

FOIA MARKER

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Folder Title: [Freeman] Medal of Honor [binder] [3]				
Staff Office-Individual: Speechwriting-Rosshirt, Thomas				
Original OA/ID Number: 4021				
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Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. letter	SSN (Partial); Address (partial) (1 page)	12/04/1996	P6/b(6)
002. letter	Address (Partial) (1 page)	12/01/1996	P6/b(6)
003. letter	Address (Partial) (1 page)	01/16/1998	P6/b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
National Security Council
Speechwriting (Thomas Rosshirt)
OA/Box Number: 4021

FOLDER TITLE:

[Freeman] Medal of Honor [binder] [3]

2008-0703-F

jm181

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
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PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

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To: Department of the Army

Subject: Statement on the actions of Captain Ed Freeman, A Company, 229th Aviation Battalion, during 14-17 November, 1965

I was the commanding officer of B Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division, during the historic 14-17 November, 1965 battle at Landing Zone X-Ray, the Ia Drang Valley, Republic of Vietnam. My company was the lead company in the battalion's air assault into the Landing Zone on 14 November and although badly outnumbered, was able to hold off for the next three days a North Vietnamese force bent on overrunning and destroying our entire battalion.

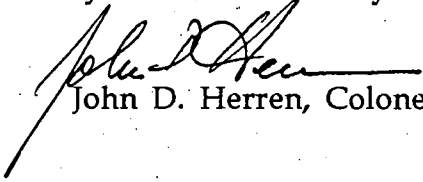
One of the principal reasons we were able to survive one of the fiercest battles of the entire Vietnam War was the critical support provided by the aviators of A Company and attachments of the 229th Aviation Battalion. In fact, if they had not kept bringing in additional reinforcements, and resupplying us with water and ammunition during the critical first hours of the battle, I strongly doubt if we would have survived. In addition, the voluntary evacuation of our wounded under intense enemy fire that knocked out at least two of their helicopters and damaged a number of others was an extraordinary act of bravery, probably unsurpassed from my readings, by any other aviation unit during the Vietnam War. A number of my twenty-one men and the battalion's who were evacuated during that first day after being severely wounded, owe their lives to the aviator's heroic effort.

I was a first-hand witness to some of these heroic acts by the 229th aviators, and particularly to those of Major Bruce Crandall and Captain Ed Freeman. As I understand it, they were the ones who volunteered to bring their flights into the LZ after the troop movement and during the first hours of the battle when enemy fire was so heavy that we infantrymen could not maneuver and one of my platoon's had been virtually surrounded. I was personally pinned down near Captain Ray Lefebvre who had just landed with elements of his company and moved towards the southwest part of the LZ which the North Vietnamese were threatening to overrun. My radio operator was killed and Lefebvre was severely wounded in the arm next to me from enemy machine gun and rifle fire that unrelentingly swept the area. With help, I carried Lefebvre back to the battalion CP area, and shortly thereafter, Crandall and Freeman's flights came in and evacuated him along with other wounded. I remember being astounded that any helicopter could land under such enemy fire.

Later that day, I called for water and ammunition which my company badly needed. Again, somehow, Captain Freeman's flight brought it in giving a tremendous boost to morale and providing essential support for us to defend our position. In the early evening hours, the 229th flew in much needed reinforcements from a company of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry who deployed on my right.

The second day of the battle, after an early morning enemy attack that almost overran the LZ, we were able to extract my cutoff platoon which had suffered twenty two casualties out of thirty men. A number of these had been seriously wounded and were quickly evacuated from the LZ by the 229th. While the intense fire from the first day had slackened, helicopters continued to be a prime target for the North Vietnamese gunners in the Chu Pong foothills and jungle surrounding the LZ and we could hear the fire directed at them as they flew in and out of the LZ. It was a great relief to me and my company knowing that our wounded would get out and back to medical facilities and kept our morale high. We would need that for the battle continued the next morning when the North Vietnamese made one more attack on the LZ. This attack was largely beat off by another reinforcing company of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, which had been flown in the night before by the 229th.

I have the highest regard for the 229th aviators and attachments who supported us during the LZ X-Ray battle. In particular, I consider the bravery of Captain Ed Freeman who continually volunteered at the risk of his own life to bring in supplies and evacuate wounded during the first day of one of the fiercest battles of the war to be extraordinary and far beyond the call of duty.



John D. Herren, Colonel, (Retired) USA

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Subject: Medal of Honor Recommendation for Major Ed W. Freeman

To Whom it May Concern:

The purpose of this letter is to provide my strongest recommendation for the award of the Medal of Honor to then Captain Ed W. Freeman for his many heroic flights into LZ X-Ray on 14 November 1965. I was the 1/7th Battalion S-4 on that day and personally went into that landing zone on two ammunition runs. On the first flight, the helicopter I was in was shot down in the LZ as we were departing. On the second flight, over an hour later, the landing zone was just as hot as the first time. (See attached copy of my Silver Star citation). I know for a fact that Captain Freeman volunteered to make ammunition runs before our first trip in and continued from then on, throughout the day. Every bit of ammunition, water and medical supplies carried into X-Ray, with the exception of my two flights, was carried in by Freeman's flight. I did not learn until later that he had made 14 such flights into X-Ray but I knew he had flown an awful lot because I was sending tons of those items by Chinook (CH-47s) into LZ Falcon, about five miles from X-Ray and Freeman's helicopters were carrying into X-Ray. I was told later by the Battalion Commander that if that ammunition had not arrived when it did, they would have run out and been over-run. That was the hottest landing zone I saw or heard of in my 54 months in combat units in Vietnam. Enemy troops were shooting at the helicopters from within the LZ, from snipers in the trees, and from the tree lines. I could not believe the Freeman helicopters could, or would, continue to fly into the LZ. I don't think anyone asked them to make these flights. I know that no one in my shop did and the first I knew they were underway was when the two I rode on showed up for ammo sent by their Flight Commander. I went in with them because I had to know first hand what the units needs were.

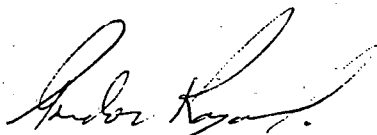
Freeman's flights carried out all of the wounded from the LZ, except our two flights, after the Division Med Evac pilots refused to fly into the LZ because it was so hot. There is little question that many of the seriously wounded would likely have died if Freeman had followed their lead. Even after there was, in my opinion, sufficient ammunition and supplies in the LZ to meet the Battalion's immediate needs, Freeman's flights continued based on the number of wounded still needing evacuation. He still took in ammo, water and supplies on each run and brought out wounded.

By their last flight, I knew that my battalion in X-Ray would not be lost due to lack of ammunition and I knew no wounded were waiting for help in the LZ.

Freeman's flights were not only among the most courageous and heroic ever made but they were also probably the most critical flown in Vietnam. If he had not volunteered and made those almost epic flights, our unit would have been known for not only having been annihilated at the Battle of the Little Bighorn by the Indians but also for being annihilated at the Battle of LZ X-Ray by the North Vietnamese.

Freeman's remarkable display of courage and caring, his ignoring of the almost overwhelming threat to his life and the extreme danger that existed in going into an LZ where others, without dishonor, refused to go, were the bravest acts I have ever seen. There are hundreds of families who owe Ed Freeman more than they will ever know. He certainly deserves and earned the Medal of Honor.

I have always wondered why Freeman was not recognized before. Now is not too late. He is well deserving of the Medal of Honor.



Gordon Rozanski
Then Captain Infantry
S-4 -HHC 1st Bn 7th Cavalry
1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile)

Enclosure: Silver Star citation

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM
APO San Francisco 96307

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 3653

11 June 1966

AWARD OF THE SILVER STAR

1. TC 320. The following AWARD is announced.

ROZANSKI, GORDON P. 05307525 CAPTAIN INFANTRY United States Army
HHC, 1st Bn, 7th Cav, 3d Bde, 1st Cav Div (Airmobile), APO 96490

Awarded: Silver Star

Date action: 14 November 1965

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Reason: For gallantry in action: Captain Rozanski distinguished himself on 14 November 1965 while serving as battalion S-4 Officer participating in a resupply mission in the Ia Drang Valley, Republic of Vietnam. A friendly battalion became engaged in a fierce battle with an estimated Viet Cong regiment and requested immediate supplies. At this time, Captain Rozanski dauntlessly volunteered to accompany the supplies to insure prompt and efficient delivery of the badly needed material. Upon landing in an area, which was under intense hostile fire, Captain Rozanski, realizing it was essential for the supplies to be unloaded quickly, repeatedly exposed himself to the direct fire to expedite the unloading operation. As the helicopters were being unloaded, Captain Rozanski, with complete disregard for his safety, crossed the open ground of the landing zone and carried wounded personnel back to the aircraft while receiving hostile fire. Upon leaving the landing zone with the wounded, the helicopter in which Captain Rozanski was riding was hit and forced to make an emergency landing. Without hesitation, Captain Rozanski began transferring the wounded from his downed aircraft to another rescue helicopter while repeatedly subjected to a heavy volume of Viet Cong fire. Enroute to medical facilities, Captain Rozanski applied life-saving first aid to stop serious bleeding of one of his injured comrades. Upon arrival at the staging area, Captain Rozanski quickly loaded more ammunition and prepared to return to the operational area. After arrival at the landing zone, Captain Rozanski again braved hostile fire while assisting in unloading the ammunition and in loading six more critically wounded American soldiers. He then departed the unsecure area amidst withering fire and again administered first aid to a badly wounded soldier. Captain Rozanski's unimpeachable valor in close combat against a numerically superior hostile force was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of the Act of Congress, approved 9 July 1918.

L

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November 25, 1996

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

SUBJECT: Helicopter Operations, 14 November 1965 - Landing Zone X-Ray, Republic of Vietnam

This letter represents an eyewitness account of the actions of Captain Ed Freeman while serving as Assistant Flight Leader of sixteen UH-1D Helicopters airlifting 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry (1/7 Cavalry) into Landing Zone X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley, Republic of Viet Nam.

Captain Freeman is to be recognized for conspicuous bravery and exemplary leadership of his platoon of four aircraft throughout the conduct of an air assault mission on November 14, 1965 into Landing Zone X-Ray. His Platoon was the second flight of four in a formation of sixteen aircraft. Landings were made in two groups of four aircraft as the LZ accommodated only eight aircraft. The first sorties into the landing zone were relatively uneventful. However, commencing with the fourth sortie, the aircraft began encountering enemy ground fire that increased in intensity with every successive lift. On subsequent lifts, enemy ground fire began taking its toll of aircraft. A number of air crew members also sustained wounds as the greater enemy force closed around the American troops into the proximity of the LZ. As the battle developed, the enemy threat escalated and the security of the landing zone was threatened. Often upon landing, enemy gunners were often only a few meters from the aircraft and able to deliver fire on the airships at point blank.

Throughout the battle Captain Freeman led by example, exhorting his crews to continue support in the face of a superior enemy force. Captain Freeman demonstrated exemplary leadership skills in rallying his air crews onward to continue the mission. In the face of insurmountable enemy odds, he successfully led flight crews being tested for the first time in combat. Captain Freeman's calm demeanor and his firm leadership under these trying conditions were instrumental in gaining the confidence of his subordinates. His personal courage, an undaunted ability to perform fearlessly under fire, coupled with a stalwart commitment to the mission were all a source of inspiration to his assigned crews. The air crews hailed his call and willingly rallied and followed him throughout until the mission was called off by the ground commander due to the increasing enemy threat. The flight was directed to return to laager at Plei Me.

Upon returning to the refueling area at Plei Me, Captain Freeman was advised of an emergency re-supply mission of ammunition and water to LZ X-Ray. Fully knowledgeable of the conditions at the landing zone and realizing the critical condition of the infantry unit, Captain Freeman willingly volunteered to accompany another ship on the mission. He subsequently performed fourteen re-supply lifts into LZ X-Ray, delivering critically needed ammunition, medical supplies and water to the infantry unit and evacuating at least thirty wounded infantrymen from the battlefield.

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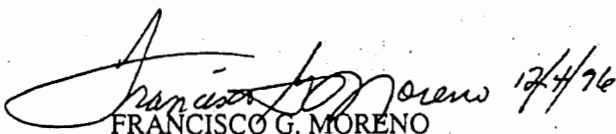
Captain Freeman performed the re-supply mission of critically needed ammunition, medical supplies and water under the most challenging conditions as flight conditions deteriorated in the battle area. The landing zone was obscured from the massive artillery strikes and air bombardment around the landing zone which reduced daylight visibility. His expert airmanship and extensive flight experience contributed immensely to the success of his mission. Again he performed extraordinary feats of bravery, executing high speed approaches to the landing zone to mitigate the effects of the enemy fire and landed with precision at the determined position in the landing zone. Disregarding his own personal safety and at great risk to his life, he remained stationery on the ground as the ammunition was off-loaded and wounded soldiers were placed in the aircraft. Again on these flights, his aircraft became the target of enemy gunners, often at point blank. Soldiers loading the wounded were themselves wounded or killed. His aircraft recoiled from the strikes of enemy rounds.

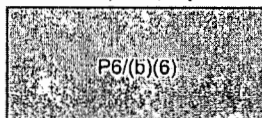
His heroic and conspicuous actions were undertaken after a pair of Division Med-Evac aircraft aborted due to the intensity of the enemy fire. One of the medical aircraft had landed but departed before it was fully loaded. The second aborted when it was struck by enemy fire on approach. Conditions deteriorated to the extent that it was doubtful whether any aircraft could possibly complete the mission. Captain Freeman met the challenge and performed the mission with distinction. [REDACTED] Captain Freeman's emergency sorties evacuating soldiers from the battlefield were night missions, further hazarding their success potential.

Throughout the entire mission, Captain Freeman demonstrated his commitment in support of the ground forces, disregarding danger to himself. On this mission, his dedication was unquestionable and his tenacity undaunted. His air support determination served as an inspiration to the friendly forces on the ground and undoubtedly contributed to the survival potential of the besieged infantrymen and the wounded soldiers.

Captain Freeman's gallant performance in the face of hostile fire is in keeping with the highest standards of the military forces of the United States and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army. Because of his untiring efforts on that day, his unwavering commitment to the mission, his demonstrated unselfishness, the courageous and repeated flights into the LZ in the face of enemy fire at the risk of losing his own life, Captain Freeman should be awarded our Nation's highest military award for heroism.

I submit this statement voluntarily, as eyewitness to Captain Freeman's actions on November 14, 1965. On this date, I was assigned to fly in the same aircraft as a pilot (then CW2) accompanying Captain Ed Freeman on each and every one of the flight sorties identified on this statement. I certify that the events documented herein are complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge.


FRANCISCO G. MORENO
MAJOR, USA (Retired)



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12-01-96

Valentino Panzitta

P6/(b)(6)

[002]

Subject: Recommendation for Award

1. Recommend approval for award of the CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR to ED W. FREEMAN, CAPTAIN, 428-42-5838.
2. Captain Freeman was a member of the Aviation task force supporting 1st Bn., 7th Cav. Reg., during operations conducted in and around Landing Zone (LZ), X Ray. This force was engaged in combat and surrounded on three sides before all 1/7 combat troops were airlifted into LZ X Ray. The untenable deadly situation caused the ground force commander to discontinue landing further troops since they were being wounded and killed as they tried to depart the landing aircraft.
3. Captain Freeman volunteered to fly almost certain risk of life and desperately needed flights into the killing zone of LZ X Ray, even after the ground commander had decided to discontinue landing of troops and material. The undersigned was an eyewitness to these repeated acts of extraordinary heroism during the entire period of the operation. Time and time again he risked his life with abandon in order to deliver desperately needed ammunition, medical supplies, and food and water while some 1000 enemy were pouring onto the only available landing zone for the operation. Additionally, he rescued gravely wounded troops from the battlefield and flew them to much needed attention in medical facilities close to the combat area. He risked his life on flight after flight into LZ X Ray, exchanged aircraft whenever his was badly shot and damaged, and continued on with the desperate mission of supporting the 1/7 Cav. in an all out effort to save a potentially bad situation.
4. This eyewitness observed Captain Freeman making at least 14-16 flights into and out of LZ X Ray, performing support and rescue missions during a deadly and most critical situation. These missions involved rescue of downed fellow crewman, resupply of badly needed ammunition, food, medical supplies, as well as medical evacuation under the most intense enemy fire.
5. His extraordinary heroism, personal bravery, and self-sacrifice clearly distinguished him above and beyond other soldiers and the call of duty. More importantly, his actions in great measure were responsible for saving the day for the 1st Bn. 7th Cav. and helped turn a potential disaster into a great victory at LZ X Ray.

VALENTINO PANZITTA

Valentino Panzitta

LTC, USA, (RET.)

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[003]

To Whom It May Concern:

I support the recommendation that **Major Ed W. Freeman, USA (Retired)** be reconsidered for the nation's highest award for heroism in combat: **The Medal of Honor**.

I am of the opinion that the heroic actions of (then) Captain Ed Freeman, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), while actively participating as a UH1D troop lift helicopter aircraft commander and flight leader at Landing Zone X-Ray, on 14 Nov 65 in the central highlands of (then) the Republic of Vietnam, along with one or two other co-volunteers, more than satisfy the criteria for this distinction.

I was there as an active participant, fully cognizant of the situation, condition, and fury of that violent battle. In addition, while researching to writing a proposed book on actual troop lift helicopter warfare at X-Ray, I have since 1988 amassed a decade's worth of historical material from archives, libraries, after action reports, and remembrances of over 100 other X-Ray active battle participants. This letter is but a précis of a rather voluminous Memorandum for Record of over 50 pages of referenced historical documented helicopter crew events that took place at the X-Ray battlefield. **[Memo will be provided for review upon request.]** Based on this, I can vouch for the validity of Ed Freeman's reported actions. To me, **the facts speak for themselves**.

I was a flight leader at this battle. I lost 2 of my 4 aircraft due to enemy weapons fire. Ed Freeman not only knew this, but he also knew that within 60 minutes after the battle had turned violent at 14:30, that 1 out of 3 of the 16 original troop lift helicopters had been downed due to combat action; and, that an Air Force A1-E aircraft had been shot down in flames over the battlefield. Yet, he still volunteered at risk of life to fly several emergency flights carrying in urgently needed ammunition and carrying out critically wounded soldiers.

I find that Ed Freeman then made several landings in X-Ray, with a few being made during the **"14:30-16:30 period"** remembered by the battlefield commander in his 7 August 1996 Memorandum as **"the critical period."** US troops were then being put under siege by an almost overwhelming enemy force that was seriously threatening to over-run the American position and annihilate all there then contained in a small perimeter being penetrated by aggressive enemy attacks. Yet, Ed Freeman knew that aircraft were being shot at, shot up, and shot down; that Americans were being killed on the helicopters and upon exiting and boarding them; that an Air Force A1-E had been forced to crash; that smoke and dust nearly obscured the landing site; that enemy fire and mortars could and did reach into the battlefield; and, that the enemy practically had surrounded the force in X-Ray. He also knew that medivac helicopters had refused to land on the battlefield to evacuate the many, many wounded then needing immediate medical attention in order to survive. Regardless of all this, Ed Freeman still volunteered at risk of life.

I find that Ed Freeman was not required by duty to exceed his assigned task, yet he **"freely chose to run the gauntlet of enemy fire time after time"** as cited by the battlefield commander in his 9 Dec 65 Operations After Action Report; and, as written in his book [p106. Moore & Galloway. We Were Soldiers Once..1992]: that **"I [the battlefield commander] asked...aircrews ...for the last measure of devotion, for service far beyond the limits of duty and mission, and they came through as I knew they would."** He states, in a letter written 7 August 1996 on "Huey" Support X-Ray Battle Nov 14-16, 1965 that "three things happened: (1) sorely needed...elements of my battalion...brought in to secure the small 2-chopper emergency LZ; (2) all...wounded were evacuated, some of whom would very likely have died in X-Ray; and, (3) my understrength battalion was resupplied with water AND ammo. We were fighting three enemy battalions...**had it not been for...Hueys supporting us, we would have gone down for lack of ammo...**"

And, I also find that Ed Freeman, while **freely choosing to go beyond his duty** requirement -- that of flight leader and aircraft commander during the 16-hour day -- accomplished these gallant actions: (1) he evacuated at least 22 to 30 (perhaps more) critically wounded soldiers from right off the battlefield; and (2) as documented in General Orders No. 847, of 23 Mar 66, "he completed 14 landings on medical evacuation and resupply missions under intense enemy fire." Three of these 14 landings, perhaps more, were made under the most dangerous of conditions. They occurred when the enemy, having penetrated the perimeter, was seriously threatening to over-run and annihilate the X-Ray force. They also occurred at a time when Ed Freeman found that not only did he have to land his own aircraft within range of direct enemy weapons and mortar fire; but, that he also had to fly right under friendly artillery being fired over the battlefield to explode on the enemy at the edge the perimeter within which he had to land his aircraft. Ed Freeman also flew at least three or more extremely hazardous sorties after dark. There was no moon, no horizon to be seen, the battlefield was shrouded with black dust and smoke, over-head aerial flares cast an eerie undulating glow over the jungle surface, the enemy occupied the high ground over the battlefield, artillery blasts speckled the area with explosions of light, and the enemy was in force all about the battlefield perimeter with the battle still raging.

Thus, it is my opinion that (then) Captain Ed Freeman deserves to be reconsidered for recognition under the terms of the National Defense Authorization Act of FY1996:S.1124 Subtitle C. Section 526, dated 22 January 1996, for risking his own life not only once, but on several occasions to directly save the lives of at least 30 wounded Americans, and to indirectly save the lives of over 500 infantrymen in battle by providing the critical ammunition they needed to prevent being over-run by an almost overwhelming enemy attempting to annihilate them. I can vouch for the heroic actions Ed Freeman performed that, in my opinion, more than satisfy the criteria for **The Medal of Honor**.


Paul P. Winkel, Jr. Colonel, USA (Ret)
formerly, 229th Astl Hel Bn, 1st Cav Div (Ambl)
LZ X-Ray Active Battle Participant, 14 Nov 65
Research Historian

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HEADQUARTERS
1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)
APO San Francisco 96490

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 847

23 March 1966

AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

1. TC 320. The following AWARD is announced.

FREEMAN, ED W. 01884148 CAPTAIN CORPS OF ENGINEERS United States Army
Aviation Company, 7th Special Forces, 1st Special Forces Group, 229th
Assault Helicopter Battalion

Awarded: Distinguished Flying Cross

Date action: 14 November 1965

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Reason: For heroism while participating in aerial flight. On 14 November 1965, Captain Freeman distinguished himself while serving as Aircraft Commander and Assistant Flight Leader of 24 UH-1D helicopters in the battle of the Ia Drang Valley, Republic of Vietnam. Captain Freeman's mission was to airlift the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division into Landing Zone "X-Ray". On approach Captain Freeman was advised that the landing zone was under intense enemy fire. Realizing the seriousness of the situation and the possibility of the landing zone being overrun, Captain Freeman, exercising forceful leadership, led his platoon through the hostile fire into Landing Zone "X-Ray". Upon return to the staging area, a request was received from the infantry battalion commander for ammunition resupply and evacuation of seriously wounded personnel. During the first landing, heavy fire was received and the aviators were visibly shaken and reluctant to return to the landing zone. Captain Freeman, realizing the serious needs of the infantry, immediately volunteered for the hazardous mission. He successfully landed despite the increasingly heavy fire directed at his aircraft. Displaying extreme stability and bravery, Captain Freeman remained on the ground even though several men were killed in the process of loading the wounded aboard his aircraft. Captain Freeman's unselfish and heroic acts at the risk of his life greatly aided the units on the ground. Captain Freeman faced the devastating fires of the enemy again and again until he had landed in Landing Zone "X-Ray" 14 times on ammunition resupply and medical evacuation missions. His actions contributed immeasurably to the victorious outcome of the battle. Captain Freeman's courage in the face of hostile fire was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects credit upon himself and the United States Army.

Authority: By direction of the President, under the provisions of the Act of Congress, Approved 2 July 1962.

GENERAL ORDERS NUMBER 847 HEADQUARTERS 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRCBIL)
San Francisco 96490 23 March 1966 CONTINUED

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:

GEORGE S. BEATTY JR.
Colonel, GS
Chief of Staff

Malcolm R. Baer
MALCOLM R. BAER
Lt Col, AGC
Adjutant General

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HEADQUARTERS
1ST BRIGADE, 7TH CAVALRY
1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)
APO San Francisco, California 96490

9 December 1965

SUBJECT: After Action Report, L. DRUG Valley Operation 1st Battalion,
7th Cavalry 14 - 16 November 1965

TO: Commanding Officer
3d Brigade
1st Cavalry Division (AIRMOBILE)
APO US Forces 96490

To: Major Bruce Crumell
Who, personally and with your
superb pilots and crews,
gave us life-saving help
during a time of
great need.
H. MOORE
Col., Inf.

I. GENERAL:

During this operation, I was the Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry. On 23 November 1965, I was promoted and turned over the battalion to my successor.

II. BACKGROUND:

1. On 10 November the battalion moved from the base camp at An Khe, coordinates GR476476, by CV-2 to a forward airstrip, and assembly area south of Pleiku, coordinates ZL190340. From there, all companies were shuttled the same day by Un-1B into a search and destroy operation in an area to the east of Plei Me, vicinity coordinates ZL2007 to ZL7606. We conducted saturation patrolling through the 12th with light contact by only Company A. We also conducted a civic action program supplying medical aid and USOM food to Langnam village, population 200, coordinates ZL237073. On the 12th, the Assistant Division Commander - 1, during a visit to the battalion, indicated to the Brigade Commander that he had no objection to the latter sending a battalion into the L. DRUG Valley. This we took as an alert and began a map study. On 13 November, the battalion was moved on Brigade orders to a new area of operations south and southwest of Plei Me. Once again saturation patrolling was conducted out of company bases throughout the day with no contact. Company B was airlifted after 1500 hours into the brigade CP area as security, and for an immediate reaction force under Brigade control. It closed into position by 1800 hours.

2. At approximately 1700 hours, the Brigade Commander and I visited the Company A CP south of Plei Me. During the visit, the Brigade Commander gave me orders to execute an assault by helicopter into the L. DRUG Valley, north of CAU LONG Mountain early the next morning with a mission of conducting search and destroy operations through the 15th. The area of operations was pointed out on the map and he informed me that we would be supported from LZ FALCON, coordinates ZL023032, by two batteries of 105mm howitzer artillery - one of which would be moved by air from FALCON early on the 14th prior to our assault.

3. I returned to my CP near Plei Me; formulated a tentative plan; issued instructions to my staff; procured further details from 3d Brigade Headquarters and the supporting helicopter unit; and issued a warning order to my unit commanders, staff, and supporting elements. By 2200 hours, 13 November, all preparations had been accomplished which were possible without an actual air reconnaissance. Arrangements included an early morning airlift of Company B back to FALCON and directions to the commanders of A and C Companies to concentrate their elements at

1a

first light in the largest pick-up zone(s) in their respective sectors; and plans for a first light air recon by all key commanders and staff officers. A time of 0830 hours was set for issuance at 17 C of the operation order.

D. At this time, the "fighting" strength of my lettered companies as they went into the operation was as follows:

	<u>NUMBER COMMITTED TO OPERATION</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Men</u>
Co A	5	115	6	164
Co B	5	114	6	164
Co C	6	106	6	164
Co D	4	76	5	118

The shortages were primarily due to malaria and MFS discharges. Each company also had 3 - 5 men at base camp at an Khe as guards, sick, administrative retention, and base camp area development workers. There were 8 - 10 men on R and R or absent going back to prepare for R and R.

III. OPERATIONS ON 14 NOVEMBER:

A. THE AIR RECON AND RESULTS:

(1) 14 November dawned bright and clear. Shortly after first light at 0630 hours, Company B was returned to battalion control at Plei Me and began making final preparations for its role as the assault company. The Chinooks which had carried B Company back were commencing to move Battery A, 1st Battalion, 21st Artillery to LZ FALCON as planned. The air recon party had assembled and after a brief orientation on the purpose of the recon, flight route, and items to look for, we took off in two UH-1D's escorted by two gun ships. The flight route is shown on the attached sketch (Tab A). We made one south to north pass at about 4500 feet actual; flew north past Duc Co, coordinates YL845255, orbited five minutes, then flew south generally over the same route and at the same altitude, and returned to Plei Me. The air recon party included the Battalion Commander; S-3; Battalion Artillery Liaison Officer; Commanding Officer, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 21st Artillery; Commanding Officer B Company (Assault Company); Scout Section Leader, Troop C, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry; and the Commanding Officer, Company A, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion (Avn Co, 7th Special Forces, 1st Special Forces Group).

(2) During the air recon, several upon areas were selected by members of the recon party as possible landing zones in and around the LA DUNG Valley. Upon return from the recon at about 0815 hours, we received a written Frq. Order from Brigade which specifically defined the area of operations. The area is shown on the attached map (Tab B). I then received comments as to the LZ to be used. Three possibilities fell out of this discussion - LZ's TANGO, X-RAY, and YANKEE (see Tab B). TANGO was discarded as the primary LZ for being too tight, e.g. a "well" - type LZ with tall trees around it, and for being too small - capacity of three to four UH-1D's. It was agreed that X-RAY and YANKEE could both probably accommodate eight UH-1D's at one landing. I tentatively decided on LZ X-RAY and prepared to issue my operation order based on that selection. Concurrently I dispatched the Cavalry Scout Section for a low-level flight up the LA DUNG Valley area to gain detailed information on X-RAY, YANKEE, the surrounding terrain, and to look for signs of enemy activity. The Cavalry section returned in approximately 40 minutes with the information that YANKEE

was spotted with high stumps and would be difficult to use as a landing zone. The Cavalry Section confirmed that LZ X-RAY could take eight to ten UH-1D's at one time. No signs of enemy activity were detected around X-RAY, and the Cavalry Section was not fired on during its low-level recon. Several trails were picked up and their locations were noted. The Cavalry Section also reported seeing commo wire on a trail north of X-RAY which led east and west. No trails led through LZ X-RAY. I made my decision to land at X-RAY with TANGU and YALOW as alternates to be used only on my order. I then issued an oral operation order. Reduced to writing, it is attached at Tab C. Present to hear the order were all my Company Commanders; the battalion staff and special staff; the lift Company Commander and his Liaison Officer to the battalion, the Cavalry Scout Section leader; CO, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 21st Artillery; and the 3rd Brigade S-3. The Brigade Commander arrived during the issuance of the order and was separately briefed shortly thereafter. It was then reported to me that the two artillery batteries were in position, and I set a time of 1030 hours for the assault landing with the 20 minute tube artillery preparation to be timed to be completed at H-hour minus one minute. The A and C Company Commanders were then flown back to their companies. The B Company Commander returned to his unit on the Plei Me airstrip on a mechanical mile. The time was approximately 0915 hours. All necessary preparations had either been completed or were nearing completion. No problems had been raised.

B. THE INITIAL ASSAULT:

Due to last minute positioning of the artillery pieces caused by air movement delays, the preparatory fires did not begin until 1017 hours. I was in the lead aircraft and had a good view of these fires. They were precisely where required, and beautifully timed with the landing of lead elements of the assault company. Fires were concentrated principally around the landing zone, in the trees and high grass, and on a finger and in a draw leading down from the high ground northwest of X-RAY. The aerial artillery came in on the heels of the tube artillery fires and worked over the area for 30 seconds expending half their loads - then went into a nearby air orbit on call. The lift battalion gun ships took up the fires and were immediately ahead of the UH-1D's. As we came in for the assault landing all door gunners fired into the trees and high grass. We landed and ran from the landing zone into the trees firing our M-16's at likely enemy positions. My command group consisted of myself, the battalion Sergeant Major, the Battalion S-2, my two radio operators, and a Vietnamese national, sent down by Brigade, Mr. Wik - a Montagnard who could speak good English. In my command chopper orbiting between Plei Me and over the LAU LANG Valley were my S-3, artillery Liaison Officer, and Liaison Officer from the helicopter lift company, and my Forward Air Controller. I had placed them there during the assault for best execution of their duties, for a communications relay, and for an air OP. On the ground we received no enemy fire and made no contact upon landing. The terrain was flat and consisted of scrub trees up to 100 feet high; thick elephant grass varying in height from one foot to five feet; and ant hills throughout the area up to eight feet high with thick brush and elephant grass on and around them. Along the western edge of the LZ, the trees and grass were especially thick and extended off into the jungle on the foothills of the mountain. Photographs of the area are at Tabs D and E. These photos were taken several days after the action ended hence the area is less foliated than on 14 November when we went in. The 16 UH-1D's returned to the Plei Me area to pick up the remainder of Company B and a portion of the next company to be brought in - Company C. Thus began the process of shuttling the battalion into the area of operations. The time of the assault was precisely 1048 hours.

C. SHUTTLE OF THE LANDING ZONE AND INITIAL CONTACT:

- (1) In compliance with my instructions, the B Company

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Commander secured the landing zone by having one of his platoon leaders dispatch his squads into different areas, 50 to 100 meters off the landing zone to reconnoiter, while he retained the balance of his company concealed in a clump of trees and high grass near the center of the LZ area as an offensive striking force. At approximately 1120 hours, one of the recon squads took a prisoner. I immediately took my S-2 and the Vietnamese, Mr. Mik, and went to the location and questioned him. He was unarmed, dressed in dirty khaki shirt and trousers with a serial number on one of the shirt epaulets, and carried an empty canteen. He stated that he had eaten only bananas for five days, and that there were three battalions on the mountain above us who wanted very much to kill Americans but had been unable to find them. He stated that he was in the North Vietnamese Army. The B Company Commander was directed to intensify his reconnoitering in the area where the prisoner had been taken (near the mountain), and to prepare to assume the C Company mission of searching the lower portion of the mountain area with emphasis on the finger and drive to the northwest. My command chopper was called in and the prisoner was taken back immediately for interrogation at the Brigade CP. By then, 1210 hours, sufficient elements of Company A had landed (unopposed) to take over the LZ security mission from Company B. Also elements of the reconnoitering platoon of B Company had made contact with scattered enemy riflemen near the mountain. The B Company Commander was ordered to assume the C Company searching mission; to move up the finger leading down towards X-343; and to develop the situation. B Company moved out, and I directed the commander of A Company to prepare to move up into the same area on order when Company C had arrived in A-443 in sufficient strength to take over LZ security. At that time, 1230 hours we were taking no fire in the LZ. Around 1245 hours, lead elements of Company B began to engage in a fire fight of moderate intensity. Shortly afterwards at approximately 1330 hours, Commanding Officer, Company B reported that he was being attacked heavily by at least two companies of enemy and that his right platoon was in danger of being surrounded and cut off from the rest of the company by a numerically superior force. The fire fight became intense. Also a few rounds of 60 and 81 mm mortar fire began falling in the LZ and on B Company. B Company also received some rocket fire.

(2) Shortly after the heavy fire fight began, the last platoon of A Company and the Company Commander and lead elements of C Company landed. The Commanding Officer, Company A was ordered to move his company up on the left of B Company; to establish physical contact with it; to protect the B Company left flank; and to send one platoon up to A Company to assist A Company in getting to the B Company platoon which was in danger of being cut off. The Commanding Officer, Company C was ordered to take up a blocking position off the landing zone to the south and southwest to prevent the LZ from being overrun from that direction, and to give protection to A Company's left flank. I called the S-3 in the command chopper and told him to have my Forward Air Controller bring in air strikes beginning on the lower fringe of the mountain foothills and work over the mountain and enemy approaches to the LZ from the west and south in that priority. The same instructions were to be given to the ARVN and to the artillery. Priority of fires were to go to fire missions and requests from companies. When not firing in response to a specific request, fires were to be poured in as directed above. The Company Commanders, forward observers, the forward air controller, and the artillery liaison officer were all having difficulty getting coordinated as to the locations of the forward elements of the companies. There were no well-defined terrain features to help and the scrub and trees all looked alike. The air was heavy with smoke and dust. B Company had more problems than any other company since it had one platoon separated from the rest of the company in the jungle, and could not precisely pinpoint its location for purposes of close-in fire support. The platoon was in a losing fire fight against a force of 75-100 enemy. The fact that this platoon was forward of B and A Companies delayed

delivery of effective fires in support of those two companies. However, using the technique of "walking" fires down the mountain from the south and west, fires were placed where they gave some help to these two companies - especially Company A. I specifically defined several draws leading down from the mountain, and wanted fires placed on enemy mortar positions sighted or suspected out to 81 mm mortar range. Two air strikes were also brought in on the valley floor to the northwest on and near the location of the suspected enemy battalion reported by higher headquarters the previous day. At this point, the most critical period of the afternoon began.

(3) The A Company Commander sent up on platoon to B Company as directed. This platoon headed out, became engaged, and ended up on the right of B Company rather than the left. This was confusing to both the A Company Commander and myself until later in the afternoon when the location of this platoon became sorted out. The B Company Commander pushed out in an effort to reach his platoon which by that time had been completely surrounded. B Company (-) plus the A Company platoon was able to get to within 75 meters of the cut-off platoon but could get no further. The A Company platoon made it closer than any other element. B Company was taking moderate casualties. Concurrently as Company A (-) was working up towards the left and rear-most elements of B Company, it made heavy contact with a large force of at least one PAVN Company which was driving in and along a dry creek bed parallel to the western edge of the LZ. These enemy were headed directly towards the left rear of Company B. A very heavy fire fight immediately broke out. A Company was taking light casualties, and extracting a heavy toll from the enemy. One of the A Company platoons was in such a position that it was able to bring close-in flanking fire on 50 - 70 PAVN as they continued moving across their front. Many of them were killed, as when the last few were dropped, the remainder kept coming right into the field of fire. A Company took two prisoners who were later evacuated to brigade.

(4) Just as the A Company fire fight broke out, the last elements of C Company and the last elements of D Company landed. As they landed, the helicopters took numerous hits but none were shot down. The C Company Commander directed his elements into position along side his other elements which had landed previously. Within five minutes, a force of 175 - 200 enemy, headed for the LZ, ran headlong into C Company. C Company held them off, killing numerous of them in the process as they continued trying to get to the landing zone. One prisoner was taken and evacuated. The C Company action continued for approximately 1 1/2 hours until the enemy, disorganized and decimated, pulled off under heavy friendly artillery and air fires, dragging many of his dead and wounded.

(5) Concurrent with all of the above, as the first elements of D Company landed (with the last elements of C Company), they immediately became engaged in the fire fight near A Company. One of the D Company Commander's radio operators was killed in the lift Company Commander's helicopter before he could dismount and the door gunner and the pilot were wounded. I stopped the other eight UH-1D's from landing by radio. The D Company elements consisted of the command group, part of the mortar platoon and the antitank platoon. The D Company Commander led them towards the sound of the heavy firing in the A Company area. They made it to the stream-bed area; immediately engaged 25 - 30 PAVN headed down the stream-bed and killed most of them. A Company elements killed the rest. During this fight, the D Company Commander and Mortar Platoon Leader were seriously wounded but continued to fire their rifles personally killing several PAVN. After the enemy were stopped, the D Company Commander alternately lost consciousness and came to. He turned over the command of the company to the Antitank Platoon Sergeant, a Staff Sergeant, J-6. Dispositions of units at that time are shown at Tab F. The Commanding Officer, C Company made physical contact with this Staff Sergeant and with my approval directed the D Company elements to the left of C Company

...in tightly around the southeastern edge of the LZ off in the brush.

(6) By then we were taking numerous casualties throughout the battalion, and it was apparent that we were fighting 500 - 600 enemy. These were only the ones we were in contact with and I figured others were headed our way. I requested the Brigade Commander to send me another rifle company. He immediately approved this request. In fact I later learned that he had already alerted A Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry and was assembling it at pick-up zones.

(7) During this fire fight, the Cavalry Scout Section was given specific orders to reconnoiter. They concentrated on routes of approach down the mountain to the northwest and southwest, and also approaches from the north and northwest on the valley floor. The Cavalry reported results to me on my command net. At this time, approximately 1500 hours, I decided that it was necessary to continue to land the remainder of the tactical element of the battalion consisting of the recon platoon, 3 main loads of C Company men, and the XO and 1st Sergeant of D Company. Although the eastern portion of the landing zone was under enemy fire it had slackened off considerably due to the C and D Company actions. These elements landed safely. I turned D Comp. my over to the Company XO and directed him to disperse the recon platoon around the north and east fringe of the LZ for LZ security and as battalion reserve. The C Company Commander had previously, with my approval, set up all rifle company mortars on the eastern fringe of the LZ. The D Company Commander was directed to add his mortars to them and take over their control from a control FDC. Principal direction of fire was toward A and B Companies. The mortars also had the mission of LZ defense to their east. All went quickly into position.

D. THE 2ND ATTACK TO REACH THE SURROUNDED 2D PLATOON, COMPANY B

(1) The time was now approximately 1545 hours and the disposition of the opposing forces was as shown at tab C. The first attempt by Companies A and B to reach the cut-off platoon had been stopped by approximately 300 enemy. We were taking moderate casualties especially among leaders and radiomen. These enemy were aggressive and they came off the mountain in large groups. They were well-camouflaged and took excellent advantage of cover and concealment. They were good shots. They were armed with numerous automatic weapons and small "potato-basher" grenades. Even after being hit several times in the chest, many continued firing and moving for several more steps before dropping dead. I ordered Companies A and B to evacuate their casualties, withdraw under covering fires out of close contact, and prepared for a coordinated attack supported by heavy preparatory fires to get back the surrounded platoon. Meanwhile Company C was continuing to hold off the enemy to their front with the help of some magnificent artillery and close air support. The Battalion S-2 was wounded and later shot again and killed during this enemy attack. The surrounded platoon of B Company stood off numerous A efforts to overrun it. Carrying their dead, their wounded, and their equipment the men of the platoon established a small 25 meter wide perimeter on a slight rise of ground and redistributed their ammunition under heavy enemy fire.

(2) At approximately 1620 hours, the second attack by Companies A and B to reach the surrounded platoon began. This attack was preceded by artillery and the preparatory fires. Between the first and second attacks and despite heavy fires from artillery and air, the enemy had moved well up towards A and B Companies. Some were in trees. Some fell back. For friendly to advance, the enemy had to be killed. This was difficult because they were well-camouflaged and used all kinds of cover and concealment. Many had dug into small spider-holes, others were dug into the tops and sides of the ant-hills. By that time, Company A had lost all three rifle platoon leaders - one killed and its artillery forward observer killed. Four men had been shot and killed within six feet of the Company Commander, including his color sergeant who was acting as a radio operator. Company B consolidated slightly ahead of the right of Company A, progressed only 75 - 100 meters

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... of it paid for in close-in fighting. I had given a Company back his platoon which had been assisting B Company. Nevertheless a Company could only progress about 150 meters. One platoon of a Company advanced farther than the other two; because one got with a greatly superior force; and was pinned down. Some of the enemy permitted the friendly to pass by them in the dense terrain and then opened up from concealed positions. White phosphorous artillery was brought in around the platoon and between the platoon and a Company (-) to give support to an a Company move forward to get it. The burning phosphorous caused a temporary lull in the enemy firing and that plus the smoke, enabled the platoon and their down and wounded to be reached and brought back. A 200 - 225 enemy force was still in the area fighting against Companies a and B. By 1740 hours, I decided that it was necessary to pull a and b Companies, under cover of heavy supporting fires, back to the fringe of the landing zone and set up a tight defensive perimeter for the night. We were still in good communications with the surrounded platoon and it was ringed with close-in artillery defensive fire. My intentions were to conduct another coordinated attack during the night or early the next morning to reach it or to get them out during the night by infiltration. Both a and b Companies had numerous WIA and KIA to get out of the area of contact; reorganization of the squads and platoons had to be accomplished; resupply of ammo and water had to be carried out; and all units of the battalion had to be tied in and disposed for the night. C Company had taken a heavy toll of the enemy throughout the afternoon. C Company had taken a few casualties but was in good shape and the enemy, although still in contact, had ceased his attacks on the company. Company D had gone into position. B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry was landed in two to four M4-D loads at a time from 1705 to 1800 hours. As they landed I built them into a reserve force prepared to counter-attack any penetration of C Company or for commitment in the a, b Company area of contact. This was not necessary.

(3) The withdrawal of a and b Companies was conducted successfully. White phosphorous, fired by artillery, was again used to cover the withdrawal. The burning phosphorous seemed to disorganize the enemy more than we and the smoke greatly assisted us by its screening effects. By 1900 hours, the organization of the perimeter was completed; units were tying in for the night and defensive artillery and mortar fires were being registered. I attached one platoon of Company B, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry to C Company as C Company had a wider sector to defend. The recon platoon was placed in battalion reserve. Dispositions were as shown at Tab a.

2. OTHER ACTIVITIES DURING THE AFTERNOON:

(1) While all of the above described actions were in progress, numerous other activities were going on. A major problem was care and evacuation of the wounded. Early in the afternoon, the battalion surgeon, medical supplies and four aid station personnel were brought in. They arrived around 1400 hours and under heavy fire treated the wounded in my Gr area. I did not call in med evac helicopters too frequently because most of the afternoon the landing zone was under fire. At about 1330 hours a small two-chopper open area was selected in the northeastern portion of X-RAY, as my supply and evacuation link to the rear. This we had to defend at all costs. This area is shown at Tab a. I requested the helicopter lift company commander to evacuate the wounded, bring in supplies, and set up a system whereby every helicopter coming to X-RAY with troops, with supplies, or for wounded would call me for landing instructions. This system worked very well; throughout the afternoon and early evening, numerous M4-D's were brought in - each from a specific direction at a prescribed altitude to land at a specific place and go out on a prescribed heading. I have the highest admiration, praise and respect for the outstanding professionalism and courage of the M4-D pilots and crews who ran a gauntlet of enemy fire time after time to help us. They never refused to come in; they followed instructions beautifully; they were great. We in turn called them in when

fire was the lightest and tried to have everything ready for each landing to keep them on the ground a minimum time. Men were shot down and destroyed although most of them took hits. Two aircraft were brought in which did not get out. One received enemy fire in the engine and had to land in an open area just off the northern portion of the LZ; the other clipped a few tree tops with the main rotor on landing in the LZ and had to be left. Crews of both aircraft were immediately lifted out by other helicopters. Both downed helicopters were immediately secured by elements of Company D without orders per Battalion SOP - they being the nearest troops. Both were slightly damaged only and were slung out two days later by CH-47 Chinooks. During the three day battle, these were the only two downed helicopters. By 1530 hours, it had become apparent that we would need a night landing capability - that I needed a pathfinder team to assist us on the ground. I called the A Company, 229th lift company commander with a request for pathfinders and was gratified to learn that he had anticipated the requirement. They arrived shortly thereafter and with engineer demolitionists cleared the LZ into a fairly safe two-chopper landing area and set up lights to be turned on if necessary for night landings. Although under enemy observation and fire, it was less vulnerable than the southern portion of LZ where we were still cleaning out enemy riflemen.

(2) By dark, at 1915 hours, a resupply of ammo, rations, water and medical supplies had been brought in. Oxycodone, morphine, and bandages were the medical supplies most needed and water was at a premium. At approximately 1850 hours, I radioed my B-3 and told him to prepare to come in as soon as possible using two UH-1H's and to bring in the artillery liaison officer, F.C., two radio operators and more water and small arms ammo. They landed at 2128 hours. The dust and smoke which hung like a horizontal curtain over the entire area delayed their arrival and made the landing very difficult but once again, the 229th pilots performed with great courage and professionalism.

IV. ACTIVITIES DURING THE NIGHT OF 14 NOVEMBER:

A. By darkness, 1915 hours, we had evacuated all our wounded and collected our dead in my CP area. Ammo and water was being distributed; the landing zone area was in the final stages of preparation for night landings; mortar and artillery fires were being registered close around the perimeter; a small light proof working area had been constructed out of benches for the medics; and the chain of command had been reorganized. I talked with many of the men and could see that the morale was high. We knew we were facing a tough enemy, but we also knew the enemy with a greatly superior force had failed to get through us that afternoon. We were in excellent shape as we completed tying in our perimeter. The cut-off platoon of B Company was in good morale and was holding its position.

B. During the night the enemy made several light probes forward of A and B Company, and of C Company near where it tied in with A Company. Artillery harassing and interdiction fires were brought down on the lower fingers and draws of the mountain, around the southern and western edges of the perimeter; and up on the slopes where four or five electric lights were observed. We received six or seven rounds of high explosive fire, either mortar or rockets.

C. The surrounded platoon of B Company on a finger of the mountain 300 meters northwest of the battalion perimeter was protected by close-in artillery fires all night. The enemy could be heard all around the platoon. Artillery fire was brought in on those areas and the shouts and screams told of good results. The platoon began and ended the night with 6 AL, 12 WL and 7 men not wounded. It was disposed in two separate locations within their small perimeter. The platoon leader, platoon sergeant and weapons squad leader were among the AL. The man who ended up on the radio was a sergeant B-5 squad leader. He could not get to the ranking man (a staff sergeant rifle squad leader), since any move he

and drew immediate enemy rifle fire. He was the calm and leadership link to his Company Commander. Throughout the night he adjusted close-range artillery fire on the enemy surrounding him as he heard them moving and talking. Three separate attacks were made during the night by the enemy, only in about 50 man strength. All were beaten off by small arms and artillery fire. Several of the wounded men of the platoon continued to fight. The second attack, at approximately 0345 hours was preceded by bugle calls around the platoon and up on the mountain 200-400 meters above the platoon. I requested and received a TAC Air strike in the area above the platoon. It was conducted under Air Force fireship illumination. It was right on target and greatly assisted in breaking up the second attack on the surrounded platoon. This was the only illumination used all night since it exposed the men in the surrounded platoon as well as the foxholes in the open areas of the battalion perimeter. Also, there was a fairly bright moon from 2315 onwards. When day-light broke, numerous enemy dead were seen around the surrounded platoon. These were only the dead who could be seen by the men as they lay prone in their positions. Other bodies were possibly concealed by the high grass which dotted the area. During the night, the men of the platoon saw and heard the enemy dragging off many dead and wounded.

D. First light came at 0630 hours. I had tentatively decided on my plan of attack to reach the surrounded platoon while simultaneously securing the perimeter. I directed my A, B, and C Company Commanders to meet me at the C Company CP to finalize the plan and to receive my orders since that was the best point of vantage. The time was approximately 0640 hours. I also directed each company to check around their positions carefully for infiltrators and snipers.

V. ENEMY ATTACKS OF 15 NOVEMBER:

a. At approximately 0650 hours the recon elements of the 1st and 2d platoons of C Company (the two left platoons) which were searching and screening approximately 100 - 200 meters forward of their positions began receiving rifle fire from their front and left front. They returned the fire and began pulling back to their defensive positions. At this time, they were attacked by a force of 2 - 3 Companies. The enemy was well-camouflaged; crouching low; and in some cases crawling on hands and knees. The recon parties from the two platoon positions right of the company CP encountered no enemy but pulled back immediately to their defensive positions. An intense small arms fire fight broke out. The weight of the enemy attack was directed at the left portion of the C Company sector. The recon parties of the 1st and 2d platoons began taking casualties including some KIL as they pulled back. Other men were hit trying to get to them. Some were recovered; however, by then - 0730 hours the enemy had moved almost to the perimeter foxholes despite taking severe losses from artillery, mortar, and close air. Savage close-range fighting went on for the next two hours in the C Company sector - primarily in the left three platoon areas and forward of the Company CP. There was considerable hand-to-hand fighting. For example, the 1st platoon leader was found later KIL with five dead PAVN around him in and near his CP foxhole. One man was found KIL with his hands at the throat of a dead PAVN. Numerous enemy bodies were found intermingled with the killed and wounded of C Company. At approximately 0715 hours, the enemy attacked the B Company sector near where the mortars were emplaced. This put the perimeter under attack from two directions. Artillery, Aerial Rocket Artillery, and TAC Air were called in and their fires were accurate and extremely effective. AR and TAC Air was also used to ring the perimeter with fires. Priority of all fires was given to C Company. The artillery FO with C Company was pinned down by rifle fire in the company CP area. Hence the artillery was adjusted by my artillery liaison officer from my CP. There was good observation.

b. At approximately 0715 hours, the Commanding Officer, C Company requested reinforcements. I took a platoon from Company A (it

being the closest to C Company) and dispatched it for the C Company CP area. It came under fire while moving over the open ground, lost 2 M1 and M1A, but made it to the right center of the C Company sector. At about 0745 hours, the A Company sector was attacked by what was later determined to be a small force. We were now being attacked from three different directions with firing of equal intensity in all three areas. Grazing fire from enemy small arms and automatic weapons was criss-crossing the interior of the perimeter into the leading zone, battalion CP area and aid station. Twelve to fifteen M2 explosions of either enemy mortar or rocket fire occurred in the perimeter. Several men were wounded in and near the CP by small arms fire. One was KIA. I alerted my reserve for probable commitment in the C Company area or D Company Sector - both of which contingencies we had planned for the night before. I radioed the brigade commander, informed him of the situation, and in view of the losses being sustained by C Company and the heavy attack, I requested an additional reinforcing company. We had already alerted Company A, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry the previous night and assembled it with helicopters ready for movement. My request was approved but I did not bring the company in at that time due to heavy fire in the area. See Tab I for dispositions of opposing forces.

C. The heavy fire fight continued only in the C and D Company sectors. At one time, approximately 0800 hours, the anti-tank platoon was heavily engaged and the M2 was severely threatened. The mortarmen were firing both their mortars and their rifles and taking heavy small arms fire. One mortar was hit and put out of action by enemy fire. I committed my reserve, the Moon Platoon, which moved into the left of the C Company sector; headed towards D Company and cleaned it out. They joined up with the rest of D Company and from then on throughout the rest of the attack, that portion of the perimeter was under control. This permitted me to take the risk of committing to bring in A Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry. Although the M2 was under fire, it was reduced somewhat. I needed A Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry in, so that I could reinforce or possibly counterattack or block in or behind the C Company sector. I ordered the commander, B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry to pull one additional rifle platoon plus his command group off his line; turn the sector over to his remaining platoon; assemble the Company (-) dispersed near my CP; and prepare, on order, to reinforce, block, or counterattack in the C Company sector which was 125 meters to the east of the CP or second, in any other area. By then, two officers of C Company had been killed and three wounded. However, the company commander although shot in the chest and back continued to function; help to control his company; and give me reports for nearly three hours. The men of C Company stood their ground. One man of Company D who wound up in the C Company sector was the only soldier left covering 50 meters. He personally shot 10 - 15 enemy with his M-16 rifle firing from the kneeling position. The company radio operator picked off 15 - 20 from the company CP foxhole. The company commander killed several before he was wounded. The enemy fire was so heavy that movement towards or within the sector resulted in more friendly casualties. It was during this action at 0755 hours that all platoon positions threw a colored smoke grenade on my order to define visually for FAC air, ant., and artillery air observers the periphery of the perimeter. All fire support was brought in extremely close. Some friendly artillery fell inside the perimeter, and two cans of napalm were delivered in my CP area wounding two men and setting off some M-16 ammo. This we accepted as collateral, but not unexpected due to the emergency need for unusually close-in fire support (50-100 meters). C Company, with attachments, fought the massive enemy force for over two hours. At approximately 0910 hours, elements of A Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry began landing. I briefed the Commanding Officer, A Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry on the situation and saw to it that he was oriented by the Commanding Officer, B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry on the sector he was to go into. I then ordered the Commanding Officer, Company B, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry to move with his command group and the one platoon to the C Company sector, assume control over the remainder of C Company and responsibility for the defense of the sector. He moved out at 0941 hours. The remaining platoon of B Company, 2d Battalion,

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7th Cavalry followed shortly after when it was relieved on the perimeter by A Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry. When the 3rd platoon of A Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry dismounted from the choppers, it headed towards the C Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry fire fight and assembled behind their left platoon. I attached it to B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry and it fought with that company throughout the next two days. By 1000 hours the enemy attack had been defeated. C Company had held. The enemy never penetrated through their position. At approximately 1330 hours all companies on the perimeter screened out for 300 meters and policed the battlefield. Dead PAVN, PAVN body fragments, and PAVN weapons and equipment were littered in profusion around the edge and forward of the perimeter. Numerous body fragments were seen. There was massive evidence e.g. bloody trails, bandages, etc. of many other PAVNs being dragged away from the area. Some of the enemy dead were found stacked behind anthills. Artillery and TAC air was placed on all wooded areas nearby into which trails disappeared. Numerous enemy weapons were collected along with other armament. Two prisoners were taken and evacuated. Friendly dead and wounded were also collected. Some friendly were killed and wounded in this screening. C Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry was then positioned as the battalion reserve in the center of the perimeter and A Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry was in position in the former B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry sector.

VI. THE RELIEF OF THE SURROUNDED 2ND PLATOON, COMPANY B, AND REDISPOSITION OF THE PERIMETER:

At approximately 1400 hours, the Brigade Commander had moved the 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry, into LZ Victor. At approximately 0900 hours it headed, in fact, for LZ X-RY. See Tab J for routes used. At 1205 hours, it closed into X-RY. The Commanding Officer, 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry and I coordinated on the disposition of forces. It was agreed that his A and B Companies which were south and west of LZ X-RY on the lower slopes of the mountain headed northwest plus C Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry would conduct a coordinated attack behind artillery, AR, TAC air preparation to relieve the surrounded platoon. The route of attack was as shown at Tab A. It was agreed that I would assume operational control of Company B, 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry and be in overall control of all units at LZ X-RY plus responsibility for its defense. B Company, 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry moved forward of C Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry on the perimeter. All 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry mortars went into position and registered. D Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry (minus the mortar platoon) was added to C Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry in reserve. The attack by A and C Companies of the 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry and B Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry under control of Commanding Officer, 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry jumped off at 1345 hours. There was little enemy resistance. A Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry reached the surrounded platoon at 1510 hours. At the location there were 8 AL, 12 ML and 7 unwounded. The platoon still had ammo left and were in good morale. The wounded were evacuated and all units disposed and dug in for the night. Dispositions were as shown at Tab A. Ammunition, water, and rations were brought in and distributed. The dead were all evacuated.

VII. ARMY NIGHT ATTACK, 0400-0630 HOURS, 16 NOV:

At approximately 0100 hours, B Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry was probed by 5 enemy. Two were killed and the other three dispersed. The moon was up at 2320 hours and there were no clouds. Fire discipline, as during the previous night, was excellent. All aiming stake lights on the mortars were extinguished, and no mortar fire was permitted, as during the previous night, without approval from me. All fires were coordinated by my Artillery Liaison Officer. Continuous, close-in and fire were conducted all around the perimeter. Some were placed on the mountainside, and firing in two areas resulted in a series of secondary explosions.

B. At approximately 0400 hours, the enemy began probing the B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry sector. At 0422 hours a force of 250 - 300 enemy attacked B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry in the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry sector. The route of attack was from the southeast as shown at Tab 11. Flareship illumination was called for and continuous until 0545 hours. The attack was beaten off by small arms and artillery fires. At 0431 hours another attack by 200 enemy came in on B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry. Each time a flare would light up, the enemy would hit the ground or fall back into the cover and concealment offered by the high grass and trees. The artillery took a heavy toll. There were four batteries firing. The P.V. could be seen dragging off numerous bodies. By 0503 hours, the weight of his attack had shifted more to the southwest with approximately 100 enemy attacking. This was repulsed by 0535 hours. At 0550 hours, the flareship ran out of flares. Artillery illumination was then employed. The mortars of both battalions had been firing since the attack began. Mortar illumination was then permitted. At 0627 hours, another attack came directly towards the CP. At 0641 hours the enemy had been beaten off and was dragging off bodies under fire. B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry had performed magnificently, and had suffered only 6 lightly wounded. During the attack, two separate resupply runs of ammo were made by the Moccasin Platoon, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry under fire and one by the XO and radio operators of B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry.

C. At 0641 hours, orders were given for all men on the perimeter to spray the trees and the anthills and bushes forward and over their positions at 0655 hours for two minutes to kill infiltrators, snipers, etc. Immediately upon firing, a force of 30 - 50 P.V. exposed themselves 150 meters forward of Company A, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry and began firing their weapons. Apparently the "two minutes" free spraying, prematurely triggered a possible enemy attack. AN and VT artillery was brought in and the attack was beaten off in twenty minutes. The tactic of spray firing accounted for 6 P.V. dead. One hung from a tree forward of the left platoon of B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry. Another dropped out of a tree immediately forward of the B Company CP. One P.V. was killed about one hour later attempting to climb down a tree and escape. My company commanders reported to me that the men liked this spraying. In addition to killing enemy, apparently it affords a release of tension built up through the night, and clears any doubts as to enemy nearby. At 0716 hours, a cautious and deliberate sweep was made by Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry and the Moccasin platoon, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry throughout the interior and fringes of the LZ. I ordered this conducted on hands and knees to search for friendly casualties and P.V. infiltrators in the high elephant grass. The trees were also searched. There were negative results.

D. At 0810 hours, all units on the perimeter were ordered to coordinate with their flank units, and prepare to move out on a search and clear sweep 500 meters commencing in order. The movement began at 0955 hours, however, after moving 50 - 75 meters B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry came under fire. One platoon leader was seriously wounded. All movement was stopped. B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry pulled back to the perimeter foxholes and close-in artillery and TAC air was called in. We then moved back out; eliminated all resistance and policed the area. 27 more P.V. were killed on this sweep. Enemy dead were lying throughout the area. I saw massive evidence of dead and wounded evacuation - blood, body fragments, bloody garments, etc. We also brought in three friendly M.L. Numerous enemy weapons were collected. Many were seen which had been fragmented by fire.

E. At approximately 0930 hours, the first elements of the 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry (-) began arriving at X-RAY. They closed at approximately 1200 hours. At 1040 hours, the Brigade Commander ordered us to move the battalion; Company L, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry; and the 3d Battalion, A Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry by LZ-1D to Patch 14, then to Camp Holloway at Pleiku for two days of rest and reorganization.

me to relieve my elements on line with elements of the 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry and the 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry. This I did. Before moving B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry, I had them make the final lateral sweep across their front out to 150 meters. This was the scene of extremely heavy action and I wanted the battlefield thoroughly policed. The extraction by UH-1D was completely successful, and was covered throughout by artillery and TAC Air delivered around the flight routes in and out, and on the slopes of the mountain. There was no enemy fire at any time during the extraction. The choppers were not brought in until aircraft loads were spotted on the LZ. Hence the UH-1Ds were only on the ground a few seconds. Concurrently with troop extraction, excess supplies, enemy weapons, casualty gear and weapons, and casualties were evacuated. Enemy hand grenades, ammo, anti-tank weapons, etc were placed in a large hole and arrangements were made with CO, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry for demolition by his engineer teams. Many other enemy weapons had previously been destroyed elsewhere in the battle area. By 1456 hours all elements of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry; B Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry and the 3d Platoon, A Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry had been extracted from X-RAY bound for LZ Falcon. By 1830 hours all elements had left LZ FALCON by air and closed into Camp Holloway, vicinity of Fleiku.

VIII. ENEMY, FRIENDLY CASUALTIES, CAPTURED:

EQUIPMENT

A. ENEMY:

Killed, body count - 634
Killed, wounded (Est) - 1215
Captured, evacuated - 6

B. FRIENDLY (INCLUDES ATTACHED UNITS):

Killed - 79
Wounded - 121
Missing - None

C. CAPTURED ENEMY EQUIPMENT, EVACUATED:

Assault carbines w/bayonet - 54
Assault rifles, automatic - 57
Automatic Rifles - 17
Heavy Machine Guns - 4
Antitank Rocket Launchers - 5
Pistols - 2
81/82 mm Mortar Tub-- -2
Medics Kits - 6

D. ENEMY EQUIPMENT DESTROYED IN OBJECTIVE AREA:

Crew-served and individual weapons - 75-100 (approx)
Antitank Rockets - 3 cases of 3 rounds each
Hand Grenades - 300-400 (approx)
Assorted small arms, AV ammunition - 5000-7000 rounds (est)
Entrenching tools - 100-150 (small shovel type)

IX. COMMENT:

A. The following items concerning the enemy and general battle-field techniques are considered worthy of mention. Most represent nothing new and are listed for emphasis as being particularly applicable to the PAVN enemy.

B. FIRE SUPPORT:

(1) Fire support to be truly effective must be close-in.

operation where the enemy is in a position where they will get very close or even intermingled with friendly in the high grass. Bringing fires in promptly, "walking them in" extremely close helped us greatly. The commander cannot wait until he knows exactly where all his men are. If he does, in a heavy action, he will get more men killed by waiting than if he starts shooting immediately. Once the enemy gets as close as 25 meters out or intermingled then he has the friendly fighting on his terms, with those who have made it that close. Close fire support then can be used to cut off his follow-up units, and they will be there. He is much more afraid of napalm and white phosphorus than he is. He hits the dirt under his fire. Under napalm and WP, he often gets up and runs around in disorder, and presents a better target for small arms, VT, and HE. The 250 pound frag bomb and the GBU's are very effective.

(2) When a unit gets into an objective area, as soon as possible after landing, artillery fires should be brought in. This will maybe kill some PAVN nearby and certainly will cut down some on target when a fire mission on known enemy is called for.

(3) Aerial rocket artillery is extremely effective especially if the pilots know the exact location of friendly. It has a tremendous shock effect on the enemy. The thing about it which makes it at times more effective than artillery is the fact that it does not have to be seen by ground observers to be adjusted. If the front lines or a friendly position is marked and can be recognized by the pilots, quick, accurate fire support is the result.

(4) The LAW was effective against the anthills behind which the PAVN were hiding. Training in use of LAWs must be emphasized.

(5) If PAVN are encountered close-in during a friendly attack, the best solution to an attack may be to back up, under artillery and ML, let the artillery and ML work the area over and then start again, loading off with plenty of M-79s in the trees and grass and LAWs into the anthills.

(6) Whenever illumination was in the air many of the enemy ceased firing.

(7) Careful placement of M-79 men should be emphasized in order to give them the best possible fields of fire. They must always be on the lookout for enemy in trees. It was found that the M-79's were extremely effective against enemy in trees as well as troops in the open. M-79's must be fired into trees and the high grass even when no enemy are seen.

(8) In this operation all mortars were combined under a central POC. This was very satisfactory. The mortars were very effective. Mortar illumination firing was carefully controlled at battalion level. The mortar illumination round has a very high end rate and it would take many rounds to provide a battalion perimeter illumination for one hour. Therefore it was used to fill the gap for illumination between the artillery and the flareship. The mortars alone could not have come close to providing the desired amount of illumination.

(9) Artillery, TOW air, and ML can be used at the same time without loss of aircraft effectiveness. The ML and TOW air flow perpendicular to the artillery gun-target line in those cases where they simultaneously struck the same target areas. Other striking aircraft flow parallel to the gun-target line and beyond it. This called for close teamwork between the POC and the artillery liaison officer.

(10) Artillery must be used against possible avenues of reinforcement as well as on the enemy in either an attack or a defense. Close-in continuous defensive ML and I fires are a must in a defensive

situation where the enemy is known to be present even if he is not attacking.

(11) Great emphasis should be placed on the ability of all personnel down to and including fire team leaders to adjust artillery and mortar fire.

(12) Each platoon must carry many colored smoke grenades and a panel for marking friendly lines and landing areas.

(13) The technique of having all units on the perimeter throw a colored smoke grenade on order greatly helped TAC Air and AAA to locate the perimeter.

C. MOVEMENT

(1) Movement must be cautiously aggressive. The enemy must be pinned down by fire. Small unit, squad sized fire and movement must be conducted to perfection. This is extremely important. If not conducted correctly, men will get hit and the problem is then compounded when other men stop firing to try to recover casualties. Then they also get hit in many cases and soon, combat effectiveness of the squad, platoon, etc. is in danger of being lost. In this connection, when enemy contact has been made or is strongly suspected, recon by fire or actual fire and movement should be conducted to forestall the enemy firing first. This is particularly important for a unit moving up alongside a unit which is in contact and in a fire fight.

(2) Platoon and company fire and maneuver must be conducted to perfection. Flanks must be secure. Open flanks can be secured to a degree by fire support. Squads and platoons must be tied together as close as the situation permits. The tighter the better against the PAVN, as he will hole up in concealed firing positions, let friendly go by, then open up.

(3) Close-in artillery, AAA, and TAC Air front, rear, and both sides is a great help in moving through an area where there are known enemy. This is normal but sometimes overlooked.

(4) When companies conduct sweep and clear operations together out of a perimeter, or over a certain route, battalion must check on the company formations to be used to insure that the terrain will be adequately covered and the companies are properly coordinated and fitted to the terrain and the enemy situation.

D. TECHNIQUES:

(1) The technique of holding a company (-) as an offensive striking force while recon elements of one platoon check specific areas out 50-100 meters from the landing zone worked out very well in this case. For one thing until the assault unit is actually on the ground and sees and feels the terrain and the environment, the commander of the unit charged with LZ security does not finally know which areas he will check out in priority. Also and most important, the assembled company(-) enables the battalion commander to hit any enemy attack quickly with a controlled unit. In this operation we were also able to move quickly with Company B to develop the contact made by one of its platoons as soon as Company A had sufficient force to take over the LZ security mission. In retrospect, the fact that Company B was in a posture for a fast move off the landing zone undoubtedly gave us the jump on the PAVN. Had not B Company surprised them with their aggressive move up the finger, we might well have been fighting the PAVN from the fringes of the LZ with our backs on it — and the enemy in turn would have had good fields of fire on the incoming helicopters carrying the last elements of A Company and all of C and D Companies.

I feel that the fact that we had first B Company, then A Company, off the landing zone moving against the RVN, then C Company in a good blocking position took the initiative away from him. From then on, for three days and two nights, he was reacting to our presence.

under: (2) At night, units must form tight perimeters, use Claymore mines, trip flares and dig in. The use of outposts and listening posts depends largely on the terrain and the enemy situation. In this operation, it would have been suicidal as the cover and concealment afforded the enemy too many opportunities to take the outguards by stealth. Camouflaged foxholes with cleared fields of fire are recommended. Normal, but sometimes hard to execute under fire.

(3) In a perimeter defense, it is necessary to check the front with small recon parties at first light and periodically through the day for 100-200 meters to clear out infiltrators, police the battlefield, and to insure that the enemy is not massing for an attack. This action should be preceded by having all troops on the perimeter spray the trees, grass, and anthills to their front and overhead at a specified time for two-three minutes. When the recon elements screen to the front, it should be preceded by artillery and recon by fire. Air Cav Scouts overhead can assist by observation. Units should move in the attack with fire and movement. All men must give the enemy the capability of being to the front and overhead as infiltrators, snipers, or massing for an attack.

(4) The battalion command group must carry a 292 antenna in on the assault and set it up as soon as possible. D Company, my alternate CP, carried one in on the assault -- set it up, and it was invaluable.

2. SUPPLY, SUPPORT, SERVICES:

(1) The minimum amount of gear should be carried into an assault. This should be one meal, a poncho, two canteens of water, salt tablets, and plenty of ammunition.

(2) Casualties are a critical problem. When fire is pinning down individuals, one casualty will cost one or two more men attempting to get to him. Heavy cover fire must be employed to try and cover the attempt to recover the wounded man and get him out of the danger area. Leaders at all levels in contact under fire must act cautiously in getting casualties out. I lost many leaders killed and wounded while recovering casualties. Wounded must be pulled back to some type of covered position and then treated. Troops must not get so concerned with casualties that they forget the enemy and their mission. Attempting to carry a man out requires up to four men as bearers which can hurt a unit at a critical time.

(3) Evacuation of casualties from the areas of contact in this action was a problem. T&E litter bearers would have been a big help. As it turned out, fighting strength had to be used to carry out a wounded man (3-4 men required) or to assist many walking wounded. (one man at least required in many cases).

(4) When a man is wounded or killed, his weapon and some of his equipment get separated from him in many cases. An S-4 representative - officer or NCO with assistants, must be present at least in the battalion forward aid station and at the collecting company at Forward Support. Some of our equipment was evacuated with men all the way to Qui Nhon. Also we had many M-16's shot up and had to have replacements in the area. Therefore we kept a lot of weapons in the battle area for re-issue. When we were pulled out we brought all excess weapons and equipment with us. Many enemy weapons which were captured and sent out with friendly KIA and WIA were never seen

again. The unit commander fighting the battle in the objective area loses control of equipment, friendly and enemy, once it leaves the forward area by helicopter. A more effective "backstop" system must be set up to catch this gear and control it when it arrives at various unloading points in the rear.

(5) Rations are no problem. Few men eat much when in a heavy action; however, water is extremely critical. It must be present in quantity particularly when there is no stream source available.

(6) The pathfinder team was tremendous. Until they could get in around 1630 hours, 14 November, all incoming aircraft had to be guided in and out by the battalion commander on the battalion command net. A pathfinder team should go into every battalion-sized assault.

(7) It took time to reload M-16 magazines one round at a time. In the heavy action we encountered, this took excessive time at critical periods. It was particularly critical during the early night attack. Also it was difficult to keep track of empty magazines in a heavy fire fight. The solution may be an expendable, plastic type magazine which is resupplied to the riflemen fully loaded with rounds as was the old M-1 clip of eight rounds. Also, the present bandolier pouch makes crawling on the stomach difficult.

(8) The individual soldier must become at least as good as the PAVN in camouflage techniques and use of terrain and foliage to cover and conceal his movements. This must be emphasized.

F. THE PAVN ENEMY:

(1) He appeared to be well-trained. He was aggressive. He was equipped with a preponderance of automatic weapons and plenty of ammunition. He carried 3 - 5 Chinese potato masher hand grenades. He carried a softball-sized wad of cooked rice, most of them carried a bed roll consisting of a piece of waterproof plastic and a hammock. His weapons were well maintained.

(2) He was an expert at camouflage and used every bit of cover and concealment to perfection. With only small arms, mortars, and antitank weapons he obviously sought to close with us *IN STRENGTH* quickly-before we could discover him - possibly to render our support less effective and certainly to overwhelm us and force us to fight on his terms. Without much overhead fire support, he probably had to fall back on expert camouflage techniques, attacks in mass, infiltrators, and stay-behind killer parties.

(3) He was a deadly shot. In caring for my men who had been killed and wounded, I was struck by the great number who had been shot in the head and upper part of the body -- particularly in the head. He definitely aimed for the leaders -- the men who were shouting, pointing, talking on radios. He also aimed for the men carrying radios. He also appeared to concentrate on men wearing insignia of rank -- particularly non-commissioned officer with stripes on their arms. In this war, I question if it is necessary, possibly even foolish, or inviting fire, for non-commissioned officers to wear insignia of their grade -- or any enlisted man for that matter. Within the small units, all men know their leaders. In base camp the leaders should wear their insignia. On operations against the enemy, they should wear clean-sleeve fatigues.

(4) When attacking, the PAVN units confronting us used mass assault tactics preceded in some cases by light mortar and anti-tank rocket fire. The latter I believe is often mistaken for mortar fire. He also used encircling maneuvers with 50 - 75 men groups. He employed his machine guns extremely well and thoroughly understood the value of grazing fire. At night, he infiltrated small numbers up to

the friendly positions. These enemy set up on top of grassy anthills, in trees, and good close-in firing positions. He was expert at probing our defensive perimeter at night and went to great efforts to try to force friendly into firing.

(5) When met by heavy ground fire or by mortar, artillery, TAC Air, or ARA he become less organized. However, he did not quit. Napalm and white phosphorous he definitely did not like.

(6) He appeared to have no radios. The leaders controlled their men by shouting. Bugles were used during the night of 14 - 15 November on the mountain above the battalion perimeter. Also, at night on the mountain they used signal lights.

(7) He fought to the death. When wounded, he continued fighting with his small arms and grenades. He appeared fanatical when wounded and had to be approached with extreme care. Many friendly were shot by wounded PAVN.

(8) He also appeared fanatical in his extreme efforts to recover bodies of his dead and wounded and their equipment. He never stopped his efforts in this regard and used the night, the high grass, the anthills and other concealment to maximum advantage to carry his purpose. We found many of his dead with ropes tied around the ankles and a short, running end free. I saw two of my dead with similar ropes tied around their ankles.

(9) Some of my men who met him face to face have stated that some PAVN appeared to be "hopped up". They based this conclusion in part on their observation that when shot, they kept moving several more steps firing before dropping. In these cases, it is possible that the high velocity M-16 bullet passed cleanly through these enemy without any immediate stopping effect. Also some men stated that they saw a few enemy keep their weapons at sling arms although under fire. One non-commissioned officer stated that one group of 30 or so enemy continued moving across the front of his squad although it was being cut to pieces by close-in flanking fire.

(10) A favorite tactic of the PAVN enemy we faced seemed to be an aggressive small-unit encircling maneuver. Another was a rapid assault by 6 - 10 PAVN on 2 or 3 friendly.

(11) We found some of our KIL "dog tags" and wallets on the bodies of dead PAVN.

VIII. Out of all the above, the principal points that I would like to emphasize are:

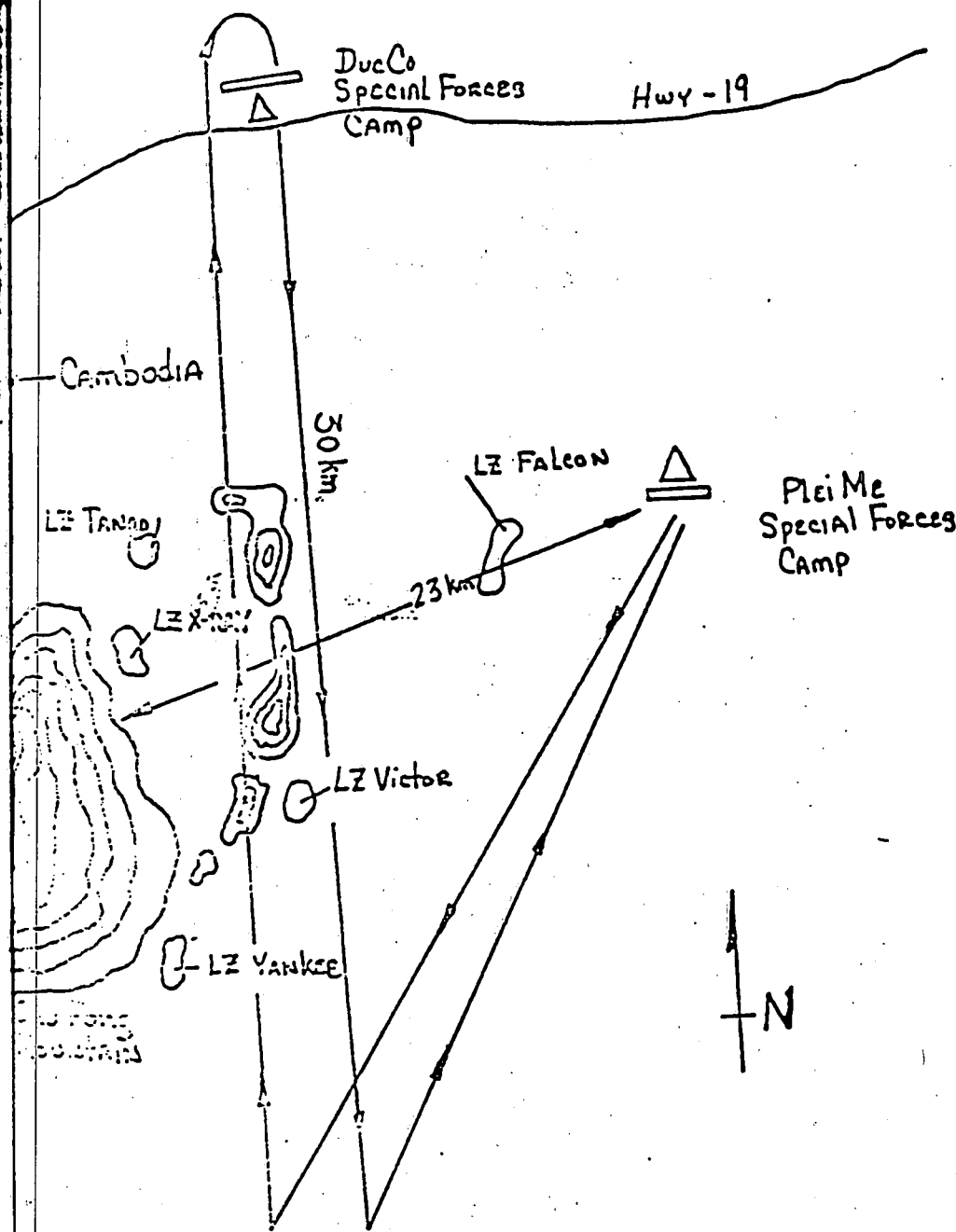
A. We must make imaginative and constant use of our tremendous fire support advantage to kill the PAVN enemy before he gets so close that we must fight him on his terms. This includes heavy use of the M-79 and even hand grenades to hold him out so that artillery, TAC Air, and ARA can work on him.

B. We must take time and every opportunity to train our men, and especially our replacements, to perfection in small-unit fire and movement and fire and maneuver. If we do not do this, men will be killed who would not otherwise be killed.

C. The commander on the battlefield must continually anticipate what the future may bring or could bring and take steps to influence the future before it comes about. This applies to the enemy; to fire support; supply of ammo, water, and medical supplies before the requirement arises;

to friendly reaction to possible enemy action; and to all other matters having a bearing on a particular situation. Also, periodically throughout a battle, the commander must mentally detach himself from the action and objectively think — what is not being done which should be done to influence the situation, and what is being done which should not be going on.

H. Moore
HAROLD G. MOORE
Colonel, Infantry



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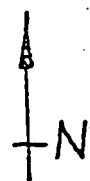
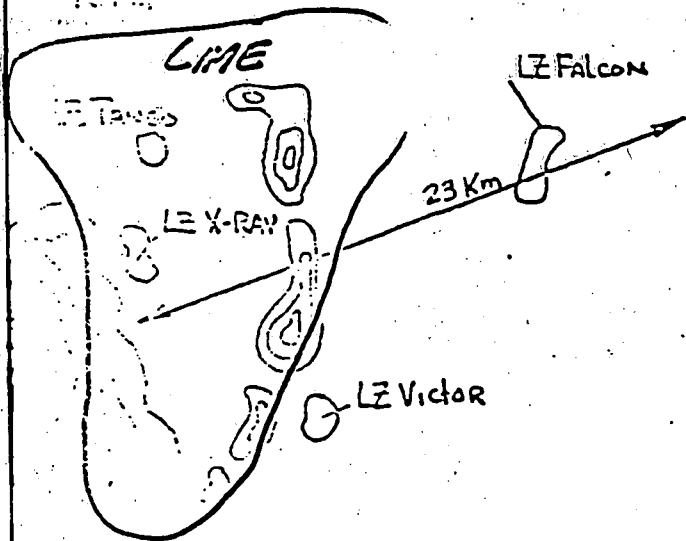


UCo SPECIAL
FORCES CAMP

Hwy - 19

Pleiku
40 km

Cambodia
1974



Tab B

21

247
[FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY]

Copy Nr _____
Hqs, 1st Bn, 7th Cav
Plei Me, RVN ZA168069
140845 Nov 65

Written transcript of Oral Operations Order issued by Lieutenant Colonel Harold G. Moore, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, 140845 November 1965.

1. SITUATION:

A. Enemy

- (1) Possible Battalion vicinity YA 903032.
- (2) Possible enemy on Chu Pong Mountain YA 935010.
- (3) Possible secret base vicinity YA 960020.

B. 3rd Brigade continues present mission of search and destroy South and West of Pleiku, Plei Me with 2/7 Cavalry South of Plei Me and 2/5 Cavalry West of Plei Me.

2. MISSION: 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry conducts Air Assault operations in area LIME (La Drang Valley) to search for and destroy the enemy. Operations will be concentrated on stream beds, river beds, and wooded high ground to a maximum height of 500 meters.

3. EXECUTION:

A. Concept of Operations:

- (1) Maneuver: The battalion will enter the area of operations by company elements shuttling from their present locations using 16 UH1D helicopters landing at Landing Zone X-RAY. Alternate Landing Zones are TANGO and YANKEE to be used only on order. Company B will land first and secure the landing zone. The landing zone will be secured using the technique of sending out reconnaissance elements from one platoon and retaining the company(-) assembled as a striking force. Company A, Company C, and Company D will follow on order. Company B and Company A on order will assemble in attack formation off the North and Northeast portion of the landing zone prepared to commence a coordinated searching movement to the East and Northeast on order with Company A on the right (East). Company C initially Battalion reserve and Landing Zone security on order. Prepare to move West and Northwest to search lower portion of mountain area vicinity X-RAY.
- (2) Fire Support: There will be an 8 minute diversionary artillery preparation vicinity Landing Zones YANKEE and TANGO, followed by a 20 minute tube artillery preparation vicinity the primary landing zone X-RAY with emphasis on surrounding terrain and the finger and draw Northwest of X-RAY.

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TAB C

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The tube artillery will be followed by 30 seconds of Aerial Rocket Artillery followed by 30 seconds of gunship preparation just prior to touchdown of the assault company. All mortars under Company D mortar platoon control. Position area to be selected after landing. Priority of fires initially to Company B then to Company A when move off the LZ to East begins.

- B. Company A:
- C. Company B:
- D. Company C:
- E. Company D:
- F. Headquarters Company: Move to Landing Zone Falcon on order utilizing 2 CH-47's.
- G. Coordinating Instructions:

- (1) Each rifle company be prepared to assume mission of any other rifle company on order.
- (2) "C" lift frequency will be used for move.
- (3) All rifle companies take one mortar and maximum ammunition.
- (4) All mortars will be brought in as internal CH-47 loads and placed under Company D control.

4. ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS:

- A. No mules will be taken into objective area until cleared to do so by the Battalion Commander.
- B. Forward Supply point will be at Landing Zone Falcon Z-022032.
- C. Equipment left at Ploi Mo will be placed inside the Special Forces Camp prepared for air move to Landing Zone Falcon or I-RAY on order.

5. COMMAND AND SIGNAL:

- A. Battalion Commander initially with assault company.
- B. Battalion Forward Command Post: Landing Zone X-RAY at Battalion Commander's location.
- C. Battalion Rear Command Post: Present location initially. Landing Zone Falcon on order.

MOORE
Lt Colonel

OFFICIALS:

DeL

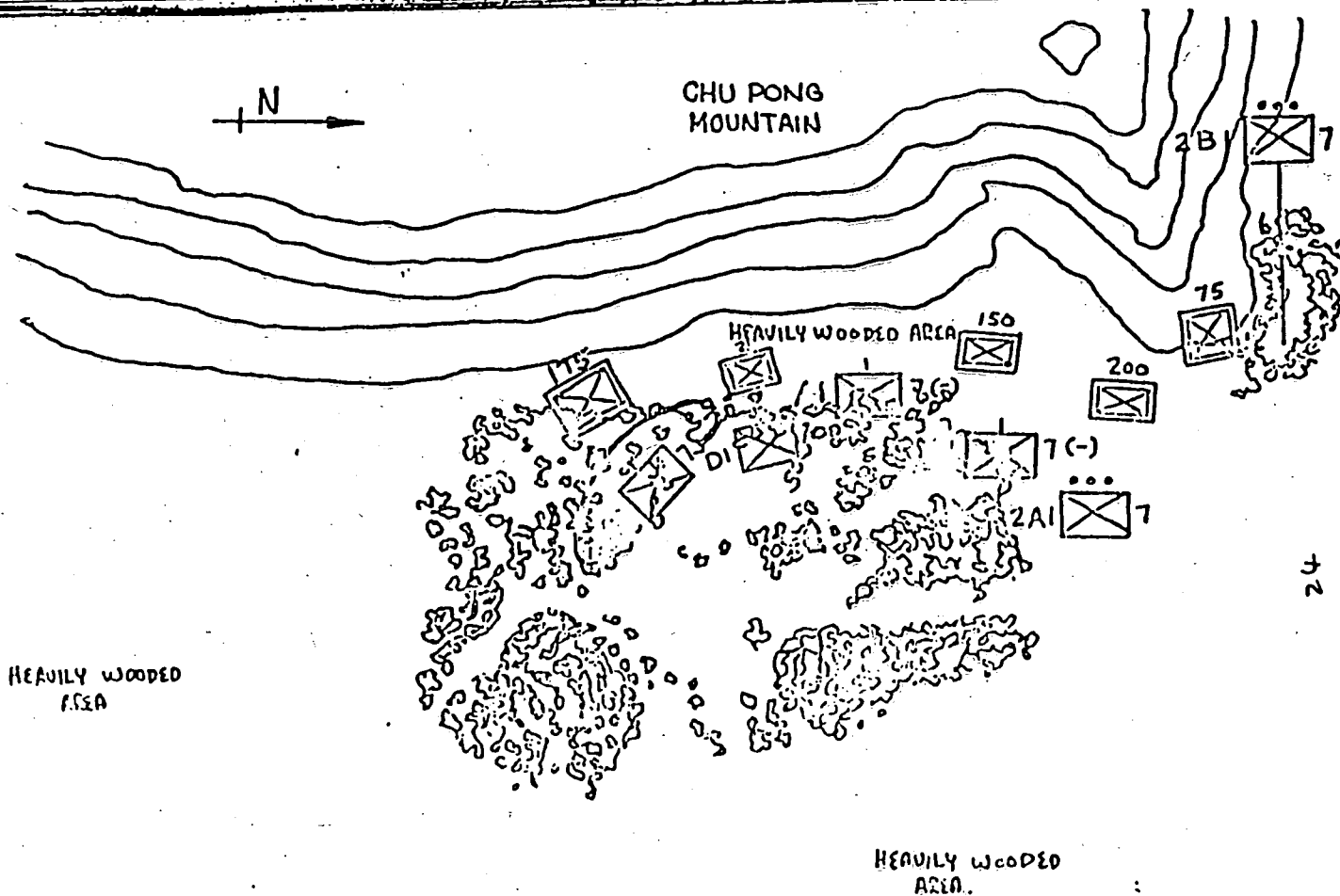
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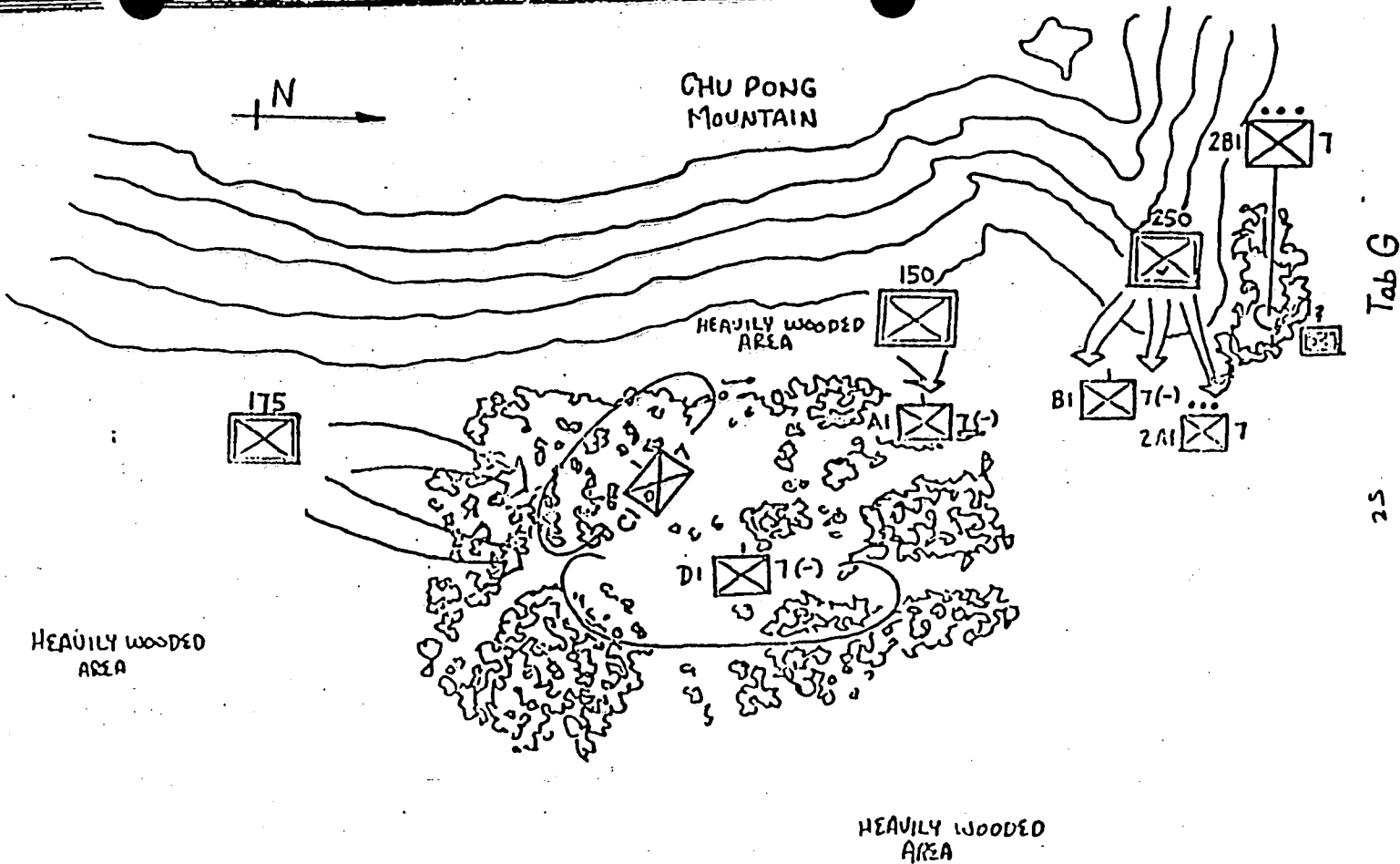
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Tab F

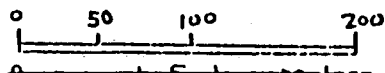
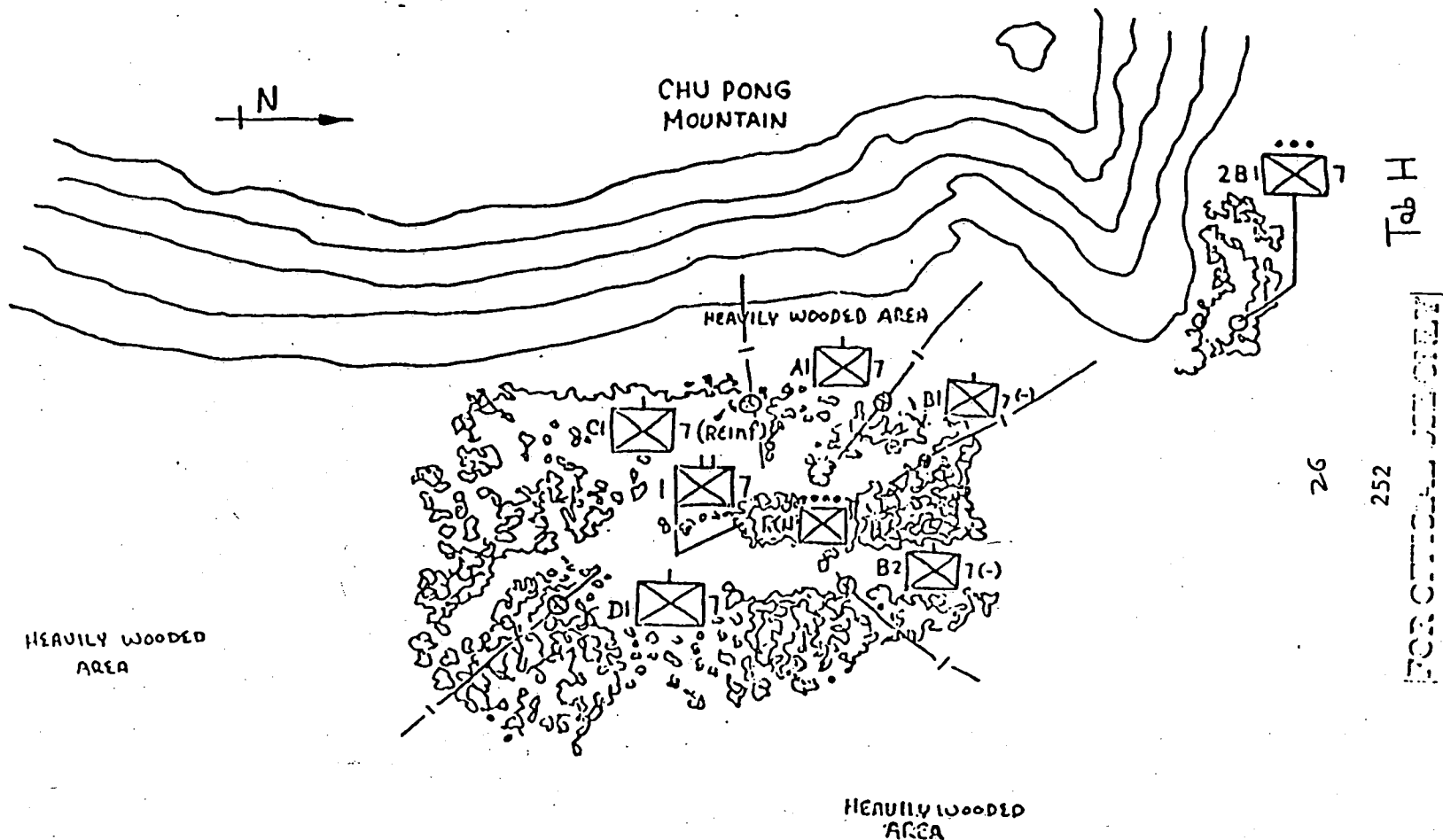


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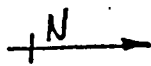
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CHU PONG
MOUNTAIN



HEAVILY WOODED AREA

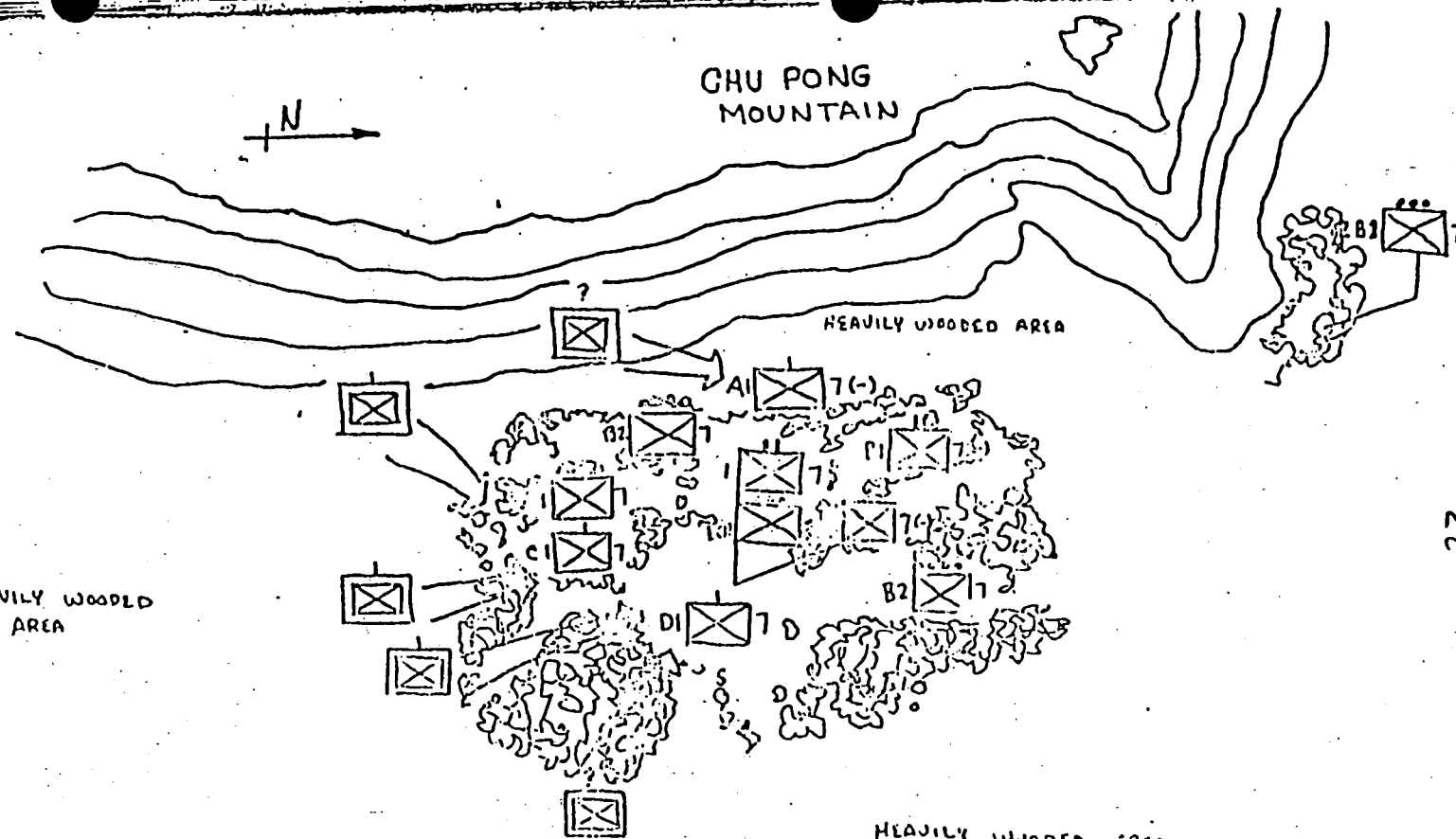
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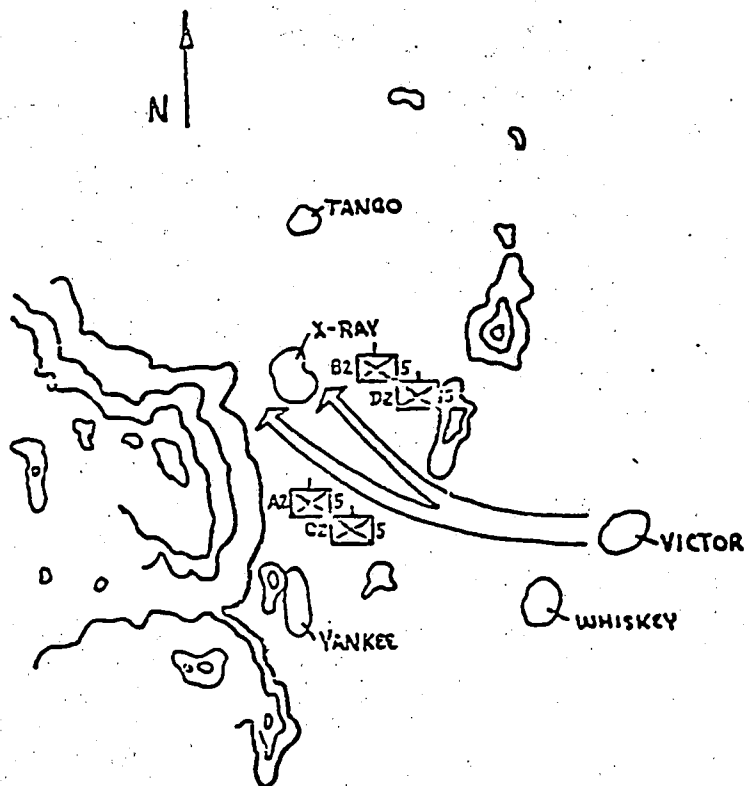
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TAB I

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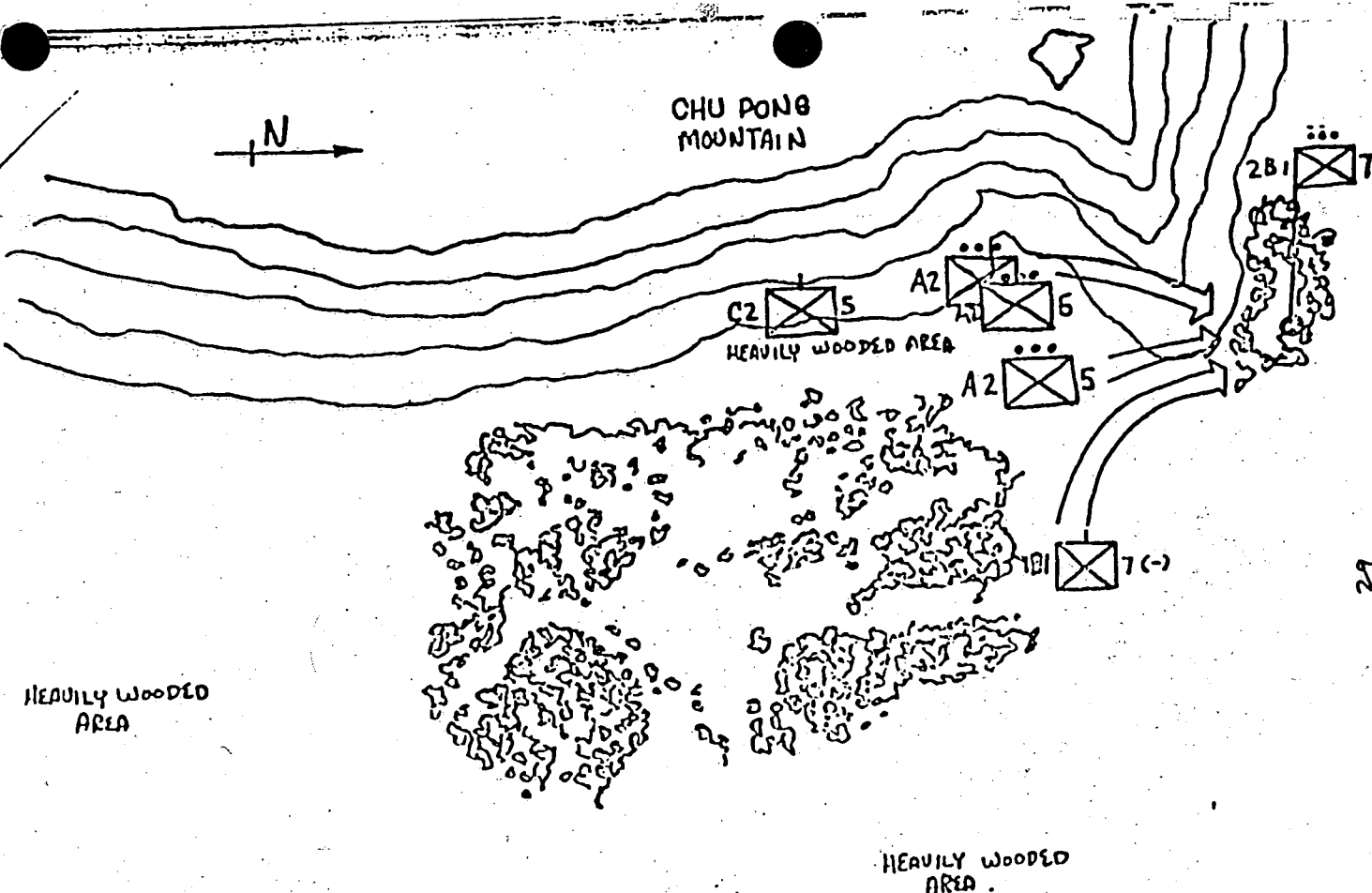


Tab J

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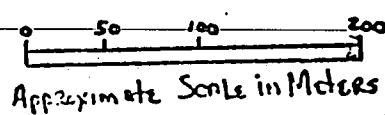
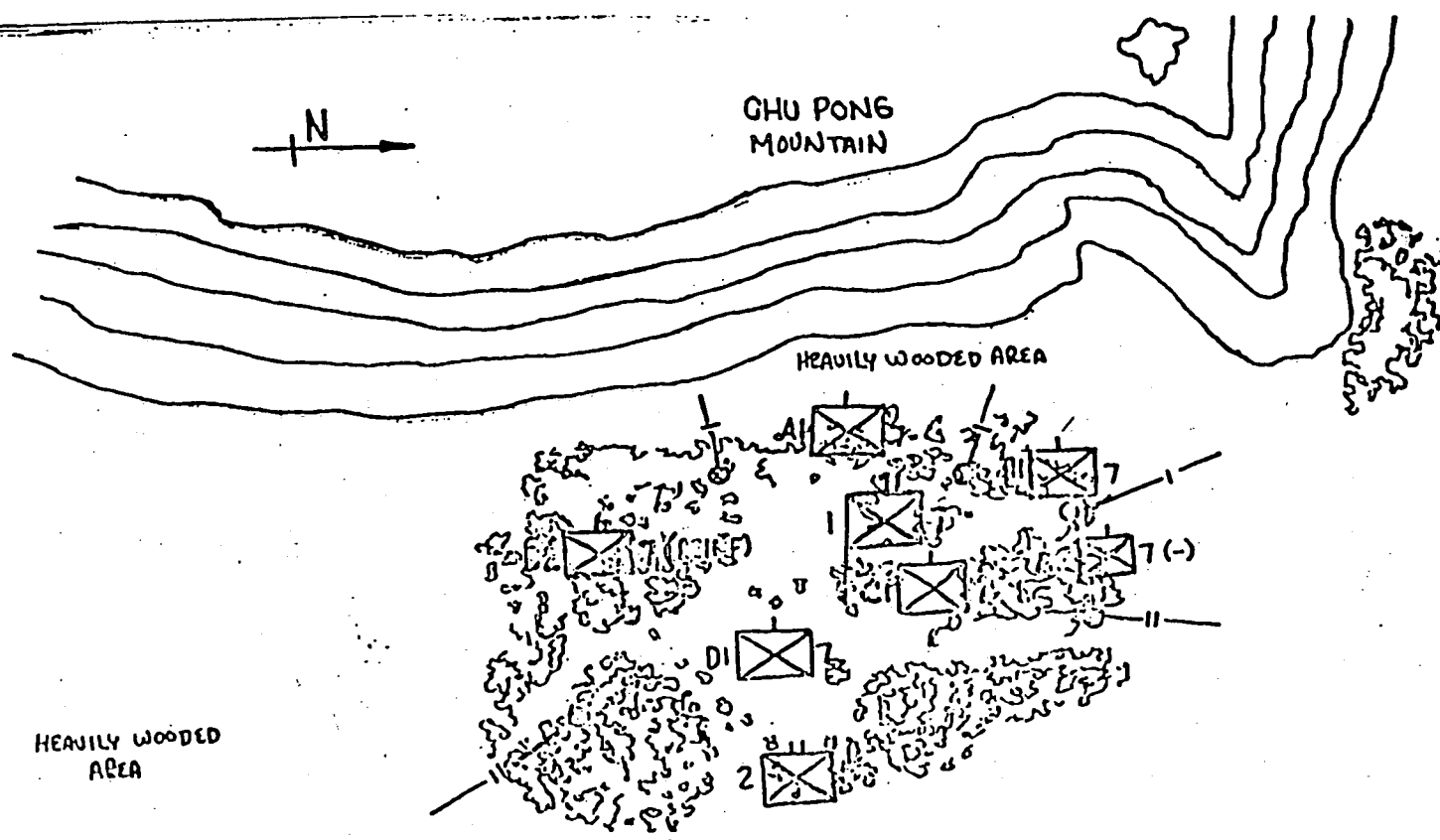
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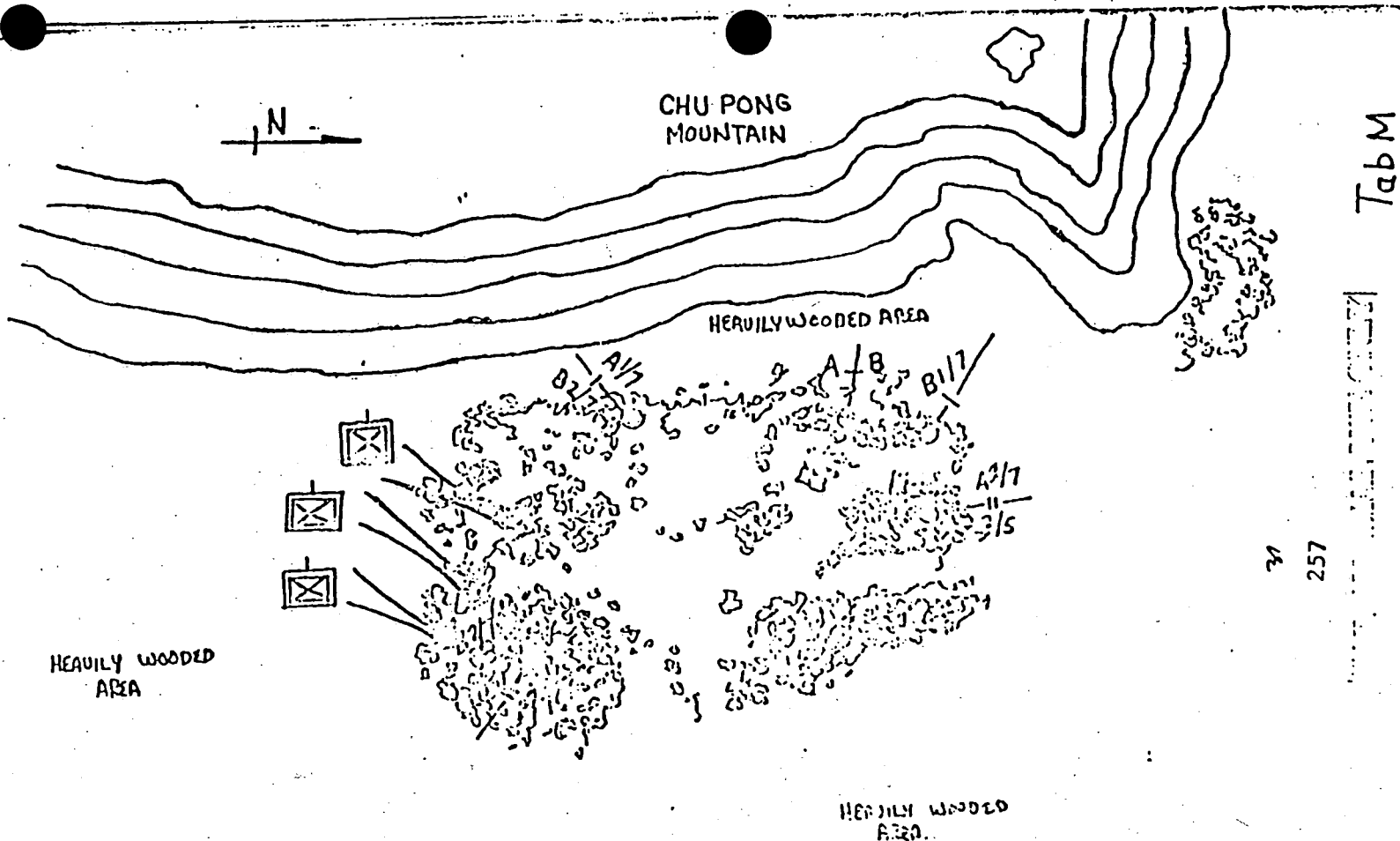
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Tab K-
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Tab L
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Q

Q

VIETNAM DECISIVE The BATTLES



Stunning photographs
and 3-dimensional
computer graphics re-create
the most significant battles
of the Vietnam War from
Dien Bien Phu to the
Fall of Saigon

FOREWORD BY CAPT SHELBY STANTON U.S. ARMY (RET)

JOHN PIMLOTT



THE IA DRANG CAMPAIGN

October 26–November 27, 1965

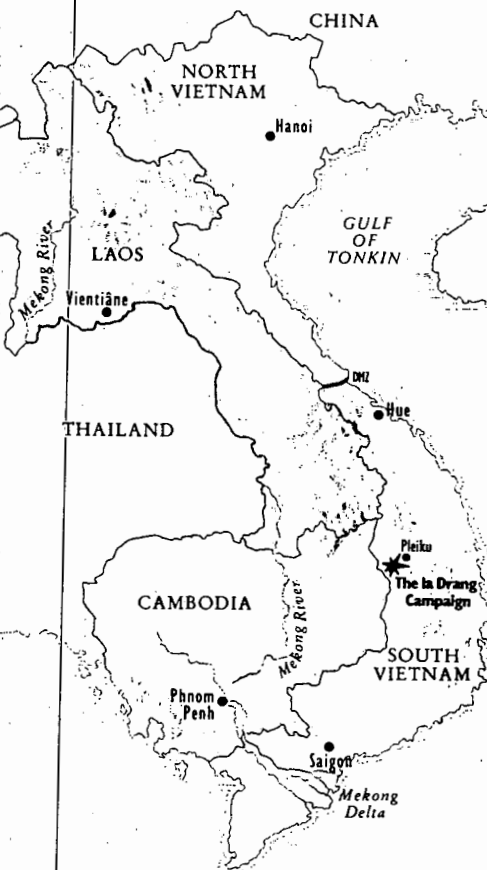
BY THE TIME OF OPERATION Starlite, the Marines were not the only American ground combat troops in Vietnam. U.S. Army Special Forces, the Green Berets, had been fighting their own unconventional operations since 1957, and advisers had been attached to the ARVN for even longer. But in the aftermath of the Marine commitment to Da Nang, President Johnson had authorized the deployment of entire army formations.

On April 14, 1965, the 173d Airborne Brigade—the army's rapid response force for the western Pacific—was ordered to move to Vietnam, and, three months later, they were joined by the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. The latter was initially slated to relieve the 173d, but ended up fighting alongside it. The steady escalation of U.S. force levels had begun.

Both formations found the transition to war frustrating, acting as heliborne infantry in a country-wide "firefighting" role. For much of the time, the troopers were involved in repetitive, tiring, and mundane "walks in the sun," chiefly in War Zone D north of Saigon and around Pleiku in the Central Highlands. The VC were initially reluctant to engage U.S. troops.

One of the reasons for Communist caution lay in the enhanced mobility displayed by the Americans. Helicopters had been used before in Vietnam, as both Ap Bac and Starlite showed, but both airborne brigades were now using them on a much more regular basis, lifting troops over difficult terrain to landing zones (LZs) in the enemy rear. It was an idea that had been explored as early as 1962, when Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara had set up the U.S. Army Tactical Mobility Requirement Board under the leadership of Lieutenant General Hamilton Howze.

By 1965, "airmobility" had been taken much further than that displayed by the 101st and 173d, who used helicopters only for movement: the newly activated 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) used



"We are in heavy contact. These guys are good!"

CAPTAIN ROBERT H. EDWARDS, LZ X-RAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1965

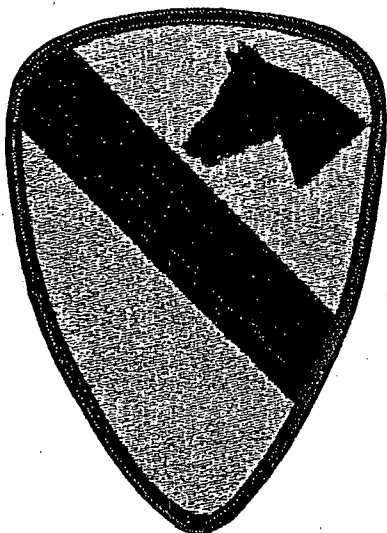
them for all aspects of battle—reconnaissance, air attack, transport, and logistic support—to produce a self-contained and potentially devastating force.

On July 28, 1965, President Johnson announced the commitment of the 1st Cavalry to Vietnam. The division had formally come into existence only a month before, absorbing personnel from the experimental 11th Air Assault Division (Test) and reassigned units from the 2d Infantry Division (now given cavalry designations), but the commanding officer, Major General Harry W. O. Kinnard, was eager for action. More than 400 helicopters—OH-13 Sioux for reconnaissance, UH-1 Hueys for assault and infantry lift, CH-47 Chinooks and CH-54 Flying Cranes for heavy lift—were loaded on transports; these, together with 16,000 personnel and 1,600 vehicles, were shipped across the Pacific, approaching Vietnam in early September.

General Westmoreland's first reaction was to split the division, sending each of its three brigades to a different part of the country; but Kinnard was adamant: the whole point of airmobility, he argued, was to keep the closely integrated force together to maximize its impact.

Kinnard's view prevailed, and he was ordered to deploy his division to An Khe, 35 miles inland from Qui Nhon in the central provinces. An immense heliport (soon to be dubbed "the Golf Course") was constructed, and the 101st Airborne was drafted in to clear Route 19. On September 14, the first Regular Army helicopters flew in to An Khe.

The central provinces were not chosen at random, for, by the summer of 1965, it was becoming apparent that the area was under attack, not just from the VC but also, more significantly, it was believed, from elements of the North Vietnamese Army. Infiltration of NVA regulars down the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and Cambodia had been recognized for some time, but intelligence sources were now painting a much more menacing picture. They were not mistaken: a special Field



Shoulder sleeve insignia of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). This unit's hard fighting in the Ia Drang Campaign won a Presidential Unit Citation.

An engineer of the 1st Cavalry comes under fire near Chu Pong Mountain by the Ia Drang Valley. On November 14, 1965, the entire 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, was helilifted into this area at LZ X-Ray and immediately ran into two NVA regiments.

Men of the 1st Air Cavalry Division (Airmobile) unload their Huey in the Chu Pong Mountain area during the campaign.



THE IA DRANG CAMPAIGN/2

The origins of airmobility

The U.S. Army used helicopters for medical evacuation and light transportation duties as early as the Korean War (1950-53). Indeed, while that war was still going on, in August, 1952, a decision was taken to create 12 helicopter battalions which would be used for ferrying infantry units into combat over difficult terrain. But technology lagged behind: it was not until the development of the gas turbine engine in the mid-1950s that helicopters could be given the power to lift heavy loads. The Army was slow to capitalize on this potential, even though a few officers were already discussing the possibility of self-contained heliborne units.

In January, 1960, recognizing the need for rationalization, the Chief of Staff set up the Army Aircraft Requirements Review Board under Lieutenant General Gordon B. Rogers. This Board made a number of recommendations regarding the design and procurement of helicopters, but said little about how they could be used beyond observation and transportation. It was not until April, 1962, that a wider perspective emerged. Secretary of Defense Robert



McNamara, exasperated by the Army's apparent inability to think beyond such unimaginative possibilities, set up the Army Tactical Mobility Requirements Board under Lieutenant General Hamilton Howze (ABOVE LEFT). The concept of airmobility, with its emphasis on the full range of



military capability within one heliborne formation, came out of the Howze Board. It led to the creation of the 11th Air Assault Division (Test) under Brigadier General Harry W.O. Kinnard (ABOVE RIGHT): the formation that would enter Vietnam in 1965 as the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile).

By 1100 on November 14, 1965, the first elements of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, had been helicoptered from their base at Plei Me to Landing Zone X-Ray (7) just east of Chu Pong Mountain (4). A major U.S. search and destroy operation in the valley of the Ia Drang (1) had begun.

Shortly after setting down, Company B (6) moved off to the west and north toward a spur of the massif. Waiting for them in positions on the mountain and in the valley were elements of the NVA 66th and 33d Regiments (2 and 3), diverted from an intended attack on Plei Me. Company B was soon pinned down by fierce enemy fire; so, too, was Company A (5), which had been dispatched to provide support for Company B on its left flank.

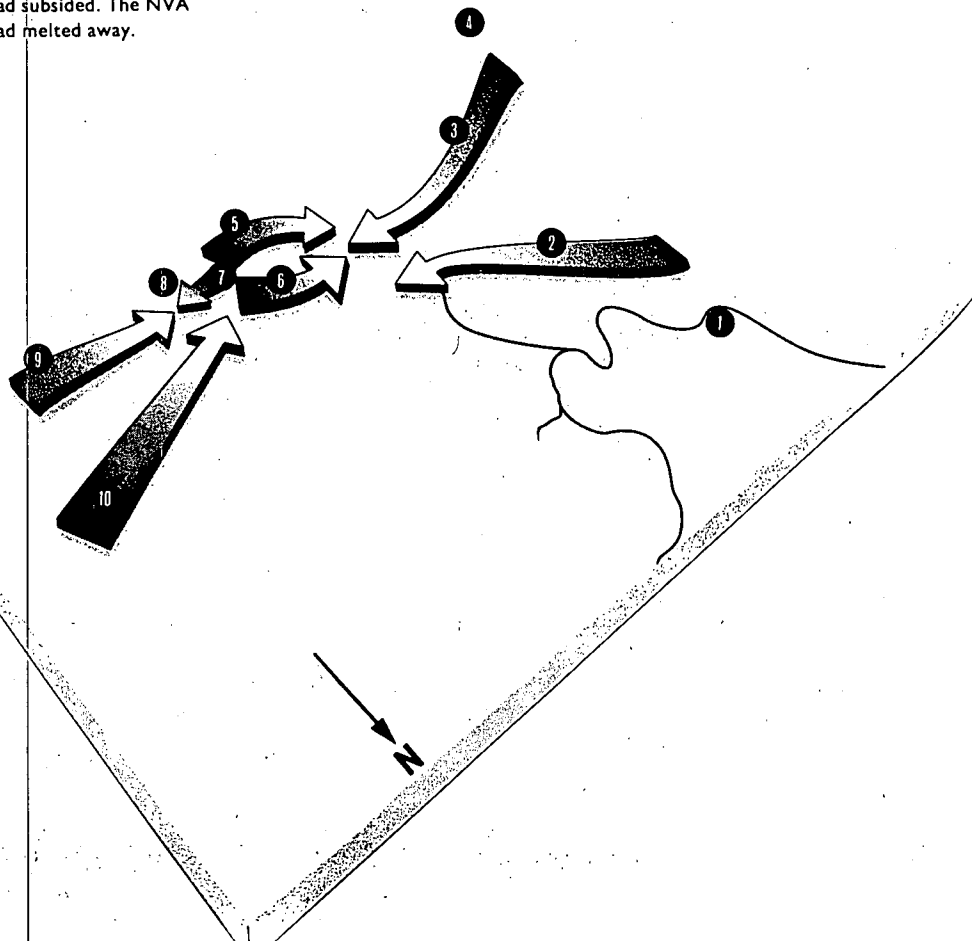
As the battle developed, Company C (8), providing security

for the LZ, probed to the east and was charged, unsuccessfully, by two NVA companies (9). With Company D reinforcing Company C around the LZ's south and southwest perimeter, the cavalrymen held on until 1800, when Company B, 2d

Battalion, 7th Cavalry, was helilifted in to bolster the defenses.

Next day, November 15, the NVA mounted spirited attacks against X-Ray, but with artillery and helicopter gunship support, the Americans repelled their attackers. By the

time the 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry (10), arrived overland at about 1300, the threat had subsided. The NVA had melted away.



Force under NVA Brigadier General Chu Huy Man was preparing to seize Kontum and Pleiku provinces, before thrusting toward the coast and splitting South Vietnam in two.

For this to succeed, the NVA had to destroy other, more westerly, Special Forces camps at Plei Me and Duc Co, opening up the main routes to Pleiku City. In late July, 1965, the NVA 32d Regiment began the campaign by surrounding Duc Co, threatening to overwhelm its defenders, who were a mixture of South Vietnamese Special Forces and Montagnard and Nuong tribesmen, all under U.S. Special Forces control. An ARVN mechanized column was committed to relieve the base, but was caught in an ambush four miles east of Duc Co. The NVA, under heavy U.S. air attacks, eventually withdrew, having inflicted significant casualties.

The NVA 32d Regiment was joined by the 33d in early September, linking up with the local VC main-force battalion to establish a base on the eastern slopes of Chu Pong Mountain. This was a 174-square-mile massif that straddled the

border south of the Ia (River) Drang; it rose more than 500 meters above the floor of a rolling plateau of jungle that stretched the 37 miles to Pleiku City. Unknown to the Americans, General Man was about to receive a third regiment—the 66th—that would increase his command to the equivalent of a division (nine infantry battalions, each of 550 men, backed by artillery and support units). It was the first time the NVA had operated in the South at a multi-regimental level.

Camp Plei Me was attacked early on October 20, and the ARVN responded predictably: as the defenders of the base fought for survival, a mechanized column was prepared in Pleiku City. But local ARVN commanders, scared of committing their troops, stalled. It was not until Westmoreland agreed to send the 1st

1st Cavalry Division troopers are pinned down by enemy fire as they fight to establish an LZ in the Ia Drang valley

In November, 1966. By their action, the Cavalry were able to preempt a major NVA attack in the Central Highlands.

Brigade, 1st Cavalry, to Pleiku to guard against possible envelopment that the relief column set out, on October 22.

As the column approached Plei Me, however, it was ambushed and, despite heavy U.S. air support, the commander insisted on caution. Only when Kinnard, in an early display of airmobility, helicoptered artillery forward to LZs close to the ambush point did the column begin to move. Plei Me was finally relieved late on October 25, having survived only through the courage and fighting skill of its Green Beret garrison.

Westmoreland was impressed by the rapid response of 1st Cavalry, and on October 26 he agreed to "give Kinnard his head," changing the role of the division from one of reaction/reinforcement to unlimited offense within a particular area of Vietnam. Kinnard was given responsibility for most of Pleiku, Kontum, and Binh Dinh provinces in II Corps Tactical Zone and was ordered to seek out, fix, and destroy any enemy forces in the region. He gave the task to his 1st Brigade, which immediately began widespread aerial searches, hoping to find the

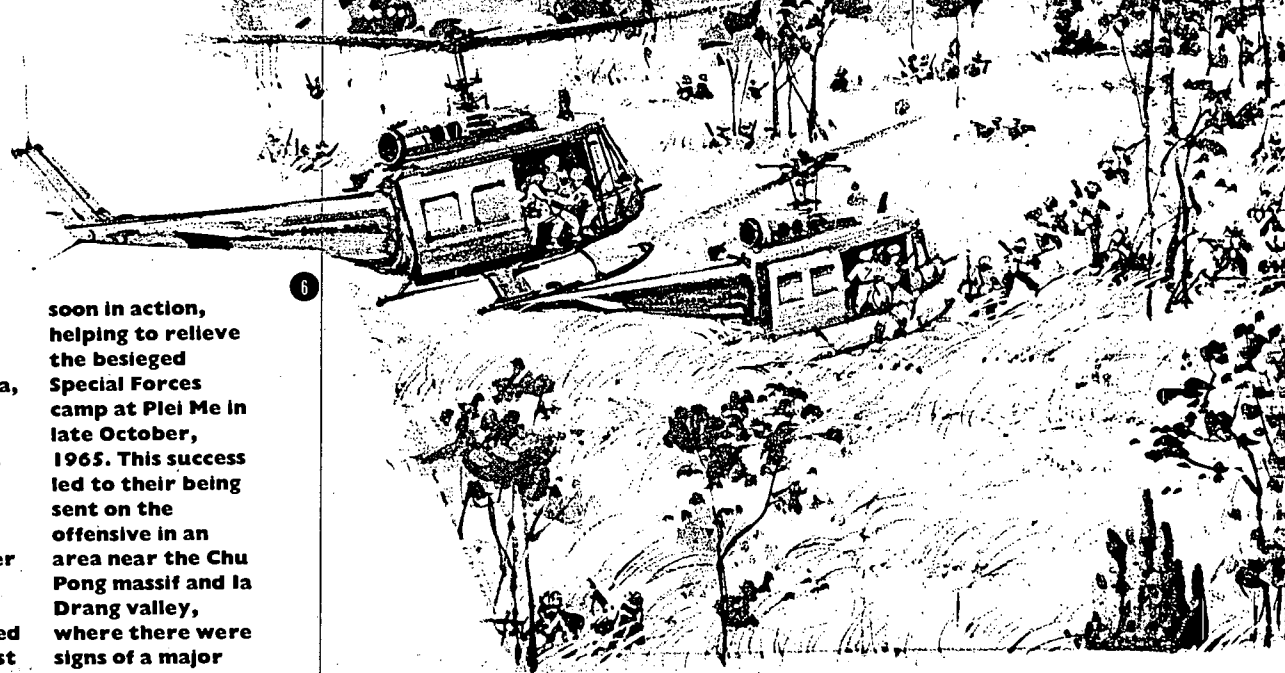


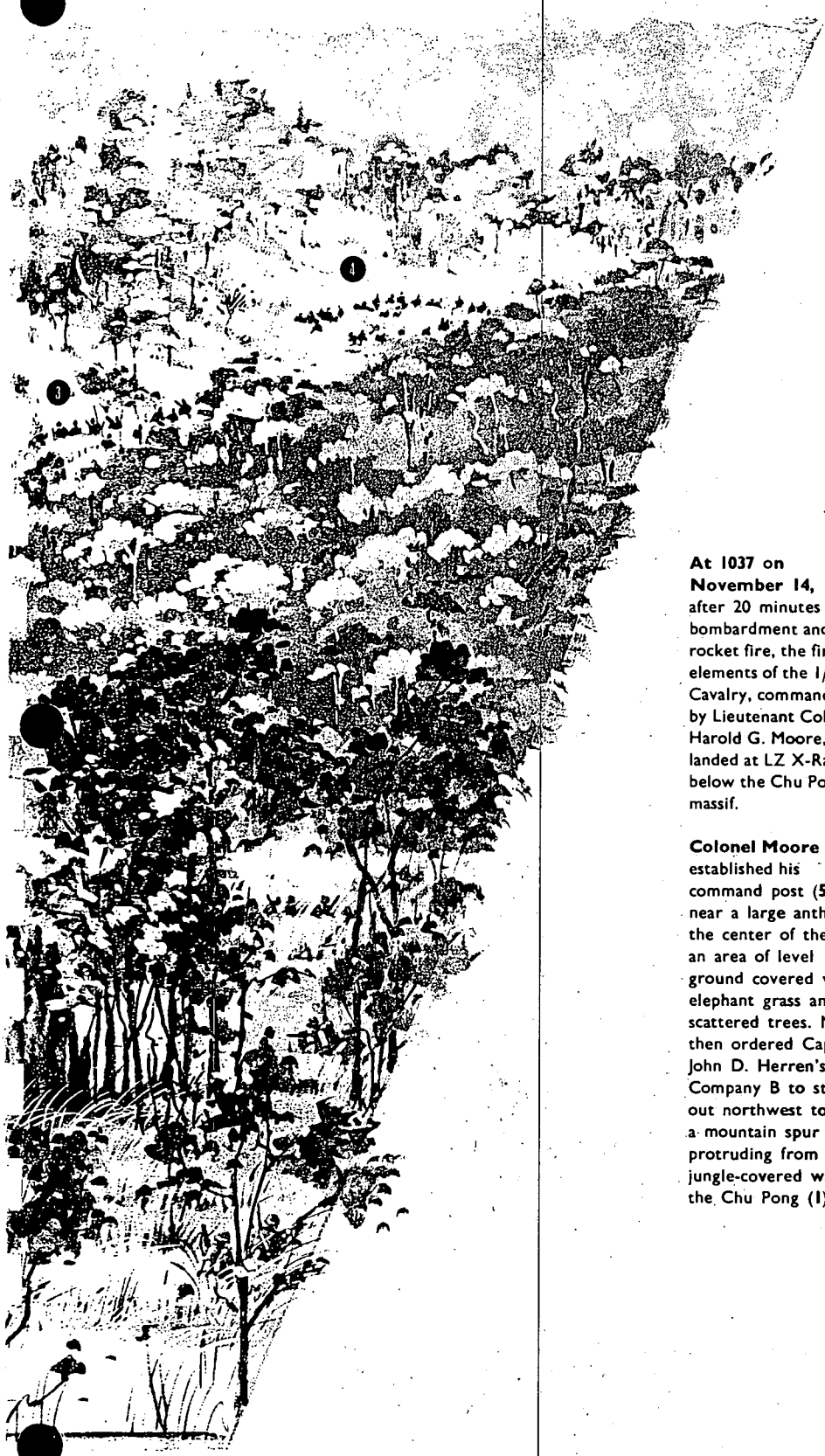
By the summer of 1965, U.S. intelligence was aware that a combined force of NVA regulars and local VC was threatening Special Forces camps at Plei Me and Duc Co in the central provinces. NVA Brigadier General Chu Huy

Man's apparent plan was to drive east across the country to the sea, cutting South Vietnam in half.

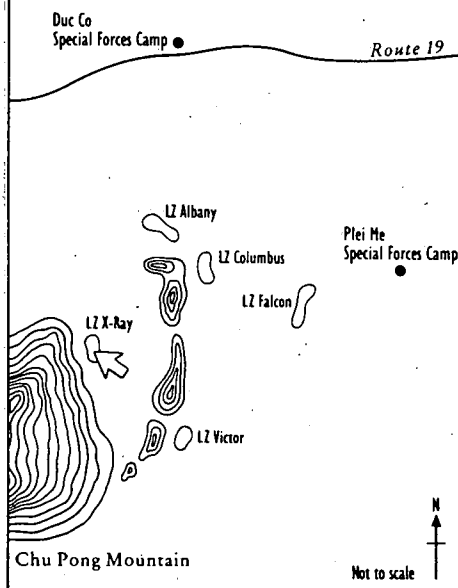
Countering this threat were units of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) under Major General Harry W. O. Kinnard, stationed at An Khe. The 1st Air Cavalry were

soon in action, helping to relieve the besieged Special Forces camp at Plei Me in late October, 1965. This success led to their being sent on the offensive in an area near the Chu Pong massif and Ia Drang valley, where there were signs of a major Communist base.





The Ia Drang Campaign



At 1037 on November 14, 1965, after 20 minutes of bombardment and rocket fire, the first elements of the 1/7th Cavalry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Harold G. Moore, landed at LZ X-Ray below the Chu Pong massif.

Colonel Moore established his command post (5) near a large anthill in the center of the LZ, an area of level ground covered with elephant grass and scattered trees. Moore then ordered Captain John D. Herren's Company B to strike out northwest toward a mountain spur protruding from the jungle-covered wall of the Chu Pong (1).

As another wave of Huey helicopters (6) came in to land at 1245, Herren's 1st Platoon (3) ran into enemy fire. On its right flank, 2d Platoon (4) also came under fire and was then rapidly surrounded. Captain Herren responded by moving 3d Platoon (2) to cover the left flank of 1st Platoon, but it too was soon to become mired in the firefight.

Meanwhile, back at the command post, Colonel Moore called up artillery and air support which eventually succeeded in subduing the enemy fire. This allowed the rest of the 1/7th Cavalry to be lifted in to LZ X-Ray at 1500 hours. As a result, Moore was able to set about reorganizing his defenses.

On the night of the 14th, 2d Platoon, reduced to seven unwounded men, was left to fend for itself as Communist forces tried to overrun the LZ. But by 0900 on the 15th, reinforcements were lifted in to X-Ray and, with 2/5th Cavalry approaching overland, the NVA began to break off the fight.

It was not until 1030 on November 16, however, after another night of fighting, that Moore was finally relieved. The battalion had sustained 79 killed and 121 wounded against an enemy body count of 634.

THE IA DRANG CAMPAIGN/4

Creating LZs and FSBs

For airmobility to be effective, helicopters had to be able to land inside enemy-held territory to bring in the men, weapons, and supplies needed for offensive operations. Natural landing zones (LZs), such as jungle clearings, were likely to be defended, so quite often they had to be created.

Once a location had been chosen, pathfinders and combat engineers would descend through the jungle canopy by rope rappel or on special "Jacob's Ladders" from hovering helicopters, while other aircraft "prepped" the area to disrupt any enemy response. On the ground, the advance engineers would begin to clear the undergrowth and trees with chain saws, axes, and explosives, creating as quickly as possible an area into which the helicopters could descend to disgorge assault platoons. In some cases, a rough, defensive perimeter would be set up by reconnaissance troops. The LZ was then ready for actual landings.

The same techniques would often be employed to create a Fire Support Base (FSB), usually located on a hilltop so that emplaced artillery could provide support to infantry on patrol in the surrounding countryside. As such bases needed to be fairly substantial, the initial clearance might be done by dropping special "Daisy Cutter" bombs, primed to explode just above ground level to topple trees. A stake would then be positioned at the center of the site and a 131-foot rope attached to mark out the main bunker line—the bunkers being 15 feet apart.

A similar rope, 246 feet long, marked the outer perimeter. Bulldozers would be brought in by helicopter to dig command bunkers and artillery pits, followed by a battery of 105mm medium howitzers. Dug in and protected by barbed wire, mines, air support, and infantry, the FSB would be ready for action.

U.S. Army UH-1 helicopters (RIGHT) fall into a tight landing formation at an LZ near Phuoc Vinh, some 40 miles north of Saigon.

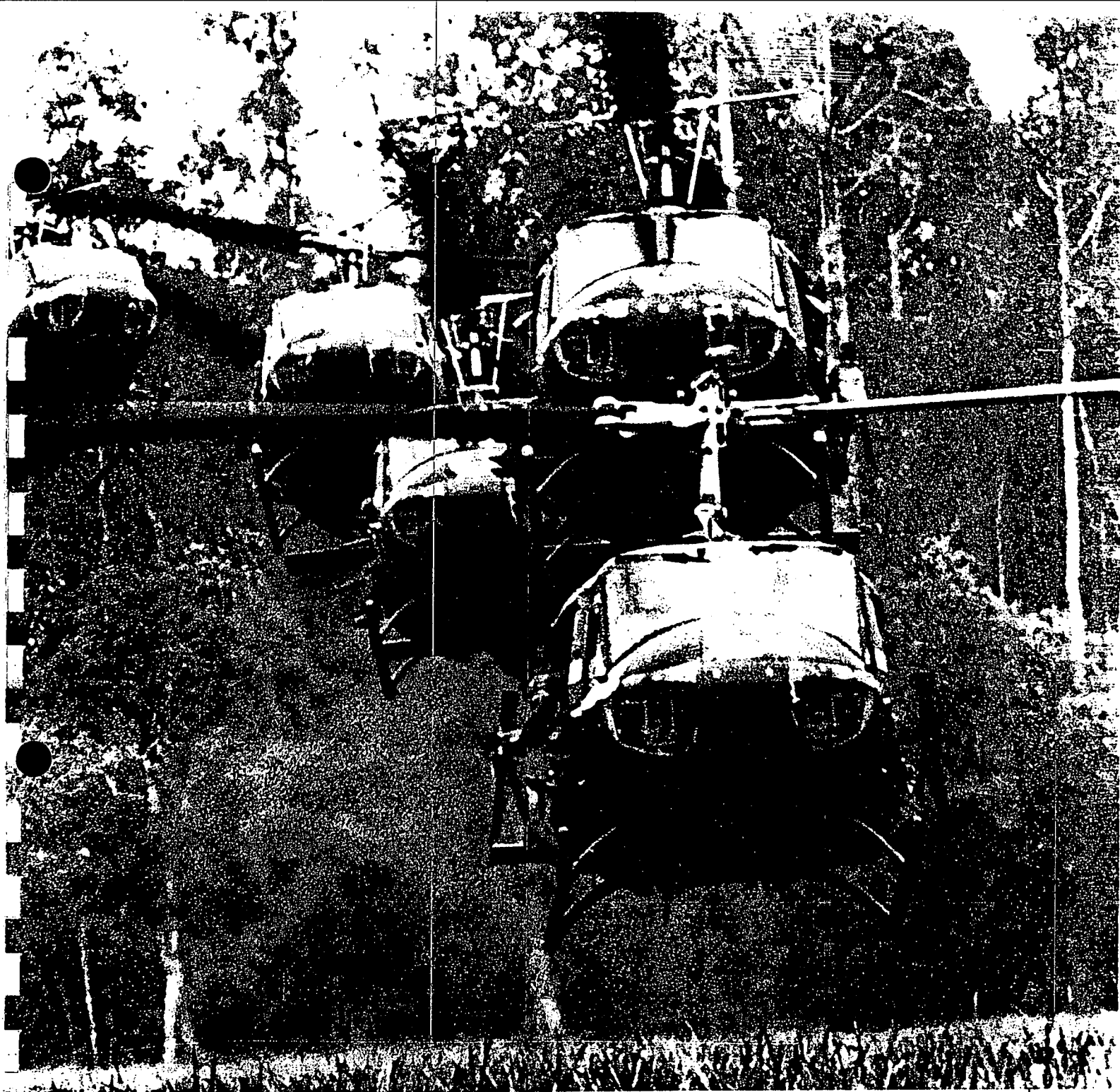
On a hilltop base (BELOW) men of the 1st Cavalry Division wait to hook a 155mm howitzer to the hoist of a CH-54 Tarhe Flying Crane.



troops responsible for the Plei Me attack. The 1st Brigade was spearheaded by the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, whose task it was to fly light scout helicopters at treetop height, calling in "aero-rifle platoons" in UH-1s whenever contact was made. The brigade's main body was made up of three heliborne infantry battalions as well as artillery and aerial-rocket fire support, the latter delivered by specially adapted UH-1 "gunships."

Unaware that the Plei Me attack and ambush had been carried out by NVA regulars, the Cavalry concentrated on areas to the north and east of the camp, hoping to spot VC guerrillas returning to their home villages. Little was found, chiefly because General Man had ordered the 32d and 33d Regiments back to the Chu Pong base in the west, where they would link up with the 66th Regiment before renewing their attack on Plei Me.

It was not until 0720 hours on November 1 that contact was made, when 9th Cavalry helicopters, ranging far and wide, spotted movement about seven miles west of Plei Me. Aero-rifle support was called up and, at 0808 hours, a group attack was made on what turned out to be an NVA field hospital. In less than 30 minutes, 15 NVA had been killed and 43 captured, along with a mound of documents and medical equipment. Isolated



firefights continued throughout the day, at the end of which Kinnard could claim a "body count" of 99 NVA for 11 of his own men killed. Airmobility was beginning to bite.

It soon became obvious from the captured documents that the Cavalry were looking in the wrong place for the wrong enemy. On November 2, Kinnard shifted his search pattern to the west, where 9th Cavalry scouts had already

reported jungle trails between the Chu Pong and the Ia Drang. They started sweeping the area on November 3, setting up a temporary LZ south of the river from which infantry patrols could be mounted. Late on the same day, one of these patrols ambushed elements of the NVA 66th Regiment and then helped to defend the LZ against attacks that cost the Communists a further 72 confirmed dead.

Kinnard now suspected that the Chu

Pong area was a major NVA base. On November 9, he relieved the 1st Brigade of his division with the 3d ("Garry Owen") Brigade, commanded by Colonel Thomas W. Brown, and ordered it to prepare for an assault into the Communist-held area. An entire battalion of heliborne troops—the 1/7th Cavalry—was to be lifted on November 14 onto an LZ at the foot of the Chu Pong and then patrol out, searching for contacts.