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11th ACR, 53
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 11TH ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96257

AVIC-WE

21 Oct 1969

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report of Enemy Captured Prior to the Battle of Northern BINH LONG Province during Operation KENTUCKY COUGAR.

SEE DISTRIBUTION:

Transmitted herewith is the Combat After Action Report of Enemy Captured by the Aero-Rifle Platoon, Air Cavalry Troop, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment on August 9, during Operation KENTUCKY COUGAR.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

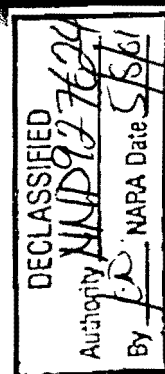
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1. (U) REFERENCES AND SOURCES: Taped interviews with all participants in the action.
2. (U) NAME OF ACTION: This action occurred prior to the Battle of Northern BINH LONG Province, while the 11th ACR was participating in Operation KENTUCKY COUGAR.
3. (U) INCLUSIVE DATES OF OPERATION: 8 and 9 August 1969.
4. (U) LOCATION OF OPERATION: Within a 150 meter circle with XT605905 as the center.
5. (U) GENERAL: The operation was designed to capture NVA's apparently dazed by a B-52 bomb strike.
6. (U) ORGANIZATION OUTLINE:

a. The narrative: This narrative is a detailed account of the Aero Rifle Platoon, 11th ACR action which captured six NVA's. It begins with the B-52 strike bomb damage assessment mission on 8 August, which first noted the enemy activity. It continues through 9 August when the ARP's captured six NVA's without being fired upon.

b. Intelligence: Intelligence gained from the captured NVA's is contained in the 11th ACR SITREP's and INTSUM's of 10 and 11 August. The information is also contained in the 11th ACR Combat After Action Report on the Battle of Northern BINH LONG Province, 11 and 13 August.

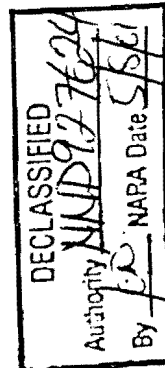
7. (C) THE ACTION:

a. 8 August: An NVA captured early in August warned military intelligence personnel that the 271st NVA Regiment had completed its resupply and was preparing to leave its sanctuary in Cambodia for operations in the AN LOC area. The increased visual reconnaissance resulting from the intelligence led to the detection of enemy movement. A B-52 bomb strike near the TON LE TROU Stream, by the Cambodian border, was aimed at interdicting the enemy movement.

The B-52 strike, at 1600 hours, 8 August, did not have the usual team of helicopters immediately following it to scout the area, assessing the bomb damage. The rain that day prevented CPT Theodore Duck, 1LT's Fred J. Van Orden and Stephen Moushogian from starting their bomb damage assessment mission until 1700 hours.

CPT Duck flew the command and control ship, a UH-1 helicopter which directs the smaller LOH models piloted by 1LT's Moushegian and Van Orden. CPT Duck, at 1500 feet altitude, directed the near sighted LOH's, which flew at tree-top level, to count the bodies and enemy equipment destroyed. The three ships were trailed by a Cobra gunship which can fire a total of 12,000

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7.62mm rounds a minute from its twin mini-guns.⁽¹⁾

At 1800 hours the LOH pilots saw a trail which led to six NVA's sitting by a tree, probably hoping they would not be seen. The LOH crewmen, Specialists 4 Bonestelle and Oulinane, soon dispatched all hopes of the six NVA's.

The NVA's had every reason to hope that they would hide successfully. If one has the misfortune to be in a B-52 strike and then has the fortune to live through it, could not the Fates as easily will your escape from helicopters? The NVA's wore short pants and American bush hats, except for one who had a complete khaki uniform. All had AK-47's or the ChiCom SKS.

The darkness and the waning fuel supply prevented further exploration of the enemy equipment noted. But the assessment concluded that the area was still a good target, and the B-52's struck again in the early morning hours on 9 August.

b. 9 August: The ground fog prevented CPT Duck's assessment team from taking off until 0930 hours.

CPT Duck directed the LOH's to the previous day's area only to find the bodies gone. Instead there was a fresh trail with four auxiliaries leading southeast to northwest. The trail crossed the TON LE TROU Stream at XT605905.

At 1100 hours 1LT Moushegian saw six NVA; his gunner killed one and seriously wounded another. The dead NVA had been sitting in the open by a mound of earth.

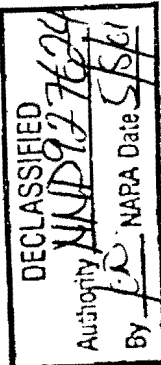
"Jesus Christ, there's five more of them over here--underneath the bamboo about five meters," yelled 1LT Van Orden three minutes later.

"Don't shoot unless they try to run," came the terse rejoinder from CPT Duck. "I want prisoners." The seemingly dazed state of mind of the NVA drew CPT Duck to the possibility of taking prisoners with little resistance, or risk.

1LT Van Orden spotted another 8 NVA about five meters from their weapons, and the LOH's kept all fourteen NVA under surveillance by flying low, tight circles while CPT Duck radioed the Air Cavalry for another LOH and Cobra (Pink Team).

CPT Duck, intending to insert the Air Cavalry Aero Rifle Platoon to take prisoners, radioed the 11th ACR Headquarters for a possible reaction force

⁽¹⁾ The B-52 bomb strikes are designed to destroy a rectangular swath, labeled a box, and bombs are dropped accordingly. The dirt blown from the craters carpets the jungle floor, making even footprints visible to the LOH's.



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to support the ARP's. He was told that only air support and artillery were available.

The Aero Rifle Platoon usually travels by UH-1 helicopters, so CPT Duck made landing approaches in a bomb crater. But a 75 foot tree standing in the crater made landing impossible. The nearest Landing Zone (LZ) was 3,000 meters away, too far for the ARP's to travel without a reaction force. (This LZ was simply a grass meadow, large enough to accomodate several UH-1's, which had been noted by the pilots.) The NVA's sat and watched the UH-1 spend a frustrated hour trying to land.

A LOH pilot in the Air Cavalry Operations Bunker listening to the radio exchanges suggested that a LOH minus the weight of its mini-gun could hold four ARP's. CPT Duck agreed, but insisted on eight volunteers for the two LOH's. 1LT Douglas Rich, platoon leader of the ARP's, asked for eight volunteers and received eighteen. He chose Specialists 4 John S. Montgomery, Edward M. Cook, Danny Bock and William K. Fargerstrom, and Privates First Class Bruce J. Stephens, Rothie Brackins, Jr., and Robert E. Lambdin.

While the ARP's prepared for the mission, four UH-1's flew to the LZ 3,000 meters east of the NVA and secured it. There the ARP's would transfer the prisoners from LOH to UH-1.

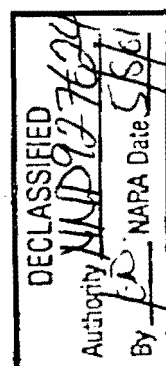
At 1100 hours, Colonel James H. Leach sent a Psychological Operations helicopter to the scene. The UH-1 PSYOP helicopter carries an interpreter and a complete loud speaker system. At 1130 hours Sergeant Think, the S-5 interpreter, began the traditional message of surrender (Chieu Hoi). Immediately sensing the NVA's death fears (the NVA propaganda equates Chieu Hoi and death) he assured them of fair treatment, food, and medical attention. He considered that perhaps only a loud command voice was needed to lead them out of the daze caused by the B-52 strike. He addressed the NVA individually by naming their location and alternately cajoling and commanding them to surrender. The helicopter was forced to leave for refueling at 1145 hours.⁽²⁾

At 1150 hours, CPT Duck ordered the LOH's to land. The lead LOH inserted four ARP's, who organized a hasty perimeter to protect the remaining ARP's. Another LOH indicated the NVA's position by smoke grenades.

SP4 Montgomery (point man) and PFC Stephens led the ARP's northeast 150 meters before capturing a NVA who tried to hide in the brush. Two more prisoners were taken and brought to PVT Brackins at this point, about 40 meters southwest of the smoke grenade. (See map.) PVT Brackins interrogated them in his limited Vietnamese, separating the officer from the enlisted men, searching

⁽²⁾ Although only one of the captured prisoners was found to be dazed by the bomb-strike, during the action the pilots and the S-5 assumed that their lack of fighting response was due to a dazed shock. Thus S-5's message was directed to that condition.

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hastily to remove their weapons. Intent on finding the size of the NVA forces in the area, he did not hear the radio calls of 1LT Moushegian and 1LT Van Orden.

The two LOH pilots were unaware of the captured prisoners, and were still circling the 14 NVAs, waiting for the ARP's to arrive and take them prisoner.

The ARP's left PVT's Brackins and Stephens to guard the prisoners and then split into pairs to search for the NVA. 1LT Rich and PVT Lambdin saw three NVA on the west bank of the stream as they approached from the east.

"Chieu Hoi, Chieu Hoi, CHIEU HOI!" 1LT Rich yelled, as one NVA brandished an AK-47 while the others faded into the jungle. After the two NVAs had left, the brandisher became the vanquished and walked up-stream to a narrower crossing. Slinging his rifle over his shoulder, the NVA started swimming across. 1LT Rich anticipated the strong current and waded out to meet the NVA. He grabbed the sinking NVA by the collar as he went under.

SP4 Cook joined PVT Lambdin on the bank as 1LT Rich waded into the water. The two surveyed the ridge, about thirty meters away, and saw 15 NVA aim at 1LT Rich as he entered the stream. Giving no sign of recognition to the NVA, the two ARP's simply waited. To their relief the NVA left the ridge when 1LT Rich grabbed the prisoner. SP4 Montgomery came to the bank and spotted a rice and weapons cache on the other side. SP4 Bock and Fargerstrom brought the other prisoners in, along with weapons and equipment. All the ARP's had noticed more NVA in the area, fading in and out of the light.

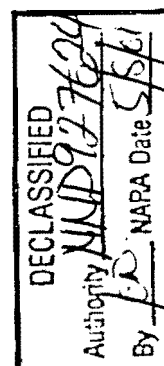
At 1220 SP4 Montgomery and three prisoners boarded the first LOH while SP4 Cook and SP4 Bock emptied three magazines into the ridge area where they had seen the 15 NVA. PVT Brackins and three prisoners boarded the second LOH; the remaining ARP's climbed into the next LOHs and flew to the LZ, where the waiting UH's hovered.

1LT Moushegian and 1LT Van Orden then expended their ammunition destroying the bunkers and caches. In the two days, August 8 and 9, the two pilots killed a total of 38 NVA. The ARP's had captured six NVAs without being fired upon.

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(3) This narrative account was compiled from taped interviews with everyone mentioned by name in the narrative.

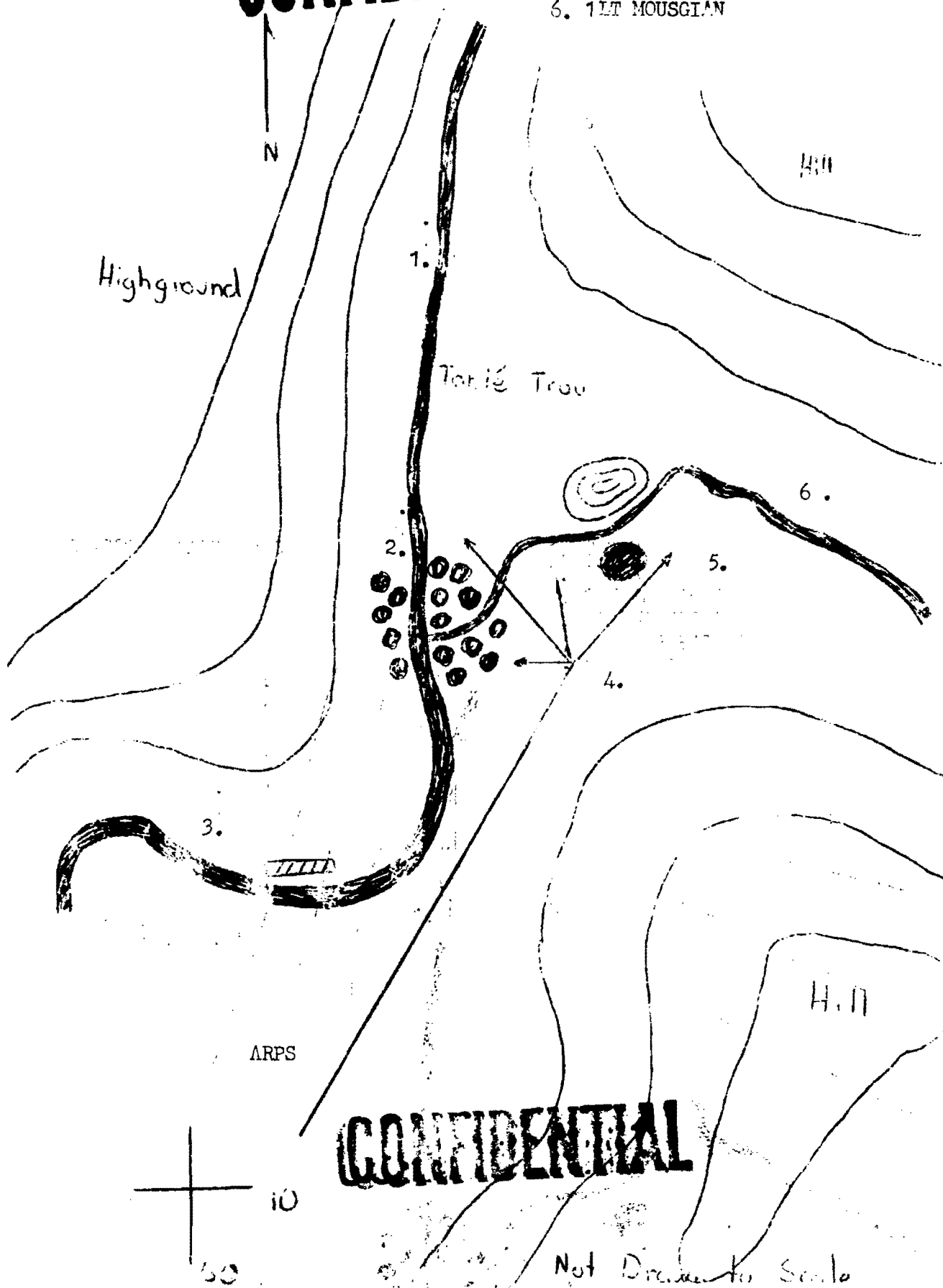
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THE ARPS CAPTURE OF SIX NVAS:

1. CPT DUCK
2. 1LT RICH & SP4 COOK
3. 1LT VAN ORDEN
4. SP4 MONTGOMERY & PVT BRACKINS
5. SP4 FERGERSTROM
6. 1LT MOUSGIAN

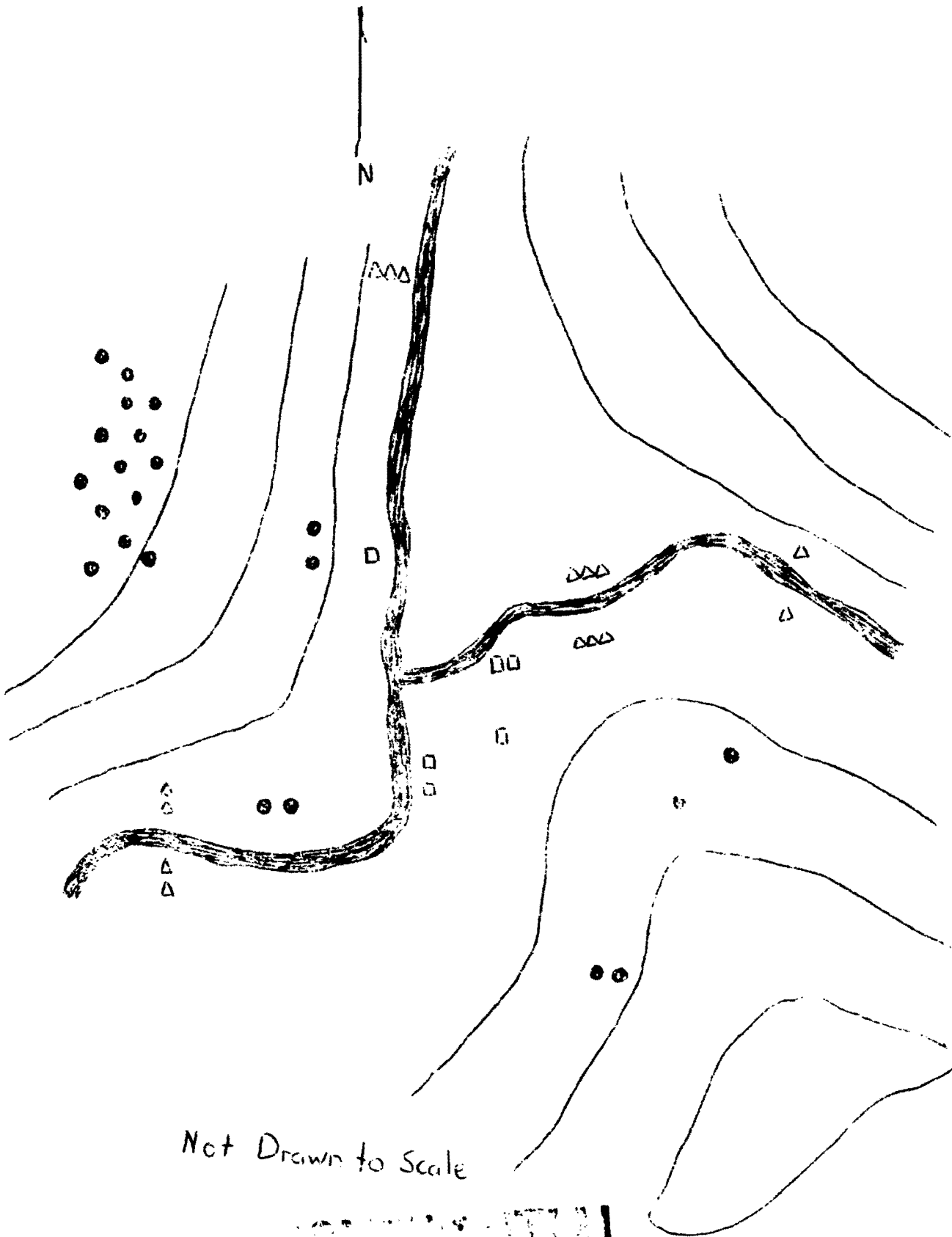
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THE ARPS CAPTURE OF SIX NVAS:

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- △ Denotes NVA KILLED
- Denotes NVA CAPTURED
- Denotes NVA SEEN ONLY



Not Drawn to Scale

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By *LD* NARA Date *5/8/01*