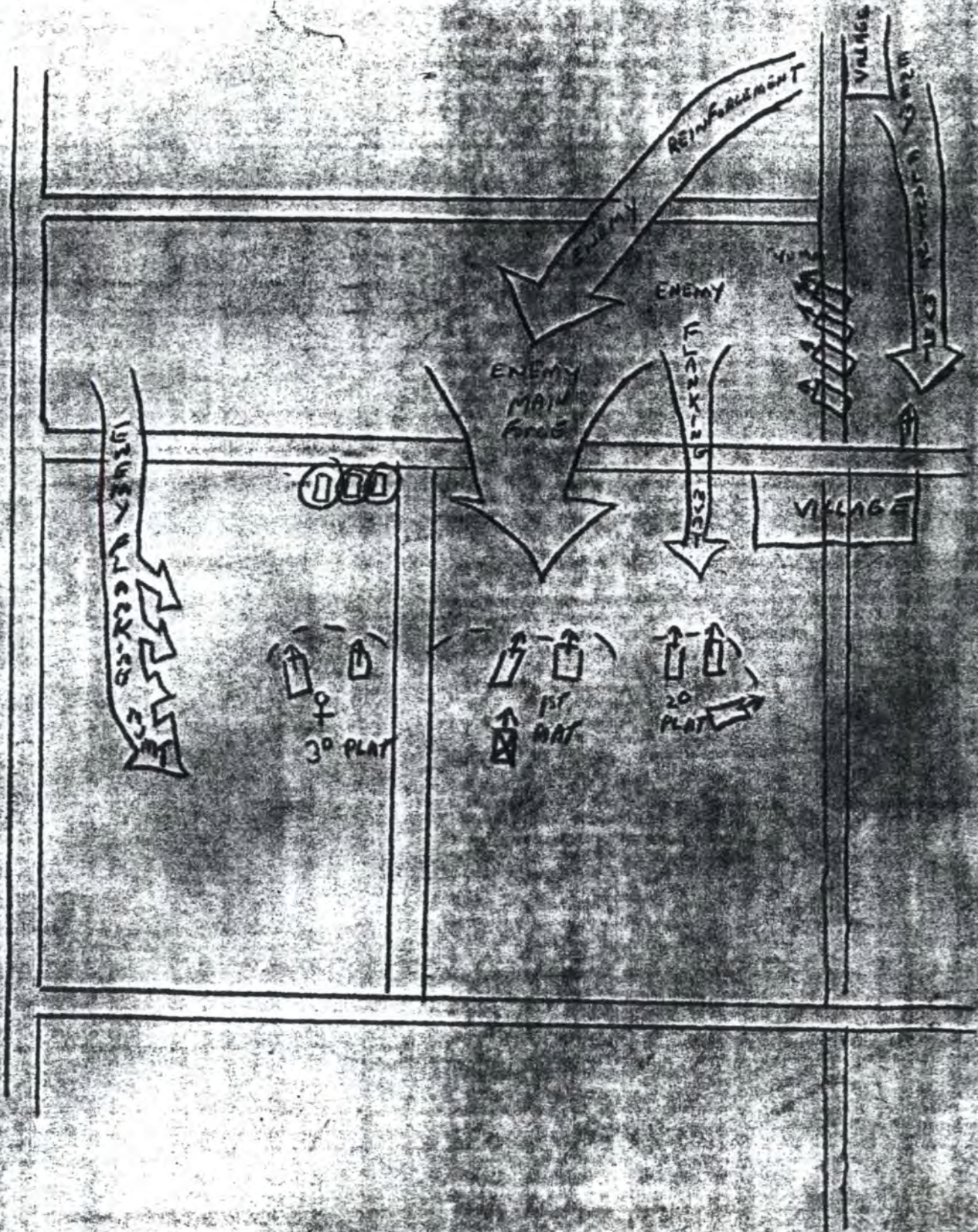
INCL 4 - INITIAL CONTACT AND IMMEDIATE DEPLOYMENTS



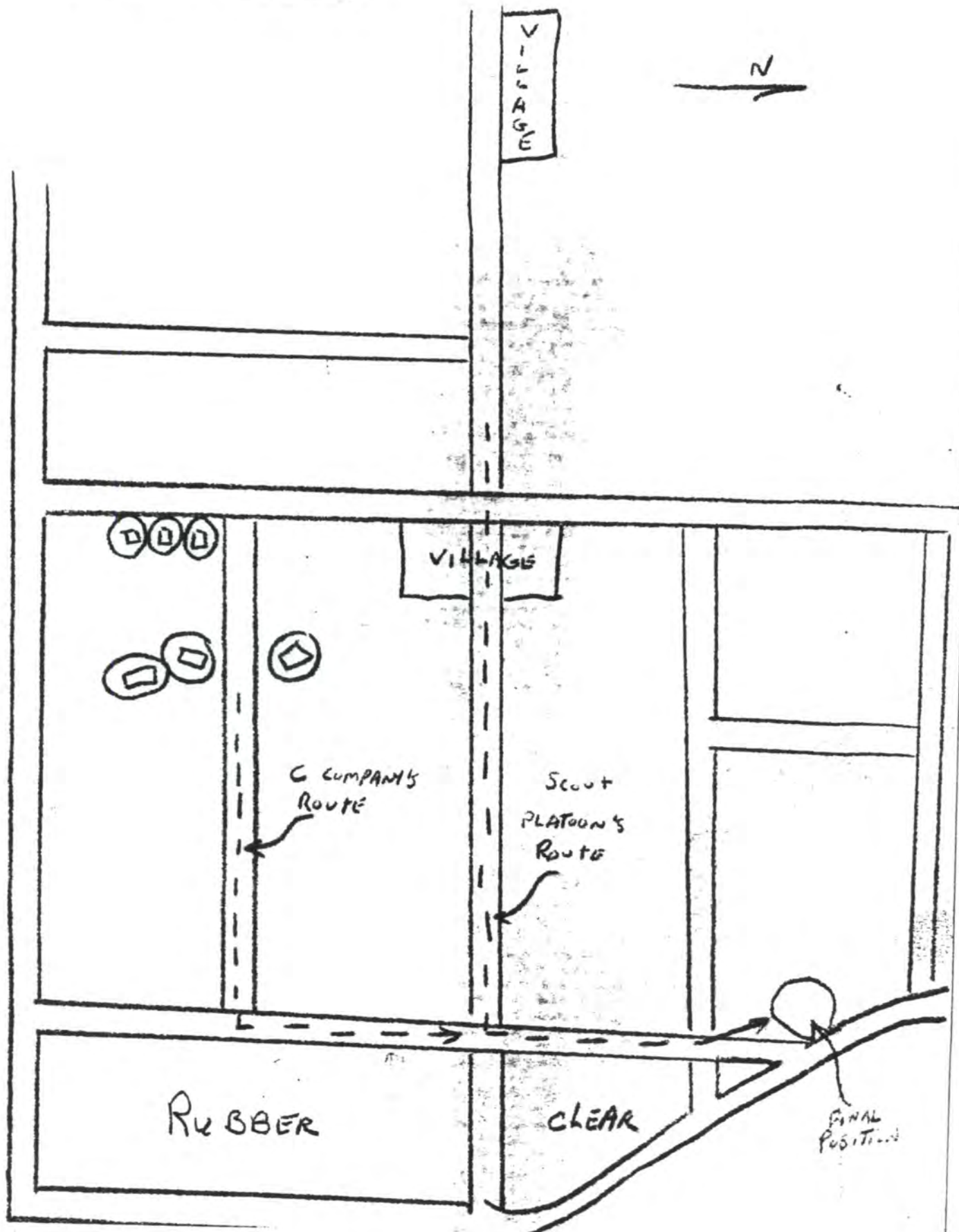
INCL 5- Second defensive positions



1966-Third defensive position



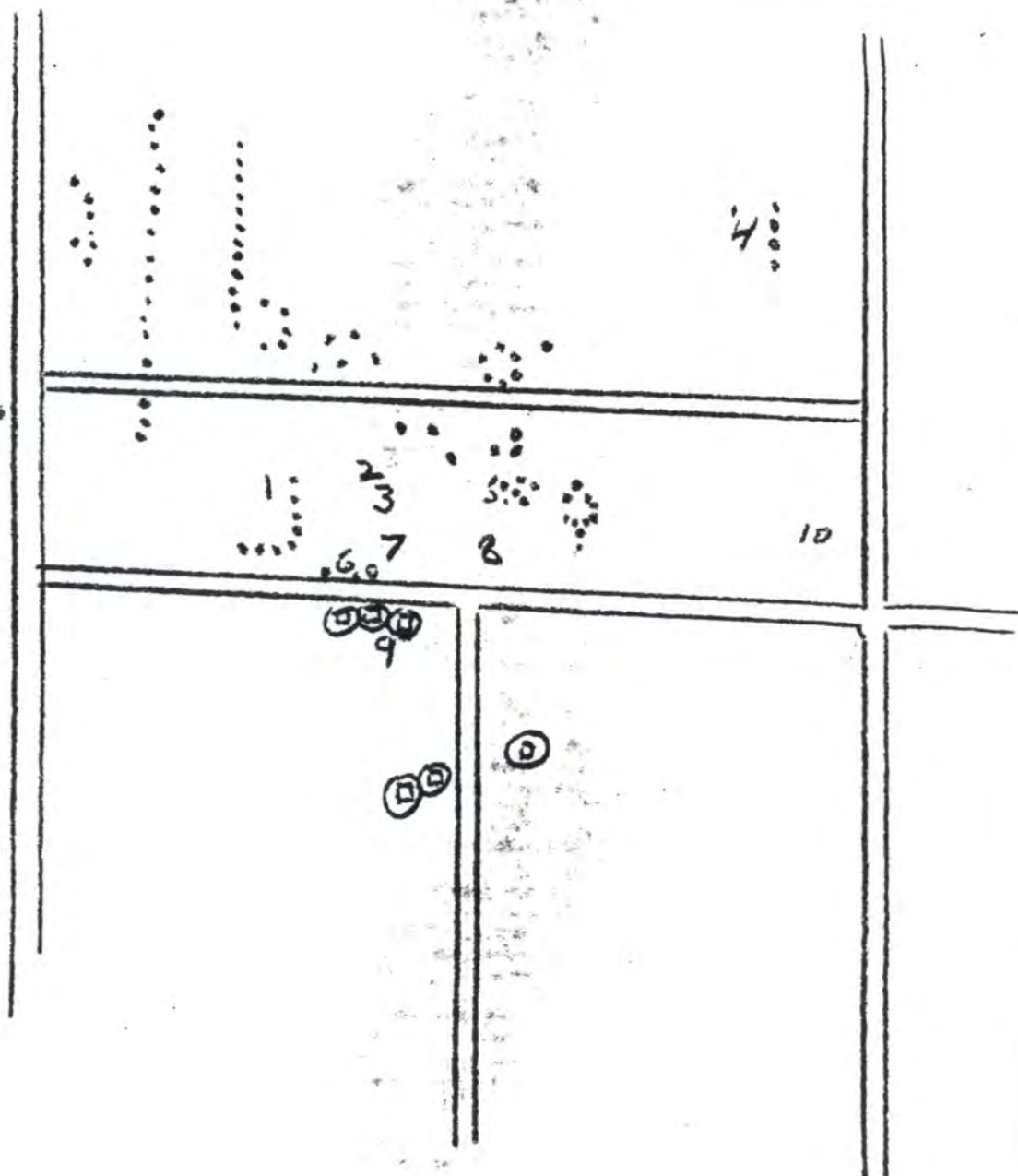
INCL 7- ROUTES OF WITHDRAWAL



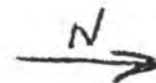
INCL 8 - Plot of Area of Engagement



1. Comm mortar AA pos
 2. Heavy NVA shirt
 3. APC-2 pos
 4. APC pos
 5. APC pos
 6. APC pos
 7. US LAW, DRAGS, M-16 LINKS
 8. US LAW
 9. Burned documents
 10. STQR shell crater
- (C) Destroyed 1 APC
 • VC Fighting pos



INCL 9 - LOCATION OF 30 MIA



T1

EDB

T4

T5

T6, T7, T8

T9

T10

T2

T3

T11

T12

T13

T14

T15

T16

T17

1. SSG LAM
2. LAMOTON
3. BARTLETT
4. HACKETT
5. JAMISON
6. MANJAN
7. STALL
8. DUNN
9. SUTMAN (interpreter)
10. JOHNSON (CO RTO)
11. BOWDEN
12. COLEMAN
13. COMBEST
14. MARTIN
15. RUSH
16. RIVERA
17. COFFEY
18. SGT YOUNG, SGT LOR

T18