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28th MHD, AARs
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
28TH MILITARY HISTORY DETACHMENT
11TH ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96257

AVIC-WE

9 May 1970

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Interview Report

THRU: Commanding General
United States Army, Vietnam
ATTN: Command Historian
APO San Francisco 96375

TO: Headquarters
Department of the Army
Office of the Chief of Military History
Washington, D. C., 20315

1. NAME AND TYPE OF OPERATION: A reconnaissance mission in which B Troop, and D Company, First Squadron, 11th ACR, captured a NVA replacement school within 160 meters of Cambodia, taking 16 prisoners and killing 27 NVA.
2. DATE OF OPERATION: March 31, 1970.
3. LOCATION: Reference Map Series L607, Sheet Number 6132, RVN, (XT 027867).
4. PERSONS BEING INTERVIEWED: Captain Lynn J. Hunt, B Troop Commander; First Lieutenant Walter E. Chase, Third Platoon Leader; Sergeant First Class Terry A. Dotson, Third Platoon Sergeant; Staff Sergeant Norman T. Bellomy, Assistant Third Platoon Sergeant; and various members of B Troop.
5. INTERVIEWER: Enlisted personnel of the 28th Military History Detachment.
6. BACKGROUND: On March 30, an aerial visual reconnaissance spotted several dwellings and trails north of the B Troop NDP. Also, on March 30, the 919th Engineers finished a culvert bridge across the Suoi Da Ha River, which enabled B Troop to conduct reconnaissance north of their NDP.
7. SUPPORTING FORCES: Pink Teams, from the First Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division (AM), to whom the First Squadron was OPCON to, were used to intercept fleeing NVA. Their effectiveness was not known, however, for they arrived late in the contact.

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8. EXECUTION: On March 31, 1970, the First and Third Platoons of B Troop, 1/11th ACR, crossed the Suoi Ba Ha and began a reconnaissance to the north. The platoons moved in column formation, Third Platoon on the left and First Platoon on the right. The Third Platoon was led by Sheridan 3-8, commanded by Staff Sergeant Norman T. Bellomy. A tracked vehicle numbered 3-0 followed 3-8, and the third vehicle in line contained the platoon leader, First Lieutenant Walter E. Chase, and the platoon sergeant, Sergeant First Class Terry A. Dotson. Captain Lynn Hunt led the First Platoon in his ACAV. The Sheridan, 3-8, stayed ahead of the First Platoon's lead vehicle because of the difficulty in "busting" the jungle. The land by the boundary is flat, but the scrub and bamboo jungle is so dense that fifteen meters is the highest limit of visibility. The troop followed a small trail northward. Wide enough for two men abreast, the dusty trail was covered with Ho Chi Minh sandal prints, indicating the passage of an enemy platoon the night before. About 1030 hours, SSG Bellomy's Sheridan came to a Y-shaped intersection of trails. SSG Bellomy scanned the area and saw a large tree about thirty-five meters from the center of the "Y". Carved on the trunk was a diamond with a dot in the center. SSG Bellomy, because of past experience along the DMZ, knew this was the NVA symbol for an assembly point. He then radioed the information to 1LT Chase and proceeded slowly forward, warily eyeing the area. "You can smell dinks, no matter what anybody says," commented CPT Hunt afterward. The troopers noticed numerous fighting positions as they advanced about 35 meters north to the first hootch. The dwelling was large and roofed with thatched leaves which had been folded in half and stitched together. The dwelling was well constructed in oriental style, with curving roof-ends and lumbered frame of local materials. Behemoth the hootch was a bunker (15'x 20'x6') with good overhead cover. The Blackhorse troopers did not notice the ground level bunkers until a NVA soldier stuck his head out of the side and fired a RPG at Sheridan 3-8. Fortunately for SSG Bellomy, the round struck a tree which was between him and the bunker. Although the round exploded only five feet away, burning him and hitting him with shrapnel, his wounds were generally mild. A cannister round "blew the hootch away". Troopers dismounted and killed three NVA in the bunker with fragmentation grenades. Other troopers nearby fired from their vehicles.

Meanwhile, in the First Platoon, about 15 meters east of the Third, the 1-6 track had driven beside a well camouflaged bunker without anyone seeing it. As 1-6 passed, a NVA fired a 7.62mm light Chicom machinegun at it, hitting the rear of the track only. The rear gunner fired, and CPT Hunt immediately ordered his track driven over the bunker. The bunker was crushed and the troopers dismounted and dug out five prisoners who had been buried alive.

The troop had entered east of the main complex, so the two platoons turned in a herringbone pattern once they were three-quarters of the way in. About 1200 hours, D Company, which had been about 200 meters behind B Troop, advanced into the complex. One tank was hit by a RPG, wounding three men. D Company came on line and fired straight ahead. Their cannister rounds cleared the area. Because B Troop had dismounted men on the right flank of D Company, the tanks could only fire directly ahead. Some tankers thought that some RPG rounds had come from the area near B Troop, however.

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SSG Bellomy's Sheridan advanced to another bunker, where again a NVA stuck his head out. The loader shot him in the head with a M-16. SSG Bellomy commented, "It was the first one he (the loader) ever got, he was yelling, 'Sarge, I got one, I got one' - thought he was going to drag me out of the TC to see it." The dismounted men killed two more NVA in the bunker with fragmentation grenades.

Meanwhile, SFC Dotson saw a NVA in a hootch on the left and killed him with fire from the .50 caliber machinegun. He then dismounted and used a fragmentation grenade to kill two NVA still inside. Later when the bunker was searched the troopers found a RPG and pistol. There was a large hootch about ten meters in front of 1LT Chase's track. SFC Dotson went over to it and looked into a crack between the boards - and saw a face, with eyes shut. Then one eye opened. With his .45 caliber pistol pointed directly at the eye, SFC Dotson softly coaxed the NVA out. He then persuaded two more NVA to come out of the bunker.

The first NVA to leave the bunker at SFC Dotson's coaxing was a young, tall NVA Lieutenant. He was afraid. "He knew I had him dead to rights," said SFC Dotson. The NVA was dirty from hiding in the bunker. He wore the solid green uniform that fades gray from washing. Although he wore no rank insignia, badges and medals were found inside the bunker.

Third Platoon continued on and crushed the next bunker, killing two NVA. The troopers found two bags of 60mm rounds, a 60mm mortar tube, medical supplies and a few documents. About twenty-five meters farther, the troopers came upon a large hootch that obviously had been a classroom. The classroom had large benches, papers and various training aids. One of the training aids was a half-silhouette of a man, quite like the targets used in basic training in the US. The silhouette had a backing of reeds, and a block plastic front. Around the silhouette were tiny clay balls. Upon further searching, troopers found a sling-shot. The exact use of these aids are unknown.) Highly significant to the 11th ACB was the finding of photographs of an ACV, a LOH, a UH-1, and a Cobra. On the back of each photograph was written the most vulnerable spots of each, and where to aim an RPG. Also found was a complete brochure about the 1st Cav Div.

First Platoon had continued searching bunkers and had taken seven prisoners from one bunker. The ARVN interpreter with B Troop searched beyond the complex to a trench line in the rear. The trench had overhead cover. The ARVN interpreter (nick-named "Mac" by B Troopers) saw a NVA Lieutenant who had dug a hole in the side of the trench, trying to hide. He persuaded the NVA to come out. Near-by troopers from the First Platoon helped the wounded NVA to his feet. He was wounded in the chest, and had numerous shrapnel wounds. The interpreter turned to lead the man away, but the NVA began choking him from behind. First Lieutenant Larry D. Sergeant struck the prisoner with the butt of his M-16, but the determined NVA continued choking Mac. Two more sharp blows finally stopped the NVA, and although they didn't knock the NVA down, the last blow broke the stock of the rifle. The wounded prisoner was subdued and then dusted-off. "Mac" suffered bruises.

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From the interrogation of the first prisoners, CPT Hunt learned that the Company Commander and Political Officer had escaped earlier. He radioed for a Pink Team which arrived about 1400 hours and began to reconnoiter the surrounding area.

After the initial RPGs and small-arms fire, enemy response was nothing. The enemy was surprisingly poorly armed. B Troopers found only one RPG and launcher, four SKS rifles, one light machinegun, a 60mm mortar tube and rounds, and a pistol. B Troop had dismounted and captured 16 prisoners, without suffering a single casualty. D Troop's destructive fires aided in killing the 27 NVA who refused capture.

The complex, which included a large out-door dining area complete with picnic tables and chairs, was an NVA replacement school. One of the large hootches was for military training, the other for political training. The school received men from infiltration groups and trained them before sending them to units of the 272nd VC Regiment. The intelligence gained was small; most of the prisoners were new in country, and could provide only aliases for the 272nd, rather than enemy intentions. That the 272nd VC Regiment had moved from their former positions to the Dog's Head was good intelligence. The 272nd VC Regiment had followed the First Squadron to the Dog's Head.

B Troop stayed in the complex until about 1700 hours, continually checking the area. They then moved to a NDP a few hundred meters away.

CPT Hunt commented on the troop's performance, " I thought my men displayed high judgment in discriminating between those who could be taken alive and those who showed resistance, thus resulting in the maximum number of prisoners captured. You can add, " he smiled, "..... I think they are the best damn troc in the Regiment."

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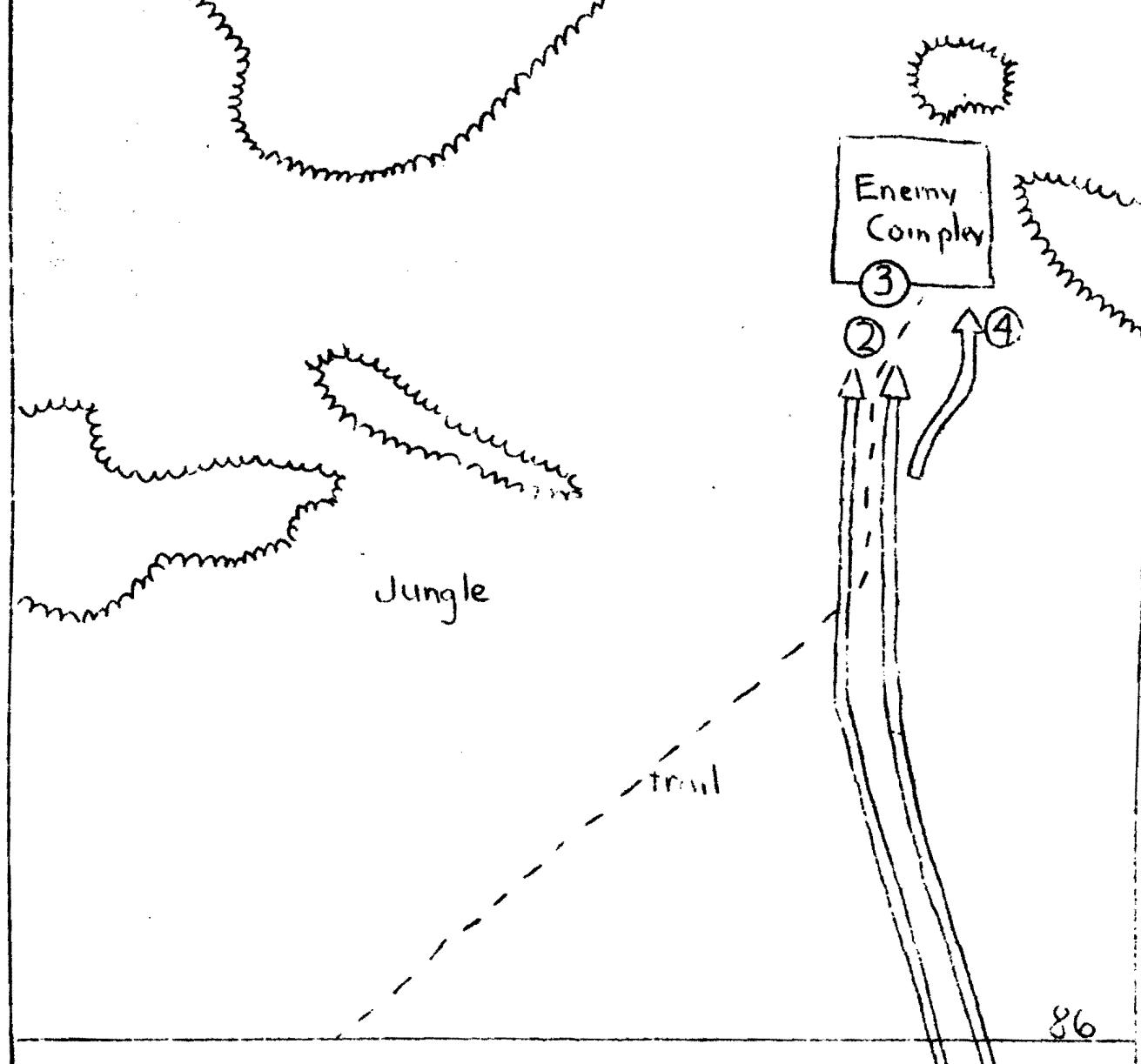
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Sketch 1 (Movement into area)

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02 ① B Troop crossed the Suoi Ba Ha at this culvert crossing and proceeded north. In column (3rd Platoon on left & 1st Platoon on right.)

② They drew RPG fire at this point.

③ B Troop's tracks "herringboned" while some men searched the bunkers on foot.

④ D Company came to this location about an hour after B Troop began searching (1200 hours). They drew fire, deployed on line, and fired to their front.

① Culver.

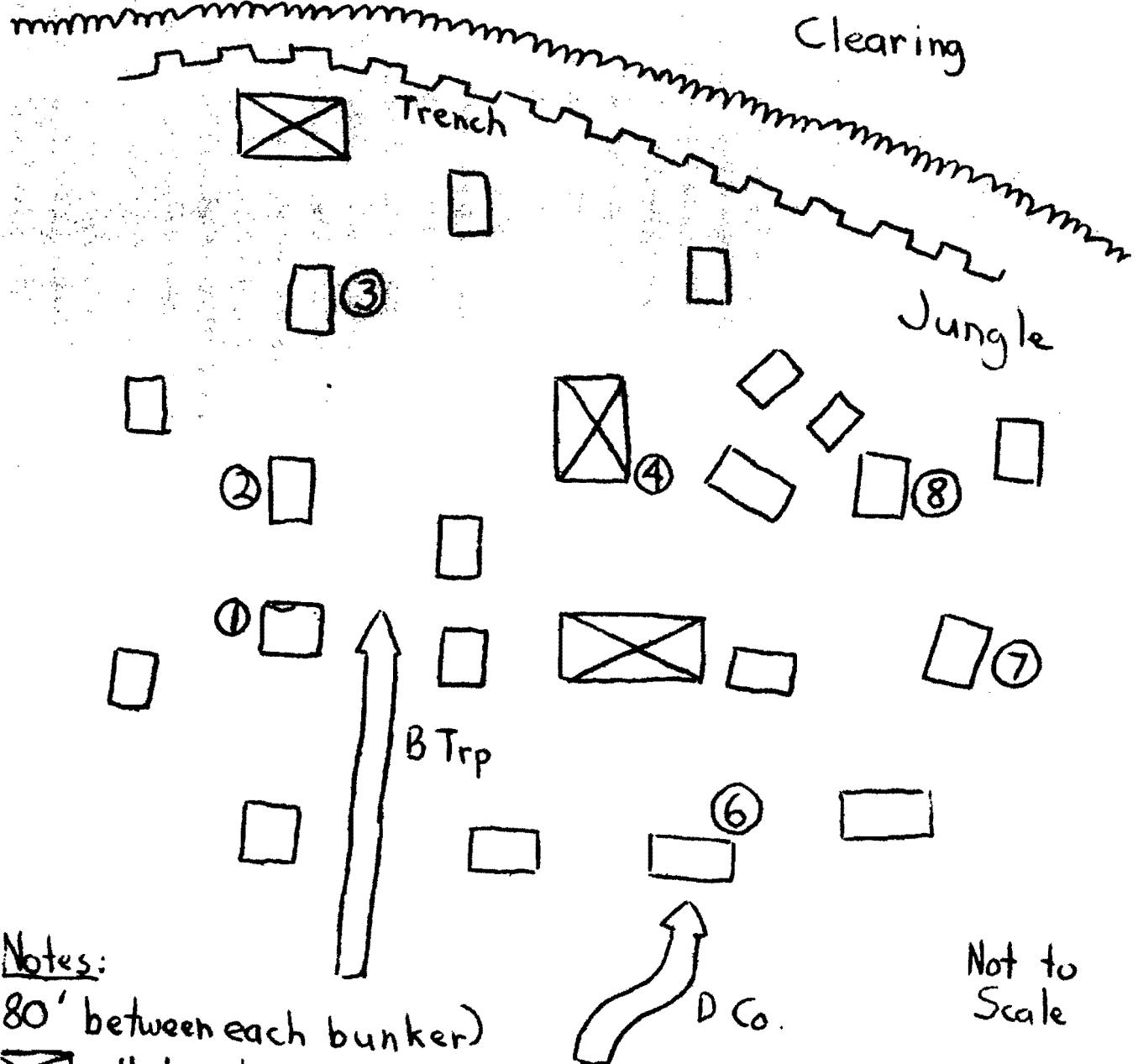
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Sketch 2

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Notes:

80' between each bunker)

 Huts above ground (40' x 30'). These had bunkers beneath.

 Bunkers underground (15' x 20' x 6')

① 4 NVA KIA

⑤ Building for political classes

② 4 NVA KIA, 1 PW

⑥ Location from which RPG fire

③ 3 NVA KIA

⑦ 7 PWs

④ Building for military classes.

⑧ 3 PWs

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