

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, 3d Bn 187th Abn Infantry
APO San Francisco, 96383

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AVDG-CD-CO

20 June 1969

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report, Operation APACHE SNOW,
Period 9 May thru 21 May 1969.

TO: Commanding General
101st Airborne Division
ATTN: ACofS, G3
APO San Francisco, 96383

THRU: Commanding Officer
3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division
ATTN: S3
APO San Francisco, 96383

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BY RAKERS ON 11 May 99

1. NAME OF OPERATION: APACHE SNOW/Reconnaissance In Force.
2. DATES OF OPERATION: 100730 - 211525 May 1969.
3. LOCATION: Vicinity YC320989, Nam Hoa District, Thua Thien Province
I CTZ: Republic of Viet Nam, Map Series L7015; Map Sheet 6441 IV;
Scale 1:50,000.
4. Headquarters 3d Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry, APO San Francisco,
Calif. 96383.
5. REPORTING OFFICER: LTC Weldon F. Honeycutt
6. TASK ORGANIZATION: 3d Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry

HQ(-) 3/187	B/3/187 (Initially 3d BDE RES)
Arty LNO	
Engineer Squad(-)(B, 326th Eng)	C/3/187
81 Mortar Section	Engineer Section
	1 PIO Rep
A/3/187	
Engineer Section	D/3/187
1 PIO Rep	Engineer Section
	A/2/506 OPCON (18-21 May)

7. SUPPORTING FORCES - ANNEX A

8. INTELLIGENCE - ANNEX B

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9. MISSION: 3d Battalion 3/187, Airborne Infantry combat assaults at H-Hour D-Day (10 May) into LZ 2, coordinate YC314989, vicinity of the Laotian border to destroy NVA/VC forces, interdict enemy LOC, and to locate and destroy his forces within the assigned AO.

0. CONCEPT OF OPERATION: 3d Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry combat assaults into LZ 2 with D, A, and C Companies in that order. After securing the LZ, D Company RIF's to the SE to secure the high ground vicinity coordinate YC320989. A Company RIF's to the NW and secures the high ground vicinity coordinate YC308994. C Company RIF's to the SW vicinity coordinate YC315985. B Company, initially Brigade Reserve; on order. Combat Assault into LZ 2, RIF SE and link up with Battalion Headquarters. After securing and searching out the border area, 3/187 RIF's to vicinity, Dong Ap Bia, Hill 937, (YC328981) and searches that ridge complex to the SW, vicinity coordinate YC315970; the south vicinity coordinate YC326973; and SE, vicinity coordinate YC337976. From this key terrain, conduct RIF's throughout the assigned AO, generally NE to the A-Shau Valley vicinity of A Luoi (YC385003).

1. EXECUTION: ANNEX C (EXECUTION)

2. RESULTS:

a. ENEMY LOSSES

(1) Personnel Losses by Day. (KIA by 3/187th small arms only).

10 May	2	16 May	14
11 May	7	17 May	2
12 May	3	18 May	114
13 May	5	19 May	2
14 May	60	20 May	78
15 May	76	21 May	0*

KIA 357

KBA 102

TOTAL 459

(2) KIA - 102**

(3) PW's - 2

(4) IWC - 12

(5) CSWC - 2

(6) Friendly to enemy killed ratio 1:12

(7) Body to wpns captured ratio 1:32

*Thirteen bodies found 21 May were credited to action on 15 May; five bodies to action on 13 May.

**Killed by Air Strikes flown in support of 3/187 only.

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(8) Number of preplanned airstrikes requested	30
(9) Number of airstrikes flown	65
(10) Number of preplanned skyspots requested	31
(11) Number of skyspots flown	14
(12) Number of Arclights requested	5
(13) Number of Arclights flown	0

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b. US LOSSES

(1) Personnel Losses by day.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>NHA</u>	<u>WHA</u>	<u>KBFF*</u>	<u>WBFF*</u>	<u>EVAC</u>	<u>NONEVAC</u>
10 May	0	3	0	1	4	0
11 May	3	9	1	35	32	12
12 May	1	2	0	0	2	0
13 May	4	33	0	0	25	8
14 May	9	71	0	3	62	12
15 May	1	45	2	20	52	13
16 May	0	0	0	0	0	0
17 May	0	0	0	0	0	0
18 May	13	60	1	4	63	1
19 May	0	1	0	0	0	0
20 May	1	43	0	0	43	0
21 May	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	32	266	4	63	283	46

*Friendly Fire (ARA)

TOTAL	
WIA	329*
WIA EVAC	283
WIA RETURNED to DUTY	85
KIA	36

(2) EQUIPMENT DAMAGED:

14 An/PRC 25 Radios
 1 90mm Recoilless Rifle
 5 Starlight Scopes

* This figure includes all wounds received regardless of severity. Some personnel were wounded two or more times and are included each time in the total, consequently the total number of actual persons wounded is less than the stated figures.

13. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

a. Supply: The logistical support was provided by a Battalion Forward Support Point located at FB Berchtesgaden utilizing UH-1D aircraft to shuttle requested items to the field elements, and by the Battalion S-4 in conjunction with the FSSE located at Camp Evans, utilizing OH-47 aircraft. Bulk items of supply such as class I, III, IV, V, and water were flown from Camp Evans to FB Berchtesgaden by OH-47 to maintain a three day basic load. Although this three day basic load was essential to insure that the field element

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were provided with required quantities of the basic classes of supply, it was not always, in fact, present at the forward resupply point.

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Due to numerous "Combat Emergency" sorties required by the artillery units in support of the operation, a backlog of sorties for this unit developed and this, combined with dwindling supplies on hand at Fire Base Berchtesgaden, required that this unit declare certain sorties as "Combat Emergency".

Property accountability throughout the operation was difficult, due to the intensive fighting and the number of casualties. In the future to prevent different companies' equipment becoming mixed up, companies will utilize their supply clerks in the field, as coordinators between the companies and Battalion S4 who normally receives backhauled equipment. Each unit will utilize a company roster indicating each individual's type of weapon, its serial number, as well as a separate "line number" for the individual. In addition to greatly speeding up casualty reporting, this line number could be affixed to the individual's weapon and rucksack, which would greatly simplify identifying evacuated equipment.

b. Maintenance: Just prior to operation Apache Snow, all four rifle companies participated in a one day "stand down" during which FGSE contact teams were made available.

c. Treatment, Evacuation and Hospitalization of wounded:

(1) Treatment of casualties was accomplished quickly and skillfully by members of the medical platoon, including replacements who had no previous combat experience. Emphasis on control of hemorrhage, using mechanical means and large amounts of I.V. fluids, in particular serum albumin, kept shock casualties to a minimum.

(2) Evacuation of the wounded from the forward edge of the battle area to the Battalion Headquarters LZ was accomplished by light observation helicopter. An evacuation triad system was set up whereby patients were classified as: critical, moderately serious, and fair condition. The classification was based upon the following criteria: amount of blood loss, state of shock, degree of trauma, type of wound, and time elapsed between initial trauma and primary emergency treatment by medical personnel. From the field, patients were transported by logistical support aircraft, light observation helicopter, and MEDEVAC helicopter to the 18th Surgical Hospital, 22d Surgical Hospital, and C Company, 326 Medical Battalion (FB Blaze). Further evacuation was accomplished by these facilities, upon the individual judgement of the medical officer in regard to each specific case.

d. Transportation: The Battalion resupply helicopter was intended to ferry supplies from the forward supply point to our field elements. As this aircraft was the sole means of resupply for our elements engaged in heavy contact, it played an essential role in the overall combat effectiveness of this unit. In several instances, this utility aircraft had to be diverted from its primary function to perform tasks which should have been but were not, completed by other aircraft. For example:

(1) Evacuation of casualties to both FB Berchtesgaden and Camp Evans, and Phu Bai, due to only one of two MEDEVAC aircraft available.

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(2) Deployment of badly needed replacements for tactical elements; as many as 34 in one day, due to lack of a aircraft which had been requested but did not arrive.

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(3) Resupply of small arms ammunition from Camp Evans directly to field elements, which had become critical due to back log of unflown CH-47 sorties. This necessary, although improper use of the Battalion LOG-bird, resulted in either field elements not receiving requested items or extension of aircraft flying time and in some cases both apply.

e. Communication: There was nothing out of the ordinary regarding communications during this operation.

f. Strengths and other Pertinent S1 problems:

(1) Timely submission of casualty reports was the biggest problem encountered. Because of the distance from the base camp to the area of operation, the only means of communication was with a relay station. When individuals were evacuated it could not be determined to which hospital they went.

(2) To establish a more effective reporting system, a representative was stationed with the CP to record and consolidate pertinent casualty information. Another representative was sent to Phu Bai to check the 85th and 22d and report on members of the command admitted.

14. Special Equipment and Techniques:

a. Employment of Spooky (C 47 w/mini guns)

(1) Item: Spooky is primarily used to provide flare and suppressive fire support to friendly perimeters.

(2) Discussion: The ship uses parachute flares to illuminate the target area. Often, though, the flare is unsatisfactory due to wind, haze or restrictions imposed by the situation.

(3) Solution: When this occurred, 81mm mortar illumination rounds, timed for near surface ignition, proved to be a quicker and more reliable way to orient Spooky than his own flares.

b. Use of Flak Jackets.

(1) Item: Flak jackets are used most often to protect soldiers on static posts.

(2) Discussion: During the battle for Hill 937, many of the US casualties were caused by RPG shrapnel. Many of the wounds, though not serious, were enough to require evacuation. This depleted the fighting strength.

(3) Solution: When it was determined that the enemy was defending in large numbers on Hill 937, flak jackets were issued to the attacking troops. By wearing them casualties were reduced considerably. Flak jackets are particularly desirable when in a situation such as this, troops have only a short distance to move to contact and can leave their rucksacks grounded in a relatively secure area.

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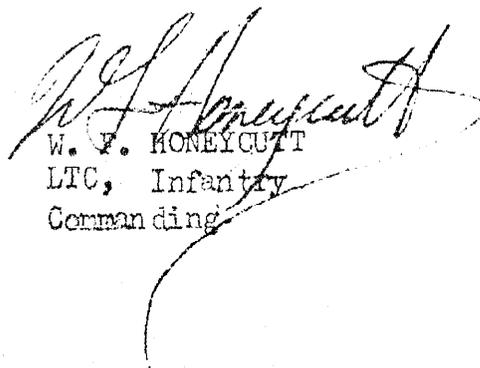
13. Commander's Analysis.

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a. Problem: The only major problem that occurred during this operation was the control of ARA.

b. Observation: On three occasions the ARA mistakenly placed fire on 3/187 troops, resulting in total casualties of 4 killed and 63 wounded. The principal cause of this was an ARA lack of orientation about the ground situation and troops locations. The policy had been for the ARA to report directly on an artillery frequency to artillery personnel, bypassing the Battalion Commander. This procedure was used over the repeated objections of the Battalion Commander 3/187.

c. Recommendation: ARA should enter the battalion command frequency for a briefing on the ground tactical situation. Only the Battalion Commander, S3 or operations people are completely aware of the troop dispositions and missions. After this they can be released to the artillery FC's control on the artillery radio net.


W. F. HONEYCUTT
LTC, Infantry
Commanding

3 ANNEXES

- Annex A Supporting Forces
- Annex B Intelligence
- Annex C Execution

DISTRIBUTION:

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ANNEX A (Artillery) to Combat After Action Report, "APACHE SNOW, 3/187
operations.

SUPPORTING FORCES (Direct Support)

2/319 (105 Airborne)
2/319 (105 Berchtesgaden)
2/11 (155 Airborne/Berchtesgaden)

Indirect Support)

2/319 (105 Ta Bat)
2/11 (155 Ta Bat)
1/33 (8" Son)

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Organic Support)

Each 81mm Mortars (YC320989)

PA

4/77 (Evans, Ta Bat)
4/77 (Blaze)

Defensive targets were fired every night by all firing units. These targets were placed on an H&I list kept by the Liaison Officer. The initial data for these targets were fired every 30 minutes during the night, beginning between 1830-1900 hours.

The main problem was the control of AAA. This problem was worked out early in the operation. (See paragraph 15, Commanders's Analysis of this report).

The forward observers made good use of recon by fires and used them regularly. Lack of rounds available to the firing batteries restricted their use somewhat.

Excellent use was made of the 81mm mortars firing in close support of the Infantry. The mortars fired in defensive targets and Recon-by-fires which proved effective in the successful seizure of Hill 937 and defense of the blocking position.

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The intelligence estimate of the A-Shau Valley area prior to the operation was essentially correct. (See Appendix 1).

It was felt that due to large number of SLAR. People Sniffer, VR Sightings and aircraft receiving fire near Dong Ap Bia that a large enemy unit was probably occupying the area around Dong Ap Bia as a way station/supply point. The extensive trail network on and around Dong Ap Bia had indicated that the mountain was located on or near a major infiltration route from Laos into the A-Shau Valley. No unit identification had been made prior to the assault of 3/187 elements on 10 May 1969, although the identification of the enemy presence made Reconnaissance In Force of the area necessary.

1. TERRAIN

a. The Dong Ap Bia mountain complex (YC327977) rises approximately 970 meters from sea level at its highest point. The mountain does not form part of a larger ridge complex, but rather stands alone in the southwestern side of the A-Shau Valley. It is bordered on the west by the Trung Phan River which forms part of the Laotian Border; to the north by the Dong So Ridge line; to the south by the Xe Sap (Rao Lao) River; and overlooks the abandoned A Loui Fort and airstrip location approximately 6000 meters to the east northeast. The valley areas surrounding Dong Ap Bia consist of rolling terrain with the small hills and fingers forming many cross compartments. The vegetation is thick brushwood, and in many places, single canopy jungle. The Dong Ap Bia mountain itself consists of a peak with several ridges and fingers extending in all directions. Two of these ridges form mountains in themselves; Hill 916 (YC315970) on the southwest, and Hill 937 (YC327982) on the north. The combination of slope, the thick undergrowth and double to triple canopy jungle make Dong Ap Bia extremely difficult to traverse by friendly troops.

b. Observation by ground elements was poor. Aerial observation was hindered due to canopy thickness, but was able to assist ground units immensely, throughout the operation. Enemy observers used the tree tops as OP's and sniper positions.

c. Avenues of approach into the Dong Ap Bia area were numerous. The valley to the north and south of the mountain were primary lines of communications from the Laotian Border. The northern valley contained many high speed trails through the Pa Da area, which turned southeast and joined the vast trail networks found along the Rao Lao River. From the intersection of the trails east of Dong Ap Bia, this line of communication proceeds across the A-Shau Valley and is believed to terminate in the new BA 114 southwest of Hue City. Many of these trails have branch trail networks leading into the Dong Ap Bia complex, and travel up the many fingers toward the peak itself. These avenues of approach were covered by fire.

2. ENEMY ACTIVITY

a. The enemy was indeed surprised as the 3-187 elements combat assaulted between Dong Ap Bia mountain and the Laotian Border in a successful effort to prevent escape of enemy units into Laos. There was an almost complete lack of hostile ground fire as the escape routes were blocked by assaulting elements. As the 3-187 Airborne Infantry moved up the mountain, they found that

the enemy employed defense in depth principle well indeed. The lower fingers were made up the first line of defense. As friendly elements moved forward the enemy fell back to increasingly stronger, better prepared positions. The enemy was well entrenched and had bunkers as large as 8'x20', 6-8' deep. Some were constructed in "A" frame configuration, and were capable of withstanding almost any type of supporting fires. All bunkers and fighting positions were mutually supporting and were covered by fire from 2 or more bunkers or fighting positions. During the attack of 14 February, it was found that the enemy was employing large chicom claymore type mines in front of and behind their bunker systems. The claymores were controlled from a central spider hole or bunker. If friendly units overran the forward bunkers, the rearmost claymores were installed to fire into friendly troops as they searched and cleared the bunker complexes.

b. It was found that the enemy units were well trained and equipped, with new uniforms, weapons, and gas masks. They were especially well disciplined and obviously trained in techniques of fire and fire control, as they would consistently wait, camouflaged and undetected, until friendly troops were in close proximity before firing. When engaged, the enemy had planned sectors of fire and obtained good area coverage. Marksmanship was far above average for VC/NVA forces. Snipers in trees were employed effectively, but consistently enjoyed a short life span, as the trees offered little protection and friendly troops observed and engaged them usually after the first shots were fired.

c. It was found that although CS was used against the enemy forces, that the effect was limited due to the presence of new NVA protective masks. CS did have some effect however, as several NVA attempted to flee their bunkers under CS attack. C/3-187 reported on 20 May that the enemy was employing an inferior form of CS against their position. Several chicom CS grenades were found later, confirming the limited US capabilities of NVA forces.

d. Although enemy forces will not under normal circumstances, remain in a fixed location under heavy friendly attack, the NVA elected to establish a very determined defense. One reason for this was probably due to the importance which the enemy attached to the facilities on Dong Ap Bia, and the lines of communications adjacent to it. It appears also that the air assaults of friendly forces cut off his escape routes across the Laotian border leaving no alternative but to stand and fight.

e. The NVA forces in the A-Shau Valley have radio monitor capabilities as evidenced on the Battalion Command net at 0948 hours, on 17 May. At this time calls for "BlackJack" were received from an unknown station. The calls were in English with a heavy vietnamese accent.

3. UNIT IDENTIFICATION:

Captured documents have identified the 7th and 8th Battalions, 29th Regiment Headquarters and possibly the D-2 AA Battalion as comprising the majority of opposing forces at Dong Ap Bia. Documents have also indicated that the 29th Regiment replaced the 9th NVA Regiment on or about 5 May 1969. It is possible that a part of the 9th Regiment also took part in the battle. The 9th Battalion, 29th Regiment has not been identified and is believed to be located in BA 611, in Laos.

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UNIT INSIGNIA:

Uniforms on the enemy bodies were of three colors: olive drab, khaki, and blue gray. On several of the bodies, unit insignia was found, it was sewn by hand, and in several colors. The symbol T-2 and T-2/6 was in blue; the symbol T-2 in red; and symbol T-2/6 with T-2 in red and 1/6 in white. The symbol T-2/1, T-2/3 and T-1/4 were also found. These insignia are believed to represent the following:

T-2/8 2 Bn 8th Co (AKA 8th Co 8th Bn, 29th Regt.
 T-2/6 2 Bn 6th Co (AKA 6th Co 6th Bn, 29th Regt.
 T-2/7 2 Bn 7th Co (AKA 7th Co 8th Bn, 29th Regt.
 T-1/1 Pass 4th Co 7th Bn, 29th Regiment.

A P.W. stated that his insignia was T-2/6, and was a member of the 6th Co, 8th Bn 29th Regt., establishing the T-2 as the symbol of the 8th Bn. T-1 is possibly an AKA for 7th Bn, 29th Regt. The P.W. further stated that no special significant was attached to the various thread colors, that personnel of his unit utilized the colors readily available to him.

P.W. Interrogation of NVA private Pham Van Hai, of the 5th platoon, 3rd Company 8th Bn 8th Regt (29th Regiment), stated that his regiment had replaced the 29th Regiment at Dong Ap Bia 15 days ago (5 May 1969). He further stated that the 7th and 8th Battalion and 29th Regimental Headquarters were there (substantiated by document readouts) and that his Battalion consisted of the 5th, 6th, and 7th Companies. He stated that the 8th company strength was 100 men upon arrival, and had suffered approximately 80 casualties by 20 May. The prisoners statements agree with 101st Airborne Division holdings of company numbers and subordination. Upon completion of Operation Apache Snow the 29th NVA Regiment is held with the following strengths:

UNIT	ESTIMATED STRENGTH
29th Regt Hq	200
7th Bn	150
6th Bn	150
9th Bn	450

See Appendix I to ANNEX A (Intelligence) for estimated strength of the 29th Regiment prior to Operation Apache Snow.

a. As a result of Operation APACHE SNOW, the presence of the 29th NVA Regiment in the A-Shau Valley was confirmed. Their location had been unknown to US/ARVN forces since the fall of 1968. Captured documents indicate that the Regiment had refitted, rested and retrained in North Vietnam prior to its return to the Republic of Vietnam in April 1969. Document readouts indicated that the 29th NVA Regiment was to stage in the A-Shau prior to conducting offensive operations in the more populated lowlands of Thua Thien Province. Elements of the Regiment in contact with friendly forces during this operation suffered a 70 to 80 per cent loss in strength. Only the 9th Bn, location unknown remains combat effective. Due to the defeat of the 29th NVA Regiment at the hands of the 3d Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry, this former well trained, disciplined and equipped unit has been rendered combat ineffective, and will not be capable of conducting any significant offensive in the near future. The 29th Regiment has been believed to have withdrawn to BA 311 to regroup, thus failing to accomplish its mission of combat operations in the lowlands near Hue City.

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Extract from APPENDIX I (ENEMY SITUATION) TO ANNEX A; OPRD 3-69 (Apache
Sauc)

1. (C) General: The northern A Shau Valley is a primary enemy LOC used for movement of material and infiltration of troops to enemy units throughout I Corps. Also, the enemy has maintained logistics installations in the northern A Shau which distribute much needed supplies to units operating in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Province. The importance of the northern A Shau as a vital LOC has increased because friendly operations are presently interrupting other key enemy LOC's in northern I Corps. Operation Maine Crag is halting enemy movement on Rte 926, and Operation Massachusetts Striker is disrupting enemy activity on Rte 548 and high speed trails in the southern A Shau - Rao Nai area and on Route 614 and main trails east of BA 607. Recently acquired intelligence indicates a pattern of movement from the northern A Shau (YD 3012) to BA 114. Additionally, the sighting of several large hut and bunker complexes vic YD 3607 and airstrikes in the same area resulting in numerous secondary explosions indicates that the enemy has established a large supply depot in this area. It is very likely that the flow of supplies from this depot and other logistics installations in the northern A Shau Valley to BA 114 will increase in the near future.

2. (C) Disposition of Enemy Forces in the Northern A Shau Area (See Appendix 10)

a. 6th Regt. The 806th Bn, 6th Regt is presently operating near the Song O Lac and My Chanh Rivers. The 800th and 802d Bns are presently unlocated. Following the Tet Offensive of 1968, the 6th Regt retreated to the northern A Shau - BA 611 area. It is very possible that the 800th Bn and/or 802d Bn, 6th Regt is presently located in this area.

b. 9th Regt. The 816th Bn, 9th Regt is presently operating in the southern A Shau - Rao Nai area vic YC 4997. The 815th and 818th Bns, 9th Regt are presently unlocated. The 9th Regt normally operates in the northern A Shau - BA 611 area, and in August 68, the 816th and 818th Bns were operating near Pa Du (2), YC 362974. It is very possible that elements of the 9th Regt are presently operating in that area.

c. 559th Trans Gp. Elements of this unit are currently operating in BA 611 and throughout the northern A Shau Valley.

d. Unidentified Enemy Forces in BA 611. The Hq of TTHMR is believed to be located in BA 611 in Laos. It is very possible that a regiment is serving as a security element for this large Hq. In response to a friendly operation in the northern A Shau Valley, it is possible that this regiment would be committed to defend the supply depots.

e. 675th Arty Regt. The 675th Regt was contacted during Operation Dewey Canyon. It is considered very possible that elements of this unit are still operating in BA 611.

3. (C) Enemy Tactics and Equipment

a. In Operation Dewey Canyon, the 9th Marine Regt discovered several

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ABSTRACT from "Appendix 1" (ENEMY SITUATION IN ANNEX A; REPORT 3-69)

20mm guns and sizeable quantities of 122mm ammunition via Rte 922. 1-502 Abn Inf recently discovered 50 rds of 122mm ammunition in the area east of BA 607. Thus, it is very possible that friendly forces in the northern A Shau Valley will encounter 122mm artillery fire from BA 611 and locs.

b. In Operation Sonnet Plain, which was conducted from 4-20 Aug '69 in the northern A Shau Valley, the 16th and 5.3th Bns conducted delaying actions and avoided major contact. However, the 9th Marine Regt encountered enemy based enemy attacks during Operation Dewey Canyon when they entered major cache areas. The 2-17 Cav met heavy resistance while initially penetrating via ID 3507, and the 3-187 initially met stiff resistance when entering their present AO. Thus, since other major LOC's are being locked, it is possible that the enemy will defend his supply installations throughout the northern A Shau Valley.

c. In Operation Dewey Canyon, the 9th Marine Regt found several large caches which were extensively booby trapped. Additionally, the large cache found by 2-502 Abn Inf east of BA 607 was booby trapped with 4 round anti-air charges. The 3-187 has also found their caches were booby trapped. Thus, it is very possible that caches in the northern A Shau Valley are booby trapped.

(C) Potentially Lucrative Target Areas in the northern A Shau Valley

a. Area via YC3507. Recent VR, airstrikes, and contacts have indicated that this area is a major supply area.

b. The Lao River area. The trails along this river serve as a key infiltration route into Thua Thien Province. Infiltration Station # 4 is on the river via YC3594. An "X" on a captured map was loc near Pa Du #1 via C 324967. Additionally, SLAR and URS indicated enemy presence and movement in this area in March and early April.

c. Dong So Mtn or "Beak" area. During Operation Delaware, 19 Apr - 6 May 69, 1st ACD discovered large caches in this area. A photo mission flown on 7 Apr 69 revealed 5 camouflaged trucks via YD 361011 and numerous OL drums via YD 364009. It is very possible that a truck park is located in this area.

d. Ap Bia Mtns area, via YC 3198. Recent URS and SLAR indicate enemy presence and a pattern of west-east movement in this area. It is very possible that the enemy is moving supplies eastward from BA 611 to caches in this area.

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1. (C) The A Shau Valley floor consists of flat open terrain which varies in width from approximately 300 meters near grid coordinate YD363032 to two to three kilometers near Ta Bat (YC420950). Vegetation includes grass, 2 to 6 feet tall, and scattered brush. Numerous bomb craters and streams existing throughout the valley's floor restrict wheeled vehicles but tracked vehicles can move throughout the valley floor with relative ease. Route 548 which traverses the entire valley, is usable by tracked vehicles but wheeled vehicular movement is interdicted by bombing. Movement off of 548 is possible in the valley, as evidenced by numerous enemy wheeled vehicles and wheeled vehicle tracks observed on aerial photography, including many examples of wheeled tracks in stream beds. Foot movement is good on the valley floor. Helicopter landing zones are available in any portion of the valley floor. However, since these zones can be observed for long distances and since cover from direct fire weapons is lacking, combat assaults would be extremely hazardous and difficult to protect without a greater than normal number of gunships.

2. (C) The northeastern side and the southwestern side of the A Shau Valley differ greatly in vegetation, trafficability, and overall shape of the terrain.

a. The northeastern side including a narrow transitional area between the valley floor and the mountain ranges.

(1) The Transitional Area: Bordering the northern A Shau on the west side at a depth of one to two kilometers, this area, although it appears from the air to be covered with low, even vegetation, is actually covered with a matted grass and brush vegetation which would greatly restrict foot movement and which would support only tracked vehicular traffic. Landing zones in this area are infrequent and are limited to stream beds and scattered slash and burn areas. Few trails have been recorded through this area between Rte 547A and the northern end of the valley, however, one road exists from Rte 548 at coordinate YD304093 into the extreme western end of the Co Bung ridge. Part of this road was cut by a bulldozer and beyond the point where it enters the tree line, trail segments appear through breaks in the canopy as far north as grids YD3011, and YD3112. In November of 1968 the area entered by this road was reported as a probable storage area or transshipment area from which trails lead into BA 114. From photography it appears that armor could deploy into as far north as the YD 3112 grid.

(2) The Mountainous Area: Rising abruptly out of the narrow fingers and uneven contours of the transitional area the canopy covered steep slopes (20% to 50%) of the mountainous region form an unbroken barrier to movement, observation, and heliborne operations. Elevation increases by over 3,000 feet from the valley floor to the ridge lines which reach their peak some five to six kilometers from the valley. Although these ridge lines are greater in elevation than those bordering the

A Shau they have supported Fire Base construction in the past and should afford the same basic problems in the future as were encountered during the recent construction of FSB's WHIP and FURY. The drainage problems encountered at FSB WHIP will confront construction units again in the northern A Shau. There is no known granite outcropping which would seriously hinder bulldozers from preparing the Fire Base platform. Not so much the vegetation but the severe slopes will impede foot movement from the mountains toward the valley floor. Landing Zones of course will be restricted to old FSB locations and to those points previously cut by friendly units.

b. The southwestern side of the valley differs from the northern side in several ways: firstly the mountains are isolated and do not form a solid barrier to movement; secondly, of the few mountains, one, the Co A Nong, located strategically at the extreme northern tip of the valley, has supported a friendly FSB and another, the Dong So ridge, has been negotiated by at least one enemy vehicle (wheeled) which was destroyed and/or abandoned prior to September of 1968; thirdly the southern side of the valley is characterized by numerous LOC's - Route 922 and the 922 by-pass around the northwestern slope of Co A Nong mountain, the Xe Sap River and the Rao Lao River, and many well-worn trails from Laos into the valley; and lastly, broad rolling areas between the two rivers which are void of heavy canopy would afford relatively easy foot movement; (see area 2 on diagram).

The traversability of the entire area west of the valley and north of the Rao Lao can be considered good for foot movement but unsuitable for tactical deployment of vehicles. Although the rivers and streams are, for the most part, negotiable, the avenues for vehicular movement are restricted by slope and vegetation. (Also not enough information about soil content is available to determine suitability, but one can assume that wet weather would restrict movement since the area is the drain filed for the waters of the A Sap Valley).

The Rao Lao River, from 10m to 40m wide, is not an insurmountable barrier to foot movement, especially during dry months. Due to its rocky bottom and the fact that it is not fed by any major cascading mountain streams, the Rao Lao flows slowly through its low banks. The depth varies from numerous shallow rapids to wide deep pools where it washes through layers of sand and silt. The appearance of numerous trails which weave back and forth across the river also indicate an easy traversability. The Xe Sap River differs from the Rao Lao with an increased number of ~~sambars~~ and rapids making it less easily traversed.

Landing Zones are available south of the A Shau along rivers and streams, especially the Xe Sap River. Large assault landing would be possible in the northern end of the valley on and around Rte 922 between Laos and Co A Nong mountain.

EXTRACT from Appendix 5 (TERRAIN ANALYSIS) to ANNEX A; (INTELLIGENCE) 4
REF ID: A69

A key point in understanding the terrain of the western side of the Shau Valley is that the few existing mountains are isolated. The enemy has used these vantage points not only to store their material but also concealed locations from which to harass friendly observation planes and thus protect their own movement over high speed routes from BA 611 and through extensive trail networks from BA 611 and further down the Laotian border. Two of the mountains seem to be especially suitable for friendly operations. First the Co A Nong mountain has supported a FSB in the past and provides good observation toward BA 611 and toward the A Shau Valley. Due to extensive bombing the southwestern slope has been cleared of vegetation and Route 922 running along the chalky slope is completely interdicted by landslides. Observation to the north is hindered by trees. Streams in the A Nong area will not hinder ground operations in any way. Second the Nong Se ridge, centrally located on the western side of the northern A Shau Valley can be easily entered on foot from its northern and southern tips. Friendly forces, were they located on these two ridge lines could probably check enemy movement while supporting US ground operations. Also occupation of these ridges would greatly lessen the amount of enemy fire upon helicopter operations.

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UNIT	STRENGTH	LOCATION/DATE LAST CONTACT	AKI
1st Regt	855	Unlocated	—
Regt Hqs	1,790		
C-12 Sapper Co	250		
C-15 A Co (12.7mm)			
C-16 Mortar Co (82mm)			
C-17 RR Co (75mm)			
C-18 Trans Co			
C-19 Engr Co			
1st Security Co			
U/1 Signal Co			
U/I Recon Co			
J/1 Medical Co			
100th Bn	420	Unlocated	K-1
C-1 Co			
C-2 Co			
C-3 Co			
C-4 Co			
102d Bn	420	Unlocated	K-2, 820
C-1 Co			
C-2 Co			
C-3 Co			
C-4 Co			
106th Bn	400	YD3820/ Feb 69	K-6, K-5
C-1 Co			
C-2 Co			
C-3 Co			
C-4 Co			
10th Regt	1780		E-9, Doan ?
Regt Hqs	300	Unlocated	
C-16 RR Co			
C-17 Engr Co			
C-18 Mortar Co			
C-19 A Co (12.7mm)			
C-20 Signal Co			
C-21 Recon Co			
C-22 Sapper Co			
C-23 Trans Co			
C-24 Medical Co			
115th Bn	500	Unlocated	K-15, K-1 1st Bn
C-1 Co			
C-2 Co			
C-3 Co			

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<u>UNIT</u>	<u>STRENGTH</u>	<u>LOCATION/DATE</u> <u>LAST CONTACT</u>	<u>AKA</u>
C-4			
316th Bn	400	YD5402/ March 69	K-16, K-2, 3d Bn
C-11 Co			
C-12 Co			
C-13 Co			
C-14 Co			
318th Bn	500	Unlocated	K-18, K-12, 2d Bn
C-5 Co			
C-7 Co			
C-8 Co			
C-9 Co (C-10 Co)			
29th Regt	1800	Unlocated	Song Lo, E-8, 3d Regt
Regt Hqs	650	Unlocated	
C-14 Art Co (Type Unk)			
C-15 Engr Co			
C-16 Signal Co			
C-17 Mortar Co (82mm)			
C-18 RR Co (75mm)			
4th Bn	400	Unlocated	K-7, D-1
C-1 Co			
C-2 Co			
C-3 Co			
C-4 Co			
6th Bn	380	Unlocated	K-8, D-2
C-5 Co			
C-6 Co			
C-7 Co			
C-8 Co			
7th Bn	380	Unlocated	K-9, D-3
C-9 Co			
C-10 Co			
C-11 Co			
C-12 Co			
5th Arty Regt	UNK	Unlocated	Doan 65
K-40 Bn (87mm gun)			
K-41 Bn (122mm gun)			
K-42 Bn (Art)			
K-43 Bn (Art)			

UNCLASSIFIED

UNIT

STRENGTHLOCATION/DATE
LAST CONTACT

AKA

UNIT	<u>STRENGTH</u>	<u>LOCATION/DATE</u> <u>LAST CONTACT</u>	AKA
675th Arty Regt 213th Bn 215th Bn 208th Bn 23d Bn	UNK	Unlocated	
E-25 Rkt - Arty Bn A Cos (Unk designation)	UNK	Unlocated	835
Birth Team 42 1st Inf Bn 1st Co 2nd Co 3d Co 4 4th Co 641st Indep Inf Co 642d Indep Inf Co 643rd Indep Inf Co 3d AA Bn C-10 Co C-11 Co C-12 Co 2 U/I AA Bns (3-4 Cos Probable) 4th Commo Bn 55th Trans Bn H-5 Co H-6 Co H-7 Co H-8 Co 52d Trans Bn (Poss) 9th Inf Security Bn (Poss) 1st Inf Security Bn (Poss) U/I Signal Co	UNK	Unlocated	

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ANNEX C (Execution) to After Action Report, Apache Snow (3/187 Operations).

1. The initial phase of the operation was executed as planned i.e. the 3/187 secured LZ 2 and the terrain immediately adjacent to it.
2. The intention after that was to secure Dong Ap Bia and the major ridges running off it to the southwest, south, and southeast.
3. The enemy, however, was discovered in force on Dong Ap Bia and the 3/187 fought him there throughout the period of participation in Apache Snow.
4. The appendices to this annex describe, in chronological order, the detailed day to day operations of the 3/187, from staging on 9 May through extraction from the AO on 21 May.

APPENDICES:

1. 9-10 May
2. 11 May
3. 12 May
4. 13 May
5. 14 May
6. 15 May
7. 16 May
8. 17 May
9. 18 May
10. 19 May
11. 20 May
12. 21 May

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Operation APACHE SNOW began for the 3/187 with staging in the vicinity of Fire Base Blaze on 9 May (D-1) 1969.

Pathfinders were supposed to arrive before dark on the 9th to coordinate the D-Day lift but they did not. The Battalion S3 met with the company commanders and a search was made of the PZ in an attempt to locate aircraft guide markers according to what had been described to the S3 by the aviation representative the night before. Finding only a partially marked PZ, the plan was formulated to position troops from east to west in two rows each with 15 groups of 5 men each. The lift was scheduled to use 30 aircraft.

At 0700 hours, on 10 May, the 3-187 troops were formed according to plan for an expected 0720 hours, pick up. Pathfinders arrived sometime around 0700 hours. Their information about the pattern on the PZ and number of ships to be used was confused and contradictory and they never did coordinate or control the lift to any effective degree. Consequently the composition of the ground units' lifts was not exactly as planned.

The C&C ship reported on the battalion frequency at 0700 hours and by 0705 hours, the Battalion Commander was airborne and ready to start the lift. The PZ time for D Company, the first unit lifted, was at 0750 hours. Their LZ time was 0801 hours, and the D Company Commander reported that LZ 2 was cold. Elements of A and C Companies were lifted at 0801 hours, and were closed into LZ 2 at 0820 hours. The Battalion Headquarters (minus the CO and Arty LNO who were airborne in the C&C ship), the mortars and additional elements of C and A Companies departed the PZ at 0845 hours, and were on LZ 2 at 0856 hours.

The insertion had caught the enemy by surprise. D Company, after securing the LZ according to plan moved its 1st Platoon up the ridge to the southeast. This immediate push up the ridge was to prove an important achievement. It was from this position, the key terrain to the immediate northwest of Dong Ap Bia (Hill 937), that the Battalion Headquarters controlled and supported operations throughout the period 10 to 21 May. Occupation of this terrain also resulted in an effective blocking position, as it stood on the major ridgeline and trail complex between Dong Ap Bia and the Laotian border.

The lack of proper Pathfinder PZ coordination caused a broken sequence of troops arriving in LZ 2. Consequently, there was some confusion and disorganization in effecting the Battalion Commander's plan for securing and expanding the perimeter of the LZ and commencing initial RIF's. When the Battalion Headquarters arrived, the S3 gathered the available leaders and directed actions essentially as the Commander had intended i.e., A Company organize on the northwest part of the perimeter and commence a RIF to the high ground to the northwest; C Company secure the southern portion and commence a RIF to the southwest. C Company was assigned the mission of LZ security until all elements were in. D Company as mentioned, already had the eastern side and had moved out to the southeast.

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At 0930 hours A Company reported reaching the high ground approximately five hundred meters to the northwest (YC313994) and finding and searching out trails in that area. During this period the headquarters and mortars, following D Company, began their move toward the southeast. C Company, waiting the arrival of the remainder of its forces, secured LZ 2 and commenced a platoon RIF toward the southwest.

At 1044 hours the Battalion Commander with the Artillery LNO, landed at LZ 2.

At 1045 hours a LOH on VR reported a complex of bunkers and huts several hundred meters to the east of the LZ.

By noon D Company had secured the ridge line blocking position to the southeast (YC320988) and the Battalion Headquarters and Mortars were within the D Company perimeter. Preparation of an LZ and mortar positions had begun.

Throughout the middle of the day Pink Teams, LOH VR's, ARA and FAC's reported numerous trails, huts, bunkers, tunnels and small groups of enemy east and west of the 3/187 location.

By 1600 hours B Company, which had been the Brigade reserve, closed into LZ 2, completing the 3/187 into the AO. B Company moved southeast to the Headquarters location and received instructions to continue moving southeast toward Dong Ap Bia, set up an NDP, and to move at first light on the 11th to RIF toward Hill 937.

At 1646 hours and 1658 hours B Company reported receiving sniper fire and then small arms and RPG fire. They responded with small arms fire, 90mm RR and were supported by mortars, artillery, gunships and airstrikes. The US suffered three WIA, while killing four of the enemy. MEDEVAC (2 ambulatory and 1 litter) was completed by 1835 hours. Gunship and airstrike support continued until dark. The night defensive positions for 10 May were:

A Co(-) at YC308994

A Co 2d plat at YC306995

C Co(-) at YC315985

C Co 1st plat at YC314983

B Co(-) at YC321987

B Co 4th plat at YC321986

D Co Mortars and Bn Hqs
at YC320989

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The night of 10/11 May was quiet and the morning's activity started at 0600 hours with a fire ball (perimeter fire into potential enemy locations).

At 0634 hours C Company's reconnaissance by fire prompted enemy return fire from vicinity coordinate YC317984. C Company returned fire with organic weapons.

Assault 25, light fire team (LFT), was on station at 0653 hours and reported two enemy soldiers running on a trail about four hundred meters east of B Company's location. He reported an observation post in a tree, also, and bunkers fortified with rocks, in the same general area. The area was taken under fire by Assault 25 and he fired on and missed by automatic weapons.

Banshee 23 (LFT) reported that a LOH reconning for him took enemy fire from the vicinity of coordinate YC355974. At 0745 hours he engaged the enemy by fire.

B Company departed their NDP at 0745 hours.

A and C Companies sent reports that their units had commenced moving.

Plans for the day were:

A Company RIF vicinity of NDP; then double back to vicinity of LZ 2 (YC314939).
 B Company RIF from NDP to vicinity of YC329984 the northern tip of Hill 937.
 C Company RIF south and east from their NDP.
 D Company remain in blocking position with Battalion Headquarters and Mortars; conduct limited RIF's to the north and east.

The FAC reported in at 0844 hours, with the first of six airstrikes of the day.

At 0851 hours, B Company reported finding two RPG rounds, one light machine gun, and numerous blood trails to the east of the previous day's contact. Between 0900-1000 hours, B Company found 4 enemy KIA's in the vicinity of coordinate YC324984. The KIA's were wearing green uniforms with khakis underneath. One of the dead had a picture in his wallet that appeared to be of him in an officer's uniform. Also found on his person was an additional picture, North Vietnamese money, eight razor blades, and a US type accessory pack with tobacco.

By 0910 hours B Company had found two additional enemy KIA's, one SKS rifle, one IMG, a Chicom grenade, one AK47 rifle, one RPG launcher with six rounds, some medical equipment, a letter, bandages, items of clothing, and numerous blood trails.

C Company gave his position, at 0913 hours, as YC315985.

At 0946 hours, A Company had moved to YC304994. He reported that he was keeping the company (-) at that location and sending out platoon RIF's.

Bilk 37, FAC, reported finding a large hut with bunkers around it at coordinate YC348983.

At 1045 hours B Company reported more enemy trails in the direction of advance.

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At 1100 hours, A Company reported the following locations: 3d Platoon at YC320990; 1st Platoon at YC300993.

At 1106 hours, B Company reported that he had found one large sack of rice containing approximately 15 pounds of rice balls; a carrying case containing three AK-47's and magazines; a bag containing three satchel charges already primed; another small bag containing something similar to C4; a bag of first aid supplies and equipment; two more Chicom grenades and blood trails leading to the east up the hill.

Unit locations at 1158 hours were: A Company and 3d Platoon at YC304994; 1st Platoon at YC300993; 2d Platoon at YC302990. B Company at YC323984; C Company(-) at YC323983; C Company 3d Platoon at YC313981.

At 1159 hours, A Company reported that they had discovered a well-used trail four meters wide running NW-SE.

At 1215 hours, the 1st Platoon of D Company returned to the company location. The platoon had reconnoitered to the NE for several hundred meters but had made no contact with the enemy.

At 1310 hours, B Company reported finding several communication wires running down from the hill into the stream bed along his route of advance. He also reported a small knoll to his east covered with sniper holes.

A LOH on VR at 1315 hours, reported that he had sighted at least two telephone poles with wires and insulators on them at coordinate YC351939. He added that there were trails running parallel to the communications system. These wires and trails evidently ran from the east, up over Hill 937, to the west. The LOH also reported that he had received fires from bunkers at YC324981.

Throughout the day A, C and B Companies continued to find trails, fresh tracks, communication wires and cables, spider holes, miscellaneous pieces of clothing and equipment, blood trails, and huts and bunkers. The pilots too, continued reporting numerous indications of enemy presence around and on Hill 937.

By 1550 hours, B Company moving east, had started up the ridge leading to Hill 937. While following fresh tracks, they were fired on by a lone sniper. The sniper's intention, evidently, was to draw the unit up the ridge where the enemy waited in bunkers.

At 1624 hours, B Company was in contact at YC327983, and at 1630 hours, the Company Commander reported that he had suffered three US KIA's. He also had two US WIA's and possibly two more from attempting to retrieve the first two. His troops had confirmed six enemy KIA's. The Battalion Commander instructed him to increase his volume of fire and push past the wounded, rather than attempt to immediately retrieve them under direct enemy fire. Mortars, artillery, gunships, and airstrikes were used in support of B Company. A MEDEVAC was requested at 1643 hours, and at 1842, all wounded were out.

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APPENDIX 2 Cont'd

At 1900 hours, during an ARVN strike, one of the ships turned and fired in the wrong direction. The rockets impacted in the center of the Battalion Headquarters location. One US was killed and thirty-five wounded. Fifteen of the WIA required MEDEVAC. Included in the wounded were the Battalion Commander and S3 (both lightly); the Artillery LNO and S4 officer (both seriously); and the Operations Sergeant and the Mortar Sergeant (both seriously). Various ships were used to evacuate and by 1907 hours, the casualties were cleared from the 3-187 location.

Through this disruption, the headquarters continued to function. Mortars continued their mission in support of B Company and the Battalion Commander continued to direct airstrikes, and give instructions to the companies.

At 1942 hours, D Company's 3d Platoon, which had been on a RIF to the north, returned to the blocking position, reporting negative sightings.

Locity, requested earlier, reported on station at 1937 hours and operated until 2019 hours.

IP's for the 3/187 on the night of 11/12 May were: A Co(-) at YC312992 with 2 ambushes at YC313992 and YC310994; B Company at YC325981; C Co(-) at YC316981 with 1st Platoon ambush at YC316981; D Company, Battalion Headquarters and Mortars at YC320989.

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The night was quiet. At 0640 hours, Bilk 37, reported on station and put in two airstrikes for C Company. There were eight airstrikes against the enemy throughout the day, the last one going in at 1734 hours. These strikes were a mix of high drag bombs, napalm, and 500 and 1000 pound bombs with fuze delay. The accuracy of the strikes was outstanding.

At 0659 hours, Company A began moving toward the Battalion Headquarters location. They arrived at 0805 hours.

B Company reported at 0820 hours that his rear element spotted some movement.

The Battalion Commander called Brigade at 0852 hours, and requested a team of engineers to assist in blowing an LZ for B Company. This request for an LZ at that location (vic. coord. YC323983) proved to be a wise one. The lower LZ, as it came to be called, was the key intermediate staging, evacuation, and supply point throughout the operation.

At 0913 hours, B Company received enemy small arms and RPG fire from the vicinity of coordinate YC325981. Results were 1 US WIA; the return fire killed one enemy soldier.

The Division Artillery Commander arrived on the upper LZ at 0940 hours. He had come to discuss the ARA mishap and a policy for control of ARA. It was agreed by him that the ARA ships would come up on the battalion command frequency to receive a briefing on the ground tactical situation before going to work for a company artillery FO. Prior to the accident on the 11th, they had been reporting directly to the Artillery FO. This procedure was used against the repeated objection of the Battalion Commander 3/187.

At 0950 hours, Banshee 27, a LOG ship carrying the engineers, reported in on the battalion frequency and was turned over to B Company's control. At 1024 hours, while inserting the engineers, the ship crashed after its tail struck a tree. There were six casualties resulting from the crash; three engineers and three crew members. One of each required immediate MEDEVAC. B Company and the remaining engineers, however, continued with the preparation of the LZ. Throughout the day gunships, ARA, airstrikes, artillery, and mortars pounded the area east of the B Company location.

At 1141 hours, D Company replaced by A Company in the blocking position, departed the Battalion Headquarters location and commenced a RIF down the finger leading northeast from the upper LZ.

At 1219 hours, the MEDEVAC requested by B Company for the crash victims reported on station, but the LZ was not considered ready and the Battalion Commander told the ship to return and wait for his call.

At 1226 hours, the Battalion S3 reported to the Brigade S3 that the crashed ship was burning and therefore there would be no need for a rigger team.

B Company reported at 1224 hours, that he was receiving incoming mortar rounds from the vicinity of coordinate YC325976. No casualties resulted. The suspected enemy location was fired on by gunships, artillery, and counter mortar fire.

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APPENDIX 3 Cont'd

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At 1448 hours, B Company had an acceptable LZ and had extended the security of it sufficiently to bring in a MEDEVAC. He had a total of nine east Lites to be evacuated; three were litter and six ambulatory. The MEDEVAC went in twice, without incident, and the evacuation was complete by 1500 hours.

At 1554 hours, Thunder 44 (LOH) went into the lower LZ and took out three US KIA's sustained in a previous action.

B Company reported that he had at least three confirmed enemy KIA's.

During the afternoon, B and C Companies called in reports of sporadic enemy movement, RPG, small arms and mortar fire. There were no US casualties resulting from these fires, however an additional NVA soldier was reported KIA. In response to any report of enemy movement or fires, friendly fires of several types were put into the suspected locations.

At 1617 hours, one of the gunships sighted three huts and many bunkers and fighting positions at coordinate YC325977. He was instructed to engage these.

At 1645 hours, C Company, moving east, reported their location as YC325977. This was just two hundred meters south of B Company. The 2d Platoon of A Company which had been sent to B Company's location with a resupply, arrived there at 1648 hours.

D Company had no enemy contact on the 12th and at 1724 hours, he reported his position as coordinate YC325989.

At 1829 hours, C Company, having engaged several enemy sightings SW of the upper LZ that afternoon, stated that he was pulling back from the contact area and digging in for the night. A moment later he reported that an estimated eleven RPG and mortar rounds fell into his old position to the west and that he was calling artillery on the suspected enemy location.

During the remaining hours of light, artillery and mortar defensive fires were adjusted in around the perimeter.

At 2000 hours, on 12 May the 3-187 was disposed as follows: A Company, Battalion Headquarters occupied the blocking position at coordinate YC325980; C Company at YC325978 with the 1st Platoon ambush at YC323979; D Company at YC323988 with a platoon ambush at YC323987.

The night was quiet with no enemy contact.

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The first person to report on the Battalion Frequency on the morning of 13 May was Assault 11 (LPT). He stayed on station from 0645 hours until 0735 hours during which time they scouted to the west and south of the blocking position and engaged several hut and bunker complexes.

The FAC was next, at 0656 hours, with the first of ten airstrikes to be placed in support of the Battalion until 1900 hours that night.

At 0701 hours, C Company, moving east for half an hour already and reconning by fire as they moved, reported that their lead element was receiving small arms fire. They requested permission to hold and strike the suspected enemy location with mortars and artillery. The request was granted.

B Company was next, at 0725, with a report that he was receiving AK-47 fire from his west. Fighters were overhead at the time and an immediate strike was called on the enemy location.

At 0732, B Company reported that he had three of his troops slightly wounded.

Minutes later, C Company reported that he had five US WIA's.

At 0850 B Company requested a MEDEVAC for two of his wounded and also informed the Battalion Commander that he had US KIA.

The preponderance of enemy fires, which consisted of RPG, mortar and small arms, was coming from the vicinity of YC327978. For the next several hours, the Battalion Commander directed airstrikes, ARA, artillery and mortars into the area.

At 0920 C Company, pushing slowly eastward, reported enemy fires and movement from several directions in close to his position. He reported that the enemy were expertly camouflaged and that C Company was using maximum reconnaissance by fire as they moved.

D Company, who had moved out at first light, reported movement, but no enemy contacts, as he was reconnoitering in the vicinity of YC325990.

At 0956, B Company's elements, following fresh tracks to the east, ran into a nest of snipers and reported two more US WIA and one KIA.

The US response to these contacts was immediate and violent. Hardly a report of enemy contact occurred during this operation that there was not some type of air support overhead. An average of eight to ten airstrikes per day put Air Force Fighters overhead nearly fifty per cent of the time. Continually on the outskirts of the immediate contact area, gunship scout teams prowled the area, engaged enemy movement and bunker complexes and were immediately available for close in support of the infantry.

For example, during this morning of contact for B and C Companies, there were at least four assault gunship teams, each at different times, in the area supporting them. Each team averaged about an hour on station. Also by noon

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ive airstrikes had been delivered in their support. During the rare moments that support was not overhead, artillery and organic mortar fires were directed into these enemy locations. Final casualty figures would show the payback tenfold for each casualty he inflicted on the 3/187.

At 1044, C Company reported that due to continuing enemy contact, he now offered a total of two KIA's and eight WIA. A MEDEVAC was requested and the seriously wounded were taken out. THUNDER 44 (LOH) who has been shuttling support to B and C Companies, evacuated eight of the less seriously wounded and three KIA to the upper LZ. B Company, at this time, had sustained a total of five wounded and one KIA for the day.

A and F Companies sent in locations at 1058 hours; B was at YC325981 and C at YC325979. The enemy was fighting a determined delaying action, but the war machines continued their deliberate move toward the hill.

At 1100, morning D Company had reconnoitered to the northeast and then turned and moved southeast toward Hill 937. At 1227 hours, the 3d and 2d platoons advanced through a stream bed at YC327989 and began the move up the ridge toward Hill 937. The 1st platoon had been covering the stream crossing and, as they moved out, mortar and RPG's wounded seven, two seriously. The Company Commander ordered the 1st platoon to move the wounded down into the stream bed, prepare a PZ and secure the area. He took the Company(-) southeast up the ridge to search for the suspected enemy position. By 1330, MEDEVAC 927 reported in, but the PZ was not ready and he departed to refuel. Meanwhile the Company(-) pushed further on up the ridge and the 1st platoon continued improving the PZ. ARA supported D Company as it moved up the hill.

At 1348 MEDEVAC 927 returned and, since the D Company PZ was still not ready, it was turned over to B Company who has been in continuing contact all day long and had now sustained more than ten WIA.

At 1450 hours, D Company(-) had reconnoitered approximately three hundred meters southeast up the ridge and were in the vicinity of YC325987.

At 1510, unknown to Battalion Headquarters, MEDEVAC 927, returned once more and D Company Commander directed him to the PZ. A few minutes later the Company Commander reported to the Battalion Commander that the MEDEVAC had been hit by RPG and has crashed. The 1st Platoon Sergeant, later describing what had happened, said that the ship had been hovering for a minute or so and had dropped the basket when it took a direct hit from the RPG. He insisted that the fire, only one RPG round, came from a ridge to the north. The ship came straight down on the 1st Platoon Command Group. Five men were killed (three crewmen and two from D Company) and three were injured (one crew member very seriously and two men from D Company) as a direct result of this crash.

The Battalion Commander ordered D Company to start moving the wounded back to the upper LZ. He also ordered A Company to send a platoon down to assist them.

The Company(-) moved back down the ridge and joined the 1st Platoon at 1600.

hours. The company Commander confirmed the situation and the case by files generally and rendered his report to the Battalion Commander. He added that the radio car had burned and was a total loss. He then reported that the enemy was ready to start carrying the wounded out. The intention was to get the MIA's out first and return the following day for the dead.

By 1710 hours, the 2d Platoon, A Company, had linked up with D Company. At 1915 hours, however, D Company Commander called to say that one crew man had been badly injured and that this slowed their movement. He requested to stop for the night and moving to the upper LZ early the next morning. The Battalion Commander approved this; instructed them to make the wounded as comfortable as possible; and ordered the A Company Platoon to return to the blocking position.

From the afternoon of the 13th, B and C Companies had continued maneuvering toward Hill 937 attempting to gain a favorable position for a major attack on the 14th. It was not an easy task. Both units maintained contact throughout the afternoon. B Company's contact with the enemy ceased at 1730 hours. C Company received mortars and small arms as late as 1935 hours and, though the enemy broke contact at 1941 hours, C Company continued observe movement and engaged it until 2000 hours.

As a result of the day's actions the Battalion had suffered thirty-three non MIA and 4 KIA. It was not until the next day, when the battalion penetrated the enemy bunker complex, that they were to confirm the damage inflicted on the enemy. Undoubtedly it was even greater than reported, since the enemy had all night to retrieve his dead and wounded.

At 2000 hours, A Company's 3d platoon returned to the blocking position.

At 2040 hours, D Company sighted moving lights several hundred meters to his north. Artillery was called in on the area and the lights disappeared.

Specky came on station at this time and worked until 2314 hours.

The 3/187 NDP's for the night of 13/14 May were: A Company, Battalion Headquarters and Mortars at YC320989; B Company at YC324983; C Company at YC325981; and D Company at YC323989.

The Battalion now fully realized that the NVA were present in considerable strength in the vicinity of Hill 937 and the blocking position occupied by the Battalion Headquarters.

The alert posture for the Headquarters, Mortars and A Company was 100% until 2400 hours; 50% until 0300 hours; and 100% again until 0500 hours. Instructions were passed for a strict STAND-TO at 0500 hours. At that hour every man and officer on the blocking position was to be in a fighting position; mortar crews on their weapons; and every radio on the checked into the net. These alert percentages and STAND-TO criteria were maintained throughout the operation. STAND-TO was held daily at 0500 hours and 1900 hours. Controlled rest periods during the day sustained the alertness of the troops.

There was no action during the night of 13/14 May.

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At 0630 hours, on 14 May the 2d platoon of A Company returned to D Company's NDP to carry the wounded back to the upper LZ.

The AF FAC, now a familiar voice and part of the daily scene reported on station at 0646 hours, and began the first of thirteen airstrikes spaced throughout the day.

The 14th of May should be considered the first concentrated attempt by the 3d Battalion, 187th to seize Hill 937. The plan was for D Company to attack from the north, after they had evacuated their wounded and recovered the dead from the crashed helicopter. B Company would attack from the west and C Company also from the west but on a finger 150 meters south of B Company. All companies would be supported by an artillery prep.

At 0756 hours, as C Company began his deliberate move toward Hill 937. He reported movement to his west and south. Reacting to all such reports, the Battalion Commander continually instructed his company commanders to move somebody toward the suspected enemy location, to watch the friendly flanks, to use maximum reconnaissance by fire, to employ the 90mm and to keep moving and stay spread out. The Battalion Commander kept airstrikes, gunships, artillery and mortars striking the enemy. All fires were brought in as closely as possible without causing friendly casualties. Units identified their positions with smoke and the Battalion Commander insisted that marking rounds be fired by artillery and mortars on first rounds and after each substantial change in data.

At 0810 hours, B Company, moving east to the north of C Company, reported receiving one RPG and light AK-47 fire and at 0832 hours, he reported receiving additional RPG and small arms as well as mortar fire.

At 0843 hours, C Company reported that he was moving into a bunker complex on the military crest of the ridge and that he was running into small arms, RPG's hand grenades, and claymores employed by enemy troops from the top of the ridge.

At 0902 hours, B Company reported that two of his platoons were in contact.

At 0903 hours, C Company reported that his 3d Platoon had almost reached the top of the hill but was meeting extremely heavy resistance.

At 0931 hours, B Company reported that he had his lead platoon on top of the ridge and that they were receiving extremely heavy fire. At this time C Company reported movement and enemy fires from around his position, and he reported that he would have to pull back. The Battalion Commander approved and, in order not to expose B Company's southern flank, he ordered them to pull back also. B Company meanwhile reported discovering another bunker complex guarded by strands of claymores, booby traps and command detonated mines. In addition he reported many enemy bodies in the area of contact.

At 1200 hours the Battalion Commander reported to the Brigade S3 that he estimated there were at least two companies to a battalion of enemy on Hill 937.

At 1210 hours, B Company Commander reported that the top of the ridge was covered with blood, pieces of bodies, and enemy dead, but that he would have to wait to give an accurate figure on enemy KIA's.

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During the rest of the day, B and C Companies evacuated wounded, received resupply and prepared for the night. Sporadic encounters with the enemy were reported in the vicinity of the lower LZ from which the companies worked.

Clearer pictures of casualties and reports of enemy KIA's were sent to the Battalion Commander during the afternoon. B Company reported his strength at 85 and C Company at 70. They had started the operation with 124 and 135 respectively. The CO ordered them to establish NDP's in the vicinity of the lower LZ and informed them that A Company would relieve C Company on the 15th. He also sent a platoon of B Company to C Company's location to assist with the wounded.

At 1345 hours, the 3d Brigade Commander, Iron Raven, visited the 3/187. He stayed for about thirty minutes, talked with some of the troops and then departed.

During this day of fierce fighting by B and C Companies, D Company had been reconnoitering the area surrounding the downed helicopter.

The 2d Platoon of A Company, arrived at 0714, secured the previous day's wounded, and carried them back to the upper LZ.

C Company's 1st Platoon was sent back to the crash site to obtain the five bodies left there overnight. The 2d Platoon reconnoitered the ridge just north of the crash site. The 3d Platoon covered the trails in the vicinity of the NDP.

The 1st Platoon had moved to the crash site, secured the bodies and was enroute to the upper LZ by 1400 hours. There had been no sign of the enemy, but, on their return, an RPG attack wounded four. None was serious, however, and the platoon continued with its evacuation mission.

At 1610 hours, D Company Commander informed the Battalion Commander that the 1st Platoon would not reach the upper LZ by dark and that he had given them instructions to press on until 1830 hours at which time they were to drop the bodies and return to the company NDP.

In addition to the 1st Platoon's wounded, the 3d Platoon had sustained six KIA from RPG's.

At 1912 hours the 1/506 sent in NDP's which placed them approximately 2 K's to the southwest of the 3/187. On the evening of the 14th of May the 3/187 was disposed as follows: A Company, Battalion Headquarters and Mortars at YC320989; B Company (-) at YC324982 with 2d Platoon ambush at YC324981 and the 2d and 3d Platoon ambush at YC323982; C Company at YC324982; D Company (-) at YC323990 with two ambushes at YC323989 and YC323988. The intention for 15 May was to attack Hill 937 again before the enemy could bring in reinforcements. A Company was to relieve C Company on B's southern flank, but was to attack more from the south than C Company had. Since B Company nearly reached the top of the hill on the 14th, they were to attack again essentially in the same way due to the limited avenues of approach to Hill 937. C Company, was to occupy the blocking position on which the Battalion Headquarters was located. D Company, operating to the northeast, was to continue attacking in that area. The 1/506 was to move toward Hill 937 from the southwest and block enemy routes of escape and enemy reinforcing attempts through that area.

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The 19th of May was the second attempt at Hill 937.

Hill 37, the AF FAC, reported on station at 0635 hours, with the first of ten airstrikes to be placed on the hill.

In the morning, C and A Companies completed their exchange of positions i.e. C Company assuming the blocking position on the hill with the Battalion Headquarters, mortars and A Company in the attack position south of B Company. At approximately 1200 hours, the companies began the move toward Hill 937. The first contact reported was from B Company at 1316 hours. Enemy claymores and command detonated mines caused several US casualties. At this same time A Company, though not in contact, reported that the enemy was moving elements between him and B Company. The Battalion Commander coordinated the fires of the two companies and gunships into the draw between them and instructed them to keep abreast of one another as they moved forward. The enemy was employing claymores, RPG's, MG's and mortars, in addition to small arms and snipers. B Company reported that the enemy was well dug in and camouflaged and that the US troops received the greatest volume of fire when they were up and attempting to move, indicating the excellent training of the enemy. Both elements, however, continued to make steady progress up the hill, using maximum reconnaissance by fire, employing the 60mm cannister round, and creeping mortars and artillery to their front and flanks.

By 1400 hours, both companies were about 150 meters from the top of the hill and each had sustained no more than a dozen wounded. At 1400 hours, however, the ARA once again shot up a friendly unit. This time it was B Company's command group and resulted in 2 US KIA's and 14 WIA's. Included in the fourteen wounded were the Company Commander, the FO, RTO's and 1st Sergeant.

At 1359 hours, the Battalion Headquarters area received the first of four RPG rounds spaced about twenty minutes between each. Eight persons from the headquarters and five from C Company were wounded. Included were the Battalion Commander and the S3; neither was evacuated at the time.

By 1416 hours, the B Company wounded were being carried back to the lower LZ and another captain (planned to replace the S2) had taken command of C Company.

At 1500 hours A Company reported he was about 75 meters from the hill top of 37. B Company was out of radio contact due to the unfortunate strike on its command group. At 1512 hours, A Company reported movement around him.

At 1517 hours, the Battalion Commander briefed Brigade on the situation. He explained to Brigade that he doubted B Company could reach the top with its command group knocked out. The new B Company Commander had just taken over and had requested that he be allowed to pull back and sort out what he could. The Battalion Commander felt that A Company might make it without B, but he did not want to put a single, below strength company on the hill alone. It was recommended that the two companies pull back to their NDP's of the previous night and let the Air Force continue to bomb the hill. This was approved by Brigade.

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at 1545 hours, as A Company was drawing back for the airburst, they reported that the enemy was counter attacking down the ridge to their south in an attempt to flank them. The Battalion Commander told A Company to put fire into the area and to protect his rear. Artillery and mortar fires were snuffed and brought in close to the company. At 1531 hours, A Company reported that his rear element was in contact and at 1537 hours informed that he had one MIA and 6 or 7 WIA's. At 1603 hours, A and B Company linked up at the lower LZ.

At 1700 hours, A Company reported total casualties for the day at 1 KIA and 19 WIA's; B Company had 2 KIA's and 19 WIA's all but five of B Company's WIA's were caused by the ARA ship. The magnitude of this mishap could not be fully appreciated at the time. On this day, sustaining moderate casualties, the 3-187th had nearly attained the top of the hill only to have the momentum of the coordinated attack interrupted by the ARA strike on B Company's forward section. Three days later the 3-187th was to suffer its 2d worst day of casualties in its third attempt to take the objective. Even though the hill was pounded day and night on the 16th and 17th by air, artillery and mortars, one can only assume from the ferocity of the fighting on the 18th, as compared to that on the 15th, that the enemy must have reinforced considerably.

At 1820 hours Spooky was requested for 2000 hours, and throughout the night to be employed on Hill 937 and west of the headquarters location toward the motion border.

By 1914 hours all the casualties had been evacuated. At 2126 hours, B Company reported his strength as 65. A Company still had approximately 100 MIA.

The evening defensive positions for 15 May were: A and B Companies together at the lower LZ at YC320986. C Company, Battalion Headquarters, and mortars occupied the blocking position at YC320989 with 1st platoon A Company ambushing at YC320930. D Company at YC320988 was just northeast of the blocking position with a platoon size ambush 100 meters to the north of the NDF.

Several fireballs were planned at odd times through the night.

At 2200 hours, Brigade called to confirm plans for a coordinated two battalion attack using gas (CS) to be conducted on the 16th. The concept was that two companies of 3/187 would move toward Dong Ap Bia to a position from which they could exert pressure on the enemy and support by fire from the west while the 1/506 made its assault from the southwest. The scheme never had a chance for the 16th, because the 1-506 was too far from the hill.

At 2300 hours, C Company detected movement on the perimeter and employed grenades against the suspected enemy location. At 2330 hours, C Company again reported movement. The Battalion Commander cautioned the company to refrain from using small arms or MG's until absolutely necessary. He instructed the unit to be sure that they did have movement and to continue to use hand grenades in order to deny the enemy knowledge of the exact whereabouts of the company.

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APPENDIX 6 Cont'd

The movement at this time was in a large draw off the western edge of the perimeter. At 2340 hours, three to four enemy grenades, or comparable explosive devices, were hurled at the perimeter. The US troops responded with more hand grenades. At 2400 hours troops were ordered to continue the 100% alert. Thirty minutes later more movement was reported and at 0058 hours several more small satchel charges or grenades were thrown toward the perimeter. All landed just short and there were no US casualties. The S3 called Brigade and requested to keep Spooky on station throughout the night. At 0130 hours the perimeter received sporadic small arms fire. The Battalion Commander instructed the line to put some M-79 fire in the suspected locations which were south and west of the perimeter. He then asked Brigade to increase the volume of his H&I fires and to fire his defensive targets. He also emphasized the need for Spooky or ARA;

At 0230 hours, Shadow (C119) with a searchlight fire guide capability and a unit similar to Spooky reported on station. The artillery and mortars were checked and Shadow went to work. At 0240 hours, Hawk 19, a light fire team of Cobras, checked in and went to work in conjunction with Shadow. Shadow, who by now was oriented and placing accurate and close fires to the south and west, merely kept his light on and Hawk 19 went in under him to shoot in the target area.

While the two were working C Company reported more enemy satchels, MG fire was placed into the draw to the west, after a soldier reported seeing two of the enemy.

About 0400 hours, Shadow left station (Hawk 19 had already departed) and the artillery and mortars resumed until 0425 hours, when Spooky reported in and went to work.

As late as 0510 hours, C Company continued to report movement. Evidently, if the enemy had planned an attempt at the perimeter, he decided against it when confronted by the alert response of the troops to his movement and the continuous mix of air and indirect fire support. 1st light check revealed 1 enemy KIA.

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APPENDIX 7 (16 May) to ANNEX 9 (Section) to After Action Report, APACHE
SNOW (1/187 Operations).

At 0703 hours, Gorder 6, (L17), reported on station and secured the area west of the Headquarters location to the border. He reported two fires that appeared to be the result of secondary explosions reported by Spinks during the night.

On the morning of the 16th, B and D Companies exchanged positions and positions B Company returned to the upper LZ blocking position and secured the eastern half of the perimeter. D Company, after a complete resupply, moved down to the lower LZ.

At 1136 hours, the Battalion was informed of the locations for the 1/506. That unit reported two companies in light contact. Very little forward progress had been made from his NDP's and, consequently, the coordinated attack was postponed until the 17th.

While the two companies selected to make the next attack, D and A Companies, were making preparations, the Battalion Commander continued to direct airstrikes and artillery on the objective.

Engineer support continued to assist the Battalion in enlarging the upper LZ, blowing a 360 degree clearance for the mortars and generally improving the defenses of the blocking position.

At 1415 hours, the 24th Corps Commander visited the Rakkasans and stayed for about an hour.

There were no significant contacts on the 16th. At dark the unit locations were: A Company at YC21985 with 4 LP's; B Company at YC320939 with 2 ambushes; C Company at YC320989 with 1 platoon ambush; D Company at YC321986 with 1 platoon ambush.

Twelve skyspots were cleared in the vicinity of the Battalion mainly to the west along the border.

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The night passed quietly with no enemy contact. Lights were observed on Hill 937 and artillery and mortars were adjusted on them.

At 0850 hours, the Battalion Headquarters received locations for the 1/506: A Company and Battalion Headquarters at YC328969; B Company at YC319972; and C Company at YC327965.

The 1/506 had gained about 300 meters from the previous day's position, but they were still too far away to be considered in any immediate plan for a coordinated attack with the 3/187th.

At 0910 hours, Bilk 35, the AF FAC, reported on station with fighters carrying 1000 pound fuze delay bombs. With him in the aircraft was a 3/187th soldier who had been up the hill. It was hoped that he could point out to the FAC the precise locations on the hill that the enemy was concentrating his defenses.

At 0938 hours, the Battalion Commander's callsign (BlackJack) was transmitted and repeated on the battalion net. The voice was obviously that of a Vietnamese. It was assumed to be the enemy and Brigade was notified.

At 1024 hours, Brigade conducted an artillery CS test fire on Hill 937.

At 1055 hours, as the third airstrike of the day began, A Company Commander reported that he saw an enemy body tossed into the air. From the Battalion headquarters location, one could observe also what appeared to be bodies suspended from trees.

At 1220 hours, locations for the 1/506 showed that their two lead companies had only progressed a hundred meters since their 0850 hours report.

Throughout the day newsmen arrived on the scene!

At 1300 hours, the Battalion S3 asked for a report on the progress of the 1/506. Brigade informed him that they were in essentially the same locations and that their A Company was running into stiff resistance from enemy in bunkers. Once again the coordinated attack was postponed, pending forward progress by the 1/506.

Meanwhile the 3/187 stored extra ammunition, to include concussion and CS grenades, at the lower LZ. Additional flak jackets were distributed to the companies destined to make the attack on the 18th. Defenses at the blocking position were improved and RIF's were sent out to the west, northwest and north east.

During the afternoon, A and D Company Commanders, with a platoon each, reconnoitered forward to the hill in order to determine a position from which they could best support the impending attack by the 1/506. It was agreed by both commanders that they would simply have to move up the hill until contact was made before they could exert any appreciable pressure on the enemy's defenses.

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Both platoons returned before dark and at 1730 hours D Company Commander reported hearing a burst of AK47 fire that was apparently shot up in the air. He presumed that it was an enemy CP alert signal.

At 1950 hours, the Battalion Headquarters received three or four enemy reports. They landed about three hundred meters southwest of the perimeter, however, and there were no casualties.

At 2020 hours, the Brigade S2 informed the Battalion S2 that the enemy occupying Hill 937 were from the 29th NVN Regiment.

The NDP's for the 3/187 were essentially the same as they had been on the 14th. Ambush and LP locations, of course, were varied some.

At 2155 hours, NDP's were received for the 1/506 which showed them to be active. They were at 1300 hours.

With this knowledge, the Battalion S3, after conferring with the Battalion Commander, called Brigade and made a strong recommendation that on the following day the 3/187 not attempt to go in alone again should the 1/506 not show more progress. It was agreed that the mission for the two 3/187 companies was to support, by fire, as the 1/506 attacked from the southwest. The Battalion S3 explained that when the order was given to move, A and D Companies would move forward to make contact and continue to move forward until they were exerting pressure on the enemy's defenses. They would attempt to not become decisively engaged until the 1/506 was in position and ready to go for the hill.

At 2130 hours, Spooky 12 arrived and he was directed against Hill 937 and the ridge running west from the blocking position to the border.

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Another Spooky came on station at 0453 hours, and worked until 0538 hours. The night was uneventful, however.

At 0630 hours, Bilk 14 an AF FAC, reported on station.

At 0757 hours, Assault 27, a helicopter scout team, reported fresh tracks and what appeared to be a recently dug grave two kilometers to the northwest of the blocking position in the area that Spooky had been firing the past few nights.

A Company reported at 0815 hours, that they had departed their NDP and were moving to their attack position.

Brigade informed the Battalion Commander of the sequence of events for the attack:

- 1st - prior to 0830 hours, airstrikes in support of each battalion.
- 2d - 0830 to 0900 hours, artillery register on the hill.
- 3d - 0900 to 0905 hours, artillery CS prep.
- 4th - 0905 to 0925 hours, regular artillery prep.
- 5th - 0925 hours, troops move out.

The schedule was a flexible one and was immediately slipped. The airstrikes were put in for the 3/187th, finishing at 0914 hours. The artillery registration began at 0915 hours, and lasted about 20 minutes. The first rounds of CS were on the ground at 0940 hours. The CS round accuracy was poor, however, and most of them landed in the vicinity of A Company located in an attack position three to four hundred meters southwest of the registration area. This was not the catastrophe one might think. The gas prep was sparse and would probably have had little effect on the enemy even if it had been on target. The day was bright and clear and there was a gentle breeze of 4 to 6 knots from the southwest, so the gas didn't linger.

At 0955 hours, Brigade informed that the CS prep would be continued dispensing the gas from aircraft.

At 0957 hours, A Company reported receiving RPG's and small arms fire from the southwest.

Shortly after 1000 hours, the ADC, Hawkeye, made the decision to curtail the use of gas and start the artillery prep; it began at 1010 hours. The artillery prep lasted for fifteen minutes with the last rounds on the ground at 1025 hours. By this time D and A Companies had moved to within 200 meters

of the hilltop. D Company had reported light contact and A Company had been receiving fire on his right flank from the northern side of the ridge to his southwest. This was the ridge that B Company 1/506 was supposed to be attacking over but all units of the 1/506 were too far away to be of any assistance. The Battalion Commander, airborne in a LCH, instructed a Company to move to the northern edge of the ridge that he was on, in order to get cover from the fires to his southwest. The enemy was also down in the draw to A Company's north and A Company was instructed to use maximum recoil fire to his left along the ridge.

APPENDIX 9 Con't

At 1058 hours, D Company reported that he was 150 to 200 meters from the top, and was maintaining a heavy volume of fire on the enemy in support of the 1/506 but the volume of enemy fire was increasing.

At 1059 hours, the following locations for 1/506 were received: A and C, with the Headquarters, were at YC328968, one hundred meters back from their last forward most plat; B Company 1/506 was at YC320973, a gain of a hundred meters but still a kilometer from A Company 3/187th. Included with this report of their locations was the message that they were receiving small arms and RPG's but were making good progress.

At 1103 hours, D Company reported seeing NVA "all around him" and that he was "shooting them up". A Company reported at 1104 hours, that his lead element had yet to make hard contact. At 1105 hours, D Company Commander personally confirmed two NVA dead. At 1128 hours, however, D Company reported receiving a heavy volume of small arms and automatic weapons fire, RPG's and claymores and that he was taking heavy casualties. Most of the fire was coming from the trees on the northern edge of the bombed out area on the hilltop and from bunkers to his front.

At 1137 hours, A Company reported being about 75 meters from the top and firing in support of 1/506.

The following report came from the 1/506 at 1141 hours: B-1/506 had moved only 100 meters and is receiving fire from all sides - mortars, small arms and RPG; A Company 1/506 is also in contact.

At 1142 hours, D Company Commander reported that he was hit bad and was turning over command to his 2d Platoon Leader. Eventually, all of D Company's officers were wounded.

At 1150 hours, both companies were receiving a heavy barrage of 60 and 82mm mortar fires. The Battalion Commander called for artillery on the suspected sites, which were on the eastern side of Hill 937, and also requested an airstrike on that area.

By 1151 hours, A Company reported incoming small arms and RPG and reported that his 1st platoon leader had been hit.

At 1158 hours, Bilk 35 the AF FAC, who had put so many strikes on to Dong Ap Bia, reported in and announced that he would have some fighters overhead in about 15 minutes.

At 1130 hours, C Company departed the Lower LZ to carry ammunition up to D Company and also to carry back casualties to the lower LZ. C Company also had a be prepared mission to pass through D Company and take up the attack on order.

At 1201 hours, A Company reported having 5 to 6 seriously wounded.

At 1202 hours, C Company was receiving automatic weapons fire and reported that he had a platoon leader hit. At 1206 hours, C Company reported that

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he was pinned down and receiving RPG and mortar fire. The Battalion Commander, above in a LOH, ordered him to spread his men out, get moving and get the ammunition up to D Company.

The majority of the fire on Company C was coming from the southern edge of a ridge running northwest off the hill. The Battalion Commander adjusted the mortars into the area and called for more artillery into the same place.

At 1213 hours, Assault 26 a (LFT) put a strike into the area from which Company was receiving most of its fire; about three hundred meters from his position on an azimuth of 300 degrees.

At 1214 hours Bilk 34, FAC, was overhead with fighters.

D Company reported again at 1218 hours, that he was receiving a heavy volume of fire. The Battalion Commander told him to hold fast; not try to move forward; and that C Company was on the way up to reinforce him, to resupply ammo, and assist with his casualties. By this time, B Company, too, had a platoon carrying ammunition to the lower LZ. It was also to assist with the security of that area and help with the evacuation of the wounded.

At 1229 hours, while the platoon was enroute, the ARA unknown to be in the area again shot up the friendlies. One man was killed and four men wounded from B Company platoon. At this point, the Battalion Commander ordered the ARA out of his area.

Meanwhile, C Company enroute to D Company's location, reported a continuous volume of mortars, RPG's and small arms coming at his left flank from the north. He was still pushing toward to D Company, but the forward progress was difficult.

At 1231 hours, A Company reported that he had eight WIA's and was holding in place. He had already dispatched an ammo resupply party to the lower LZ.

At 1239 hours, the Battalion Commander, who had landed to allow his LOH to refuel, was airborne again. He immediately started adjusting the mortars in closer to his companies had the artillery moved to make it more effective, and demanded that C Company spread out, put out a greater volume of fire and move faster up to D Company's location.

At 1251 hours, bilk 35 put an airstrike into the front of A Company's position. The approach was a difficult one for the jets because of the disposition of friendlies, but the pilots did a magnificent job. This time, with the FAC and Battalion Commander in the air working together, they managed to put the strike precisely where it was needed.

For the next half hour the companies held in position and the enemy was hit with a concentrated mix of napalm strikes, gunships, mortars and artillery, as well as a maximum volume of US small arms, MG, M-79 LAW, and 90mm. At 1321 hours C Co reported that he had one of his reinforcing units linked up with D Company and that another was right behind with ammunition. The Battalion Commander ordered him to move up personally and take what remained of D Company under his command. He "rogered" and added that his First Sergeant had just been hit.

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At 1336 hours, the Battalion Commander returned to the Headquarters location. Incidentally, at the blocking position there was a clearing on the southeast side of the hill from which the entire 3/187 effort could be observed. Though not the same as being in a LOH, it was a good ground observation and control position.

At 1350 hours A Company, who by now had effected his ammunition resupply, reported that he was still receiving RPG's, mortars and small arms. At 1357 hours, the Brigade S3 informed the Battalion Commander that A/2/506 would arrive later in the afternoon to reinforce the 3/187.

The Battalion S3 kept a continual check on the progress of the 1/506, hoping for some progress in that direction to take the pressure off the units of the 3/187. Throughout the day, however, the 1/506 forward progress was slow. Evidently P/1/506 had made a heavy contact and had moved off the ridge to the southwest of A/3/87 and had gone east to join the main body of the 1/506. This action was unknown to the 3/187.

With casualties beginning to mount, assistance from the 1/506 not forthcoming and, adding to the difficulty, a torrent of rain falling, the Battalion Commander recommended to Brigade that he once more pull back the 3/187 to avoid taking unacceptable casualties. His recommendation was approved by the Brigade Commander and at 1432 hours on the 18th the three companies reported that they were pulling back. A Company was to hold initially and support by fire to the front of D and C Companies while they withdrew. All Companies, however, continued to have contact with the enemy as they were pulling back. The enemy were in trees along the ridge to the north and northeast of A and C Companies and in the draw between those two and A Company. Airstrikes, artillery and mortars, in addition to the fires of the ground troops, got the companies back down the hill.

At 1437 hours, the Battalion Commander briefed the ADC, Hawkeye on the situation. It was agreed that the enemy must be reinforcing considerably from across the border. As the enemy KIA's were wearing clean new uniforms and steel helmets and gas masks.

At 1456 hours, the Battalion reported from Brigade all possible air support for the night i.e. Spooky, gunships, ARA.

It was felt that the enemy, having previously attacked the 3/187th's blocking position, might try attacking there again in order to divert attention from Dong Ap Bia. Even during daylight the troops manning this position, who were not taking rest breaks, were kept alert, OP's were manned and squad RIF's were sent out three to four hundred meters in all directions. Sporadic contacts by the headquarters and blocking unit was experienced. Included in the request at 1455 hours, for air support, was a request for increased MEDEVAC's. A heavy rain was falling, visibility was less than 20 meters, and the northern A Shau was socked in. US WIA's were lying on the LZ and a reported 15 to 20 more were on the way. Sixty three were eventually evacuated.

At 1526 hours, the Battalion Commander, 2/506, arrived at 3/187 Headquarters in order to discuss the arrival of his A Company in about one hour.

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+ 1537 hours, the first MEDEVAC departed the area. Through breaks in the weather, use of IAG chaps, the IOH and an offer to use the Division Commander's helicopter, all the wounded were evacuated before dark.

+ 1555 hours, Thunder 44 IOH reported that he had evacuated all the serious EIA's from A, C, and D Companies and was starting to evacuate the KIA's.

Word at this point about the IOH shuttle, between the upper and lower LZ's was appropriate. The IOH and its pilots were of invaluable assistance to the 187th during the operation. Thunder 44 (and others) became a call sign to verify the whole effort. In the dark, in the rain, through indirect fire, and LZ's and LZ's receiving fire, they performed in a most courageous manner. The lower LZ was located about 400 meters to the southeast of the upper LZ. It was the key intermediate area between the main LZ and the objective. Huey's could bring supplies, key personnel, and ammo only as far as the lower LZ. The MEDEVAC's could land only on the upper LZ. Consequently, it fell to the IOH to shuttle wounded and immediately needed items between the two LZ's. On many occasions, when time and the situation demanded, the IOH covered right down into the area where the companies were attacking, in order to deliver critically needed items.

The first ships with the troops of A/2/506 arrived on the upper LZ at 1630 hours, and were completed by 1725 hours. Between lifts of the A/2/506, the Division Commander, Lucky Eagle, stopped in to visit with the Rakkasans and stayed for about 30 minutes. It was a timely visit and gave the officers and men of the 187th a great boost.

+ 1645 hours, the Battalion Commander was informed that some US KIA's and possibly MIA's had been left on Hill 937 when D and C Companies pulled back. The Battalion Commander ordered C Company Commander to go back up and get them, after both units had rendered an accurate accounting.

+ 1743 hours, A Company reported that his men had reported killing at least 5 of the enemy, but that he had not canvassed all of his troops yet.

Ready 11, FAC, had fighters with 1000 pound bombs, at 1751 hours, and continued pounding Hill 937.

+ 1800 hours, the following casualty figures were reported to the Battalion Commander: C Company WIA 27; KIA 11; D Company WIA 23; KIA 10; MIA 12; A Company WIA 10, KIA 0.

The corrected battalion totals were: WIA (hostile) 60, (friendly) 4, total WIA 64; KIA (hostile) 13, (friendly) 1, total KIA 14.

At 1840 hours, the Battalion S2 sent the enemy casualty figures, inflicted by 2/187th troops, to the Brigade S2. A Company 27 KIA; I Company None; C Company 22 KIA; B Company 63+ MIA.

At 1934 hours, the Battalion Headquarters position received approximately ten enemy rounds (suspected 82mm) from the northwest at a distance of 400 to 600 meters. Mortars were already laid on the area and the response was immediate. The artillery, which was firing in D's to the rear-ward, quickly was able to hit the area covered from previous nights. No other enemy activity

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Spooky rained on the target for approximately ten minutes, receiving no further fire, the enemy mortar was presumed to be neutralized. All enemy rounds had fallen short, and there were no US casualties.

Spooky came on station at 2003 hours, but was diverted minutes later to go to work for the 1/506 as they were reported to be in contact with the enemy.

IP's for the 3/187th on 18 May were: A Company at YC322983, with ambush at YC321983; C Company and D Company at YC323984; B Company and A/2/506 were on the perimeter at the blocking position, YC320989.

E Company occupied the northern half of the perimeter with a platoon size ambush to the north (YC320991), and A/2/506 occupied the southern portion with a platoon size ambush to the west (YC318988).

At 2141 hours, the Battalion Commander reminded Brigade that Spooky was no longer working for the 3/187th and requested that the 1/506 keep him on their case on the fire coordination line (FCL) so that the 3/187th could continue with its fire support program. FCL's using the 97.8 and the 32.8 grid lines had been established.

At 2325, the Brigade discussed the multi-battalion operations for the 19th and 20th with the Battalion Commander. Essentially these plans were to commit the additional battalions into the Dong Ap Bia campaign. Around noon on the 19th, the 2/501 would be combat assaulted into an LZ approximately 1500 meters northeast of Hill 937 and the 2/3 ARVN would be combat assaulted into an LZ approximately 2000 meters southeast of the hill. All four battalions would be in position by dark on the 19th and early on the 20th they would attack the hill.

At 2332 hours, the Battalion Commander informed the companies of this plan and requested they confirm their strength figures. The following were reported: A Company 83; B Company 78; C Company 76; D Company 57; and A Company 2/506 98.

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Shadow came on station at 0100 hours and worked the hill and border region, while working just east of the border, about 1500 meters to the west of the 3/187th, he reported several fairly big secondary explosions. This was the same area in which Spooky reported secondaries on a previous night.

Skyjets went in on suspected infiltration routes throughout the night.

The troops on the LZ perimeter continued with the 100/50/100% alert schedule and fired their fireballs. The night, was quiet.

At 0618 hours, Speedy II, FAC, reported that he had a set of fighters inbound with "Snake and Nape". ETA 0630 hours.

At 0657 hours, A Company Commander cautioned that someone had been popping purple smoke continuously since the FAC was on station. A check was made through Brigade with all units in the area. No body was presently marking anything with purple smoke. All friendlies in the immediate area had marked with smooth, but none was using purple.

At 0712 hours, Speedy II announced another set of fighters on station.

Assault 24, LFT, who had been working since 0704 hours, reported sighting more purple smoke on the ridge line 300 meters southwest of A Company.

Speedy finished his airstrike at 0738 hours, and left the 3/187th area to put in a strike for 1-506.

On 19 May, there was a total of seven airstrikes put on the eastern slopes and on top of Hill 937, in support of the 3/187th. Also, Assault (LFT) roamed the area all day drawing the enemy's fire and engaging him.

Early in the morning, C and A (3/187th) Company Commanders were brought up to the Battalion Headquarters where they met the Company Commander, A/2/506. All were briefed on the plans for the remainder of the day and the attack on the 20th. Each was given an aerial VR of the objective.

D Company was brought to the upper LZ and A/2/506 replaced it at the lower LZ.

The Battalion Commander intended that, during the day, the three companies prepare completely for the attack and be in their attack positions and dug in by nightfall. On the 20th, A/2/506 was to attack up the northern face of the hill into the trees from which D and C Companies had received the majority of their fires on the 18th. C Company, in the middle, was to attack on generally the same line of advance that they had used in reinforcing D Company on the 18th. A Company which had sustained only light casualties on the 18th, was to take the southern flank but attempt to keep its forces protected from the anticipated enemy fire from the southwest.

Orders were to move deliberately; bypass nothing; and take out all resistance to the flanks.

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The rest of the morning was used to stockpile ammunition at the lower LZ; check every man going into the attack for a flak jacket; and generally equip and prepare for the impending assault on Hill 937.

At 0925 hours, the Brigade S3 informed the Battalion Commander that the 2/501 had a helicopter crash (not as a result of enemy action) on its PZ and to hold off moving 3/187th elements. Actually, the 3/187th units had more than enough time to meet whatever plan that evolved. The distances to the three units' attack positions were not more than an hour for C and A Company and only slightly longer for A/2-506.

It was already apparent that even with the whole day at their disposal some of the other battalions might not be at their assigned LD's by dark.

For the troops of the 3/187th and attached A/2-506, the 19th was a time to get set just as they wanted for the attack.

The Rakkasan mortarmen, however, guided by the Battalion Commander, who was sometimes at their ground position and sometimes in a LOH, spent the whole day firing into suspected enemy locations and obtaining data for specific points on the hill that would be fired as the companies moved forward the following day. From their two tubes they fired more than three hundred rounds of 81mm on the 18th and again on the 20th; plus another 70-80 WP each day.

At 1050 hours, D Company reported seeing one NVA body fly through the air due to an air strike on hill 937. Another body could be seen hanging from a tree. By this time the formerly triple-canopied top of Dong Ap Bia was bald and with each airstrike and each arty prep the canopy peeled back more exposing the shells of bunkers destroyed by the pounding.

At 1155 hours the Brigade S3 informed the Battalion Commander that the artillery prep for the 2/3 ARVN LZ would begin at 1230 hours and continue for 15 minutes. He confirmed the LZ location as YC341976. The 2/3 ARVN would assault with 550 troops. Upon the completion of their assault, the 2/501, with 500 troops, would be inserted at YC333991.

At 1238 hours, A Company 2/506, while maneuvering into their attack position, reported engaging a sniper in a tree in the vicinity of YC322985.

At 1306 hours, the Battalion Commander instructed B Company to RIF about 1000 meters to the west and at 1345 hours, two patrols departed.

From 1416 hours until 1521 hours, the Battalion Commander was airborne in a LOH, flying low over Hill 937 to get a good look at enemy positions and to assess the effects of the US fires on them.

At 1421 hours, the Brigade reported that the 2/3 ARVN would complete their CA into the LZ at YC341976 in approximately ten minutes. Their LZ was cold. As a visual recognition symbol, the ARVN troops would be wearing red and yellow arm bands.

The Battalion Commander, 3/187 while directing artillery and mortars from the LOH, called at 1432 hours to instruct the Battalion S3 to tell Brigade that artillery fires in support of the 1/506 were falling on the 3/187th.

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Though these two battalions, and on the 20th, two more battalions, converged on the same general area, there was no major problem or incident with fires as limited by this FCL.

At 1447 hours, the Brigade S3 announced that the 2/3 ARVN LZ completion time was 1430 hours, and that the 2/501 would begin their CA shortly.

The 2/501 made their assault later in the afternoon onto a cold LZ and commenced their RIF to the south toward Dong Ap Bia.

The 1/506 had reported to Brigade, at 1600 hours, that its B Company was at YC327973 and that its A Company in that vicinity also had made no contact with the enemy that day.

At 1611 hours, A/2-506 confirmed that they had killed the sniper fired on earlier.

Skyspots were cleared at 1715 hours; with the 3/187th requesting priority for three on the border to the west. ARC lights and skyspots were planned for numerous locations on this night as they had been for other nights during the operation.

At 1750 hours, A Company reported hearing an enemy mortar several hundred meters from their location (YC324984) on an azimuth of 210 degrees. The area was immediately pounded by counter mortar fire and even aurally by artillery. The enemy rounds did not fall on any of the 3/187th locations. At 1915 hours, B Company reported spotting several NVA carrying a mortar at YC314993 or about 300 meters to the NW of the upper LZ. The enemy force was taken under fire by MG's, mortars, and artillery and was not seen or heard from again.

At 2046 hours, the 3/187th received NDP's for the 1/506: A Company at YC327974; B Company at YC324976; C Company at YC327968 also Battalion Headquarters. Their forward progress had been about 100 meters from the previous NDP's.

Earlier, Brigade had sent coordinats to dictate forward progress for lines of departure (LD) that the four battalions would make by dark on the 19th. These were: 3/187th from the NW YC326989. This was well behind the forward progress of the attached A/2/506's forward progress. The other attacking companies, of course, were already poised at the bottom of the hill.

2/501 from the NE YC331989 they had inserted about a kilometer NNE of this in the mid to late afternoon and did not quite make their LD by dark. Their NDP was in the vicinity of YC339975.

The 2/3 ARVN were to reach YC339975 and did so easily.

The 1/506 were to reach YC328979 and they were there at night fall on the 19th.

On the night of 19 May, elements of the 3/187th were disposed as follows: A Company(-) at YC324984 with the 1st Platoon ambushed at YC323984 and 2d Platoon ambushed at YC323983, they employed 2 LF's.

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APPENDIX 10 Cont.

C Company located in a combined position with A Company, had its 3d Platoon ambushing at YC325983. C Company put out one LP in addition.

D Company stall at the lower LZ, employed one LP. D Company's mission for the 20th was to provide security for the lower LZ and provide ammunition and casualty carrying parties in support of the attacking companies.

E Company manned the blocking position.

A/2/506 was at YC326987 with 3 LP's.

Generally this is the way the four battalion were displaced on the night of 19-20 May:

The 2/501, to the NE still had a mile of rough uphill terrain to climb before they reached the hill top; they were not to make it on the 20th, until several hours after the Rakkasans.

The ARVN troops, a kilometer or better to the SE, had an easier approach and with light resistance would reach the eastern side of the hilltop about 2 hours and a half after H-Hour.

The 4/506, to the SW, in the general vicinity of the past few days, were to continue at about the same rate on the 20th. Their casualties on the 20th; however would be their heaviest of the operation.

The 3/187th units, in a position up tight to the enemy's main defenses, had Dong Ap Bia's western face coming at them in the night. Tomorrow they would sit on top of Hill 937 approximately two hour after H-Hour.

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At 0001 hours, on the 20th of May, the same entry that had been entered for the past nine days was made once more: Journal opened, 3/187 continues operations in assigned AO vicinity of the A Shau Valley.

The first daylight activity was Stand-To, it began at 0530 hours, and relaxed at 0600 hours. Defensive fires were included in this Stand-To.

Speedy 11, FAC, reported on station at 0633 hours, with his usual wares: snake and nape.

Enemy fire from small arms cracked over the Battalion CP area at 0634 hours, as if to tell the 3/187 that the enemy was still there. The perimeter returned fire to the suspected locations west of the upper LZ. Brigade was asked to send a pink team out to take a look. A pink team already on the way, arrived at 0640 hours, and was asked to scout west of the upper LZ.

Instructions were passed to the perimeter to periodically shoot up trees and other possible sniper locations for the next ten to fifteen minutes. Meanwhile, the Bn CO had put in the airstrike. An explosion, followed immediately by the cry for "medic", interrupted morning shaving at 0705. One of B Company's LP's was hit by the shrapnel of an RPG fired from a draw to the northwest of the upper LZ. The area was shot up and a squad RIF sent out to investigate, reported negative contact. A MEDEVAC was brought in and the evacuation was completed by 0735 hours.

Another airstrike had since begun against Hill 937, and Assault 28, LFI, was working to the west.

At 0745 hours, A Company 2/506, reported that his troops had killed one enemy soldier. The enemy KIA had walked directly up to their perimeter carrying a grenade with the pin pulled and they fired him up with small arms. He didn't appear to be on dope. He had no insignia. In his possession were a tobacco pouch, song books, and a paper with what appeared to be coordinates on it.

Two ships inbound at 0810 hours, with newsmen. At 0813 hours, Speedy 11 reported on station with the 3d of 7 airstrikes for the 3/187 on D-Day. At 0904 hours the Brigade S3 informed the Battalion Headquarters that the artillery prep would begin in two minutes.

At 0917 hours, the Brigade S3 informed the Bn S3 to instruct the 3/187 units to hold in place once contact with the enemy was made and to wait for the coordinated move of the 1/506 and the 2/501 before continuing the assault on Hill 937. The Brigade Commander would give the order to move out.

At 0942 hours, the Brigade S3 informed the Bn CO that there was mortar fire falling too close to the 2/3 ARVN. The CO informed Brigade that they were not the 3/187 mortars as they were not firing.

At 0950 hours, the 2/3 ARVN, reported mortar fire falling to their front and rear. At 0958 hours, with two minutes of artillery prep remaining, the Bn CO passed last minute reminders to his troops. He was particularly anxious for A/2/506 to get fires into the wooded area to C Company's front. The artillery seemed to increase in intensity as H-Hour approached. The fires which included 105, 155, and 8-inch were accurate and intense. This prep was the best artillery effort witnessed by the 3/187 during the entire operation. The troops by now were standing in the door. 10-54 10-48

All wore flak jackets and had more than two basic loads of ammunition. Concussion and CS grenades were also carried. They did not realize at the time, but only one man, a soldier from A/2/506 would not return that day. Not a man balked and at 1000 hours, when the word came from Brigade that the artillery prep was over, they assaulted the hill.

At 1003 hours, the Battalion Commander requested that Brigade have the 2/3 ARVN mark their lead element with purple smoke and the lead element, 2/501, mark with yellow. He requested that they use those colors exclusively and that they keep out continuous smoke.

The 3/187 units had met only light resistance by 1015 hours, and continued pressing up the hill behind their mortar fires. Still, the Bn CO, overhead in a LOH, cautioned them to get spread out, stay alert, recon by fire, and by-pass nothing on their immediate flanks.

By 1020 hours, the 3/187 was 125 meters from the military crest of the hill. The 2/3 ARVN to their southeast, were also making fast gains toward the top.

At 1027 hours, the Bn CO reported that all 3/187 units were abreast, approximately 100 meters from the military crest of the hill, and still climbing.

By 1031 hours, A/2/506 reached the first bunkers on the northwestern face of the hill. They reported no resistance. Still they were instructed to approach the structures carefully and destroy them before moving beyond them.

The initial lull was deceptive and at 1035 hours, the battle of wills began once more. C Company reporting receiving RPG's. The Bn CO urged him to counter with his 90mm and to press quickly for the military crest which was less than 50 meters from him. The enemy was still on the hill in force, however, and at 1037 hours, D Company reported receiving heavy automatic weapons fire. The Bn CO instructed him to put suppressive fires into the automatic weapons position and hold in place until A/2/506 moved farther up to hit the enemy flank.

A/3/187 was into the action with a report, at 1042 hours, of incoming enemy fires. Again the fires were from the ridge to his rear (SW) and from the draw on his left flank. At 1045 hours, C Company reported that one of his platoon leaders was hit. A minute later C Company added that they were receiving hand grenades. This position just below the military crest was quite precipitous and the enemy, without exposing himself, simply rolled hand grenades down on the attacking troops.

At 1043 hours, C Company reported a MG firing at his right flank. This fire was coming from one of several bunkers that were still intact even after the concentrated 30 day pounding by air and artillery. Many of course had been demolished. At the start, however, there had been multiple, concentric rows of mutually supporting bunkers cleverly positioned and dug deep into the side of the hill. Only a direct hit would destroy one. This particular MG sat at the U between the two ridges upon which C and A Companies were advancing.

At 1100 hours the Brigade CO informed the Bn CO that the 2/3 ARVN was still maneuvering and suggested that the Bn CO coordinate the movement of the ARVN Battalion with the 3/187 to avoid the possibility of one friendly unit inflicting casualties on another. At 1131 hours, A/2/506 reported

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four of his soldiers were WIA. C Company informed at 1102 hours that he was still receiving RPG's. The Bn CO cautioned the Company Commander to continue to keep fires going out, but to keep them low because of the ARVN locations just on the other side of the hill. At 1107 the Bn CO informed A/2/506 that his direction of advance was off. He was instructed to turn 45 degrees to his left and move forward. His direction had been too southerly and his fires had been bothering C Company. At 1109 the Bn CO put a smoke marker down to guide A/2/506 to the precise terrain that he wanted taken. He did the same for C Company a moment later.

Since A/3/187 first had contact thirty minutes earlier, the action had become heavier. At 1116, he reported enemy on his right flank and stiff resistance on his left, but that he was making headway toward the large huts and bunker complex on the western military crest of the hill. A moment later the Bn CO, adjusting mortars from the LOH, was bringing 2 rounds of 81mm tube per minute directly onto this target area. He told A/3/187 to watch his flanks, because the "gooks" are up and running around up here and streaming off the western side of the hill into the draws". At this time, he enjoined the Bn CO 1/506 to move quickly to catch the enemy spilling into the draw several hundred meters to the front of the 1/506. At 1126 A Company CO reported that he had just been hit in the head and was passing on command to his 2d Platoon Leader. All the 3/187 units were on the military crest of the hill by 1127 hours. Ammunition began to run low at this point and A and C Companies started carrying parties back to obtain more. D Company which was securing the lower LZ, already had dispatched ammo parties forward. For immediate insurance, the Bn CO ordered a mix of M-60 M-16, and M-79 shuttled up to A Company's location ASAP. At 1134 C Company shouted to Black Jack that the enemy had masks on and was employing gas! The Bn CO ordered "Put on your masks and don't stop moving forward". Actually, there never was any appreciable amount

of gas used by the enemy. What he did use was probably C/S grenades dropped by US WIA's on the 18th. At 1142 hours, Thunder 007 the LOH went right into A Company's location and kicked out the ammo resupply.

The first company to actually reach the top of Hill 937 was C/3/187. He accomplished this at 1144, one hour and forty-four minutes after starting. He complained of a lot of sniper fire, though, and the Bn CO told both A Companies to get moving and relieve C Company's flanks. The Bn CO returned to the GP to refuel at 1145 hours.

At 1152 hours A/2/506 was receiving heavy fire from below C Company's location. C Company, who by now had progressed further onto the top of the hill, diverted one of his rear elements to move north and down into the draw between him and A/2/506 to neutralize resistance there. The Bn CO was airborne again at 1200 hours. C Company reported numerous snipers on the hill top and the Bn CO told him to be sure that he shot every thing up and be certain to blow every bunker he passed, even if it appeared unoccupied. The LOH had already started the casualty evacuation shuttle to the upper LZ. The Bn CO now was spotting groups of NVA on the hill and advised units of the enemy locations in relation to them. Mortars, keeping up a maximum sustained rate of fire, were adjusted on these locations. The Bn CO advised the 2/3 ARVN and A/2/506 to link up on the northeast. The 2/501 was still a considerable distance down the face of Dong ap Bia in that direction. At 1207 C Company estimated that he had ten US WIA's. At 1208 the Bn CO reported to Brigade that a good number of the enemy to the front of A Company were just standing there and locked up. He requested pink team to work the area. At 1213 the Bn CO

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observed white puffs of smoke, possibly an indirect fire weapon, behind the 2/501 location. Assault 28, a LFT, was told to check the area. By 1217 link up between A/2/506 C Company and elements of the 2/3 ARVN had been made. Assault 28 reported that he might have spotted mortars to the east of the hill. The Bn CO told him to clear the location with the 2/3 ARVN US L&O. At 1230 D Company was still receiving fire from the ridge to the south of A Company. At 1232 Brigade informed the 3/187 that the 60 2nd Corps would like to visit the Khe Sanh headquarters. The Bn CO was on the upper LZ told him to come on in. Both the Division Commander and the Corps Commander paid separate visits to the 3/187 on the aft ramp of the 20th. At 1243 A Company had linked up with C Company on the hill top. ARVN was working to their front and the Bn CO continued to chase the enemy with the mortars. At 1252 hours the Bn CO reiterated to Brigade that he would see the enemy retreating toward the 1/506. The location of the retreating elements was marked and struck innumerable times by ARVN assault teams, airstrikes and mortars. By 1255, with the noise of lightning over the hilltop, the Bn CO reported enemy running in every direction over the hill in their confused attempt to escape. The majority however were spilling into the draw on the west in a desperate rush for the border less than two kilometers away. Still many stayed to the end and at 1256 A Company and D Company reported continuing incoming RPG. At 1306 the 3rd S-3 was informed that the perimeter observed at least five NV moving west, through an open area, approximately 600 meters out, on an azimuth of 210 degrees. The target was immediately engaged with MG's and mortars.

The southern end of the blocking position, overlooked the draws leading east from Dong An Bia to the Laotian Border. Mortar fires, airstrikes, artillery and automatic weapons fire were clearly observable and conveniently adjusted on the enemy. At 1316 an adviser with the 2/3 ARVN reported that several advisers had been wounded and that some of the ARVN were retreating from the hill. At 1326 A/2/506 requested a M&DEVIC and was instructed to have his seriously wounded carried down to the lower LZ. About this time, also, C Company reported RPG from his rear. Many of these reports of RPG from the rear were actually small caliber (60mm) enemy mortar fires. Enemy mortar fires of varying caliber were definitely fired from the east, northwest and south of the upper LZ at different times during the day. At 1334 A/2/506 reported receiving 60mm mortar fires from the north of his location on Hill 937. It appeared that the enemy knowing the US would drive them from the hill, had positioned mortars in several directions from it. Pink teams and ARA were usually dispatched to deal with these suspected locations. At 1350 hours the Battalion Commander requested that Brigade contact the 1/506 and 2/501 to man their positions and come upon the 3/187 frequency to discuss final push of their units on the hill. At 1405 hours, the Brigade Commander informed the Battalion Commander that the mission now was to search the objective thoroughly, and destroy remaining enemy and positions. At 1410 hours A/2/506 reported that his casualties were 1 KIA and 8 MIA. A LFT, Assault 26, checked in at 1420 hours, and was instructed by the Battalion Commander to work over the path of the retreating enemy in the draw to the west and southwest of Hill 937. At 1447 hours, the Battalion Commander recommended to Brigade that the top up operations call for 2/3 ARVN to press over the crest of the hill into the hut and bunker complex to their west; that the 1/506 AIF, march, and will be in their units on the west side of the

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achieved the hill, they exploit their success by pushing down into the draw to the west. This would keep the area to the west and southwest free for the present and enable US airstrikes and artillery to pound into the rear of the retreating troops. Airstrikes into this area must truly have taken their toll because for days after this numerous enemy grave sites were found in the vicinity of the large western draw. Speedy 31 FAC was on station with fighters at 1451 hours and was told to keep his ordnance on the enemy retreating west. At 1459 hours, the 3/187 ARVN advisor reported receiving mortars on and azimuth of 250 degrees from his location. The Battalion S3 requested current locations of the 1/506 who advancing through the suspected vicinity of the mortars. At 1516 hours, the ARVN advisor reported to the 3/187 that he was still pushing toward the objective and that the NDP for his CP would be to the east of Hill 837. Mark 34 FAC requested clearance to put an airstrike into vicinity coordinates YC320973. The Battalion S3 gave coordinated clearance for the 3/187 but suggested that he check with 1/506 for any of their troops possibly in that area. At 1552 hours, while the Division Commander was visiting, enemy mortars were fired from the west at the upper LZ. The suspected area was fired up with mortars, MG's and artillery. There were no friendly casualties. During the remaining hours of day light the unit on the hilltop continued mopping up operations. The progress was slow because of the continuing sniper fire. At 1651 hours, C Company had found two of the enemy WIA hiding in a bunker. One died shortly thereafter. C Company Commander called to explain that the captive wouldn't come out of the hole. The Battalion S3 instructed him to throw tear gas or smoke grenades into the hole. The Battalion Commander came on the radio at that point to warn the Company Commander that he didn't want a single US soldier even scratched in an encounter such as this one. He ordered that if they couldn't get the NVA out of the hole to tell him we would throw a frag grenade in with him. Minutes later at 1655 hours, the enemy soldier was out of his hole stripped and on his way to the lower LZ. This captive evacuated later in the afternoon told the grizzly tale of how more than 80% of his company of a hundred and twenty men had been wiped out since the fighting began on 10 May. He was from the 5th platoon, K8 Bn, 29th NVA Regiment. The Brigade S3 landed at 1707 hours to confer with the Battalion Commander and to pass on the new missions and general movement planned for the 3/187 for 21 May to the Battalion S3.

On the 21 of May, the 3/187 was to be withdrawn from the area and sent in for a Stand-Down and subsequent missions in the coastal plains.

As late as 1816 hours, C Company reported having a man wounded by sniper fire.

At 1930 hours, D Company arrived at the upper LZ and took positions on the southern half of the perimeter.

NDP's sent in at 1930 hours were: A Company 3/187 at YC320982 with 3 LP's; B Company 2/506 at YC327984 with 1 LP; C Company 3/187 at YC320989 with 3 LP's and an ambush at YC320990; D Company 3/187 at YC320982; E Company 3/187 at YC320988 with 3 LP's and an ambush at YC319988.

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APPENDIX 4) Con't

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yspot, AR5 light, and artillery clearances were granted and the
ree were placed on enemy routes of withdrawal throughout the night.

2020 hours, Spocky was again over the 3/137 and, between arclight and
yspot strikes, worked an area 600 meters in all directions from
ordinate Y0310293 and farther to the west and south.

2025 hours, B Company's 2d Platoon LP detected movement and
ere two grenades. There were no other actions on the perimeter except
ain friendly fireballs, and the night passed quietly.

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On the 21st at 0032 hours, Brigade informed the Battalion S3 that the desired order of extraction of 3/187 units was: B, C, Battalion Headquarters, D and A. The quiet was broken at 0615 hours, when enemy 60mm mortars were fired at the headquarters location. Approximately 15 rounds were fired from south of the perimeter but caused no casualties. Counter mortar fire answered swiftly and MG's raked the suspected location. An additional fireball was executed at 0630 hours. At 0656 hours, the C&C ship, to be used in controlling the extraction, reported in on the battalion command frequency. B Company was prepared for pickup but, because of adverse weather at 0730 hours, the Battalion Commander elected to postpone the extraction for an hour.

At 0910 hours, the Division Commander arrived at the upper LZ. Five minutes after his arrival, enemy mortar rounds, impacted just outside the western section of the perimeter. The target was engaged by mortars and MP's and there were no friendly casualties.

At 0924 hours, Brigade was informed that the extraction would begin at 0930 hours.

The PZ times for B Company was 0936 hours. It was clean for B Company at 1014 hours.

A FAC requested clearance to put an airstrike into the vicinity of coordinate XC314981. This area was the main draw off Hill 937; it extended to the border and was the shortest escape route for the enemy. Clearance was granted.

PZ time for C Company was 1017 hours. The PZ for C Company and A Company was located on the top of Hill 937. A Company, 2/506, which was extracted after the completion of the 3/187, provided security for the pickup.

By 1030 hours, B Company had completed its move to the intermediate LZ at FB Blaze and was on its way to a new mission at Phong Dien.

The PZ complete time for C Company clearing Hill 937 was 1031 hours, and by 1105 hours, they too had been cleared through FB Blaze and were on their way to a new mission at Colco Beach. Next the headquarters came out and it was back at Camp Evans by 1136 hours. Everything was going smoothly with the D Company extraction when at 1300 hours, with 21 men remaining on the upper LZ, they received four incoming RPG rounds. Fortunately only two men were wounded and not seriously. The Battalion S3 who was controlling the extraction, gave instruction to the platoon leader on the ground and called for air support from Brigade. While the D Company Platoon sought to neutralize the enemy presence and guarantee the security of the LZ, the lift ships were diverted to A Company. A Company was extracted from Hill 937 without incident and by 1505 hours, was on the way to Eagle Beach for a stand-down.

Approximately 1400 hours, the Battalion Command 3/187 arrived in a LOH over D Company's troops, that were left on the blocking position PZ. He directed armed helicopter fires and airstrikes on possible enemy locations close to the PZ. After an hour of these fires, he deemed the PZ secure and the troops were successfully extracted by 1515 hours.

Thus ended the action of the 3/187 at Dong Ap Bia Hill 937.

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