

APPENDIX I TO
ANNEX C TO 7 RAR
SVN 9/67
DATED 09 SEP 67

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

5 Aug 67.

This was the final day of a three days Coy search op in the NW corner of the 7 RAR TAOR. A number of ambushes were laid, including one at GR 351718 where there is a junction of several tracks. At 1145 hrs a recce ptl from 1 Pl moving out from the ambush spotted two VC, one armed, but were also seen by the enemy who disappeared before an aimed shot could be fired.

At 1900 hrs the coy was resupplied at GR 362721 by four Iroquois - the whole resup was completed in 2 mins 40 secs. This was done to preserve the security of the operation in the initial stages. The SAS insertion technique was used.

6 Aug 67.

Moving towards the projected base in the "GARDENS" area, the Coy crossed the SUOI CHAU PHA at about 1040 hrs. 2 Pl, who were leading, reported a fresh VC track at GR 344742 and were ordered to ambush it while the OC moved fwd to examine the area. At 1045 hrs two armed VC walked into the ambush and were killed. A major contact then developed which is described in detail in the attached Engagement Report. Following the contact, and after resup, the coy harboured at GR 345744.

7 Aug 67.

The coy was ordered to remain in its overnight loc until B Coy had closed from the NORTH. However B Coy found signs of the en and were delayed by a contact during the day. At 1130 hrs one armed VC dressed in greens walked along a track towards a 2 Pl sentry. The sentry fired at and wounded the VC who escaped leaving a blood trail. It should have been a certain kill but the sentry fired too quickly - in fairness to him it should be mentioned that he had joined the coy as a reinforcement on the night of 5 Aug, and been in the middle of the 6 Aug engagement, and was understandably tense.

At 1700 hrs the coy was ordered to move NORTH to link up with B Coy. This was impossible before dark because of the tangled undergrowth caused by airstrikes and artillery, and the coy harboured at GR 346755, 300 m SW of B Coy.

8 Aug 67.

After A Coy had linked up with B Coy, both moved NE to GR 357778 where a two coy ptl base was estb. Fresh VC tracks heading NW were passed at GR 354763.

9 Aug 67.

The coy was ordered to act as reaction company while B Coy searched the surrounding area.

.. /2

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ENGAGEMENT REPORT
A COY ENGAGEMENT AT GR 344742 ON 6 AUG 67

Description of Contact

1. Introduction. 7 RAR was engaged on a search and destroy operation named Op BILLARAT in the NW of PHUOC TUY Province. The initial phase called for the four rifle coys to move undetected into coy ptl bases within the AO to commence recce and ambushing with the aim of killing those VC who were in the area before they realized that an operation was in progress. A Coy on completion of a 3 day op was to move from GR 362721 to vic GR 343764 to estb such a ptl base on 6 Aug 67.
2. Initial Contact. 2 Pl, who were leading, crossed the SUCI CHAU PHA at 1040 hrs and at 1045 hrs reported finding a track at GR 344742 which had been used only minutes earlier. OC A Coy told the pl cmd, 2Lt G.H. ROSS to move his pl astride the track and to cover it both ways while he moved fwd to recce. At 1050 hrs 2 VC armed with slung rifles moved into the ambush along the track from the WEST and were killed. The terrain was thick primary jungle with visibility approx 10 m lying, up to 40 m standing.
3. Phase 1
 - a. OC A Coy who was at the scene of the contact ordered 1 Pl to move fwd to secure the area while 2 Pl prepared to sweep along the axis of the track to the WEST in the hope of finding the remainder of what was thought to be a VC squad. At the same time the Coy FO fixed arty from 106 Bty at GR 335745 to cut off the VC escape route.
 - b. 2 Pl had gone about 100 m along the axis of the track when a further contact developed. One LMG and several automatic rifles could be distinguished. 2 VC who were seen on the track by 5 Sect were engaged - probable result 1 VC KIA, 1 VC WIA. Because the fire was coming more from the NW, the pl cmd decided to leave 5 Sect as fire sp while he took the remainder of the pl in a right flanking attack towards the en.
 - c. As soon as the pl attack got under way, 2 pl ran into heavy fire from further to the NORTH, and it became apparent that the VC had by now deployed at least a platoon. Using fire and mov 2 Pl continued to advance as far as they could. 3 VC whose bodies were later

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-2-

Local ambushes were set on possible approach routes to the platoon base. At 1500 hrs the coy was ordered to ambush a track which had been spotted from a helicopter. This was done. There were clear signs of a VC platoon sized group having moved NW along the track within the previous 24 hours.

10 Aug 67.

The ambush was maintained throughout the day without contact.

11 Aug 67.

After resup the coy was ordered to move NE as standby for B Coy. An Iroquois helicopter reported seeing a mortar 200 m from the resup point but a search revealed only an old bomb crater.

During the subsequent move, when the coy could not locate the creek junc at GR 374797, it became clear that the previous ambush posn had been approx 400 m further NORTH than previously thought. An aircraft fix was obtained and the company error adjusted. The coy harboured at GR 383796.

12 Aug 67.

The coy moved to an ambush posn at GR 417793 at the SW corner of a rubber plantation while the other coys moved to similar positions around the plantation fringe. Numerous small and recent VC tracks were found running NE through squares 4079 and 4179. Local guerilla movement is probably constant through the area.

13 Aug 67.

The ambush was maintained without contact.

14 Aug 67.

As above. Resup was taken at 1230 hrs.

15 Aug 67.

The coy was ordered to move SOUTH to search to approx 3000 m from the ambush posn. A prominent VC track heading WEST was found at GR 403770 - last used by about a platoon one week previously. The clearing at GR 395759 was secured for the subsequent fly out of the Bn.

16 Aug 67.

A and D Coys flew out to NUI DAT by air mobile Coy starting at 0820 hrs. The fly out was efficient and without incident.

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-2-

recovered by A Coy were killed in this phase, but the VC fire was too intense and accurate for 2 Pl to continue moving. 2 Pl had two men killed and a number wounded in very close fighting. Both sides were throwing grenades and several of 2 Pl were lightly wounded by shrapnel.

d. The FO changed the fire of 106 Bty to approx GR 341751 and then adjusted at FFE within 400 m.

4. Phase 2

a. At about 1115 hrs OC A Coy and the FO joined the pl cmd of 2 Pl on the right flank approx 100 m NORTH of where the original contact had taken place, and where the en fire appeared to be concentrated. The enemy could be heard shouting in a very agitated manner, and many were screaming from wounds. It is thought that some of these may have been women.

b. The OC ordered 2 Pl to adjust and hold their present posns so as to be able to bring maximum fire onto the enemy to the NORTH and NW. 3 Pl were ordered to take over security of the area of the original contact while 1 Pl, commanded by 2Lt R.C. SMITH, prepared for a right flanking attack using 2 Pl for fire sp. After the pl cmd had been briefed, 1 Pl moved around to the right flank and lined up with 2 and 3 Sects fwd, and 1 Sect in res behind 3 Sect on the NORTH side.

c. 1 Pl started to move fwd carefully at about 1130 hrs with sect comds directing their men from fire posn to fire posn. After moving about 50 m the pl had reached opposite the right flank of 2 Pl when they came under heavy and accurate en fire from the same enemy who had been firing at 2 Pl plus enemy further to the NORTH. En wpsn distinguished were 4 - 5 LMGs, a number of automatic rifles, and at least one B40 RL; grenades were also thrown by both sides. The Sect Comds of 2 and 3 Sects were both killed and 3 Sect in particular bore the brunt of some very accurate en fire. 1 Sect turned to face NORTH and were soon heavily engaged. The pl cmd reported that he could not continue to advance and was ordered to hold where he was, and by the use of fire and mov to withdraw any exposed soldiers into a perimeter line.

d. To deal with the enemy in the NORTH and to try to prevent the en moving further NE, the FO directed 106 Bty at GR 350750 and adjusted close, at the same time maintaining the med bty at FFE to the NORTH. The FO adjusted close with one gun and then ordered 10 rds FFE with

.. / 3

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with the adjusting gun. The JPI of this fire was 60 m fwd of 1 Pl and two tree bursts were observed. This fire fell right amongst the en and is believed to have been the immediate reason which compelled the VC to withdraw. At the same time the remainder of 106 Bty was firing within 250 m of own tps.

5. Phase 3

a. The OC at one stage intended to commit 3 Pl to a further right flanking attack supported by 1 Pl and 2 Pl. However it was decided not to do this because arty fire was too close, and because the layout of the coy would have been too scattered for effective control. 3 Pl were then ordered to move fwd to link up with the right flank of 1 Pl, to face NE, and to present a continuous curved perimeter to the enemy. The pl moved into posn as ordered. They came under en fire from the NE while they were moving in, but there were no cas, and the en fire died down after about five minutes.

b. The en then withdrew using fire and mov and maintaining excellent fire control to the last. At this stage it was not known for certain that the en had withdrawn - simply that the fire was dying down.

c. At this stage it became nec to stop the arty to evac the seriously wounded. There were some gunships in the area and while the casevac was going on they laid down fire approx 100 m NORTH of 1 Pl and 3 Pl. When the seriously wounded had been evac, the FO moved 106 Bty fire NORTH as a cut off. 106 Bty "A" Bty 2/35 US Arty and 7 BAR mortars were fired at 10 rds PFE NORTH and then NW.

6. Reorg

a. 1 Pl and 3 Pl then carried out a search fwd of their posns. The en had recovered all their killed and wounded less the 5 VC KIA who had been overrun during the fight, and had left no eqpt lying around except for fragments of clothing. They had even carried away most of the brass. There were many bloodstains and dragmarks to indicate casualties which were estimated to total about 40 in the immediate area.

b. The coy was then laid out in a tighter perimeter around the helicopter winch point which was the scene of the original contact at GR 34:742. The lightly wounded were evac, then all surplus eqpt, then finally the dead. At the same time ammo and med stores were replenished. Ammo resup was not large because all pls had taken ammo from the wounded during the casevac.

c. When reorg was complete, the coy moved to a harbour posn at GR 345744 for the night.

Effectiveness of own Wpns

7. a. M60s

(1) The M60s performed well throughout the engagement. Gunners reported a few minor stoppages caused by the belts becoming twisted or muddcaked, but these were fixed within seconds.

(2) A debriefing of gunners suggests that link ammo carried Mexican bandit style was easiest to employ and was the preferred method. Ammo carried in mattress covers remained clean, but the gunners had trouble getting the belt out of the cover without making themselves conspicuous. Ammo carried in pouches was all right as long as gunners could reach the pouch easily. In some cases the pouch was worn on the back of the belt and was hard to get at.

b. SLRs and M16s

All SLRs and M16s appeared to fire satisfactorily throughout the contact.

c. M79s

The M79s did not perform well because the dense foliage stopped the rounds from arming. This criticism is not meant to condemn a good weapon. It only proves the point that the M79 should always be carried as a supplementary wpn, and not as the sole personal wpn.

d. M26 Grenades

Many grenades were thrown at close quarters but only one VC is known to have been killed by an M26 grenade. The VC stick grenade appeared to be effective. The tape around grenades was at times hard to remove but is still considered necessary in the interests of day to day safety.

4. Alternative Wpns

(1) Whilst the current range of wpns can and did perform well, it is possible that a small anti-tank type wpn would have been more effective in getting at en behind such cover as anthills.

(2) Some soldiers favour the idea of an automatic SLR. While there are advantages in being able to produce automatic fire, it is felt that the higher rate of ammo expenditure and the loss of accuracy might offset any advantages.

(3) A 60 mm mor would have been useful although the selection of a base plate posn would have presented difficulties.

Effectiveness of En Wpns

8. a. LMGs

The VC are thought to have had 7 LMGs (Soviet RPD Type 56) firing at the height of the battle compared with the 6 x M60s from 1 Pl and 2 Pl. Their fire was extremely accurate although the round has less penetrating power than our long 7.62 mm ammo. The VC machine gunners were aggressive and skilful.

b. Soviet 7.62 mm Assault Rifle AK47 Type 56

This rifle has an automatic capability which made it hard to distinguish between VC rifles and LMGs. The effectiveness of the rifle appears to be comparable with the SLR, although the SLR has greater penetrating power.

c. Chicom B40 RL

Three of these wpns were reported. The rocket has a considerable blast and shrapnel effect - for instance the round which caused the serious wound to Sgt SUTHERLAND's leg landed on the ground about one metre away. The launcher is small, only about 1/3 the bulk of the Carl Gustav, and therefore easier to use in close country. The VC wpns were coloured red which made them conspicuous. Loading the rocket appears to take some time, and one VC was killed while trying to load for a second shot. One B40 RL was captured.

d. Stick grenades

The VC stick grenades were effective and appear to have very considerable shrapnel and blast effect.

Use of Fire Sp

9. a. Close sp arty

The FO did an outstanding job in getting fire on the ground where it was required. As mentioned earlier in this report, he brought FFE from one gun to within 60 m of own tps with the result that the VC were forced to withdraw, and must have taken casualties. The close sp fire from 106 Bty was extremely accurate. In all, 106 Bty fire over 800 rounds.

b. Other arty

Arty fire was fired in the cut off role throughout the contact.

c. Bn Mors

Initially the bn mors were out of range. As the contact developed they were flown to a new posn within range.

d. Gunships

Gunships were circling the area whenever DUSTOFF ac were in the vicinity. They were used on three occasions to fire on the en immediately in front of 1 Pl. The method of tgt indication was to throw smoke from the furthest NORTH part of 1 Pl and then instruct the pilot to make EAST-WEST runs firing no closer than 30 m NORTH of the smoke. This seemed to work although there was no means of knowing what casualties were caused.

e. Airstrikes

CO 7 RAR organised 12 airstrikes of which only 8 could be flown for technical reasons. The CO arranged with OC A Coy that the ac could have ground clearance as long as they kept NORTH of a 1000 m semi-circle from WEST to NE. At least one strike fell a good deal closer to the coy but no harm to own tps resulted. It is thought that the airstrikes performed a valuable role in keeping possible VC reinforcements from the scene, and may well have caused cas to VC withdrawing from the engagement or troops in rear.

Enemy Dress and Eqpt

10. a. Dress

The VC wore both black and green uniforms and both long and short trousers. Presumably the dress is optional. They were bareheaded and the 5 KIA wore HO CHI MINH sandals made from old tyres.

b. Eqpt

Most wore items of U.S. 56 patt eqpt including a belt and waterbottle. The first two VC killed were carrying small packs but no food. None of the other VC were observed to carry packs. They may well have dropped their packs further back, as did A Coy.

Enemy Tactics and Field Signals

11. a. Tactics

(1) The VC reaction to the initial contact was obviously a "Contact Front" drill. Their response was rapid and coincided with A Coy's right flanking move. The subsequent actions

of the two forces seem almost to have been a mirror image. Their choice of ground and of fire posns was similar to ours.

(2) Their withdrawal is thought to have started with a thin out from the rear, until finally only LMGs and perhaps a few automatic rifles were left in contact. There was a brief flurry of firing at the end, and then silence. This occurred after the closest fire from 106 Bty.

b. Fd Signals

The VC do not shout as much as AUSTRALIAN troops during the battle. Instead they whistled to attract each other's attention and then talked in a low voice. This method is thought to be superior to our own.

Casevac

12. a. Preparations

As soon as it was known that there were casualties, the Coy 2IC moved fwd with the fire sp sect to a likely winching area which happened to be where the original contact had taken place. The fire sp sect and the combat engrs cut some trees using machetes and folding saws. The Coy medic and the 3 Pl medic found a suitable area to receive cas.

b. Comms

DUSTOFF was arranged on the Admin Net with C/S 92 and cas figures continued to be passed by this means as they became known. Cas figures were passed to Bn HQ on Command Net from time to time. The spare arty set was flicked to the coy frequency to enable the 2IC to get the latest sit from the OC and to co-ord DUSTOFF with the fire sp programme. When helms were in the air the Admin net operator talked directly to the pilots to give details of cas. This system of comms worked splendidly. It is the standard unit procedure and it proved its value.

c. Classification

As cas were brought back to the winching area they were classified by the coy medic with priority being given to the seriously wounded. Morphine was given when applicable. Documentation was carried out by the Coy 2IC.

d. DUSTOFF

(1) The first DUSTOFF ac was shot at by the VC who wounded a medic aboard and damaged the winching gear so that the ac had to

return for repairs.

(2) As other DUSTOFF helos became available the Coy 2IC notified the OC who ordered a stop on close artry while the seriously wounded were winched out. A gunship was available and used to fire on the enemy while the DUSTOFF was in progress.

(3) Evac of casualties (less KIA) was completed by 1410 hrs. This was followed by the removal of personal equipment and weapons and finally the evacuation of the KIA. The part played in this by the RAAF was greatly appreciated.

(4) It should be noted that the canvas padded litters are not as good as the wire litters for winching. With the canvas litter, the straps are hard to do up, and it is difficult to judge the centre of gravity.

Summary of Own Losses

13.

Own losses were:

5 KIA

1 BOW (before reaching hospital)

19 WIA (of whom 12 were slightly wounded or shock cases)

1 x M16 rifle damaged beyond repair.

Summary of VC Losses

14.

a. 5 KIA (BC) confirmed by body count.

10 KIA (pos) (of these 5 bodies were seen others badly wounded crawling away)

25 WIA (pos)

It is considered that the above VC losses are a conservative estimate.

b. Equipment captured:-

3 x Soviet Assault Rifles AK47 type 56

1 x Soviet LMG RPD type 56

1 x Chicom B40 RL and 3 rockets

Quantity of 7.62 mm short ammo

Documents, personal equipment

27.

.. /9

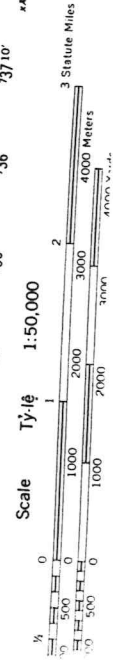
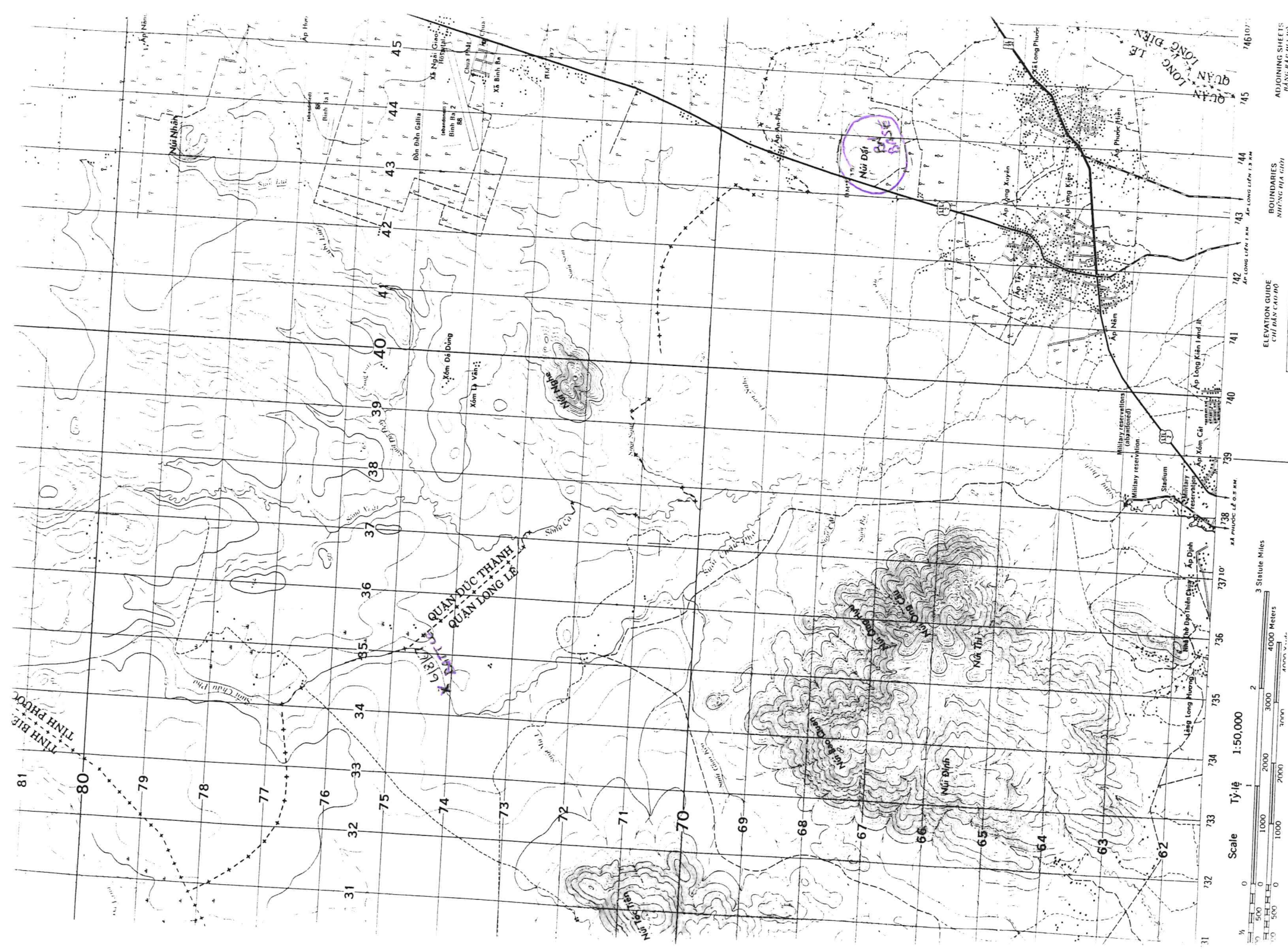
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Identification

15. The VC were subsequently identified as C12 Coy 3 Bn 274 Regt and the KIA incl one pl comd and two sect comds. Documents on the bodies included two promotion orders signed by the CO of the 3rd Bn on 2 Aug 67 thus suggesting that the coy was operating in the vic of Bn HQ. From the fresh tracks found before and after the engagement it is concluded that at least one additional VC coy was in the general area. The 3 B40 RL sighted seem to indicate the presence of the bn recce platoon.

Lessons Learnt

- 16.
- a. Mainforce VC use similar contact drills and jungle tactics to our own. In addition they are comparable in firepower and training with main force elements of similar size to our own. Once in close contact, our advantage comes from the use of arty, mortars, and airpower, and this advantage is decisive.
 - b. A fault revealed in our trg is shouting orders when in close contact. The VC system of whistling followed by low talking is better. The location of whistling is difficult to detect.
 - c. The M79 should not be used as a personal wpn because in very close country the round will not arm before it strikes an obstacle. The wpn is still useful for most terrain and should still be carried as a supplementary wpn.
 - d. The use of one of the spare radios to enable the Coy 2IC to keep in the picture regarding the battle is recommended. It enables the OC to know how casevac is proceeding and provides an alternate means to Bn HQ through the Admin Net. In addition it enables the Coy 2IC to know what the arty are doing. This is important in relation to DUSTOFF.



ELEVATION GUIDE
CẤM ĐƯỜNG

BOUNDARIES
HƯỚNG GIỚI

ADJOINING SHEETS
HƯỚNG KẾ TIẾP

210°