

HEADQUARTERS
US ARMY ADVISORY GROUP
1st Ranger Group
APO San Francisco 96349

KACHB-1TF-R

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report LAM SON 719

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U.S. Army Advisory Group I Corps and Military Region I
APO San Francisco 96349
ATTN: KACHB-1CP

1. References:

- a. Directive 335-8, HQ, USMACV, 31 Jan 69, subject: Combat Operations After Action Reports (MACJ3-32 (R2)).
- b. Letter, HQ, USAAG I Corps and MRI, 13 Mar 71, subject as above.

2. Transmitted herewith is the combat after action feeder information in compliance with reference 1.b.


ROBERT E. DEPREE
MAJ, USA
Senior Advisor

9 Incl

1. Task Organization
2. Supporting Forces
3. Major Problems
4. Supporting Plans
5. Lessons Learned
6. Important Decisions
7. Counterpart Performance
8. Performance of Unit
9. Combat Support

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Inclosure 1

Task Organization of 1st Ranger Group for each Phase of LAM SON 719.

1. Task Organization:

The task organization commanded by Col Hiep of First Ranger Group, consisted of the following elements:

a. Phase I: 31 January thru 8 February, 1971

- (1) 1st Ranger Group, Headquarters Element (30 Jan-4 April 71)
- (2) 21st, 37th, 39th Ranger Battalions (30 Jan-4 April 71)
- (3) A Battery and C Battery 6th Artillery, 105 Howitzer (30 Jan-4 April 71)
- (4) C Battery 48th Artillery, 155 Howitzers (30 Jan-4 April 71)
- (5) 102nd Engineer Company (30 Jan-1 March 71)

b. Phase II: 8 February to 1 April, 1971

- (1) 1st Ranger Group Headquarters Element (30 Jan-4 April 71)
- (2) 21st, 37th, and 39th Ranger Battalions (30 Jan-4 April 71)
- (3) A Battery and C Battery 6th Artillery, 105 Howitzer (30 Jan-4 April 71)
- (4) C Battery 48th Artillery, 155 Howitzers (30 Jan-4 April 71)
- (5) 102nd Engineer Company (30 Jan-1 Mar 71)
- (6) Two companies of 77th Border Ranger Battalion (19 Mar-4 April 71)
- (7) One company of the 79th Border Ranger Battalion (19 Feb-4 April 71)

c. Attachments: ARVN

- (1) Aviation Liaison Officer, VNAF (7 Feb-24 Mar 71)
- (2) Liaison Team from ARVN Airborne Division (8 Feb-28 Feb 71)

d. Attachments: US

- (1) Pathfinder Team (3 Feb-13 Feb 71)
- (2) Aviation Liaison Officer from 101st Aviation Group (17 Feb-20 Mar 71)
- (3) Air Force TACP Team (12 Feb-16 Mar 71)

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d. Attachments: US

- (4) RATT (Radio Teletype Unit) (14 Feb-24 Mar 71, Destroyed 23 March 71)
- (5) Radio Retrans Station (7 Feb- 29 March 71)
- (6) Artillery Forward Observer Teams (7 Mar-1 April 71)

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Inclosure 2

2. List of all forces in general support of 1st Ranger Group for LAM SON 719.

- a. A Battery 5/4th Artillery (155)
- b. A, B, and C Battery 2/9th Artillery (175mm-8inch)
- c. B Battery 8/4th Artillery (175mm-8inch)
- d. 1/37th Artillery (175mm-8inch)
- e. 1/5th 54 Artillery (105-155mm)
- f. Hunter and Barker FAC's (provided TAC Air)
- g. 101st Aviation Bn troop ships and resupply ships
- h. Khe Sanh Dustoff-Medivacs
- i. 12th Signal Group
- j. 158th Aviation Bn (UH-1)
- k. 2/17th Cav (ARA)
- l. 159th ASHC (CH-47)
- m. 132nd ASHC (CH-47)
- n. 478th Aviation Company (CH-54)

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Enclosure 3

3. A narrative statement in chronological order, of major problems encountered and solutions used; unusual tactics and techniques employed by enemy or RVN forces; important decisions as to the use of supporting forces; reserves and other resources; and other significant events and activities not reported in Daily CPSURS.

a. ARVN attachments were not properly supported initially. The attached units, the Artillery Battery, the Engineer Company and the Ranger Border Company initially were not properly supplied. The Ranger Command support company was not initially tasked with the mission. Note: 1st Ranger Group has no AML company and relies exclusively on Ranger Command's logistical assets for support.

Solution: The Ranger Command's support company was tasked with the mission of supporting all attached units and liaison teams.

b. The 1st Ranger Group S-4 staff was not prepared, organized, or trained to sustain an operation of this magnitude and duration. The Ranger Command's support company lacked the experience and organization, to coordinate, order, rig, and ship the supplies. There was in some cases, duplication of efforts, with the artillery support team supplying howitzer ammunition and food for the troops. At the same time the 1st Group was also drawing ammunition and food for their troops. There was no overall commander in charge of resupply to coordinate the supply effort for all the units involved.

Solution: Col Hiep, 1st Ranger Group Commander, directed that the Group S-4 be responsible for insuring effective resupply of all units. US Advisors also assisted in making or forcing the existing system to work by insuring requests were submitted and filled, to include, anticipating needs and regulating supplies.

c. Airlift items. Airlift items such as slings and cargo nets were in short supply. On three occasions air resupply had to be cancelled due to a lack of sufficient airlift items to rig the resupply. The ARVN lacked a sense of urgency in the handling of airlift items. Slings and cargo nets were lost or damaged by incoming mortar rounds or track vehicles as they lay on the landing zone.

Solution: To insure all air items were gathered and rigged for return and release, advisor recommendations were reinforced, as required by US personnel personally handling air items.

d. Lack of facility in the English language caused field units to have difficulty in directing and effectively using the Air and gunships.

Solution: The problem was temporarily relieved by having all communication between ground troops and US air assets passed through the VNAF Aviation LPO, who was competent in the English language. A long range solution would be the continuation of the English language classes initiated prior to Lm Son 719.

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e. The ARVN tended to use air strikes and gunships on targets which could have been attacked just as effectively by attached artillery units. Solution: Advisors urged the use of artillery when practical, to immediately engage the targets.

f. Abuse of medivac priorities and evacuation of lightly wounded. The ARVN, realizing that routine medivacs often had to wait as long as 4 hours for evacuation, upgraded priorities to insure getting a medivac as soon as possible. 1st Ranger Group also had a policy to evacuate all wounded, regardless of the severity of the wound, thereby causing a needless drain of valuable manpower.

Solution: Advisors made periodic checks with medivac crews to determine the actual condition of the wounded to determine the validity of the assigned priority. In cases where US Advisors were present, they personally checked the wounded to insure that the priorities were not abused.

g. Poor leadership in some areas hampered medivacs. Able bodied troops, or slightly wounded troops, would "mob" helicopters in hot landing zones, preventing medivac of the more seriously wounded.

Solution: In Vietnam, US Advisors controlled the landing zones to insure orderly evacuations. In the landing zones in Laos the situation could not be corrected.

h. CH-47 Chinook pilots did not talk to ground controllers early in the operation and at times would drop loads from 30-40 feet causing damage to the cargo; and sometimes loss of the loads.

Solution: Direct coordination with the Hook Battalion Commander corrected this situation to a marked degree but failed to correct it completely.

i. The Rangers, as light infantry, were given a mission of occupying fixed positions. They lacked the necessary fire power to perform such a mission.

Solution: Repeated attempts were made to get a mobile type mission for the Rangers through both ARVN and US channels. Requests for 90mm recoilless rifles were never filled.

j. ARVN were hesitant to give accurate ground tactical situation to Luftoff and resupply aircraft fearing to lose the medivac or resupply helicopters. The 39th Bn went into Laos with only 1 days supply of rations. The 21st and 39th were both issued 5 days supply of rations 7 Feb. It was planned that both battalions would be inserted on 8 Feb. The 21st was inserted on 8 Feb, but bad weather prevented the insertion of the 39th until 11 Feb. Helicopters were not available for resupply between the 7th and 11th. Resupply of 39th was accomplished on 12 Feb.

Solution: All landing zones were considered "hot" and all aircraft were provided sufficient support, e.g. gunships accompanied all medivac and resupply helicopters.

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k. There were no local channels of logistical and commo support for Ranger advisors.

Solution: I Corps G-6 advisor, assumed the task of communication support, and Ranger advisors detached to Ranger Command's A&L company, The Sanh were able to secure other logistical support.

l. Lack of proper supervision on the part of the artillery commanders allowed artillery ammunition to be unnecessarily exposed resulting in its explosion by incoming mortar and artillery rounds. This problem was compounded by shortage of barrier materials.

Solution: Where ever possible, ammunition was relocated, bunkers built and command emphasis applied with a limited degree of success.

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