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COMBAT OPERATIONS AFTER ACTION REPORT

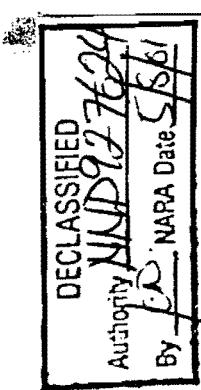
OPERATION CLIFTON CORRAL



11TH ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT

Downgraded at 3 Year
Intervals; Declassified
After 12 Years.
DOD Dir 5200.10

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CONFIDENTIAL1. (U) REFERENCES:

- a. 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment OPORD 2-68 (CLIFTON CORRAL), 6 Apr 68.
- b. 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment OPORD 4-68 (TOAN THANG), 14 Apr 68.
- c. Maps, Vietnam, 1:100,000, Series L6C7, Sheet Numbers 6331, 6332, 6333, 6431, 6432, 6433.

2. (U) TYPE OF OPERATION: Operation CLIFTON CORRAL, executed as part of Campaign TOAN THANG, was an armored cavalry raid and a reconnaissance in force operation.

3. (U) DATES OF OPERATION: The CLIFTON CORRAL portion of TOAN THANG was conducted 15 to 26 Apr 68.

4. (U) LOCATION: the area of operations extended along the axis Phuoc Vinh (XT9648) - Dong Xoai (XT0776) - Buanard (XT2643) to the area east of the Be River and southeasterly into War Zone D.

5. (U) CONTROL HEADQUARTERS: The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment conducted CLIFTON CORRAL under the operational control of Headquarters, II Field Force, Vietnam.

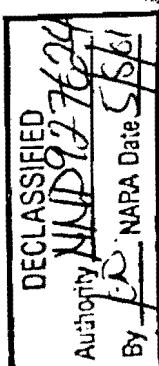
6. (U) REPORTING OFFICER: The reporting officer is Colonel Charles R. Gorder, Commanding Officer, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

7. (C) INTELLIGENCE:

a. General: Since the TET offensive, enemy activity in Military Region 10 (Binh Long and Phuoc Long Provinces) had been light. Phuoc Long Province had been almost stripped of known enemy units. Resupply for the units around Saigon had been shuttled through the province by the 81st and 86th Rear Service Groups (vic YU2648 and YT2655, respectively). Replacements were being processed in greater numbers than ever before into the 5th Viet Cong Division and the 7th and 9th NVA Divisions by the 76th Replacement Regiment (vic YU1232).

b. Order of Battle: Two main force battalions, the 211th and the 212th, had been identified in the area near Song Be. These units were from a regimental size infiltration group that had split its third battalion (the 213t to fill out the ranks of the 211th and the 212th). Several local force companies operated in Phuoc Long Province. Three of these companies, the C-270, C-272 and C-273 formed a concentrated provincial battalion. It was conceivable that up to three infiltration groups of regimental size could be providing security and labor for the new VC supply route. The 7th NVA Division, with two regiments, was located in Binh Duong Province. They appeared to be oriented on Saigon but could possibly have been diverted toward IR-10. The 275th Regiment of the 5th VC Division was probably conducting resupply activities as far north as Phuoc Long Province. No other known enemy units were available for immediate reinforcement of Phuoc Long Province.

c. Specific Situation: In mid-March 68 Headquarters, II Field Force, Vietnam, directed visual and photographic reconnaissance as well as Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol activity into Phuoc Long Province. This reconnaissance effort discovered the presence of what appeared to be a key VC supply route through the province east of the Be River. It appeared that the road had been

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constructed under the jungle canopy in order to provide a vehicular route from Cambodia to War Zone D. ARVN reconnoiter teams had reported observing bulldozers and eleven M113 type tracked vehicles in the area east of the Be River. The VC disregard for secrecy in the construction of the road was believed to be caused by stringent requirements for resupply of the units around Saigon.

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 d. Capabilities: Since acute resupply requirements appear to have caused the VC to sacrifice surprise, it was likely that they would attempt to defend against interdiction of the road by allied forces. Attacks by fire on night laager positions, probing attacks and tank-killer teams were to be expected. Though mining was expected initially to be very light north of Dong Xoai, it was anticipated that the enemy would quickly begin to use anti-tank mines to slow down friendly track movement along lines of communication which would become more and more limited as the monsoons set in in late April and early May.

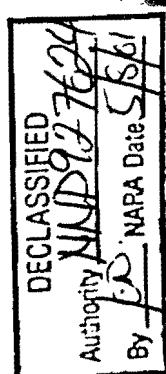
e. Vulnerabilities: Friendly activity could undoubtedly disrupt normal resupply, thereby putting a strain on the VC units in central III Corps Tactical Zone. Supply caches too large to be moved quickly could be captured. Infiltrating replacements could be forced into the battle although the enemy was most likely to avoid fixed contact in which U.S. fire superiority could be more effectively employed.

8. (C) MISSION: The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (minus) was to conduct a raid to interdict the enemy line of communications extending from Phuoc Vinh to Dong Xoai to Buanard in the area east of the Be River and in War Zone D and to locate and destroy enemy forces and installations in these areas.

9. (C) CONCEPT OF OPERATION: The 11th ACR was to execute an armored raid to secure deep objectives along the Phuoc Vinh - Dong Xoai - Buanard axis and in the area east of the Be River from which it could conduct reconnaissance in force operations to entrap and destroy enemy forces and equipment. The 1st Squadron was to be the lead unit, followed by the 3rd Squadron, in coordination with the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division. (See Annex A - Task Organization.)

On 6 Apr 68 the preparatory deception phase for Operation CLIFTON CORRAL was put into effect. On 0617Z 6 Apr 68 the 2nd Squadron was released from OPCO to the 1st Infantry Division and road marched from its former Area of Operation vic Ben Cat (XT7433) to Blackhorse Base Camp, closing at 2002H. The 2nd Squadron also secured the movement of the Regimental Command Post from Bien Hoa to Blackhorse on 6 Apr. Rather than have the 2nd Squadron attack north directly from Ben Cat into the CLIFTON CORRAL Area of Operations, the move back to Blackhorse was designed to disguise the intentions of the regiment in regard to this objective and to catch the enemy off guard. As a continuance of this deception operation, on 10 Apr 68 the 3rd Squadron was released from its direct support mission to the 25th ARVN Infantry Division and began its tactical road march to Blackhorse Base Camp at 110004H Apr to conduct maintenance and training in preparation for future operations. Also on 10 Apr the 1st Squadron relinquished responsibility for the security of Blackhorse Base Camp, Gia Ray, the Blackhorse to Long Binh convoy and as a Ready Reaction Force for the Long Binh/Bien Hoa complex, and these duties were assumed by the 2nd Squadron. This freed the 1st Squadron for maintenance and training in preparation for future operations. During the period 11-14 Apr the 1st and 3rd Squadrons prepared for an armored raid into this suspected logistical enclave in MR-10 which was believed to be the main avenue for supplies to the VC/NVA forces threatening the Saigon area.

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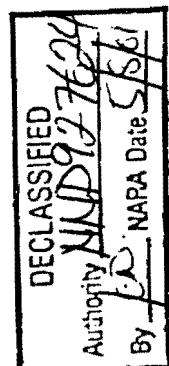


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The concept of the move to the area of operations on 15 Apr was for a rapidly executed thrust to secure objectives 85 miles and 115 miles north of Blackhorse Base Camp. The deception and speed employed in this concept were designed to catch the enemy unprepared and to locate and destroy the maximum amount of enemy installations and equipment prior to his anticipated mining activity. The operation was to be conducted in three phases: Phase I was targeted on the recently located route extending through Phuoc Long Province east of the Be River in a generally southerly direction over which the enemy had been moving supplies from Cambodia. The initial mission of the regiment was to locate and destroy this supply avenue. Phase II of the operation called for the regiment to conduct reconnaissance in force operations to discover any continuation of this logistical route to the south. Phase III directed the regimental RIF operations into War Zone D still further south of this initial AO. The projected duration of the overall operation was two to three weeks.

10. (C) EXECUTION: At 150200H Apr, the 1st Squadron, the lead unit of the regimental march column, began its rapid move from Blackhorse Base Camp to the initial CLIFTON CORRAL Area of Operations. (See Annex B - Operations Overlay). The 3rd Squadron, accompanied by the Regimental Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, followed, departing Blackhorse at 0330H. The Air Cavalry Troop provided two Heavy Fire Teams as air cover for the march squadrons the entire length of their route. The cavalry raid into AO Allons carried the regiment through dense jungle, bamboo thickets, and unimproved roads. The route was obstructed by numerous unbridged waterways, causing the 919th Engineer Company (Armored) to prepare five AVIF sites and two expedient crossing sites on the initial thrust north. Refueling arrangements for the march north were particularly well-planned and smoothly executed. For emergency refueling between Blackhorse and Phuoc Vinh, the squadrons carried their organic wheeled fuel vehicles. At Phuoc Vinh a regimental refueling point was established to insure that every vehicle would be fully prepared for the march north into the AO. On a small horseshoe turn-off adjoining the regular march route, two 10,000-gallon fuel tankers were positioned. One contained diesel fuel, and the other gasoline, both having five hoses to facilitate servicing a large number of vehicles simultaneously. As the vehicles refueled they moved past the fuel point to an assembly area, avoiding congestion at the fuel site. This arrangement worked satisfactorily, and no problems were encountered in refueling the regiment on the move to AO Allons.

Attacking through the Phuoc Vinh - Dong Xoai - Bunard axis, the 11th ACR dashed into enemy-controlled areas, seizing Objective 1 at Tap Tak (YU 2000), Objective 2 at Bunard (YU2789) and establishing the Regimental Command Group at Camp Bunard. In a particularly daring move, the 1st Squadron took maximum advantage of the surprise obtained by pushing a trooper over a demolished bridge and marched an additional 20 kms in order to seize infantry landing zones in the heart of the target area. On 16 Apr, the 1/18th Infantry was airlifted from the Song Be Airstrip into AO Allons Blue (vic YU3215) where the 1st Squadron had secured a landing zone for the air-assault. Elements of the 1/18th Infantry were cross-attached with elements from both the 1st and 3rd Squadrons, and the three balanced teams, each with two armor and one infantry elements, began RIF operations in AO Allons. Bicycles began to appear in great numbers. As the 1st Squadron moved north on 16 Apr, they encountered several hundred lined up in rows; demolishing what they could, they continued on their mission to the north and alerted the 3rd Squadron of the find. Within several hours, when the 3rd Squadron arrived at the site, the enemy had removed approximately half of the find. On 18 Apr the 1st Squadron discovered an enemy bunker complex in the center of AO Allons Yellow (vic YU368120) which contained 13 bicycles as well as countless bicycle repair tools and parts. From 15-21 Apr a total of 16

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Bicycles were either captured or destroyed in the numerous enemy base camps that were located in the area. These pack vehicles were probably from the Transportation Battalion, 86th Rear Service Group.

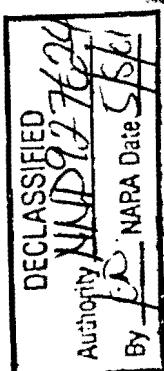
At 181020H Apr M Company, 3rd Squadron, while supporting the 1/18th Infantry, received small arms and RPG fire from an unidentified VC force of unknown size vic YU319167. The fight lasted only three minutes before the enemy broke contact and withdrew. Five US personnel were wounded, and one tank was slightly damaged. VC Losses were unknown. At 190945H Apr B Troop, 1st Squadron, in support of the 1/18th Infantry, received small arms, automatic weapons and RPG fire from an unidentified VC force of unknown size vic YU342170. The enemy force was believed to have been composed of personnel from the 211th and the 212th Main Force Battalions. Fire was returned with unknown results while artillery, TAC air and light fire teams supported. The enemy broke contact at 1055H and withdrew north. VC losses were unknown while US forces suffered three killed, 21 wounded and two ACAV's slightly damaged.

The regiment moved virtually at will throughout the Area of Operations, occasionally being confronted by harassing tank-killer teams. There were no additional major engagements during the period of reconnaissance in force operations in AO Allons. However, enemy anti-aircraft fire was particularly frequent and intensive in MR-10. This was due, at least in part, to the extensive friendly air activity in the area to include the regiment's Air Cavalry Troop, the regimental FAC, B/3/17th Cavalry, as well as a large number of air strike craft and US Air Force and Army resupply craft.

By 161800H Apr B Troop, 1st Squadron, had reached the northern terminus of the road (vic YU308188) within the target area. The route was capable of supporting wheeled or tracked vehicle traffic. The road had overhead bamboo cover and was two feet wider than an ACAV. The route showed evidence of recent use, mostly by bicycle traffic. Numerous smaller access routes were also located near the main road.

The exploration of the road network east of the Be River in Phuoc Long Province revealed it to be a well-used logistical/infiltration axis. There was little evidence of wheeled or tracked vehicle traffic along the route. Although the hulls of three destroyed trucks were found, two of these had been destroyed months or even years prior to the operation. The destruction or capture of numerous bicycles by regimental forces during their searches indicated that this was the primary means of logistical movement. The location of several base areas and fortifications revealed an extensive enemy communication network.

At 201950H Apr the regiment was unexpectedly ordered to return to the Long Binh/Bien Hoa area on 21 Apr as a security and ready reaction force for II Field Force in preparation for the suspected second attempt on offensive against Saigon and the surrounding key installations. As a result of the brief tenure of the operation, the newly constructed end run route was not investigated to the fullest extent. The mission of destroying the supply route was tasked upon the 5th Special Forces Group at Camp Bunnard. On 21 Apr the 3rd Squadron moved from AO Allons Silver to Phu Loi (XT835148) by way of Dong Xoai and Phuoc Vinh, becoming OPCON to the 1st Infantry Division at 220820H Apr as it crossed the Be River in vic XT9344. The 1st Squadron departed AO Allons Yellow for Dong Xoai on 21 Apr and from there, in a surprise move to the east, drove along Highway 322 to destroy VC/NVA forces in AO Peach, penetrating War Zone D with negative contact. The lead element reached the Dong Nai River at 221640H Apr and secured a fire support base at YT253280. During 1st Squadron reconnaissance in force operations on 23-24 Apr, enemy contact failed to materialize; however, evidence of a large enemy logistical network in this area was uncovered by the squadron. Chicom weapons, repair parts, enemy ammunition cases and rafts for movement along the Dong Nai River as well as numerous bunker complexes were located and

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captured or destroyed.

At 250650H Apr the 1st Squadron and the Regimental Command Group moved from AO Peach to a float bridge crossing on the Dong Nai River vic YT314261. This float bridge, the largest ever constructed in Vietnam to date, spanning 925 feet, was installed for the hasty crossing of the regiment by the 168th Engineer Battalion (Combat) in 48 hours. The Regimental Command Group and the 1st Squadron closed into the Long Binh/Bien Hoa complex at 251655H Apr. A force consisting of 1/18th Infantry, G Troop, 2nd Squadron and A/168th Engineers was left to secure the crossing site after the regiment (-) had crossed. At 252358H Apr an unidentified enemy force attacked this group with small arms, automatic weapons, RPG and 82mm mortar fire. Fire was immediately returned and continued until 260050H Apr when contact was broken. During the battle TAC air, artillery and light fire teams supported friendly units. Two US personnel were killed, two trucks were destroyed, and two ACAV's and four trucks were damaged. The enemy lost ten men by body count with 16 possible KIA's and one POW. One small arm, two crew-served weapons and 22 grenades were captured

11. (C) ENGINEER SUPPORT:

a. The 1st Platoon, 919th Engineer Company, provided support to the 1st Squadron. The platoon assisted in preparing three AVLB sites and two expedient crossing sites on the initial move north. On the move south through War Zone D, the 1st Platoon was given the mission of negotiating any obstacles in order to expedite the move of the combat elements accompanying it through the area. This required eight hours of tank-dozer effort preparing 14 expedient crossing sites. One key crossing was a 70-foot ravine which was impossible to by-pass.

b. The 2nd Platoon, 919th Engineer Company, supported the 3rd Squadron. The platoon assisted in preparing two AVLB sites on the initial thrust north. Operating in AO Allons Silver the platoon provided support in the destruction of over 300 enemy fortifications.

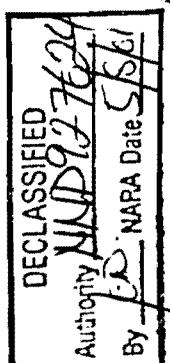
12. (FONO) LOGISTICAL SUPPORT:

a. Class I, II, IV: During the period 15-21 Apr the regiment was supplied with Class I, II and IV supplies by the 229th Supply and Service Company located at Phuoc Vinh. The supplies were flown from Phuoc Vinh to regimental field locations by CH-47. There were 1,172 missions flown transporting 2,024.9 tons of cargo and 1,591 passengers during 417.7 hours of flying time.

b. Class III and V: During the period 15-21 Apr the regiment was supplied with Class III and V supplies by the 64th Quartermaster Battalion in Long Binh. The supplies were flown into Camp Bunard by C-130 aircraft. Forty-nine C-130 sorties flew 645 tons of supplies into Bunard. From Bunard these Class III and V supplies were flown to regimental field locations by CH-47 aircraft. 152 sorties were flown forward from Bunard, transporting 314 tons of equipment.

c. During the move toward the Long Binh/Bien Hoa complex on 22 Apr, the regimental forces were supplied with Class I - V by CH-47 aircraft from supply points in Bien Hoa. A total of 24 CH-47 missions were flown to the regiment on 22 Apr. At Bunard on 21 Apr there were 331 tons of III and V supplies stockpiled for the anticipated use of the regiment in AO Allons. On 21 and 22 Apr there were 25 C-130 sorties to evacuate these supplies from Bunard.

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d. During the operation, there was one C-123 flight daily between Blackhorse Base Camp and Phuoc Vinh for the transportation of mail and personnel.

e. Problem Areas:

(1) A problem existed in transporting the flamethrower service units from Bunard back to Phuoc Vinh when the regiment was ordered to move out of AQ Allons on 22 Apr. The 2½-ton trucks on which the flamethrower service units were mounted could not negotiate the terrain between Bunard and Phuoc Vinh. Although these units were not filled with flamethrower chemicals at Bunard and hence were completely safe, the Air Force refused to transport them unless they were first steamed out, which was an impossibility. The problem was solved by scheduling three flying crane sorties to transport the units. This incident clearly pointed out the need for a tracked vehicle capable of transporting the flamethrower service unit to any location trafficable to the organic M132A1 Flamethrower.

(2) The Air Force forklifts available at Bunard were not able to negotiate the rough terrain between the runways servicing C-130 aircraft and the loading pads for CH-47 aircraft. The distance separating these areas was approximately 300 feet over which all of the ammunition for the squadrons had to be carried by hand. A rough-terrain type forklift with extra large wheels suitable for off-runway terrain could have solved this problem.

13. (c) RESULTS:

Friendly Losses

| | | |
|------------|-----|-----|
| Personnel: | KIA | WIA |
| | 6 | 66 |

Equipment: Damaged:

| | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| M48A3 | ACAV | Bridge Boat | Bridge Truck | 3/4-Ton Tr. |
| 2 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| 5-Ton Truck | Lowboy Truck | | | |
| 1 | 2 | | | |

Destroyed:

| | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Bridge Truck | ½-Ton Truck | Bridge Boat |
| 1 | 1 | 1 |

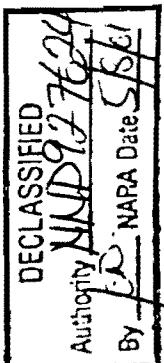
Enemy Losses

| | | | | |
|------------|----------|----------|------------|------------|
| Personnel: | KIA (BC) | KIA (BC) | KIA (Poss) | KIA (Poss) |
| | 13 | 16 | 16 | 21 |

Equipment: Destroyed:

| | | |
|---------|----------|----------|
| Sampans | Rice | Bicycles |
| 2 | 2225 lbs | 102 |

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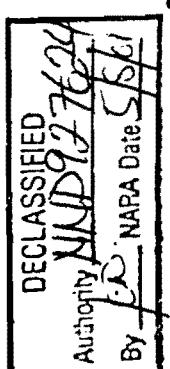
Captured:

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <u>Bicycles</u> 53 | <u>AK-47</u> 3 | <u>AK-50</u> 5 | <u>RPG-2 Launcher</u> 3 | <u>RPG-2 Rds</u> 29 |
| <u>RPG-2 Boosters</u> 26 | <u>Med Supplies</u> 22 lbs. | <u>SA Ammo</u> 650 rds | <u>12.7mm. Ammo</u> 50 rds | |
| <u>M16 Ammo</u> 150 rds | <u>Gren</u> 27 | <u>Doc</u> 5 lbs | <u>120mm. Mort</u> 1 | <u>82mm. Mort</u> 21 |
| <u>75mm. RR rds</u> 142 | <u>Rice</u> 615 lbs | <u>AT Mines</u> 1 | <u>.51 Cal Ammo</u> 50 rds | |

14. (C) COMMANDER'S ASSESSMENT: The eleven days of this operation demonstrate clearly the capabilities and limitations of recent armor operation in Vietnam. Given careful planning and route selection, armor can make rapid surprise moves deep into enemy territory. However, such moves must be accompanied by complete and imaginative logistical planning. Upon arrival in the target area, the employment of the tracked vehicles will depend entirely on the terrain. In this operation both in the vicinity of Song Be and also in War Zone D, it was necessary to spend several days in jungle-busting preparation of the area for more rapid movement in following days. Additionally, since the regimental operations in the vicinity of Loc Ninh, December 1967, the enemy reaction to armor units has been to evade contact. On this operation, the enemy also avoided decisive engagement and sought to oppose the friendly force only by use of tank-killer teams: three men armed with an RPG-2 and two AK-47's. When pressed by speedy armor operations, the enemy will abandon his stores and equipment. To fix and to defeat the enemy soldier requires much time and the development of an interdiction plan utilizing all available assets of air, artillery, and maneuver elements. Terrain obstacles, especially rivers which permit easy aerial surveillance both day and night become particularly advantageous to friendly forces at this moment. Thus, it is again apparent that there are no new tricks for armor operations in Vietnam; success depends upon sound logistical planning and the skillful integration of all available intelligence as well as maneuver and fire support elements.

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Initial Task Organization
(150200H - 220830H Apr 68)

1st Squadron, 11th ACR
1st Plat, 919th Engr Co

3rd Squadron, 11th ACR
2nd Plat, 919th Engr Co

1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division

Battery D, 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery

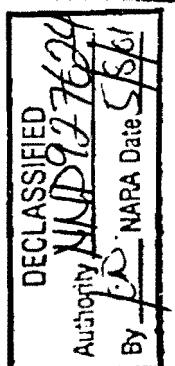
Regimental Control

Hq Trp, 11th ACR
919th Engr Co
409th RR Det
541st MI Det
37th Med Co
398th Trans Det (CHFM)
506th S&S Co (Spt)
551st Lt Maint Co (Spt)
11th TACP

Subsequent Task Organization
(220830H - 251655H Apr 68)

Same as above with deletion of the 3rd Squadron and the 2nd Plat, 919th Engr Co

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2d Squadron 1st Armored Cavalry Regiment
ACTION REPORT

1 JAN 67 - 6 APR 68

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