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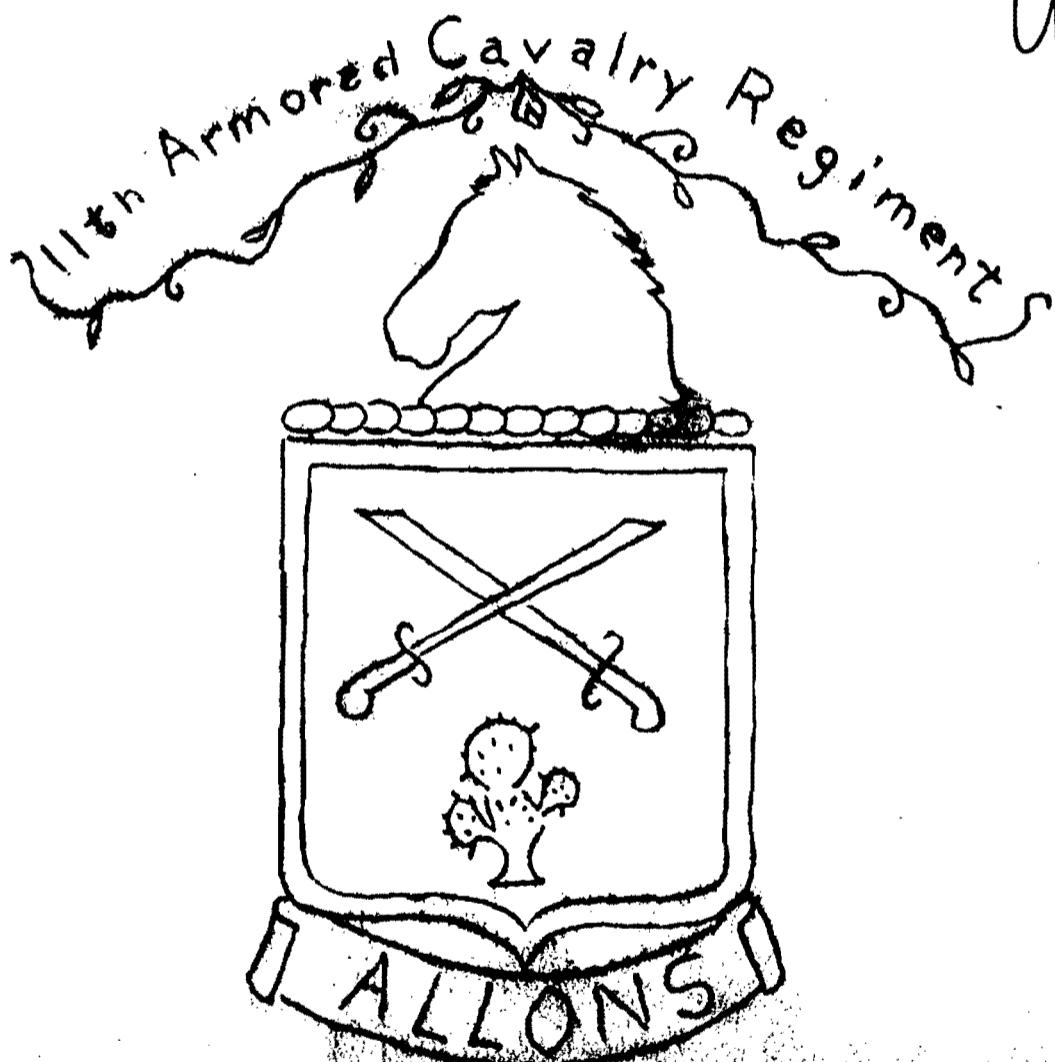
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COMBAT OPERATIONS AFTER ACTION REPORT

OPERATION QUICKSILVER

QJ4



Downgraded at 3 Year
Intervals Declassified
After 12 Years
DDU PIR 5200.10

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1. (U) REFERENCES:

a. 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment CPORD 27-67 (Operation QUICK-~~SILVER~~), 4 Dec 67.

b. Maps, Vietnam, 1:50,000, Series L7014, Sheets 6331 III, 6330 I, IV; 6430 IV; 6331 I, II, and IV.

2. (U) TYPE OF OPERATION: QUICKSILVER was primarily a route security operation with limited cordon and search and reconnaissance in force operations.

3. (U) DATES OF OPERATION: 4-21 Dec 67.

4. (U) LOCATION OF OPERATION: QUICKSILVER was conducted along the portions of Highways 7B, 2A, and 1A which form a convoy route between Ben Cat (XT7433) and Phuoc Vinh (XT9649).

5. (U) CONTROL HEADQUARTERS: QUICKSILVER was controlled by Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division.

6. REPORTING OFFICER: The reporting officer is Colonel Jack MacFarlane, Commanding Officer, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

7. (C) GENERAL: Operation QUICKSILVER was initiated to secure Route ZINC between Ben Cat and Phuoc Vinh for the movement of logistical/personnel convoys of the 101st Airborne Division. This area was the operating territory of an aggressive Viet Cong local force which had saturated the convoy route and adjacent areas with mines. In addition to route security, limited cordon and search and reconnaissance in force missions were performed by the 1st and 2nd Squadrons, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

For Task Organization, see Annex A.

8. (C) INTELLIGENCE:

a. Order of Battle:

(1) Viet Cong Main Force:

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Probable Location</u>
7th NVA Div	XT5890 - Fish Hook Region
5th VC Div	YU1706 - Song Be
9th VC Div	Binh Long - Phuoc Long Provinces (Military Region 10)
Dong Nai Regt	Tan Uyen District, Bien Hoa Province

(2) Viet Cong Local Forces:

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Probable Location</u>
C-61 Co	XT7343

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C-62 XT9126

C-301 Co XT9263

b. Capabilities:

(1) Sniper activity, mining incidents, and attacks by fire were the primary capabilities.

(2) Ground activities against isolated elements or against targets of opportunity by battalion-sized forces was a lesser capability.

(3) The enemy was also capable of major ground attacks with multi-battalion size elements. These could have included ambushes and counter sweeps.

c. Enemy Dispositions:

(1) Main Force: Elements of two battalions of the newly-formed Dong Nai Regiment were located 5-20 kilometers southeast of the Regimental Area of Operations (AO). These units could place six infantry companies and two support companies in action. The 3rd Battalion, Dong Nai Regiment, which may have been the Phu Loi I Battalion, was considered to be immediately available as reinforcement. Elements of the 7th NVA Division and the 9th VC Division could move to the Regimental AO within one to four days from their locations in the Fish Hook Region and Military Region 10. Elements of the 5th VC Division, located near Song Be, could have also influenced Operation QUICKSILVER.

d. Conclusions:

(1) Major relocation of main force units in the Regimental AO was not considered likely. Such a course would have subjected the enemy to probable isolation and destruction by friendly forces.

(2) Elements of the Dong Nai Regiment could have performed offensively in the AO; however, continued pressure on this unit by friendly forces made such a course of action improbable.

(3) Local force units have operated in the vicinity of the AO since the commencement of guerrilla operations after the Geneva accords with France. Harassment tactics from these elements was considered the logical course in the face of superior US forces. Sniping, mining, and attacks by fire were well within the capability of local force units.

(4) Small, coordinated probes to determine friendly dispositions and weaknesses were a possibility. Again, this was not expected since major elements would be necessary to exploit any targets of opportunity.

e. Intelligence Sources: The following sources were utilized to plan and direct the operation:

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- (1) II Field Force Vietnam Intelligence Report
- (2) Agent Reports
- (3) Intelligence Estimate for III Corps Tactical Zone
- (4) Sniffer Missions
- (5) Visual Reconnaissance
- (6) SLAR Readings
- (7) Red Haze Readings

9. (C) MISSION: The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment was to secure and outpost Route ZINC from Ben Cat to Phuoc Vinh for convoy movement of the 101st Airborne Division and to conduct cordon and search and reconnaissance in force operations in the area of operations.

10. (C) CONCEPT OF THE OPERATION:

a. Phase I: 11th ACR (-3/11) was to conduct a tactical road map from Blackhorse Base Camp to the new area of operations.

b. Phase II: 11th ACR (-3/11) was to secure Route ZINC with maximum emphasis on outposting, providing convoy escort, and reconnaissance in force operations. (See Annex B, Operations Overlay)

11. (C) EXECUTION: Operation QUICKSILVER commenced at 041200H Dec 67 when the 1st Squadron, 11th ACR, received notice to prepare to move to Lai Khe to begin operations with the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. The lead elements departed Blackhorse Base Camp at 041400H Dec to start a tactical road march of approximately 110 kilometers. The squadron closed into the overnight staging area in Lai Khe at 042400H Dec. At 050700H Dec, the squadron began movement from Lai Khe to the area of operations to relieve the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. By 051500H Dec, the squadron was deployed along its sector of Route ZINC from XT917429 to XT999479. It had the mission of securing and outposting this portion of the route to support movement of logistical/personnel convoys of the 101st Airborne Division from Ben Cat to Phuoc Vinh. The squadron's additional missions were the security of the Song Be bridge (XT925442) and the bridge at coordinates XT959479 and reconnaissance in force operations within the squadron AO.

On 6 Dec 67, the 2nd Squadron departed Blackhorse Base Camp to assist in Operation QUICKSILVER. Upon closing the Regimental AO, the squadron secured its sector of Route ZINC from XT760325 to XT917429.

The Regimental Command Post was located in the vicinity of Lai Khe (XT7737).

Intelligence collection efforts in the area were hindered by the local population. Long-term close control of the populace by the Viet Cong had created a deep silence which effectively cloaked the enemy's activity. The informant and agent net was virtually non-existent in this area. As a result Viet Cong guerrillas freely enjoyed the sanctuary of the hamlets. Close

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liaison was maintained with the MACV advisers and RF/PF hamlets, but no useful information was obtained from these sources. On one occasion, MEDCAP and psychological operations resulted in the only useful information, when four boys revealed to US troops the location of four 60mm mortars and a hole dug under the road, presumably for mine emplacement.

Route ZINC was heavily mined as were the trails and areas adjacent to the roads in the area of operations. Information gathered from local friendly forces indicated that the mines had been emplaced during the wet season beneath the surface of all passages, from trails to major highways, as well as the areas adjoining the roads which the regiment was expected to use. At night the Viet Cong connected batteries to the detonator wires and hid them in the bushes and tall grass on the sides of the road.

Each morning the route was swept by three mine-sweeping teams composed of two men each, one sweeper and one prober with a bayonet. The sweeping teams were protected on both flanks by dismounted troops and were followed by ACAV's. This activity consumed an average of eight hours each day in order to completely sweep Route ZINC. In all, 19 mines were discovered and destroyed in place. These mines, as well as their detonators, wires, and batteries, were covered with plastic. Most of the mines discovered were pressure-detonated. Detonators were placed in the ruts of the road so that when the tracks ran over them, the mines which were buried offset would explode under the vehicle. One command-detonated claymore mine was employed in the 2nd Squadron AO.

Additional precautions were taken to eliminate the mine threat. Bushes tall grass on the sides of the road were cut and burned to aid in the search for batteries and detonators. Track commanders were ordered to dismount all personnel except the driver when passing over areas suspected of containing mines. ACAV's were outposted every 75-150 meters along Route ZINC. In spite of all these precautions, 12 vehicles were damaged or destroyed by mines. Such incidents only demonstrate once again that a clever and aggressive employment of mines will severely hinder armor units required to operate over and in the vicinity of a major road network.

On three occasions, the 2nd Squadron found dismantled 750-pound bomb duds with the explosive charge removed. Comparing the size of the mines employed against the regiment (18 X 6 inch cylinder) with the amount of TNT available in one 750-pound bomb, it is estimated that the US may have inadvertently supplied the Viet Cong with sufficient explosives for a minimum of 90 mines.

Although the regiment suffered casualties and vehicular losses in outposting and securing Route ZINC, the logistical/personnel convoys protected by the regiment moved without incident.

Reconnaissance in force missions were conducted on an infrequent basis as a result of the extensive time consuming mine-sweeping and outposting operations. Outposts were maintained with all forces throughout the mine-sweeping operation (consuming a daily average time span of eight hours) and until the daily convoy cleared the AO or closed Phuoc Vinh, normally between 1400 and 1500 hours. Mines further hampered the reconnaissance in force operations in that operations were delayed or confined by the necessity to sweep all trails or by negotiating difficult terrain to avoid the trails. Although these operations did not result in enemy contact, the enemy was denied freedom of movement, and his access to Route ZINC was limited.

Ambush patrols were conducted during Operation QUICKSILVER, six of

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which resulted in enemy contact. These patrols dispersed enemy probes, denied him freedom of movement, and limited enemy access to Route ZINC.

12. (c) SUPPORTING FORCES:

a. Artillery:

(1) Artillery forces firing in support included:

Howitzer Battery, 1st Squadron, 11th ACR

Howitzer Battery, 2nd Squadron, 11th ACR

C Battery, 6th Battalion, 15th Artillery

54th Artillery Group (Supported during Phase I)

1st Infantry Division Artillery (Supported during Phase II)

(2) The location of the fire support bases provided mutual support among artillery batteries as well as complete road coverage along Route ZINC.

(3) An artillery air observer was provided daily by the 1st Infantry Division and was utilized to keep the 11th ACR Area of Operations as well as Route ZINC under surveillance.

b. Engineer:

(1) Throughout QUICKSILVER, the 919th Engineer Company provided technical supervision of mine-sweeping operations along Route ZINC.

(2) Significant platoon activities included the following:

(a) 1st Platoon (attached to 1st Sqdn): Detected and destroyed four A-7 mines.

(b) 3rd Platoon (attached to 2nd Sqdn):

1. Detected and destroyed one A-7 mine.

2. Cleared fields of fire for the F-Troop CP using a dozer.

3. Destroyed one 750-pound bomb and one 155mm round.

4. Destroyed one brick house and two bunkers.

5. Discovered, dismantled, and evacuated a 10 X 6 inch anti-tank mine which had a center cap and a pressure detonator.

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c. Chemical: The 33rd Chemical Detachment conducted almost daily personnel detector (E-63) missions, gathering intelligence data on suspected enemy concentrations.

d. Army Aviation:

(1) General: The aviation elements supported the regiment with 16 OH-23G's, 11 UH-1D's, and 19 UH-1C's. The OH-23G's were flown a total of 396 hours, consumed 6,732 gallons of 115/145 fuel, and transported 556 passengers. The UH-1C armed helicopters flew 383 hours, consumed 22,980 gallons of JP-4 fuel, fired 49,700 rounds of 7.62mm and 196 rounds of 2.75 inch. Ten structures were damaged or destroyed with an estimated 29 enemy killed. The UH-1D helicopters were flown 312 hours, consumed 18,720 gallons of JP-4 fuel, transported 1,810 passengers, and carried 20.3 tons of cargo (1.13 tons per day).

(2) Employment: The following sorties were flown:

	<u>Command & Control</u>	<u>Reconnaissance</u>	<u>Administrative</u>	<u>Aerial Support & Reaction Force</u>
OH-23G	688	3	220	
UH-1C				447
UH-1D	157	9	580	
	<u>Troop Lift</u>	<u>Cargo Lift</u>	<u>Casualty Evacuation</u>	
UH-1D	56	68	2	
<u>Total Sorties</u>	<u>~ 2,230</u>			

(3) Techniques: Proven concepts were employed during this operation with no significant changes.

(4) Maintenance: (average)

	<u>On Hand</u>	<u>Available</u>
OH-23G	16	12.0
UH-1C	11	9.3
UH-1D	19	14.9

e. Air Force: During Operation QUICKSILVER, continuous coverage was given during daylight hours with night missions being flown at random utilizing the starlight scope. One spooky (flare ship) mission was flown in the vicinity of Ben Cat. The Regimental Forward Air Controller operated from either Bien Hoa or Lai Khe. Support was concentrated on convoy escort and reconnaissance. Aircraft were provided landing and service areas at

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Bien Hoa as well as numerous emergency landing zones. Flying time for forward air controllers was increased due to the initiation of a program of on-station replacement providing more efficient air coverage for the operation.

f. Psychological Operations:

(1) Aerial Leaflets: During QUICKSILVER, 158,000 leaflets of the following types were distributed from the air: sanitation leaflets, JUSPAO newsletters, reward leaflets, Chieu Hoi Appeals, rally appeals, safe leaflets, appeals to the families of the Viet Cong, safe conduct passes, 11th ACR rally appeals, and post-airstrike leaflets.

(2) Ground Leaflets: 100 JUSPAO Newsletters were distributed on the ground.

(3) Aerial Loudspeakers: Nine hours and fifty minutes of messages on the same subjects as the aerial leaflets were broadcast from the air.

(4) Ground Loudspeaker: Three hours of instruction to Vietnamese civilians whose village was being cordoned and searched was broadcast on the ground.

13. (c) RESULTS:

a. Friendly Losses:

Personnel: KHA WHA

5 39

Materiel: ACAV M48A3 5-ton Truck

7 2 1

b. Enemy Losses:

Personnel: KIA (BC) Detainees

1 12

Materiel: Captured: 3 lbs. documents, 3 lbs. medical supplies, 150 lbs. clothing, 1 claymore mine, 3 boxes .30 cal. ammunition, 9 Chicom hand grenades, and 6 RPG-7 rounds.

Destroyed: 15 artillery duds including three 750-pound bombs.

Fortifications: Bunkers Tunnels

19 6

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Foodstuffs: Rice (in pounds)

1600

14. (c) ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

a. Logistical Support:

(1) During Operation QUICKSILVER, the units of the 11th ACR were resupplied by the 1st Supply and Transportation Battalion of the 1st Infantry Division at Lai Khe. Supply point distribution was used for all classes of supply. The regiment received its direct support maintenance from the 551st Light Maintenance Company which displaced the majority of its shop operation from Blackhorse Base Camp to Lai Khe. The 1st and 2nd Squadron trains were located adjacent to each other within the base camp at Lai Khe. Medical support was provided by the 1st Medical Battalion, 1st Infantry Division.

(2) Organic transportation was utilized to resupply the unit in the forward area. Since both the 1st and 2nd Squadrons were located along the convoy route from Ben Cat to Phuoc Vinh, the convoy control was simplified. Normally, each squadron's resupply vehicles followed the logistical personnel vehicles of the 101st Airborne Division in the same convoy. The 2nd Squadron provided convoy escort in its AO, and the 1st Squadron provided the convoy escort in its assigned area. As the convoy proceeded along the highway, appropriate squadron resupply vehicles would be dropped off at predesignated positions to resupply the subordinate units.

(3) Because of the large volume of convoy traffic in the area, close coordination with the 1st Infantry Division Transportation Officer was a daily requirement. On several occasions, due to last minute changes, convoy departures were delayed.

(4) Major combat losses sustained by the 11th ACR during QUICKSILVER were as follows:

2 M48A3 Tanks

7 M113A1 ACAV's

1 5-ton Truck

Further damages sustained during the operation were repairable on position or at the 551st Light Maintenance Company, located at Lai Khe.

(5) Bulk laundry service was available at Lai Khe. Individual laundry was trucked to the Long Binh area.

b. Signal Activities:

(1) Communications for QUICKSILVER were simplified as the regimental headquarters was co-located with the 1st Infantry Division. In addition, part of the regimental communications platoon displaced to Lai Khe.

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in advance of the Regimental Command Post. Full coordination was made with the signal officer of the 1st Infantry Division and the S-3 of the 121st Signal Battalion prior to the operation.

(2) Communications with higher headquarters:

(a) The regiment entered the 1st Infantry Division FM Command Net upon becoming OPCON.

(b) Secure on-line encryption was utilized on all RATT nets. Land-line communications with the 1st Infantry TOC and local switchboard were provided by cable laid by the 121st Signal Battalion.

(3) Communications from regimental field location to base camp

(a) FM communications with the 3rd Squadron at Blackhorse were possible through the relay on Hill 837.

(b) RATT communications were maintained on the Regimental Command/Intelligence Net.

(c) Two land-line circuits were provided by II Field Force Vietnam, to the Hurricane TOC.

c. Personnel and Administration:

(1) Administrative operations continued in a normal manner. A message center was established in the forward area for distribution of reports and messages to the forward units. Courier service was established on a twice-daily basis employing UH-1D's between the base camp and the forward area. Casualty and strength reports for units in the field were sent by radio to the Forward Command Post and forwarded to base camp by telephone. Casualty reports were telephoned to USARV from the base camp.

(2) Casualties:

KHA	5
WHA	39
Non-Battle Dead	1
Non-Battle Wounded	7

(3) Personnel Services:

(a) Religious:

Catholic

<u>Services</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
Field	31
	373

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Protestant

<u>Services</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
Field	23
	438

(b) Red Cross: During **QUICKSILVER**, the Red Cross Clubmobile made three trips to visit the units in the field.

(4) Maintenance of Morale, Discipline, Law, and Order:

(a) Strong emphasis was placed on the prompt delivery of mail, which contributed greatly to the morale of the regiment. The average transit time for Air Mail was five days.

(b) There were no serious incidents.

(c) There were no prisoners of war taken.

(5) Awards and Decorations: The following awards were processed during **QUICKSILVER**:

Silver Star	1
Distinguished Flying Cross	1
ACM	1
ACM "V"	22
Bronze Star	17
Bronze Star "V"	7
Air Medal	49

15. (C) COMMANDER'S ANALYSIS: The effectiveness of Operation **QUICKSILVER** can best be measured by the successful completion of the daily logistical/personnel convoy schedule. No convoy vehicles were damaged or delayed as a result of enemy intervention. Although the operation did not result in enemy contact, it did deny the enemy freedom of movement and limited his access to Route ZINC. It was not, however, a good mission for an armored unit as the mobility and firepower of the squadrons could not be employed.

16. (U) LESSONS LEARNED:

a. Item: Village Cordon.

Discussion: When a village is cordoned off at night, enemy snipers from outside the cordon will try to draw fire to enable the enemy within to pinpoint US locations and slip between them.

Observation: Commanders should expect this tactic and prepare

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their commands for rapid reorganization within the sector to be guarded.

b. Item: Cutting Electrical Wires.

Discussion: When two electrical wires are running together to an unknown element, they should be cut one at a time.

Observation: Cutting both wires simultaneously may complete the circuit and detonate a mine or booby trap.

c. Item: Disposal of Brass.

Discussion: Brass and links should not be thrown off vehicles onto the sides of the road.

Observation: The practice of discarding these items indiscriminately leads to time wasted by mine-sweeping units which must locate and clear every piece of metal in their path.

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Annex A

Task Organization (Initial)

1st Sqdn

1st Plt, 919th Engr

Regt Con

Hq Trp, 11th ACR

2nd Sqdn

3rd Plt, 919th Engr

46th Inf Sct Dog Plt (-)

Tm Escort

H Co, 2nd Sqdn

33rd Cml Det

LFT

541st MI Det

Aerial Arty:Observer

17th PI Det

Det, B Co, 720th MP Bn

28th MH Det

FAC

37th Med Co

Air Cav Trp (-)

398th Trans Det (CHM)

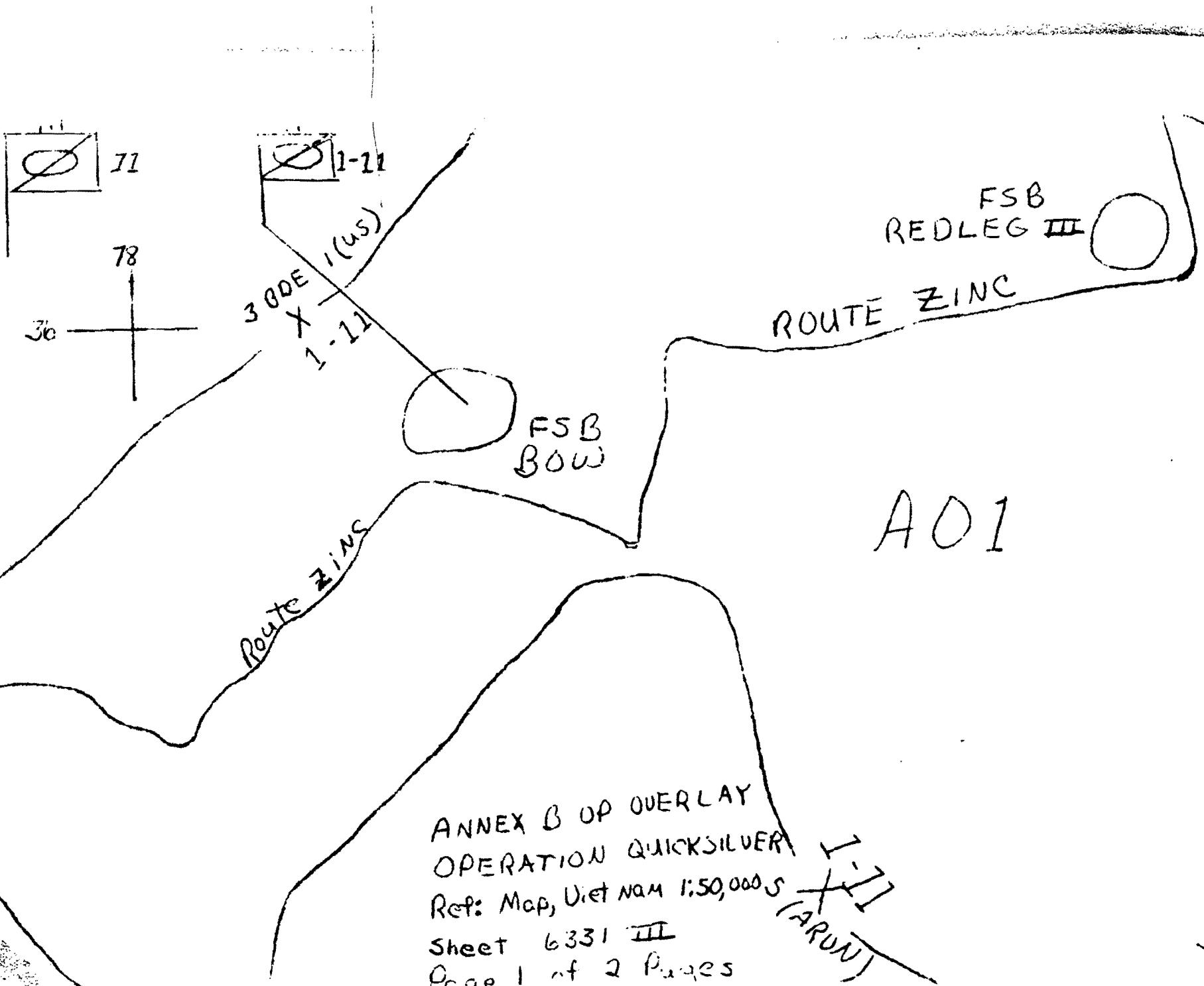
506th S&S Co (Spt)

11th TACP

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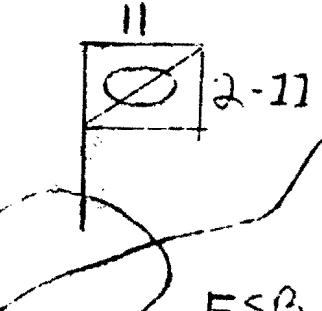
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ROUTE ZINC

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1-11
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OPERATION OUT
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