

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
F Troop, 9th Cavalry
12th Combat Aviation Group
APO San Francisco 96398

AVBAU-19

16 February 1973

SUBJECT: After Action Report

1. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this report is to cover those actions just prior to, and during, the stand-down phase of F Troop, 9th Air Cavalry.
2. **GENERAL:** The period covered on this report will run from 1 November 1972 to X-16, 13 Feb 73. X Day was designated as 28 January 1973. Probably the most important lesson learned is that there can not be too much prior planning. Planning must be updated and continuous. Part of this planning can be aided by one consolidated SOP from the next higher headquarters. The SOP not only helps to organize stand-down but can also be used as a measuring device for progress. One problem area was created by the various visitors and inspectors from higher headquarters. This was particularly apparent when concerned with police. Everyone sees his task differently and policing an area that was once the responsibility of a battalion is not accomplished like a minute wash. Since trash collection is less than adequate to meet the requirements of stand-down a centralized refuse point was established. From this point combustible trash was separated and burned. The ashes were later picked up by front end loader or shovels. Next to planning, attitudes become the next most important ingredient for a successful stand-down. This, however, is a leadership responsibility.

a. Section I:

(1) Pre-X-Day phase: During the month of November 1972 the Troop was anticipating stand-down as a result of the attempts in October to call a cease-fire. Although operations were continued at a normal pace, planning for the stand-down was possible. This planning included preparation of folders for each individual in the unit. Each folder contained clearance forms, orders, and any other personal data that concerned each individual. OER's were typed and each mater and endorser was told to begin writing drafts on their officers. Awards were also written to expedite the actions prior to the end. Rosters were made up to include all those duties which would be essential to clear the post. These rosters included but were not limited to: Transportation Officer, Keystone Officer, Summary Court Officer, and CPO Officer. These personnel were selected according to their retainability after X-Day. This was possible by selecting those personnel with the longest time in country.

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(2) Stand-down phase: Upon notification of the cease-fire the Troop was relieved of all operational requirements except for a heavy gun team which was maintained on strip alert. The primary emphasis during the first 3 days was to turn in all assigned aircraft. Almost simultaneously we began policing the billet area for all T4-50 and other government property. Through experience from a past move, to preclude pilfering from becoming a major problem, we immediately put the base off limits to other than US vehicles. All personnel were warned about the possibility of increased pilferage and advised to ship hold baggage as soon as practicable. Vehicles were scheduled from TWP on X+1. These vehicles were immediately put into use moving equipment for turn-in and when a slack period was determined we began shipping empty conex containers to the turn-in yard. The mess hall was left in operation until X+14 since the equipment would be turned-over in place. Weapons were turned in as personnel began leaving the Troop. Along with the weapons we kept a sufficient amount of ammunition primarily for local security purposes. The nature of the over situation and possibility of pilfering made it necessary to maintain a limited security guard force at night.

(3) Withdrawal phase: Withdrawal began almost simultaneously with the stand-down phase. Personnel were initially taken from the troop to support other special missions. In addition, ten to fifteen personnel were processed out of country each day. A total of 58 Troops were left at Bien Hoa for the roll-up phase.

(4) Roll-up phase: During the roll-up phase it was essential that vehicles be available to carry off trash and move out that personal gear which the Troops had to keep until the last minute. These included, bedding, flight suits (nomex), jungle fatigues, and worn article such as boots. This equipment could not be disposed of without shipment to the proper turn in point. Also during the roll-up phase we had a requirement for heavy equipment. This equipment could not be gotten through PA&S and was only gotten through favors from the Air Force at Bien Hoa Air Base. The equipment was used to remove large quantities of trash and ashes. Also it became necessary to borrow a bulldozer from the ARVN to remove and level areas where house trailers had been removed. The roll-up phase is that portion of the stand-down where all the loose ends are tied together. It is the period of final inspection and the last police call. With the foregoing in mind personnel and at least one vehicle should be available for the last police. We were fortunate enough to have a vehicle borrowed from another unit which was returned to the unit when we departed Bien Hoa.

b. Section 2: Observations and Recommendations.

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(1) Pre-X-Day: If stand-down can be foreseen, planning should be essential to start the stand-down off on the first day. This plan should include those personnel responsible for individual areas, by area. The current should be used during their collection so that a man will be given a job which he is capable of handling and that he will have sufficient time, left in country, to finish. The plan should also include a tentative schedule for turning in equipment. In this regard it would be folly to turn in all vehicles the first day. By the same token weapons must be kept until the last day. As personnel are transferred their weapons can be turned in by lots of twenty five or fifty. Another plan should be developed to consolidate personnel remaining in as few buildings as possible. Those buildings which are emptied should be policed, repaired, and boarded up. This plan will allow for orderly clearing and will provide a visual measure of accomplishment.

(2) Stand-down phase: A single stand-down plan should be initiated at the next higher headquarters. This plan or SOP should consolidate all requirements from Brigade and higher headquarters.

(3) Withdrawal phase: Withdrawal must be planned and controlled to prevent the loss of personnel which are essential to successful stand-down. As jobs are completed these personnel may be utilized on various other requirements.

(4) Roll-up phase: Sufficient personnel must be kept for a last minute maintenance of the area. Plans must be made to transport these personnel from the area since most equipment, including vehicles, will be turned in prior to the roll-up phase.

3. Specific:

a. Section 1: Everyone in the troop was eager to leave but attitudes were high and necessary chores were accomplished in good order through all three phases. This attitude is particularly important with respect to the PEO. He must be energetic and well informed if a smooth turnover of equipment is going to take place. This means that the PEO must be briefed ahead of time on the various turn in points and formats for required reports. An officer should be designated, prior to stand-down, if time permits, as keystone officer. This officer can assist the PEO and the various sections turning in equipment by staging himself at the turn in point. Security after the cease-fire was focused on pilferage by local nationals. This problem became more acute as time progressed. To meet these requirements we utilized two roving patrols in M151's and a gate guard. In conjunction with the security force we placed the post off limits to all vehicles other than U.S. vehicles. To meet deadlines and provide the necessary creature comforts, plans must be made to have all supplies on hand prior to X-Day. This is important, since logistic facilities are probably phasing down also. Arrangements must be made ahead of time to transport all non-functional equipment by flat bed

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truck or other forms of transportation. EIA must have signature cards and requests 24 hours prior to requirements. C-Motions must be laid on for the last few meals after the mess is closed out. Normally it should take one day to close the mess if facilities are being turned over in place. Transferring equipment ran smoothly. Administration became very important. Knowledgeable and responsible people must be retained to handle administrative requirements to see that they are performed properly and arrive in the proper hands. Transferring of station property was a different type of problem. Since buildings were transferred to one ARVN unit and post, camp, and station property to a second unit, coordination had to be made for two separate transfers. All property weather buildings or post, camp, and station should be inventoried ahead of time and checked against TASS inventories. By inventorying ahead some shortage can be made up. Finally after the post, camp, and station has been removed a police of the area will again have to be performed.

b. Section 2: Commanders Comments on Lessons Learned

(1a) Observation: During the course of the stand-down many visitors, both announced and unannounced, came through the area. These visits were time consuming and distracting.

(1b) Evaluation: Visits by inspectors are necessary to see that goals are being accomplished. Too many visitors confuse the situation because everyone sees their tasks and requirements differently.

(1c) Recommendation: Only the next higher headquarters should make periodic checks until the area is ready for inspection.

(2a) Observation: At Bien Hoa there were areas which were used for centralized burning. Burning became necessary because of the inadequate trash collection during the stand-down. These areas had to be policed after burning with heavy equipment. This equipment had to be acquired from the Air Force.

(2b) Evaluation: To thoroughly police an area as large as Bien Hoa it takes more than manual labor. Some desirable equipment to request should be large lawn mowers, motorized by a tractor, a front-end loader, and a dump truck.

(2c) Recommendations: If possible coordination should be made with area engineers to support these requirements.

(3a) Observation: Hold baggage had to be move from Bien Hoa to Saigon for shipment.

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(3b) Evaluation: Each individual desires to keep his personal belongings until the last minute. This caused an unnecessary burden on the troop because it meant each individual had to take time off to ship hold baggage. Transportation had to be layed on daily to transport these people to Saigon and back to Bien Hoa.

(3c) Recommendation: A hold baggage team should be sent to outlying areas to check hold baggage on location and crate it for shipment.

(4a) Observation: Vehicles must be turned in prior to roll-up phase. At least one vehicle must be available for final, unforeseen, requirements.

(4b) Evaluation: Two possibilities exist to meet final transportation requirements. THP vehicles can be utilized until the last moment and if possible vehicles can be borrowed on hand receipt from other units not currently standing down.

(4c) Recommendation: That coordination be made at group level to hand receipt necessary vehicles from other units until stand-down is complete.

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