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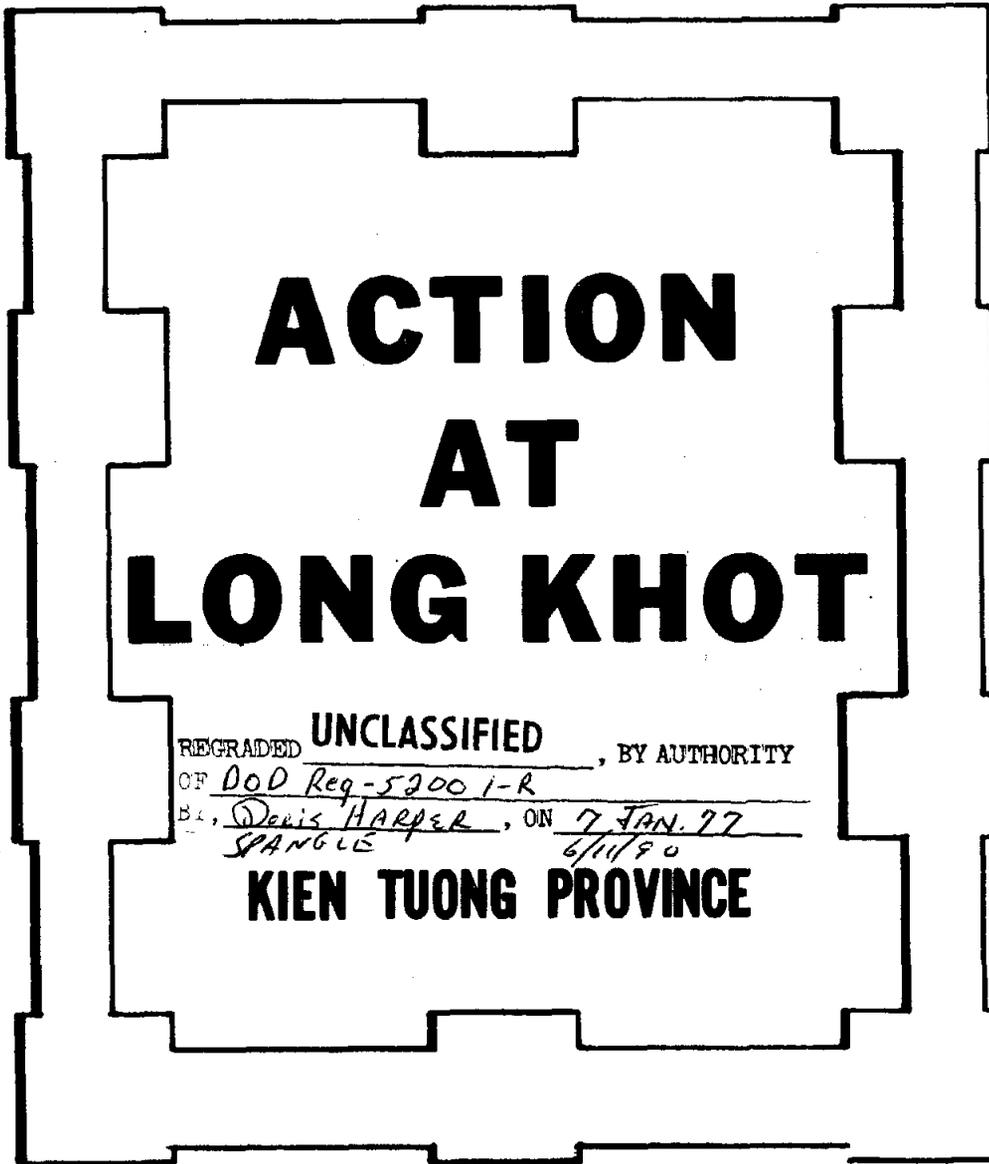
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**HEADQUARTERS
US MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM**

RELEASABLE TO FVMAF AND RVNAF



**ACTION
AT
LONG KHOT**

REGRADED **UNCLASSIFIED**, BY AUTHORITY
OF DOD Reg-5200.1-R
BY DAVID HARPER, ON 7 JAN. 77
SPANGLE 6/1/90

KIEN TUONG PROVINCE

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LESSONS LEARNED NO. 78

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HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
APO 96222

MACJ3-052

17 February 1970

SUBJECT: Vietnam Lessons Learned No. 78: Action at Long Khot

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1. Attached for your information is a Lessons Learned summary from current combat operations in South Vietnam.
2. Comments or questions concerning this document, or requests for changes or additions in the distribution of Lessons Learned, should be addressed to this headquarters, Attention: MACJ3-052.
3. Lessons Learned published by this headquarters to the present date are listed in inclosure 3. Those published prior to 1969 may be obtained from the Defense Documentation Center.

FOR THE COMMANDER:


J. F. HARRIS
Major, USA
Asst AG

- 4 Incl
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 2. Distribution.
 3. Index Current Lessons Learned.
 4. Index to MACV Combat Experiences.

241

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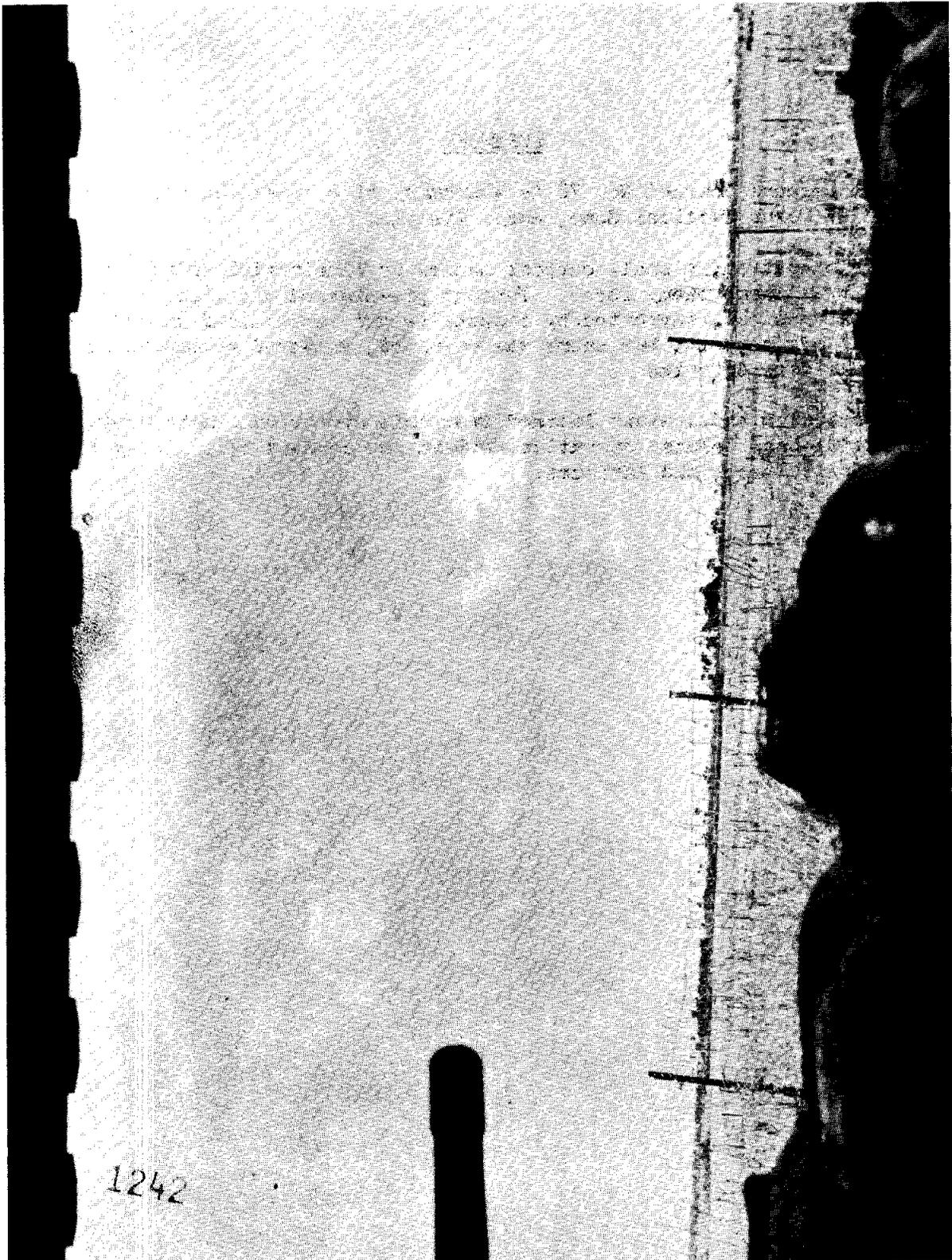
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FOREWORD

Vietnam Lessons Learned No. 78 is a summary of a recent combat operation in the IV Corps Tactical Zone, South Vietnam.

In this operation, a small outpost manned by territorial units, was attacked by a large enemy force. Through pre-planned and well executed reaction measures, supported by responsive and coordinated gunship and tactical air support, the enemy was repulsed, suffered extensive losses and was decisively defeated.

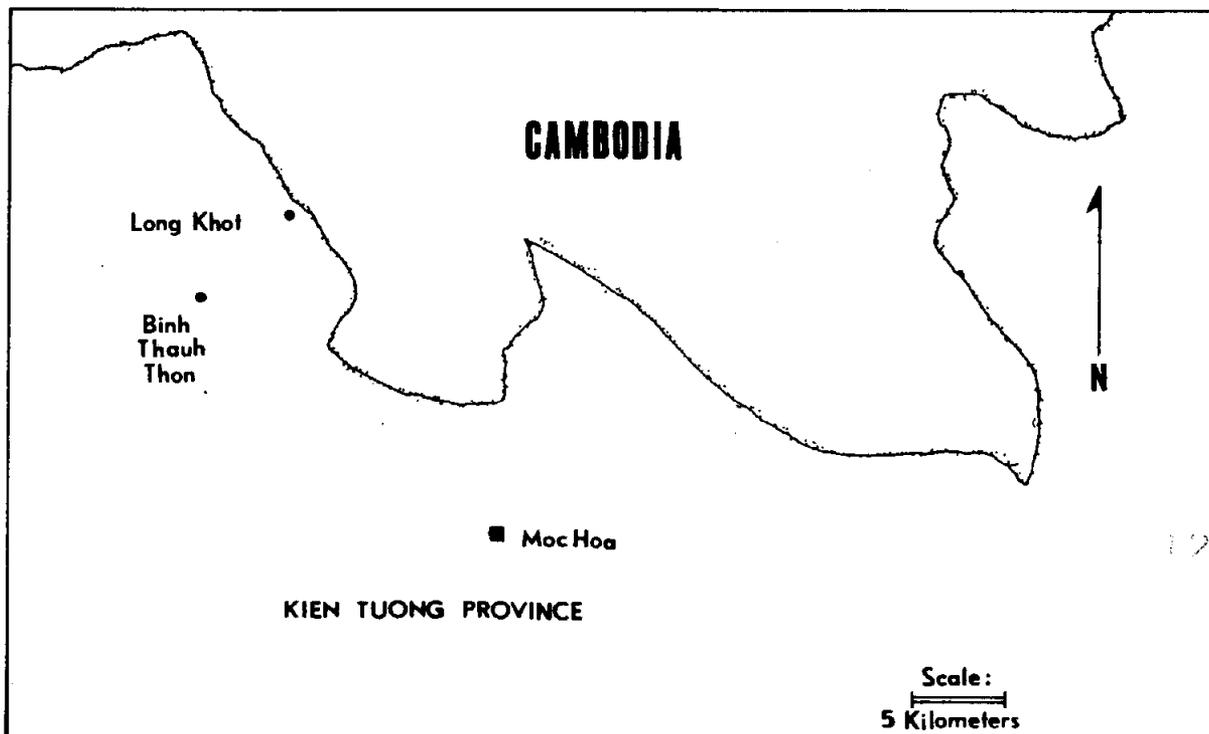
The conclusion and lessons learned from this operation can be useful in evaluating base defense operations and in the conduct of training for Territorial Forces and Advisors.



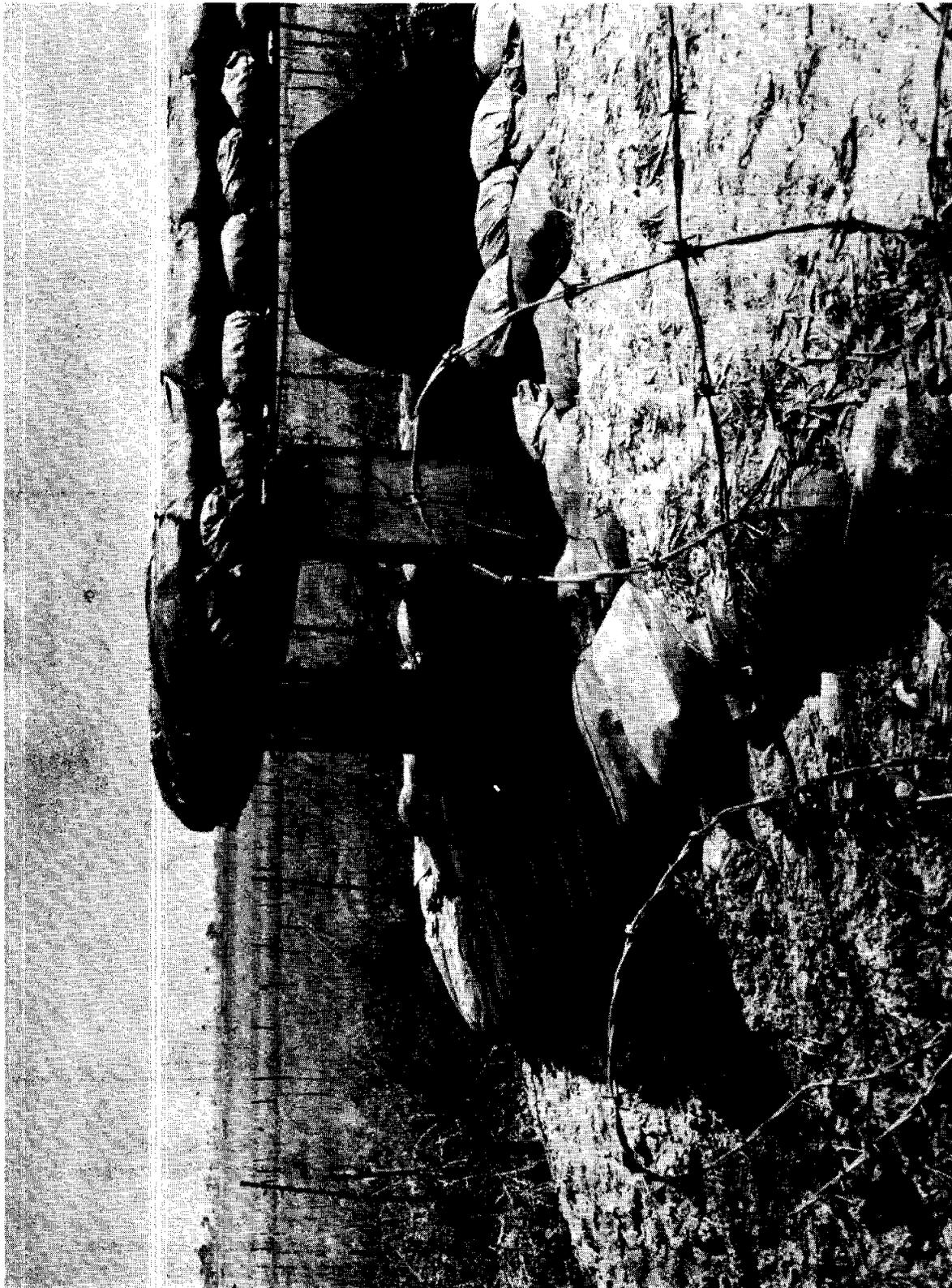
View from gun position - Long Knot Outpost. Tree line in background marks Cambodian border.

ACTION AT LONG KHOT1. (C) BACKGROUND.

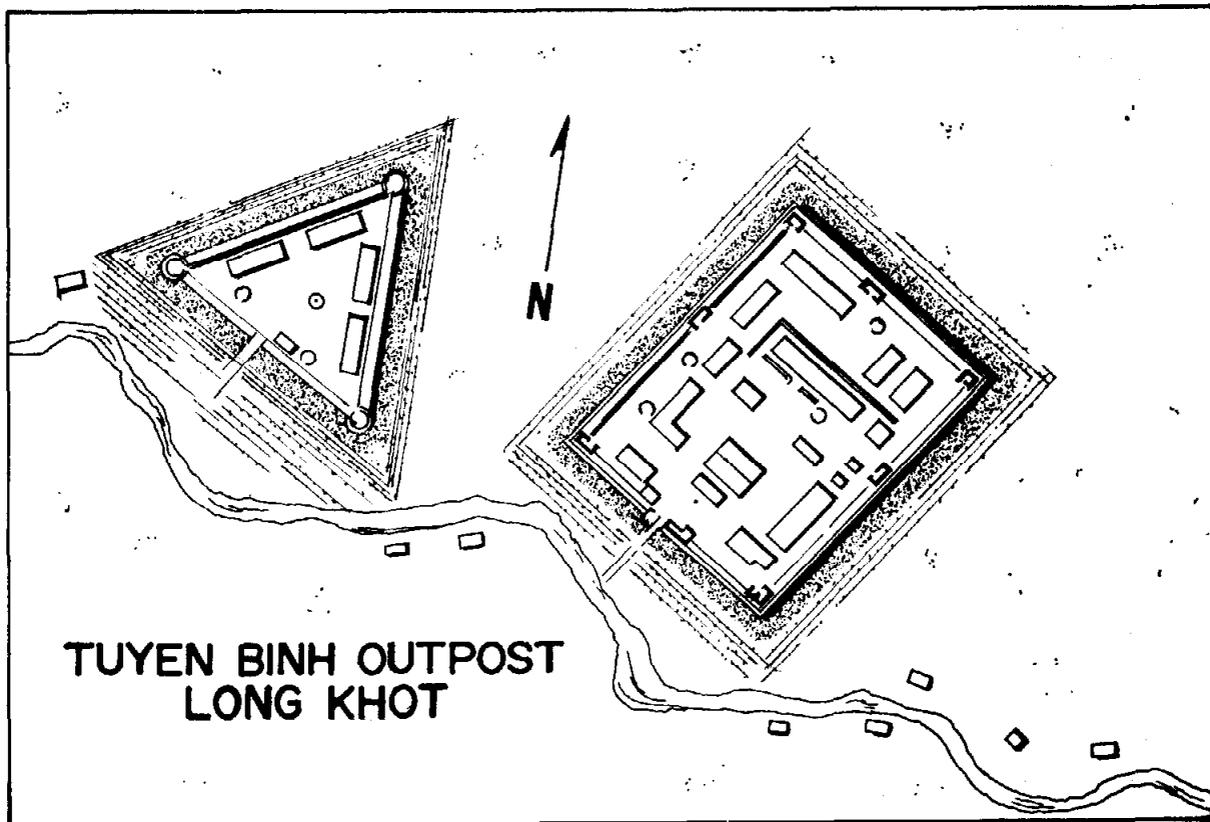
- a. Tuyen Binh Outpost at Long Khot lies on the northern edge of Kien Tuong Province, IV CTZ. It faces Cambodia across seven hundred meters of flat marsh and rice land in a sparsely settled area. Fourteen isolated hamlets, mostly along waterways of the Vam Co Tay River form the Tuyen Binh District. To the east, the boundary line with Cambodia forms the well-known Parrot's Beak. The province seat is twenty-two kilometers to the southeast at MOC HOA. The Binh Thanh Thon Civilian Irregular Defense Group Camp lies six kilometers to the southeast.



- b. Two small compounds approximately two hundred meters apart, form the outpost along the narrow Vam Co Tay River. The larger compound measures approximately 100 by 125 meters. Each is protected by an earthen berm two to three meters high and surrounded on all sides by lines of barbed wire apron. A hamlet is strung out along both sides of the river in a thin line of dwellings.



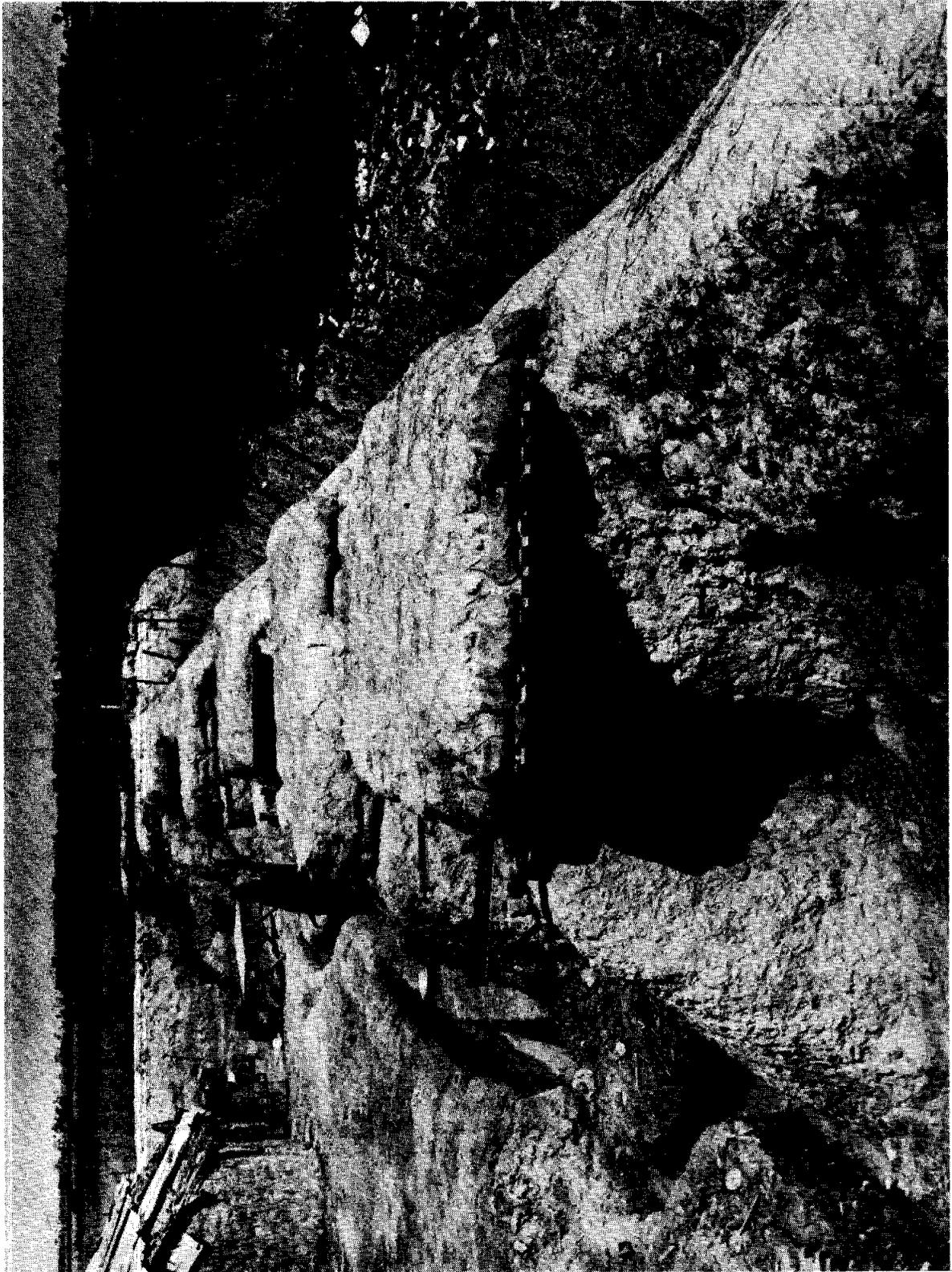
Machine gun bunker - Long Khot Outpost.



- c. The larger compound houses the district office, the 859th Regional Force Company (RF) with a strength of approximately eighty-nine men, four Popular Force platoons (PF) and a small Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU). The Senior Advisor for the district (a US Army captain) and four assistants are also quartered there. Early in November, 1969, the 866th Regional Force Company with a strength of approximately 85 was moved to the outpost and occupied the small triangular compound. The District Chief commands the outpost.
2. (C) THE ENEMY ACROSS THE BORDER.
- a. The outpost has lived for many months with the threat from Cambodia. The enemy was always near. He was frequently detected in small groups in the border region. There were ten light contacts in November, 1969.

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1242



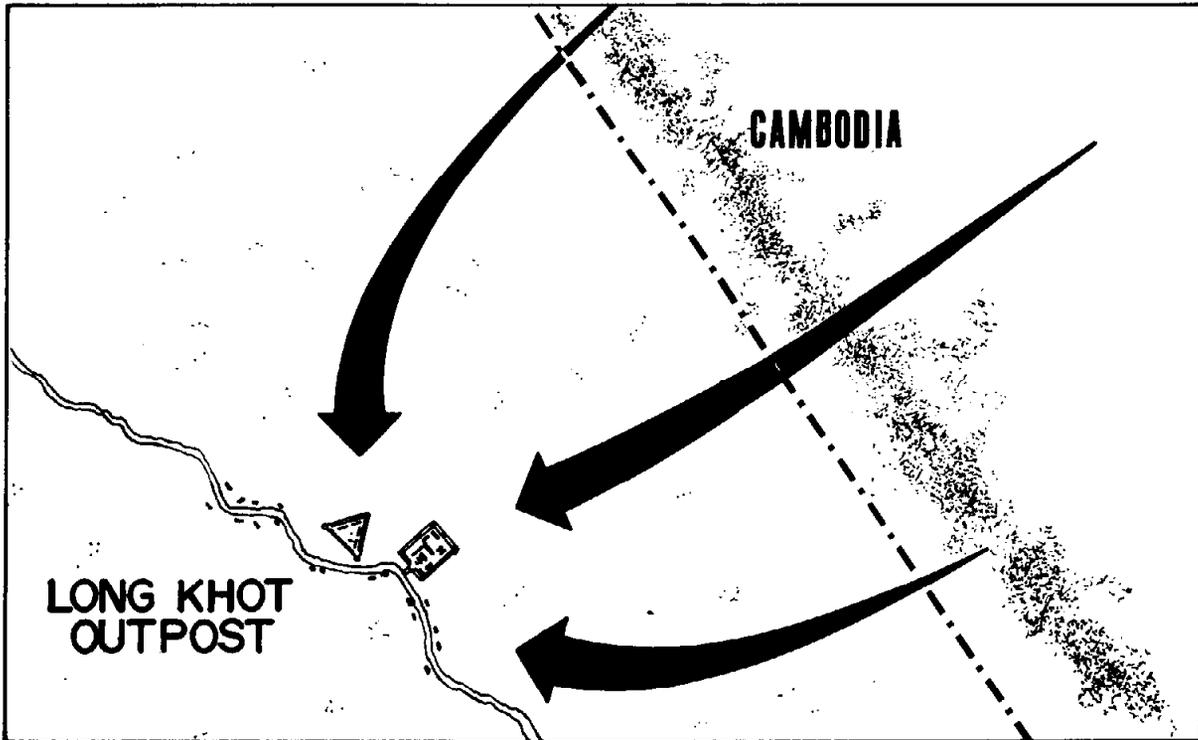
Section of defensive berm - Long Khot Outpost

- b. On 3 December, the threat became a reality. At 0300, the 504th VC Battalion and four companies of the 8th and 9th Battalions, 88th NVA Regiment, crossed the border behind a barrage of mortar and rocket fire. A quick, easy victory over a small Republic of Vietnam territorial force was anticipated.
 - c. The action was not quick, it was not easy and it was certainly not a victory. Hours later, the confused and defeated attackers were fleeing back over the border in disorder leaving one hundred and sixty of their dead on the battlefield at Long Khot.
3. (C) THE ACTION.
- a. As darkness fell on 2 December, the outpost deployed five ambush patrols and observation posts to scan the area and the trails during the night. Shortly after 2130, two patrol contacts were made near the border. After a thirty-five minute firefight the enemy withdrew leaving behind seven dead, three AK 47 rifles, three plastic gas masks, a pair of binoculars and a field telephone. The patrols lost one killed and one wounded.
 - b. Patrol members brought the captured equipment to the outpost then returned to the border area. The commander and the senior advisor examined the items and concluded that a forward observer element had been intercepted while reconnoitering a position from which to direct fire on the compounds.
 - c. The commander was not unduly perturbed. Stand-off attacks were not uncommon. He advised the Tactical Operations Center (TOC) at Moc Hoa by radio of the patrol contact and the nature of the captured equipment. The outpost continued its usual night-time activity, however, they were now alerted.
 - d. At 0300 the first incoming 107mm rocket round arced over the border and impacted in the outpost area. A barrage of mortar, rocket and recoilless rifle fire quickly followed from enemy positions to the north and northeast in Cambodia. Then the enemy opened fire from the northwest.
 - e. The intensity and duration of the fire indicated to the Long Khot commander that the enemy's intentions might be more than just another stand-off attack. He opened his radio net to the Binh Than Thon CIDG Camp (BTT) six kilometers to the southwest. As part of it's fire support plan, BTT had it's single 105mm howitzer registered on the area surrounding Long Khot. The outpost now requested that it be placed on call.

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- f. The barrage continued and soon reports came in from the patrols that the enemy was crossing the border in strength heading for Long Khot.



- g. The outpost opened-up with its mortars on the enemy avenues of approach. BTT was asked to commence the 105mm howitzer fire and the Executive Officer of the 859th RF Company positioned himself on the berm as a forward observer and adjusted the fire. BTT was also requested to divert to Long Khot any air assets known to be in the area. The TOC at Moc Hoa was also asked to supply air assets.
- h. BTT contacted a Night Hunter Team whose Cobra gunship and UH-1BB helicopter (fitted with a Xenon searchlight/infrared light and 7.62mm miniguns) were completing a mission to the northwest. The team immediately headed for Long Khot. The gunships circled the outpost and took the enemy under fire wherever he was sighted south of the border. In approximately fifteen minutes the team departed, having expended its remaining ammunition.

1246

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- i. As the enemy advanced through the darkness from three directions, mixed small arms fire was received along with the mortar and rocket rounds and the patrols from the outpost were slowly drawn in closer to the perimeter.
- j. The TOC at Moc Hoa had contacted the Direct Air Support Center at IV CTZ (IV DASC) and called for gunship support. The 44th Special Tactical Zone TOC at Cao Lanh was also alerted for assistance.
- k. Shadow 77, an AC-119 gunship armed with 7.62mm miniguns and flares, was airborne and ready for just such a contingency when the call came through to proceed to Long Khot. The gunship was over the battlefield by 0345. It's radio contact was the Senior Advisor who was co-located with the commander in the outpost. Working through a fluent, English-speaking RF officer, the Commander passed details of the situation to the Advisor who in turn passed it on to Shadow 77. After plotting the location of friendly patrols still in contact, Shadow 77 took the enemy under fire.
- l. The enemy gradually surrounded the outpost and the defenders laid down a heavy counterfire in all directions. The last of the friendly patrols were brought into the compounds. The Commander authorized Shadow 77 to fire within fifty meters on all sides of the two perimeters. By this time, the outpost had received nearly 300 rounds of mortar and rocket fire.
- m. Backed by intense enemy machine gun fire, sappers with bangalore torpedoes and satchel charges worked their way into the perimeter and final defensive wire. A machine gun post in the north corner of the 866th compound was destroyed and the enemy penetrated the position at this point. The 866th company commander quickly led a group of defenders in a counterattack on the enemy-held gun post and after a bitter, ten minute fight, closed the breach in his position.
- n. Shadow 78, alerted by IV DASC, to replace Shadow 77, received a radio briefing from Shadow 77 while enroute to Long Khot and arrived on station at approximately 0455. Shadow contacted the Senior Advisor by radio and was informed that the outpost commander had declared a Tactical Emergency and requested Shadow 78 to take action to suppress the intense hostile fire.
- o. Spat 05, a night Forward Air Controller (FAC), arrived on station shortly after 0530 to reconnoiter the border area and locate enemy positions for an air strike. The outpost defenders continued their heavy counterfire from all sides of the compounds and by 0600 had successfully repulsed three assault waves. Spat 13 then arrived to replace Spat 05 as night FAC and at 0630 he directed the first air strike on the enemy. Shadow 78 remained on the scene working closely with the FAC.

7
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- p. The Senior Advisor radioed Shadow and Spat that the enemy appeared to be pulling back, however the outpost was still receiving mortar and small arms fire. Shortly after 0630, Bomber 32, a day FAC, came on site and directed four more air strikes in the vicinity of the border against mortar and machine gun positions still firing on the outpost. By this time the enemy was widely scattered and disorganized.
- q. At first light, the TOC at Moc Hoa airlifted a reaction force of two RF platoons and inserted them three kilometers southeast of the outpost. This force conducted a sweep up the river and into the battle area to pursue the enemy and cut his escape routes. Another RF company was readied for movement from Moc Hoa by boat. By 0900, a CIDG platoon from BTT was enroute on foot to reinforce the outpost. Another CIDG company from BTT moved into a blocking position four kilometers to the south.
- r. In the early afternoon, villagers in a small hamlet four kilometers northwest of the outpost, reported that enemy troops were present in strength in their area apparently unable to regain their sanctuary across the border. A Mobile Strike Force and two CIDG platoons were airlifted from BTT and inserted south of the hamlet where they made contact with an estimated fifteen enemy, however, contact was broken ten minutes later.
- s. By late afternoon enemy activity had ceased.

4. (C) RESULTS.

a. Enemy losses:

160 killed in action

2 detained

48 individual weapons

9 crew-served weapons

300 grenades

110 kilos of TNT

1 pair of binoculars

1 field phone

4 protective masks

unknown quantity of rocket propelled grenades and satchel charges.

b. Friendly losses:

16 killed in action

(RF, PF, PSDF, RD)

27 wounded in action

(RF, PF, PSDF, RD, PRU, NPFF and two US wounded when a Light Observation Helicopter was shot down).

5. (C) CONCLUSIONS.

- a. The territorial forces at Long Khot fought courageously and with great determination. They successfully repulsed and thoroughly defeated an overwhelming enemy force.
- b. The commander at Long Khot had carefully and intelligently organized what manpower and fire support resources he had to his best advantage.
- c. Through nightly deployment of patrols and observation posts, the outpost gained significant intelligence and early warning of the enemy's intentions.
- d. The prompt appearance of the Night Hunter Team was as reassuring to the outpost as it was disconcerting to the enemy.
- e. The quick diversion of a Shadow gunship to the battle area provided critical support when the ground commander most needed it.
- f. Fire support from the lone 105 howitzer six kilometers to the south had been preplanned and was immediately responsive when the need arose.
- g. Counter-mortar fire had been carefully preplanned for potential enemy assembly areas, routes of attack and probable heavy weapons positions.
- h. The Night Forward Air Controller dispatched to the scene prepared the way for delivery of the heavy ordnance needed to suppress the enemy gun positions firing on the outpost.
- i. The presence of a US advisory team in the outpost provided the vital communication link between the commander and the supporting aircraft. Equally important was the presence of a highly competent and fluent English-speaking Regional Force officer who greatly facilitated rapid and pertinent communication between the advisor and the commander.

1251

- j. The outpost commander's decision to direct the Shadow gunship to fire within fifty meters around the outpost enabled the gunship to render maximum close support.
 - k. The Tactical Operations and the Direct Air Support Centers responded swiftly to the call for assistance from Long Khot. Their ability to maintain continuous gunship and forward air controller support on station maximized the support rendered.
 - l. The reaction forces which were inserted to sweep the battlefield after daylight effectively cleared the area of the remaining enemy forces, blocked his escape routes and prevented him from concealing his losses or retrieving weapons for future use.
 - m. The intelligence provided by the local populace was a contributing factor in the elimination of retreating enemy forces. This is an indication that the inhabitants of this particular area have identified themselves with the government of South Vietnam and actively participated in upholding it.
 - n. It was fortunate that the outpost had taken action, through various means, to increase its firepower. The normal RF company authorization for crew-served weapons would have provided the outpost with only four M-60 machine guns and four 60mm mortars. On the date of the attack, the outpost also had a 4.2 in. mortar, two 81mm mortars, two caliber .50 and two caliber .30 machine guns. Without these additional weapons, the outpost would have found it difficult to put forth the volume of counterfire needed to repel three massive assaults.
 - o. The territorial forces at Long Khot were determined to hold their ground. They were prepared. They fought aggressively. They achieved a significant victory.
6. (C) LESSONS LEARNED.
- a. The action at Long Khot demonstrates how a small, isolated but well-defended base can repel the enemy, inflict heavy losses and decisively defeat him.
 - b. The combination of nightly patrols to provide early warning; preplanned counterfire to disrupt enemy movements; effective command and control to insure maximum utilization of available resources; well-organized defenses; well-developed communications; and accurate assessment of the situation enabled the outpost commander to stand off, repulse and then defeat the enemy.
 - 754 c. The timely, preplanned artillery, gunship and tactical air support provided the vital heavy fire support needed to decimate the enemy, reduce his firepower, disrupt his attack and disorganize his forces.

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 2 - CG, Fifth Army
 2 - CG, Sixth Army
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5 - CINCLANTFLT	
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3 - COMPHIBTRANLANT	

MACV LESSONS LEARNED INDEX

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
1	30 Mar 62	Heliborne Operation Cai Ngay, An Xuyen Province
2	30 Mar 62	Airmobile Operation in I Corps
3	11 Apr 62	Operation JUNGLE JIM
4	11 Apr 62	Ranger Task Force Operation in Vinh Binh Sector
5	11 Apr 62	Multi-Battalion Operation in Northern Tay Ninh Province
6	11 Apr 62	Operations in Phuoc Thanh Sector to Relocate Civilians
7	18 Apr 62	Operation DAN TIEN VIII
8	23 Apr 62	Operation CA CHEP
9	27 Apr 62	Operation in Kien Hoa Sector
10	1 May 62	VC Ambush-Trung Lap, Binh Duong Province
11	5 May 62	Operation TIGER HUNT
12	10 May 62	Operation RAINDROP
13	16 May 62	Operation NGUYEN HUE
14	Undated	Operation SON CA
15	15 Jun 62	Ambush Techniques
16	19 Jun 62	Review of Lessons Learned 1 - 15
17	25 Jun 62	Techniques Dealing with Airmobile Assaults
18	24 Jul 62	Tips and Combat Experiences

Incl 3

19	31 Jul 62	Operation SUNRISE
20	27 Aug 62	Indiscriminate Use of Firepower
21	28 Aug 62	Ambush Techniques
22	8 Sep 62	Operations of US Army Helicopters
23	5 Oct 62	Operation BINH TAY
24	13 Nov 62	Airmobile Raids Against Superior Forces
25	17 Dec 62	Search Techniques
26	18 Jan 63	M113 Operations
27	28 Feb 63	Ambushes
28	18 Apr 63	Guidelines for Advisors
29	17 May 63	Ambush in BINH CHANH
30	17 Aug 63	Psywar and Civic Action Operations
31	27 Sep 63	Artillery Organization & Employment in Counterinsurgency
32	19 Oct 63	Eagle Flight Operations
33	29 Oct 63	Utilization of Military Dogs
34	30 Nov 63	Railway Security
35	10 Jan 64	Clear and Hold Operations
36	4 Feb 64	Fire and Maneuver
37	10 Feb 64	Vehicle Convoy Organization and Control
38	12 Mar 64	Area Saturation Operations
39	11 Mar 64	Ambush Operations
40	23 Mar 64	Corps Psywar/CA Operations Center
41	28 Jul 64	Operations of Seabee Technical Assistance Teams

42	7 Oct 64	VC Employment of Land Mines
43	22 Dec 64	Combat Tips I
44	23 Jan 65	Elimination of Viet Cong Infrastructure
45	12 Feb 65	Viet Cong Tunnels
46	3 Mar 65	Recent Operations
47	30 Mar 65	River Assault Group Operations
48	7 Apr 65	Combat Tips II
49	13 Apr 65	Operation HOAI AN
50	13 Apr 65	Naval Conduct of Amphibious Operations
51	24 Apr 65	Operational Employment of Riot Control Munitions
52	22 Nov 65	Operational Employment of the Mity Mite Portable Blower
53	29 Sep 66	Viet Cong Improvised Explosive Mines and Booby Traps
54	27 Jan 66	The Battle of Ky Phu
55	15 Mar 66	The Battle of Annihilation
56	18 Apr 66	Operations Against Tunnel Complexes
57	25 May 66	Pursuit
58	20 Jun 66	Operation HAPPY VALLEY
59	13 Jul 66	Employment of Image Intensification
60	5 Oct 66	Defense Against Mortar/Recoilless Rifle Attacks
61	27 Jan 67	Salient Lessons Learned
62	11 Mar 67	Salient Lessons Learned

63	25 Apr 67	Search and Rescue Operations
64	15 Sep 67	Imitative Communications Deception
65	20 Oct 67	Population and Resources Control
66	10 Nov 67	Countermeasures for 102mm, 122mm and 140mm Rockets
67	4 Apr 68	Defense
68	20 Jul 68	Viet Cong Base Camps and Supply Caches
69	10 Sep 68	Analysis of Enemy Positions at Khe Sanh and Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Weapons Systems Against Enemy Fortifications
70	17 Oct 68	Friendly Casualties from Friendly Fires
71	13 Mar 69	Countermeasures Against Standoff Attacks
72	16 Nov 68	Aerospace Rescue and Recovery in South Vietnam
73	20 Nov 68	Defeat of VC Infrastructure
74	15 Sep 69	Accidental Herbicide Damage
75	20 Jan 70	Cordon and Search Operations
76	22 Nov 69	Vietnamization
77		Fire Support Coordination

MACV COMBAT EXPERIENCES INDEX

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>SUBJECTS</u>
1	6 Jun 69	Defense against sapper attacks; sniper training and employment; small unit operations.
2	29 Jul 69	Tactical Cover and Deception (C & D) in Counterinsurgency Operations.
3	7 Sep 69	Task Force Remagen; Experiences with Enemy B-40 and B-41 Rockets; Naval Forces Operations; Bridge Security Against Underwater Sapper Attack.
4	3 Nov 69	Bunker busting/and clearing; Sapper actions of North Vietnam Communists; FAC Operations; KBAR/VAMPIRE concept; Anti-Rocket Program.
5	5 Jan 70	Viet Cong Attack on Regional Force Outpost; Pacification of Quang Dien District.

