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By TJ NARA Date 28699

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION  
APO San Francisco 96262

AVDDH-GC-P

13 June 1968

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After-Action Report

Commanding General  
4th Infantry Division  
APO San Francisco 96262

1. (U) NAME AND TYPE OF OPERATION: Operation MATHEWS. Offensive Operations.
2. (U) DATES OF OPERATION: 242000 May 68 to 121500 June 68.
3. (U) LOCATION: Kontum Province, RVN. Maps, Vietnam, scale: 1/250,000, sheets No 48-4, 48-8, 49-1, 49-5. See Incl 1, Operations Overlay.
4. (U) CONTROL HEADQUARTERS: Headquarters, TF MATHEWS.
5. (U) REPORTING OFFICERS:
  - a. BG Don R. Hickman, Commanding General, TF MATHEWS.
  - b. COL Joseph Fix III, Commanding Officer, 1st Bde, 4th Inf Div.
  - c. COL Lawrence L. Mowery, Commanding Officer, 3d Bde, 101st Abn Div.
6. (U) TASK ORGANIZATION: Incl 2.
7. (C) INTELLIGENCE:
  - a. Enemy Situation Prior to Operation MATHEWS.
    - (1) In late April, Headquarters, NVA 325C Division, with at least two subordinate regiments, moved into the Tri-border area west of BEN HET. It began conducting operations in early May, the most significant being the 10 May attack on C and D/3/8 Inf at FSB #25. Intelligence gained from PW's, ralliers and documents during the first three weeks in May identified the 325C Division and its subordinate regiments, 101D and 95C, with a total strength of at least 6000. In addition, it was learned that the 325C Division probably possessed armaments not previously employed by the NVA in the 4th

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Division 40; i.e., tanks, 100 and 105mm artillery. It was also determined that the enemy's immediate objective was BDN HET. This situation existed at the time TASK FORCE MATHEWS began operations on May 24th.

(2) Enemy Composition, Disposition and Strength Prior to Operation MATHEWS:

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>STRENGTH</u>	<u>DISPOSITION</u>
325C NVA		
HQ and Support	2200	YB 750300
101D Regt	2150	YB 842286
95C Regt	1800	YB 795195
120th Sapper Bn	250	YB 750300
40th Artillery Regt		
HQ and Support	200	Tri-Border Area
K-33 Bn	300	YB 896179

b. Enemy Activity During Operation MATHEWS

(1) On 25 May 2/C/2/1 Cav made contact on Hwy 512 (YB 903274) with an unidentified enemy unit which attacked from the northwest, resulting in 47 NVA KIA. On 25 May at FSB 29 (YB 939223), A and C/1/8 Inf were attacked from the south, south-southwest and west by elements of the K-4 Bn, 95C Regt, resulting in 149 NVA KIA.

On 27 May reliable intelligence reports indicated the movement of an unidentified NVA division headquarters element into the vicinity of DAK PEK Special Forces Camp. This division was believed to be the 2nd NVA Div, which had overrun two Special Forces Camps just north of the 4th Division HQ during the period 9-11 May. It was not known what elements on the division accompanied the headquarters element. TASK FORCE MATHEWS instituted a sustained air strike effort in the area, in conjunction with reconnaissance in force by two battalions of the 3d Bde, 101st Abn Div. Subsequent reconnaissance and other intelligence indicated that the enemy force had apparently withdrawn temporarily into Laos.

On 30 May on Hill 990 (YB 817248) D/3/12 Inf was attacked from the north, northwest and west by a large enemy force, believed to consist of elements of the K-1 Bn, 101D Regt, resulting in 43 NVA KIA (BC). It was believed that the enemy's casualties were at least three times as high as the body count, but he was able to remove most of them before they could be counted. On 3 June, at YB 794274, 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry was attacked from the north, west and south by an estimated enemy battalion. Sweep of the area around the perimeter found 4 NVA KIA (BC) and many parts of bodies and drag marks. Subsequent search of a bunker complex which included a medical facility at YB 7827 revealed 18 additional NVA bodies in shallow graves. This attack was the last offensive action by the 325C

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Div; following it the enemy began a gradual withdrawal toward the border. The 101D Regt is believed to have withdrawn northwest of Hwy 512 into Laos, while the 95C Regt moved southwest of Hwy 512 into Cambodia. On 4 June on Hwy 14N (ZA 209950) a convoy was ambushed by elements of the 4th Bn, 24th Regt. The convoy was relieved by elements of 2/1 Cav, resulting in 39 NVA KIA. Identification of the 4th Bn, 24th Regt in the ambush area by captured documents confirmed the movement of this unit into the area north of KONTUM City near Hwy 14N. The 24th Regt continued to constitute a significant threat to friendly lines of communication in AO MATHEWS between KONTUM City and TAN CANH.

On 10 June DAK PEK Special Forces Camp and B and D/1/22 Inf received intense attacks by fire, in which the enemy employed 60 and 82mm mortar fire, 75mm RR fire, and 122mm rocketts. In addition, B/1/22 Inf at YB 910677 received a ground assault with small arms, grenades, and flamethrowers. The attacking force was probably a reinforced company. The size of the unit making the attack, as well as the weapons employed in the ground attack and attacks by fire, indicate that major elements of the 2d NVA Division have probably returned to the DAK PEK area to renew offensive.

(2) Enemy Composition, Disposition and Strength Encountered During Operation MATHEWS:

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>STRENGTH</u>	<u>DISPOSITION</u>
325C NVA Div		
101D Regt	1430	YB 8124
95C Regt	1425	YB 8322
120th Sapper Bn	125	Both of the above locations
2d NVA Div		
U/I Regt	2000	YB 9167
24th Regt		
4th Bn	350	ZA 2095
5th Bn	375	ZA 1899
40th Arty Regt		
K-33 Bn	300	YB 9216

c. Characteristics of the Area of Operations:

(1) Weather: Almost every day of Operation MATHEWS saw heavy rainfall; normally a light drizzle occurred in the morning, giving away to numerous afternoon rainshowers. Scattered low clouds, bases of 300 to 500 feet, and scattered-to-broken clouds above 1000 feet were experienced during early morning hours. Broken cumulus and scattered cumulonimbus

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and ceilings of 1000 feet (obscuring some peaks) occurred during late afternoons and evenings. Several foggy mornings limited visibility to 3 foggy mornings.

(2) Terrain: The western portion of KONTUM Province from the border to the eastern end of AO MATH WS is characterized by rugged mountains surrounding a small central basin area. The highest peaks reach over 1400 meters while ranges in the west and south average 1035 meters. Vegetation in the mountainous areas consists of very heavy double to triple canopy forest. The undergrowth in most areas is very thick brush mixed with bamboo. Some of the higher elevations have very light undergrowth. In the mountainous areas, there are scattered out-croppings of mixed large stones and stone cliffs. There are natural stone caves in such areas. Suitable natural landing zones do not exist in the mountainous areas. The central basin area has moderate relief averaging from 650 to 660 meters. Vegetation varies from single canopy heavy forest with very thick undergrowth to scattered low trees with thick grass and mixed brush undergrowth. Lower areas near streams have heavy brush grass. Large stands of bamboo are scattered throughout the basin area. Suitable natural landing zones can be found in some areas. Principal drainage is provided by the DAK POKO River, which flows south through the area. Many smaller tributaries dissect the entire area. Deep ravines are found throughout the mountainous area while rice paddy choked streams meander and criss-cross through the basin area.

(a) Observation and fields of fire: Observation and fields of fire are extremely limited in the mountainous areas due to the very heavy vegetation. Some vantage points, however, do exist which permit observed direct and indirect fire into the low areas. Observation improves in the lower areas and along the DAK POKO Valley where scattered open areas and lighter vegetation offer less restricted fields of fire.

(b) Cover: Good cover is available throughout the mountainous area where many deep ravines, large rocks, heavy forest, and natural caves provide protection from both airstrikes and artillery fire. In the central basin area, cover from indirect fire and airstrikes can only be obtained from bunkers and tunnels.

(c) Concealment: Concealment is excellent in the heavily forested mountainous areas; air observation of ground activity is impossible except in areas where heavy bombing has removed the vegetation. The central basin area provides much less concealment; air observation varies from good in the lightly forested areas to excellent in the open areas.

(d) Obstacles: The majority of the AO, except for the basin area east and south of BEN HET, is characterized by steep (30%) slopes, rain forests, and dense vegetation. In the eastern section of the area, the DAK POKO River presents a formidable barrier to vehicular and foot traffic. The bamboo in

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the area east and south of BEN HET is thick and difficult to traverse. Conditions greatly restrict foot movement to existing roads and/or trail networks and for all practical purposes channelizes vehicular movement to Highway 512.

(e) Key Terrain: In addition to friendly fire bases the following areas are critical:

1. Bridges vic YB 943238 and ZB 156053.
2. High ground vic ZB 0126 and YB 9969.
3. Ridge-high ground vic YB 9222, ZB 0416 and ZB 0011.

(f) Avenues of Approach: The main avenues of approach into the area are provided by Highway 14N, Route 14N, Route 512 from the west, a newly constructed enemy road toward BEN HET from the west, and the DAK SIR and DAK HO'DRAJ Valleys from the south. A major trail enters the area from the west vicinity YB 730368. (See Appendix 3).

1. Highway 14N as far north as TANH CANH is an improved, hard-surfaced, two lane dirt road trafficable to wheeled and heavy armored vehicles except from mid-June to late September when the low areas become impassable. North of TANH CANH it is unimproved dirt road, impassable to vehicular traffic.

2. Route 512 enters the AO from the west vicinity YB 7527 and continues to the east through BEN HET and DAK TO to TANH CANH where it meets Highway 14N vicinity YB 063225. This route has generally the same characteristics as 14N, but it is impassable from YB 750270 to YB 802238 due to heavy bombing.

3. A newly constructed enemy road enters the AO from the west vic YB 740219 and connects with Route 512 vicinity YB 803238. The road, constructed by hand labor, is hard-packed dirt and averages four to five meters in width. The road follows terrain contours and has no drainage ditches. Due to heavy bombing the road is impassable from YB 784227 to YB 803238. If repairs are made, this route could provide a high speed armor approach to BEN HET.

4. The river valleys from the south provide excellent avenues of approach for infantry movement. Concealment from aerial observation, however, is lacking in many areas.

(g) Effects of Weather on Terrain: Soil conditions vary from moist and fairly firm in the high mountains to saturated and extremely muddy in the central basin area. Thick vegetation and very slick, steep slopes present a definite impediment to foot and vehicular traffic. Many waterways, especially

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the DAK POKO River due to the swelling caused by the rains and drainage, become unfordable during this period.

d. Attacks by Fire on Friendly Positions by Type.

60mm mortar	10
82mm mortar	42
75mm RR	4
100mm Gun	0
105mm Howitzer	4
122mm Rocket	3
120mm mortar	3

e. Mining Incidents.

Vehicles hit mines	3
Mines discovered	2

f. Captured Enemy Weapons.

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Small Arms</u>	<u>Crew Served Weapons</u>
1-8 Inf	41	15
1-22 Inf	3	
3-8 Inf		1
3-12 Inf	65	3
2-1 Cav	22	
1-35 Inf	6	
1-506 Inf (Abn)		
2-506 Inf (Abn)	4	
3-187 Inf (Abn)		
7-17 Air Cav		
	141	19
Total Weapons Captured 160		

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## g. Enemy Casualties:

<u>Unit</u>	<u>KIA (Body Count)</u>	<u>CIA</u>
1-8 Inf	149	
1-22 Inf	5	
3-8 Inf	9	
3-12 Inf	72	3 (2-Returnee)
2-1 Cav	90	3 (1-Returnee)
7-17 Air Cav	5	1
1-35 Inf	5	
1-506 Inf (Abn)	0	
2-506 Inf (Abn)	11	
3-187 Inf (Abn)	0	
LRPs	6	
	<b>352</b>	<b>7</b>

## 8. (C) MISSION:

## a. TF MATHEWS was activated to:

- (1) Conduct reconnaissance in force operations and locate and destroy enemy forces in AO MATHEWS.
- (2) Destroy the 325C NVA Division in accordance with OPORD 11-68, HQs 4th Infantry Division, dtd 24 May 1968.
- (3) Protect DAK PLK and BEN HET USSF Camps.
- (4) Protect DAK TO Base Camp.
- (5) Secure LLOC within AO MATHEWS.
- (6) Be prepared to relieve/reinforce 42D ARVN Regiment.

b. Letter of Instruction to CG, TF MATHEWS is at Inclosure 3.

## 9. (C) CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS:

a. Task Force MATHEWS was formed with 2 brigades in response to the movement of major units of the 325C NVA Division toward BEN HET USSF Camp from the west. To destroy the 325C Division, 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division attacked on D-Day (27 May 68) with simultaneous combat assaults by two battalions to secure objective DIGGS (YB 8731) and objective BAVON (YB 8124). 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division followed at H + 3 hours with a one battalion combat assault to secure objective CARDINAL (YB 8218) southwest of

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BEN HET. One CSF company began reconnaissance in force at H+2 hours from BEN HET west northwest toward Hill 705 (YB 8526) to find and destroy NVA weapons positions and assembly areas. 1st Bde continued the offensive on D+1 with a battalion-size combat assault to secure objective CORBS CRACK (YB 8327).

b. In order to block the TU MRONG Valley approach to DAK TO and TAN CANH from the north, 42d ARVN Regiment deployed one battalion by air assault northeast of DAK TO on D-1 (26 May 68). The 23d ARVN Ranger Battalion was deployed beginning D-1 (26 May 68) to secure FSB's along Rte 512 and the high ground north of DAK TO. Convoy routes were secured by armored cavalry units supported by armed helicopters and air cavalry.

c. CSF operations at BEN HET and DAK PEK were coordinated with Task Force operations and were integrated into the overall offensive plan.

d. One battalion, as Task Force reserve, was initially prepared to exploit contacts in either brigade area and/or to secure objective FOSTER (YB 7829) on D+3. 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne was prepared to reinforce DAK SEANG and/or DAK PEK USSR Camps should the enemy threat require.

e. All offensive operations were supported by B-52 airstrikes and massive artillery preparations prior to assaults by infantry. Immediate tactical air support, B-52 strikes, and artillery were employed throughout Operation MATHEWS to neutralize enemy weapons and destroy enemy forces by fire and as close support.

f. Inclosure 1, Operations Overlay.

10. (C) EXECUTION:

a. General.

(1) Operation MATHEWS was initiated by Task Force MATHEWS at 242000 May 68 with 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division and 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division under the Command of the Assistant Division Commander, 4th Infantry Division. The area of operations encompassed AO SPAATZ (DAK TO) and AO CHARCKLE (DAK PEK) and included BEN HET, DAK SEANG, and DAK PEK USSR Camps. 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division closed using C-130 aircraft on 26 May with 3 battalions.

(2) On 27 May (D-Day) 3d Brigade relieved 1st Brigade of responsibility for the AO east of BEN HET. 1st Brigade air assaulted with 2 companies, 3d Battalion, 8th Infantry at 1003 hours to secure Objective DIGGS (Hill 900) and with 4 companies, 3d Battalion, 12th Infantry at 1005 hours to secure Objective BAVON (Hill 990). Both objectives were secured with no enemy contact. The command and control aircraft, 3d Battalion, 8th Infantry received enemy fire and made a forced landing south of Objective DIGGS. The command group and crew were extracted uninjured and continued control of the assault. At 1200 hrs (H+2), a BEN HET CSF company began a ground assault to secure Hill 705 northwest of BEN HET. At 1340

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hrs, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry under OPCON 3d Brigade, assaulted and secured Obj CARDINAL (Hill 889) with 2 companies without incident. Upon securing initial objectives, 1st Brigade units began conducting reconnaissance in force toward the Cambodian border with a mission to engage and destroy enemy forces. From Objective CARDINAL, 3d Brigade controlled the southwest approach toward BEN HET by conducting extensive reconnaissance and screening operations around Hill 889 and along the approach toward the northeast.

(3) On 28 May 68 (D+1), 1st Brigade continued to attack with a combat assault by 3 companies, 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry to secure Objective COBBS CREEK and search possible NVA staging or storage areas in the draws west of BEN HET.

(4) Based on the major threat to DAK PEK which developed on D-Day from units of the 2d NVA Div, 3d Brigade deployed on 28 May 68 (D+1) with a Brigade CP, 2d Battalion, 506th Airborne Infantry. 3d Brigade assumed OPCON of AO CHEROKEE with the mission to protect DAK PEK and to destroy 2d NVA Division forces threatening DAK PEK. With the deployment of the remainder of 3d Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry on 29 May, 3d Brigade established control of the high ground controlling DAK PEK to the west and north and began a series of airmobile combat assaults to exploit B-52 airstrikes and engage 2d NVA Division forces. Airstrikes, artillery, and positioning of infantry on key terrain resulted in the enemy forces withdrawing into LAOS. Upon withdrawal of the major enemy forces, 2d Battalion, 506th Airborne Infantry was deployed back to DAK TO on 2 June.

(5) After the enemy attack on the 3d Battalion, 12th Infantry mortar base at Hill 990 on 30 May, A Company, 3d Battalion, 8th Infantry reinforced Hill 990 and began extensive sweep operations around the base. 1st Brigade continued to push toward the west with 3 battalions searching the ridges and draws along approaches leading from the west.

(6) 23d ARVN Ranger Battalion and 2d Battalion, 42d ARVN (-), under OPCON 42d ARVN Regiment, assumed responsibility for the area north of Rte 512 and east of FSB 25 (YB 8829) beginning 28 May. 42d ARVN Regiment retained responsibility for securing FSB 13 (YB 9125), FSB 3 (YB 9523), FSB 30 (YB 9726), and maintaining one company on the ridge north of DAK TO.

(7) On 1 June 68, 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry assaulted with three companies to secure Hill 905 (YB 7921) and block the southwestern escape route from BEN HET, FSB 29, and FSB 15. The battalion conducted reconnaissance in force northwest to Hill 947 (YB 7724) and operated astride a well used NVA route from Cambodia. No enemy contact was made.

(8) On 3 June 68, 2d Battalion, 506th Airborne Infantry, under 1st Brigade control, secured Hill 1043 (YB 3332) with an air assault and began reconnaissance operations northwest to Hill 1191 then southwest to FSB 18 (YB 8531) and west to search the DAK SU Valley approach toward BEN HET. No contact was made with the enemy.

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(9) As the 1st Brigade maneuvered to search the routes and suspected assembly areas between BEN HET and the Cambodian border, it was apparent that the 325C Division had withdrawn from the battle area toward the west. Light contacts with small NVA covering forces were made and several battalion sized bases were secured and contaminated with CS chemical.

(10) The 4th Infantry Division offensive west of POLMI KLONG required that TF MATHEWS release 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry to 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division on 5 June.

(11) On 8 June 1st Brigade assumed responsibility for AO CHEROKEE and deployed the 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry to DAK PEK to relieve the 3d Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry. 3d Brigade began deployment out of AO MATHEWS by airlifting the advance party with five C-130 sorties. 3d Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry departed on 9 June with the brigade CP followed on 10 June by 2d Battalion, 506th Airborne Infantry. 1st Brigade resumed responsibility for all of AO SPAATZ and completed pursuit operations to within 3 Kms of the border.

(12) Based on intelligence that a battalion of the 325C Division had moved to vic (YB 8513), 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry assaulted 2 companies to YB 8213 and 2 companies, 1st Battalion, 506th Airborne Infantry to FSB 28 on 9 June. All companies, under control of 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry, conducted a detailed bomb damage assessment of six B-52 strikes that preceded the combat assault. Although recently used enemy bunkers and positions were located and searched, no contact was made nor were bodies or weapons found.

(13) Early morning on 10 June an attack on DAK PEK by NVA forces began with a battalion sized ground assault supported by mortars and rockets against the 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry FSB'S. The 1st Battalion, 506th Airborne Infantry remained under Task Force control as 3d Brigade (-) departed the AO. 3d Battalion, 8th Infantry reinforced AO CHEROKEE on 10 June and established positions both inside and northwest of DAK PEK Camp. Over the 48 hour period that followed, intense indirect fire attacks were received by friendly installations in AO CHEROKEE. B-52 strikes were employed on enemy positions and again the enemy withdrew to LAOS. Combat assaults followed by reconnaissance and pursuit operations were conducted throughout AO CHEROKEE to discover and defeat any remaining enemy forces.

(14) The threat of DAK PEK, BEN HET, and DAK TO diminished and at 121500 June 68, TF MATHEWS was deactivated and control of tactical operations in the DAK TO and DAK PEK areas reverted to 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division.

b. Following are the significant contacts during Operation MATHEWS:

DATE	US UNIT(S)	EN UNIT	LOCATION	US LOSSES	EN LOSSES
25 May	B/2-1 Cav	UNIDENT EST Co (+)	YB892270	3KIA 6WIA	47 NVA KIA
25 May	A,C/1-8 Inf	K-4 Bn 95C Regt	YB839222	14KIA 55WIA	149 NVA KIA

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DATE	US UNIT(S)	EN UNIT	LOCATION	US LOSSES	EN LOSSES
30 May	D/3-12 Inf	K-1 Bn (+) 101D Regt	YB817247	7KIA 56WIA	43 NVA KIA
4 June	C/2-1 Cav	4th Bn 24th Regt	ZA208948	1KIA 8WIA	41 NVA KIA
10 June	B/1-22 Inf	UNIDENT EST BN (+)	YB910677	1KIA 22WIA	43 NVA KIA

C. Implementing FRAG Orders published by HQ, TF MATHEWS, are at Inclosure 3.  
d. Chronological summary of operation is at Inclosure 4.

11. (C) SUPPORTING FORCES:

a. Non-organic and non-attached supporting forces.

- (1) 7th US Air Force
- (2) 52d Artillery Group
- (3) 52d Combat Aviation Battalion
- (4) 299th Engineer Battalion (C) (-)
- (5) Det, 9th Air Commando Squadron
- (6) Co B, 8th Psyops Battalion

b. Artillery Support

- (1) General.

(a) The concept of artillery employment was to provide direct artillery support to each maneuver element and to employ the relatively large amount of medium and heavy artillery in reinforcing and general support roles to weight maneuver efforts and to provide artillery support for ARVN operations.

(b) Initially, the 6th Battalion, 29th Artillery was in direct support of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division. Battery C, 4th Battalion, 42d Artillery (105mm T), Battery C, 2d Battalion, 9th Artillery (105mm T), Battery A, 5th Battalion, 16th Artillery (155mm SP), and Batteries A and C, 1st Battalion, 92d Artillery (155mm T) reinforced its fires while Battery D, 5th Battalion, 15th Artillery and Battery B, 6th Battalion, 14th Artillery were in general support. 3d Brigade of the 101st Abn Div deployed to 4th Div control with its direct support artillery, the 2d Battalion, 39th Artillery (105mm T), which arrived on 24 and 25 May. Additional artillery (155mm SP) closed on 26 May and Battery C, 5th Battalion, 22d Artillery (175mm SP) arrived on 28 May.

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(2) DIVARTY established a Division Artillery Tactical Command Post at DAK TO Base on 25 May to coordinate artillery activities in the battle area and to insure maximum effectiveness in the allocation of general support artillery fires.

(3) Artillery units conducted 24 displacements to support tactical operations initially west of DAK TO and then north to DAK PEK.

(4) Extensive use was made of radar. Three (3) AN/MPQ-4A counter-mortar radars were employed in the DAK TO, DAK PEK and BEN HET areas. This aggressive use of Q-4A radars resulted in detection of 48 mortar locations and one 122mm rocket location. One AN/MPQ-10A counterbattery radar was flown into the AO from TUY HOA and transported to a forward fire base by CH-54 on 2 June to counter the threat of enemy artillery detected on 30 May west of DAK TO. The AN/TPS-25 ground surveillance radar organic to Division Artillery was displaced by air to a forward fire base in the DAK TO area. The TPS-25A radar located seven groups of personnel identified as enemy ranging in size from 3-21 personnel. These targets were engaged with artillery.

(5) Meteorological support was furnished continuously throughout the operation.

(6) Maximum use was made of air observation. Division Artillery was augmented daily by aircraft from 52d Artillery Group.

(7) Assigned, attached and operational control units during Operation MATHEWS are as follows:

(a) 6-29 Arty	(105 T)	DS	1st Bde, 4th Div
(b) 2-319 Arty	(105 T)	DS	3d Bde, 101st Abn
(c) C/4-42 Arty	(105 T)	DS	1st Bn, 22d Inf
(d) C/2-9 Arty	(105 T)	DS	1st Bn, 35th Inf
(e) A/5-16 Arty	(155 SP)	GSR	6-29 Arty
(f) C/5-16 Arty	(155 SP)	GSR	6-29 Arty
(g) D/5-16 Arty	(8" SP)	GSR	6-29 Arty
(h) A/1-92 Arty	(155 T)	GSR	6-29 Arty
(i) C/1-92 Arty	(155 T)	GSR	6-29 Arty
(j) B/6-14 Arty	(175 SP)	GS	TF MATHEWS
(k) D/6-14 Arty	(175 SP)	GS	TF MATHEWS

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(8) Summary of ammunition expenditures by caliber.

(a) 105mm	27,037
(b) 155mm	12,966
(c) 8"	1,560
(d) 175mm	4,076
GRAND TOTAL 45,639	

(c) Air Support.

(1) Task Force MATHEWS TACP controlled tactical fighter-bombers and long-range heavy bombers for ground elements of the Task Force.

(2) The existing TACP of 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division was augmented by three Forward Air Controllers, three O-1G aircraft, a radio control 1/4 ton vehicle, and four enlisted men. This composite TACP was the coordinating agency for USAF assets in AO MATHEWS.

(3) Initial organization of the Air Request Net was that all 1st Brigade, 4th Division G3 immediate and preplanned strikes went through normal channels to Division G3 Air at Camp Phu Nhari. 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne request immediate strikes from TF TACP at DAK TO who then relayed the request to IFFV and was monitored by Div G3 Air by telephone. Sorties assigned to fill these request were controlled by Forward Air Controllers from 1st and 2d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division because of the performance limitations of the O-1 aircraft assigned to 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne. ALO, 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division provided liaison between the brigade and HQ, TF MATHEWS.

(4) The Air Request Net was modified on 28 May when 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne deployed to DAK PEK. The mobile TACP of 3d Brigade, 101st was air-lifted to DAK PEK and processed immediate requests for tactical operations within AO CHARKEN. Preplanned missions continued to go directly to Div G3 Air. In addition, radar-guided Combat Sky Spots (CSS) were used to deliver Tac Air Support during inclement weather and for night missions.

(5) All preplanned strikes were backed up with CSS strikes because weather changed rapidly during the operation. These backup missions were often flown instead of cancelling a flight of fighters.

(6) Weather conditions adversely affected Tactical Air Support during Operation MATHEWS. Low cloud ceilings and morning fog associated with the Southwest Monsoon combined to limit FAC missions to the late morning and early afternoon hours on approximately 16 days during the period. A total of 40 preplanned FAC missions were diverted to CSS status because of unfavorable weather conditions in the target area.

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(7) Summary of air support flown is as follows:

- (a) Fighter missions-309
- (b) Fighter sorties-661
- (c) Spooky/Moonshine-8/1

(d) Summary of Damage Assessments-33 bunkers destroyed, 2 foxholes destroyed, 4 active AAA positions destroyed, 1 recoilless rifle position destroyed, 35 NVA KIA (9 BC), 21 secondary explosions, 2 landing zones constructed.

(8) ARCLIGHT STRIKES: Arclight strikes contributed more significantly to the success of Operation MATHEWS than to any previous 4th Infantry Division operation. Employed in mass for the first time in this area of operations and closely coordinated with the scheme of maneuver and other supporting fires, they were a major factor in the attrition of enemy forces. Since employment varied between the DAK TO, BEN MET and DAK PEK areas, they will be described separately.

(a) DAK TO - BEN MET: The concept of operation in this area called for the numerically inferior allied forces to occupy the critical terrain in the area in strength, concentrating the Division Reconnaissance Package in the area to find targets for exploitation of the friendly preponderance of fire power. Once located, targets were attacked by massed fires of all appropriate types, including Arclights. This phase of operations employed 39 Arclight strikes. After massive attrition of the enemy forces, and the arrival of additional maneuver forces in the area, simultaneous air assaults were to be made in the enemy's rear to complete his destruction. These assaults were preceded by a massive five day Arclight, tactical air, and artillery preparation in the area known to be occupied by major elements of 325C NVA Division. During this five day period there were 29 strikes, culminating in five on D-Day on the immediate objectives of the combat assaults. These assaults were made as scheduled, even though on D-Day events in the DAK PEK area required diversion of significant maneuver forces to that area. Although large and determined enemy elements were known to have been present in the objective area prior to the preparation phase, US Forces were able to complete three battalion air assaults into cold landing zones on D-Day without loss of a single US soldier. In operations following the US attack, Arclights continued to be used in mass to complete the exploitation and to neutralize enemy fires. A total of 20 targets were attacked during this period, bringing the total for Operation MATHEWS in this area to 88.

(b) DAK PEK: Arclight strikes were employed in the DAK PEK area to blunt a major enemy thrust at the isolated CSF camp and to provide reaction time for reinforcement of the defense. There were two separate phases of this operation, 23 to 31 May and 11 to 14 June. Task Force MATHEWS reacted to indications from a reliable intelligence source that major enemy forces were threatening the DAK PEK CSF camp. During the earlier period, a total of 11 Arclights were employed, and despite reliable indications of the enemy's presence in the area, no attacks were made on friendly positions, and the enemy apparently withdrew. From 11 to 14 June, after withdrawal of the bulk of the US Forces, the enemy again threatened the camp this time in strength. During this period, 20 Arclight targets were

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struck. Despite indications of a major enemy effort to overrun the camp, he was able to make only one ground attack on friendly positions and ineffective attacks by fire. In this operation, because of comparative lack of artillery support and poor weather conditions for tactical air support, Arclight support was especially significant.

(c) In summary, it is apparent that the mass employment of Arclight strikes played a major role in the decisive defeat of elements of two NVA Divisions in Operation MATHEWS. Although extensive efforts were made to assess bomb damage, no single target strike could be proved to have produced dramatic results. Taken in sum, however, the evidence of their effect is conclusive. The enemy made a major effort during this operation, moving large forces for long distances to mass them against numerically inferior US forces, he introduced more sophisticated weapons systems than had been previously used in the Central Highlands, including artillery, and probably armor. Despite this major effort the enemy achieved not one minor objective, but paid a staggering price in casualties and damage. Friendly casualties were comparatively very light considering the results achieved. The large number of Arclights were massed in a relatively small area where the enemy forces had to assemble to attack their objectives, and they were never able to organize a sustained attack.

d. Army Aviation Support.

(1) Aviation support for Operation MATHEWS was provided by the organic 4th Avn Battalion and the 52d Combat Aviation Battalion. Missions were assigned by the Task Force Aviation Officer to support combat operations.

(2) Task Force MATHEWS employed an average of 24 UH-1hs, 6 UH-1Cs, 6 CH-47s, and 1 CH-54 per day. This represents the normal commitment of two (2) Assault Helicopter Companies and one (1) Assault Support Helicopter company. These aviation resources conducted an average of two (2) combat assaults, one (1) extraction and one (1) secure lift daily.

(3) The following is a summary of operational data and support furnished to TF MATHEWS by the combined assets of the 4th Avn Battalion and the 52d Combat Aviation Battalion.

	<u>UH-1D/H</u>	<u>UH-1C</u>	<u>CH-47</u>	<u>CH-54</u>
(a) Total Hours	2990	599	627	66
(b) Total Sorties	13499	6101	2003	102
(c) Type Missions:				
CA	6128	6101		
Log	5889			
C&C	1482		2003	102

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(d) Cargo (Tons)	2300	3747	444
(e) PAX	23343	4017	

## e. Engineer Support

(1) Direct support was furnished to the Task Force by Company A, 4th Engineer Battalion and Company B, 326th Engineer Battalion who supported 1st Bde, 4th Infantry Division and 3d Bde, 101st Abn respectively.

(2) Company D, 299th Engineer Battalion, augmented by Headquarters and Headquarters Company 299th Engineer Battalion, provided general support to the Task Force.

(3) Company A 4th Engineer Battalion provided direct support for the infantry and artillery battalions of 1st Brigade, 4th Division performing LZ clearing missions, cleared fields of fire, and provided technical assistance for barrier installation. Also, Company A operated a 1500 gallon-per-hour water purification point at 1st Brigade base camp, and installed and operated a 600 gallon-per-hour unit and BEN HET Special Forces Camp. Daily minesweeps on Hwy 512 were also conducted by Company A. Heavy equipment was airlifted to provide support missions for the TF and a large TOC was built for HQ, TF MATHEWS at DAK TO Base. An emergency ASP/POL storage facility was constructed at DAK SEANG Special Forces Camp to support tactical operations in the DAK PEK area.

(4) Company B, 326th Engineer Battalion provided direct support to the 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne, Infantry Battalions and DS Arty Battalion. Major elements of Company B deployed with the brigade to DAK PEK, where the company constructed fire support bases, as well as berms for three POL storage areas and three ammunition points. In addition, a 1500 gallon-per-hour water purification unit was installed and operated at 3d Brigade Base Camp and a 600 gallon-per-hour unit at DAK PEK

(5) Company D and Headquarters Company, 299th Engineer Battalion (Combat) provided general support to both brigades and to the Task Force. Priority was given initially to construction of a base camp for the 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne, consisting of a brigade TOC and Artillery TOC, four helipads using M8A1 matting, two helicopter revetments, establishing drainage control, dozing out offensive positions, clearing fields of fire and providing technical assistance for the establishment of a tactical wire barrier system. Also, elements of Company D assisted 4th Engineers to conduct minesweeps on Hwy 512. A 1500 gallon-per-hour water point was operated at DAK TO Base in support of the Task Force.

## f. Signal Support

(1) The 124th Signal Battalion provided communications support for Operation MATHEWS, and established communications with the following major units:

(a) 4th Inf Div Main

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- (b) 1st Bde, 4th Inf Div
- (c) 3d Bde, 101st Abn Div (modified area signal center)
- (d) 4th Inf Div DIVARTY (TAC)

(2) Multichannel VHF systems were activated on 25 May from 4th Infantry Division Base Camp to the 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division at DAK TO I airstrip, and from Task Force MATHEWS CP at DAK TO Base to 3d Bde, 101st Airborne Division at Dak To I.

(3) Upon deployment of HQ, 3d Bde, 101st Abn and 2 battalions to DAK PEK, a VHF relay and FM relay station were planned for. This was necessary because both the DAK TO Base and DAK PEK Special Forces Camps are virtually inaccessible to VHF and direct FM communications. On 29 May, FM relay was established with DAK PEK. The multi-channel systems, however, encountered many difficulties which included airlift of equipment, frequency problems, equipment problems, and non-line-of-sight-path.

g. Psyop Support

(1) Psychological operations were conducted in conjunction with tactical operations to create dissatisfaction and desertion among NVA units.

(2) A total of 108 PSYOPS missions were flown in support of Task Force MATHEWS. These missions dropped 2,200,000 leaflets and made 140 hours of aerial loudspeaker broadcast. In addition, a total of 82 hours of live broadcast were made. Target areas were known and suspected enemy locations and infiltration - exfiltration routes.

(3) During the operation, three NVA soldiers rallied to US units. These individuals provided unit identifications, personalities and locations that were promptly exploited by PSYOPS teams. The CHIEU HOI wrote leaflets and made tapes urging their comrades to rally.

(4) All of the ralliers told that their reasons for rallying were B-52 strikes, suffering, and life in the jungle.

h. Civic Action Support

(1) The civic action program already underway in AO SPIATZ was continued with efforts aimed at improvement of health, sanitation and living conditions.

(2) Eighteen villages in AO MATHEWS were selected for the Civic Action Program. A total of 154 visits were made, in addition to 1450 MEDCAP visits. A total of 5293 children participated in the Youth Health Program. Diagnostic examinations by the surgeons of both brigades were provided to approximately 182 people in villages in the AO.

i. Chemical Support

(a) CS Operations:

(1) During the period Operation MATHEWS chemical operations consisted mainly of contamination of bunker complex using persistent CS-1.

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Assuming normal weather conditions for this time of year it is felt that this contamination should last for at least 6 months. It is estimated that more than 200 bunkers were contaminated using this method during the operation.

(2) The E-8 Tactical CS Launcher was used extensively on firebase perimeters during the operation. The E-8 was used on several occasions to assist in repelling NVA attacks on such installations. The 4th Division Chemical Section provided the 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division with 60 E-8s. These items were used on defensive perimeters throughout their AO.

(3) A bulk CS drop was conducted north of CHEROKI by USAF using C-130 aircraft and 500-800 found drums of CS. The purpose of this drop was to contaminate the NVA road which enters SVN vicinity of YB 893858.

(4) E-158 (XM-15) munitions and the newly developed BFOG (Box Full of Grenades) were used to prep LZs prior to combat assaults. In addition, the 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry used the BFOG extensively throughout the operation.

(5) During the period of Operation MATHEWS the following munitions were issued by the Division Chemical Section to units participating in the operation:

122 E-8 Tactical CS Launcher

50 Boxes of JEEPICS (2000 pounds)

12 E-158 (XM-15) Tactical CS Clusters

## 12. (C) RESULTS

a. Summary of enemy personnel and equipment losses.

### (1) Personnel:

(a) NVA KIA - 352 (PC)

(b) NVA CIA - 7

### (2) Weapons:

(a) Small Arms - 141

(b) Crew Served - 19

b. Summary of Friendly personnel losses.

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>MIA</u>	<u>(NBI) (Non Battle)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
HHClst Bde		1			1
1-8 Inf	8	57	3		68
3-8		23	1	3	27
3-12 Inf	13	88			101
1-35 Inf	4	18			22
1-22 Inf	4	37			41
2-1 Cav	3	9			12
7-17 Cav					
DIVARTY	3	10			13
DISCOM					

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<u>UNIT</u>	<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>MIA</u>	<u>(NBI) (Non Battle)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Div Troops	2	3		1	
4th Div Recap	37	246	1	7	6
					291
<u>UNIT</u>	<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>MIA</u>	<u>(NBI) (Non Battle)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
3-101 Abn					
1-506 Inf					
2-506 Inf	1	13		1	1
3-187 Inf	1	15		7	21
2-319 Arty				3	19
326 Engr				1	1
3-101 Recap	2	28		12	42
TOTAL	39	274	1	19	333

13. (c) ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

a. General.

(1) The concept of logistical support of Task Force MATHEWS followed the previously established concept of logistical support of operation MACARTHUR. The battalions logistical bases were co-located with the brigade's trains at DAK TO. The 1st logistical Command Forward Support Activity (FSA) at DAK TO continued providing Class I, III, IIIA, V, barrier materials, bath, laundry, and graves registration to the units. Class II & IV materials, less barrier, were provided from CAMP ENARI through established supply channels. Organic elements from the Division Support Command (DISCOM) provided medical support, maintenance support, and a direct exchange for personal clothing.

(2) Resupply of forward company and battalion fire bases was by UH-1D, CH-47 and CH-54 helicopters from the battalion logistical bases at DAK TO. Resupply of the FSA at DAK TO was primarily by overland convoy from PLEIKU Sub Area Command utilizing some of the Divisions organic vehicles as augmentation.

(3) To continue the previous concept of providing supply point distribution as far forward as possible and also to provide an emergency resupply logistical base, a small resupply point consisting of Class I (C-Rations), III, and V was established at DAK FEK. Resupply of this area was CH-47, CH-54, C7A Caribou, and C-130 air drop. Due to restrictions placed on the use of CH-47 for resupply during the latter stages of the operation, another emergency resupply logistical base was established at DAK SEANG. Resupply of this area was by C-130 air drop.

b. Material and Services: The majority of the supplies consumed during Operation MATHEWS were issued through the FSA at DAK TO. In order to provide the required logistical support, the previously established supply levels and objectives at the FSA had to be increased.

(1) Supply summary for Operation MATHEWS.

(a) Class I: Meals issued:

<u>ARATIONS</u>	<u>C RATIONS</u>	<u>SUNDRY</u>
151,826	81,192	1,395

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- (b) Patients evacuated: 424
- (c) Returned to Duty: 33
- (c) Patients seen but not admitted: 1213

e. Headquarters, Task Force MATHEWS was composed of the following personnel and supporting equipment:

(1) Personnel: Officers 21  
Enlisted men 38  
TOTAL 59

(2) Equipment:

(a) Tents: 3 GP medium and 6 GP small

(b) Light Sets: 3

(c) Generators: 3 (5 KW)  
1 (3 KW - DC)

(d) Vehicles: 9 (1/4 T)  
2 (2 1/2 T)  
3 (2 1/2 T VANS)

(e) Cots: 70

(f) Air mattresses 70

(g) Sleeping bags: 70

(h) Chair, folding: 25

(i) Tables, folding: 15

14. (C) SPECIAL EQUIPMENT & TECHNIQUES.

a. A flash and radar Information Coordination Center was established by Division Artillery survey personnel which combined the information from visual observation posts and radar locations for target data.

b. Selected munitions were employed extensively on suitable targets during the period. Examples are:

(1) On 30 May, Hill 990 (YB 8124) received a ground attack. Firecracker was employed in and around the perimeter with nine (9) artillery batteries firing in support. A sweep on 31 May revealed 43 NVA KIA, 25 by artillery. Numerous blood trails and drag marks were also found in the area.

(2) On 1 June, an aerial observer sighted four 100mm field pieces in dug-in positions. Fire was adjusted resulting in 2 guns destroyed and a large secondary explosion. VR on 2 June revealed 4 NVA bodies still in the open. Fire tracks in the area indicated that the weapon and bodies had been recovered during the night.

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(3) Firecracker expenditure:

<u>Caliber</u>	<u>Firecracker</u>
105	472 rds
155	126 rds
8"	5 rds

15. (c) LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

a. Operations

Item: Control of Army Aviation

Discussion: Operation MATHEWS utilized almost an entire CAB (Combat Aviation Battalion) on a daily basis and these assets were employed in an extremely large area of operations. The Task Force Aviation section had two (2) FM radios to control the Aviation elements during the day. The majority of aviation resources were provided by the 52d CAB and the 52d retained command of the aviation elements. This arrangement resulted in unacceptable response time to requirements that arose during the day. In addition the TF Aviation section was unable to function as a staff planner/coordinator because they were involved in minute-to-minute control of aircraft assets.

OBSERVATION: At a minimum, a forward CP of an aviation battalion is required to control aviation assets and effectively coordinate with the supported brigades. Additionally, this control element should be equipped with a MRC-119 ( $\frac{1}{4}$  Ton) which would provide UF, VHF, ssb, and FM communications. This would permit the TF Aviation Section to function in a planning/coordination role and provide immediately responsive command and control of the aviation units supporting the TF.

Item: Massing Arc Lights

Discussion: Arc Lights were employed in mass for the first time in the Division Area of Operations and were closely coordinated with the scheme of maneuver and other fire support means. These strikes proved to be a major factor in the attrition of enemy forces and caused him to abandon his mission of overrunning friendly positions at DAK PEK and in the DAK TO-BEN HET area. Although single Arc Lights had been planned on enemy targets previously, the grouping of several Arc Lights in one area and over short time spans created a devastating effect on the enemy.

Observation: When the enemy gives indications of massing for an attack, Arc Lights should be massed in order to gain maximum advantage of the strikes.

b. Logistics

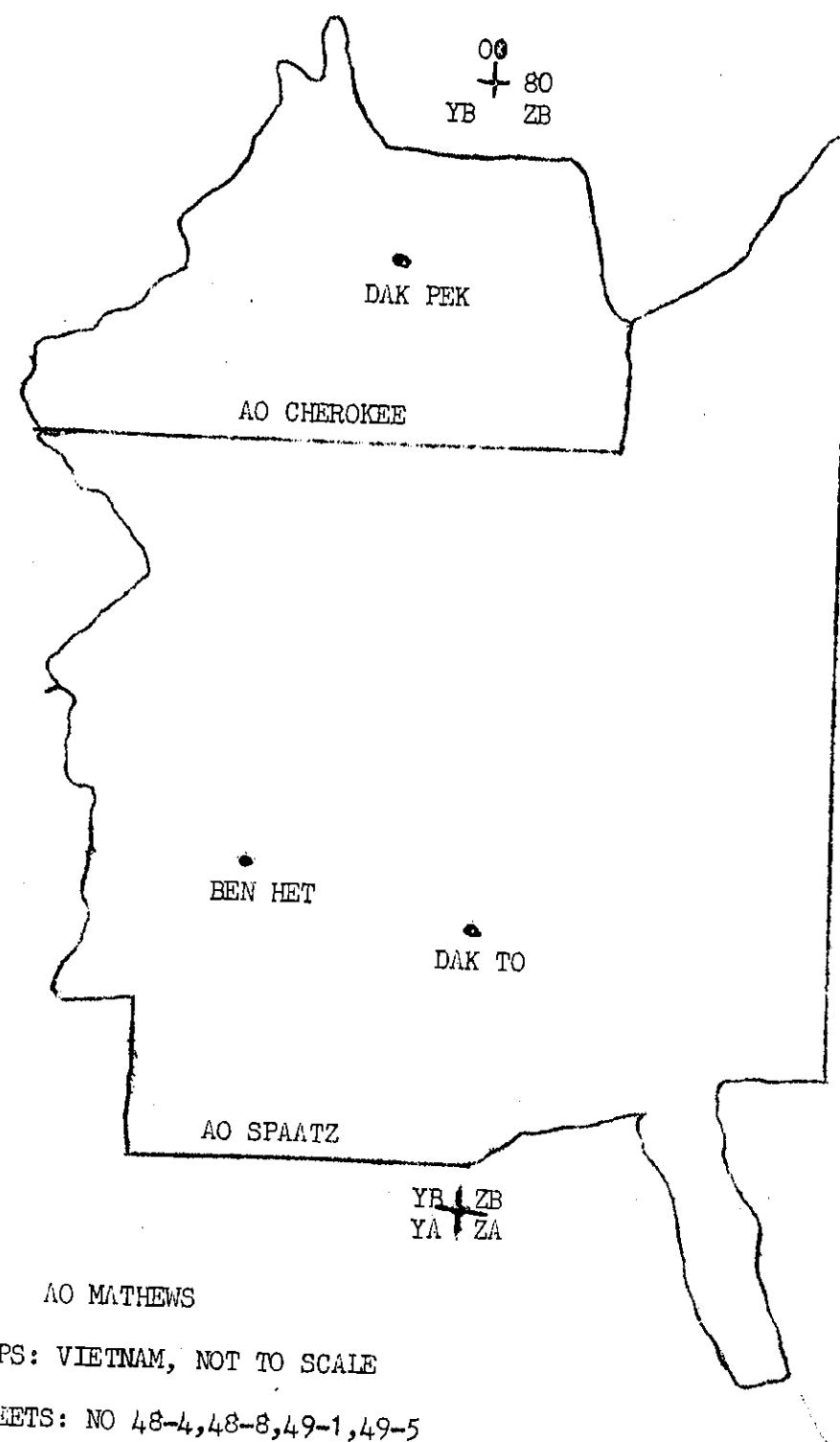
Item: Need for Airmobile Bulldozers

Discussion: Tactical operations in the Central Highlands require frequent use of key terrain features for Fire Support Bases. The need to move heavy engineer construction equipment to isolated areas is apparent. High altitudes coupled with the monsoon season, reduces the lift capability of the CH-54 and restricts air transport of the D5A and D6B to the forward fire bases. The D6B with adapter kit is acceptable, and would allow a payload reduction; however, the D6B with kit is not organic to the Division.

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MAPS: VIETNAM, NOT TO SCALE

SHEETS: NO 48-4,48-8,49-1,49-5

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TASK ORGANIZATION:

1st Bde

HHC, 1st Bde  
3-8 Inf  
3-12 Inf  
1-35 Inf  
A/4 Engr  
6-29 Arty (DS)  
C/4-42 Arty (DS)  
TACP

3d Bde, 101st

HHC, 3-101st  
1-506 Inf  
2-506 Inf  
3-187 Inf  
1-8 Inf (-)  
1-22 Inf  
C/2-1 Cav (+)  
2-319 Arty (DS)  
TACP

TASK FORCE CONTROL

HQ, TF MATHEWS  
B/6-14 Arty (GS)  
D/6-14 Arty (GS)

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