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HEADQUARTERS
U.S. ARMY VIETNAM

COMBAT LESSONS BULLETIN

NUMBER 16

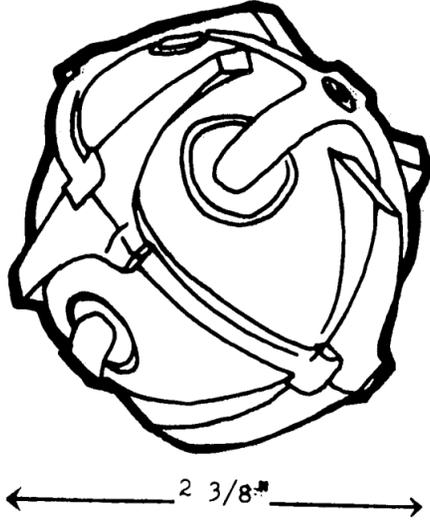
24 December 1969

AIR DELIVERED MUNITIONS (U)

(C) GENERAL

The 4th Infantry Division has successfully employed air delivered munitions to harass, disrupt and canalize enemy movement into areas that can be covered by massive artillery and air strikes. The munition used is the BLU 54/B air delivered, wide area, antipersonnel mine.

(C) BLU-54/B MINE



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The small spherical bomblets are dispensed in large numbers from US Air Force fighter aircraft using CBU dispensers. The bomblets deploy trip lines upon impact with the ground (Figure 1). Any disturbance of the lines or the bomblet will cause detonation. The bomblets are designed to self-destruct after a 30 day period.

(C) PLANNING AND EMPLOYMENT

Sound intelligence is the basic ingredient for effective employment of the air delivered munition. Enemy base camp areas and routes of movement must be located, then coordinated planning between the Army and the Air Force commences. The barriers caused by the air delivered munitions are employed to complement the ground scheme of maneuver. The Air Force liaison officer and the G3 Air conduct map and aerial reconnaissance of the area to select precise traces for the barriers. Special consideration must be given to terrain variations and the capabilities of the delivery aircraft in order to obtain the desired density of bomblets in the barrier. Deployment in areas with streams also requires special consideration. Bomblets placed in streams may have a greatly reduced lethality due to water depth and water movement which may cause premature detonation of the bomblets. A detailed reconnaissance will permit planning for employment which will minimize the reduction in effectiveness of the bomblet barrier.

Upon receipt of approval for employment of the barrier, the mission is programmed from daily allocated air resources. Forward Air Controller (FAC) delivery control procedures, similar to those used in any other air mission, are used. The FAC marks the beginning of each portion of the trace of the barrier, provides the delivery aircraft with the heading and indicates the number of dispensers to be expended on the run. Each change in the trace requires a mark and repositioning of the delivery aircraft.

The delivery aircraft flies at an altitude of approximately 300 feet and at a speed of 450 knots. One dispenser will provide effective coverage of an area 250 x 1,400 meters in size.

Figure 2 illustrates employment of the munitions by the 4th Infantry Division to encircle the enemy and establish a kill zone for tactical air, artillery and B-52 air strikes. The area is northwest of Pleiku. Intelligence has verified that enemy movement was restricted to the confines of the selected kill zone and that the combined use of the bomblets and a massive fire program greatly damaged the enemy's capability to reinforce and conduct effective operations against US and FWMAF in the Central Highlands.

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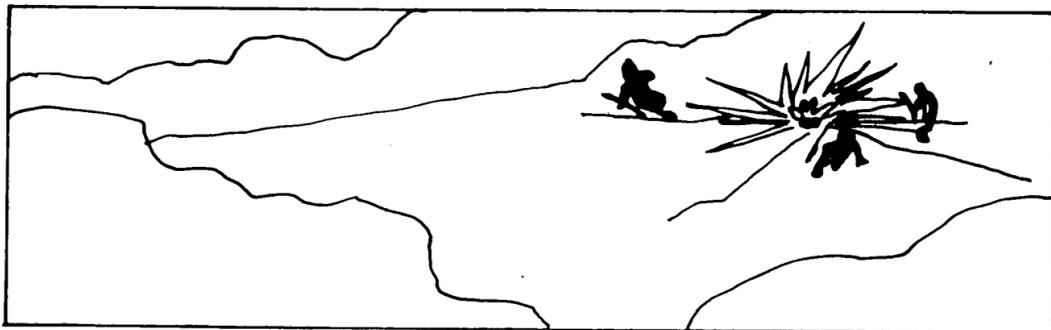
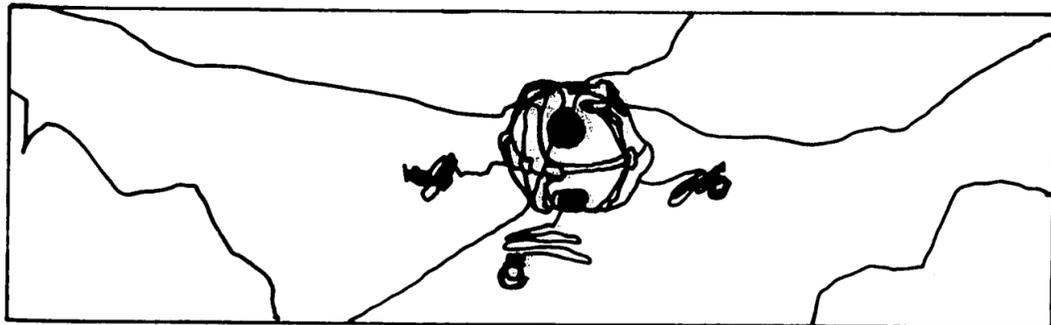
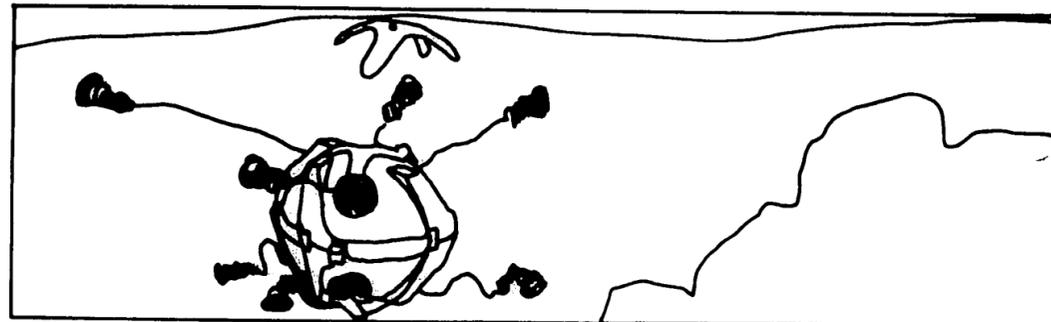


Figure 1.

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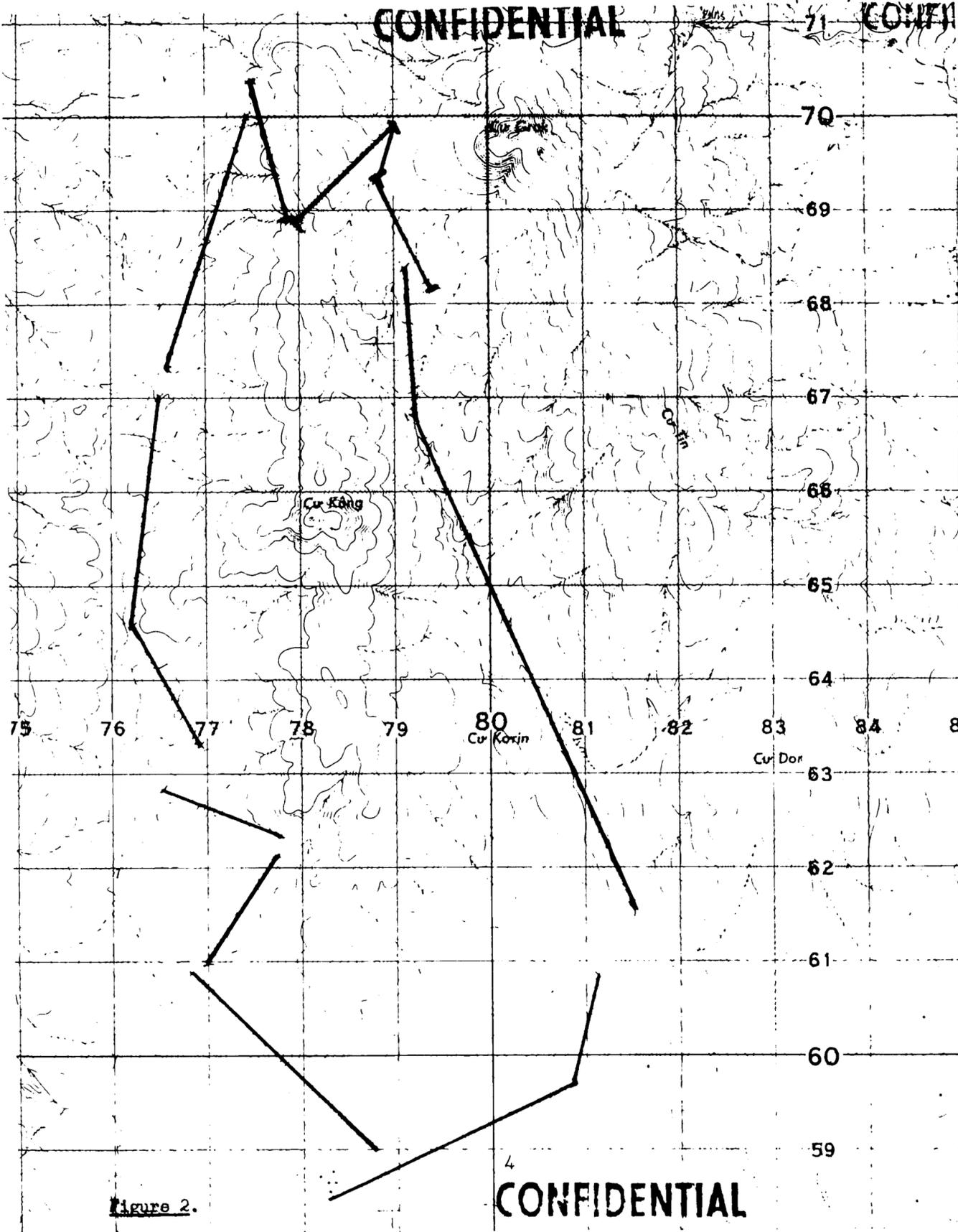


Figure 2.

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(C) LIMITATION

The BLU 54/B barrier presents the same problem as any other barrier: friendly movement and activity is restricted as well as that of the enemy. Consequently, employment should be restricted to areas where there is no planned or anticipated requirement for friendly movement in the area for at least 30 days. The self-destruct mechanism will clear the area of the barrier after that period.

(C) SUMMARY

The 4th Infantry Division has found that air delivered munitions employed against properly selected targets can effectively restrict and disrupt enemy activity and movement. When viewed in terms of its overall effect in restricting and disrupting enemy operations, the selective use of the bomblets is considered to be an economical means of supplementing other ground and air resources, thereby maximizing their effect on the enemy.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



GEORGE L. MABRY, JR.
Major General, US Army
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