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25 Aug 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Command Historian

SUBJECT: Operation "APACHE SNOW"

1. Attached is a copy of 101st Airborne Division narrative on Operation "APACHE SNOW."
2. This operation was, as you know, the first Corps level operation ever conducted in I Corps. Elements of the 3d Marine Division, 1st AFVN Infantry Division, and 101st Airborne Division participated. The principal objective of the operation was to establish a firm Allied presence in the A Shau and cork up that traditional infiltration route. The objective was accomplished. I think the fact that the NVA stood and fought, particularly at Dong Ap Bia, is indication that the enemy knew what was happening and hoped to preclude it. "Hamburger Hill" nearly overshadowed a brilliantly conceived and executed combined operation.
3. The XXIV Corps after action report on "APACHE SNOW" is nearly finished and will be in print soon. I assume that your office has access to, or receives copies of all after action reports. If not, I will be glad to forward a copy to you.

David E. Luthers
 DAVID E. LUTHERS
 MAJ, GFC

31st Military History Detachment

APACH SNOW



Mike
CARTER
69

NARRATIVE
OPERATION "APACHE SNOW"
101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION
MAJOR GENERAL JOHN M. WRIGHT JR., COMMANDING
10 MAY - 7 JUNE 1969

Prepared by:

22d Military History Detachment

P R E F A C E

The inclosed narrative of the actions involving elements of the 101st Airborne Division during the XXIV Corps directed operation, "APACHE SNOW" was written to emphasize a gallant and hard fought victory by the Screaming Eagles over a determined enemy. The operation took place in the remote and inhospitable A Shau Valley from 10 May to 7 June 1969. It is hoped that this narrative will be of some benefit to students and service schools, and will give the reader a better understanding of combat in the Vietnam jungles.

Of all their infiltration routes from North Vietnam and Laos into South Vietnam, none has been so heavily exploited by the North Vietnamese as the A Shau Valley. Similar to a natural funnel, the 30-mile-long valley floor is rolling terrain covered with elephant grass and is rimmed by densely forested hills. This area has been the target of recent operations conducted by the 101st Airborne Division. One such operation was APACHE SNOW.

On the evening of 9 May the 101st Airborne Division — specifically the Third Brigade working in conjunction with the 1st ARVN Division and Ninth Marine Regiment — was poised for the attack against enemy forces, bases and lines of communications in and adjacent to the Northern A Shau Valley. Ten artillery batteries had their tubes in position at fire bases Bradley (YD 273123), Airborne (YD 355071), Currahee (YC 398949), Berchtesgaden (YD 424011), and Cannon (YD 474028). The troops participating in the combat assaults the following morning were being marshalled in the vicinity of FB Blaze (YD 536020). The paratroopers of the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry; 3d Battalion, 187th Infantry; and 2d Battalion, 501st Infantry hurriedly prepared their gear, cleaned their weapons, and wrote the letters that they would not have the time to write in the coming days. The following morning they would be helilifted into the inhospitable A Shau Valley.

10 May

At H-hour, 100730 May 1969, the lead elements of the four battalions were picked up by sixty-five UH-1H helicopters from

FB Blase and moved to their respective landing zones (SEE MAP). Prior to the combat assaults each landing zone was bombarded for seventy minutes by tactical aircraft and artillery with final suppressive fires being delivered by air cavalry gunships and aerial artillery. B, C, and D Companies, in addition to the battalion's command post, of the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry were the first to hit the ground in the area of operations at 0812H. Once on the landing zone (YC 312949) all companies began maneuvering on multiple axes toward the Laotian Border.

By 1600H all companies and the battalion's command post of the 3d Battalion, 187th Infantry combat assaulted from FB Blase to their two ship landing zone (YC 320988). Once on the elephant grass covered landing zone which opened to high ground in the west, they began their reconnaissance in force operations in the vicinity of the Laotian Border. D Company, which was first on the landing zone, moved along a ridge to the southeast as planned. Elements of A and C Companies, once they were on the landing zone, secured the northwest and southern portions of the landing zone perimeter respectively. Once the landing zone was secured A Company reconnoitered to the northwest and C Company reconnoitered to the southwest. B Company's assault was completed by 1600H. They moved from the landing zone southwest to the battalion's location where they received instructions to move southeast toward Hill 937 (the number representing its height in meters). B Company established

their night defensive position on the lower slopes of Dong Ap Bia (Hill 937) and began preparations to move out at first light the following morning and secure the hill. No one at this time realized the size of the enemy force positioned on the hill or what was ahead for the battalion before this order could be fulfilled.

The third of the four battalions conducting the combat assaults into the area of operations was the 2d Battalion, 501st Infantry. B, C, and D Companies and the battalion command post assaulted onto a landing zone (YC 288015), at 1047H while A Company secured and continued construction of FB Airborne.

The last battalion to be helilifted into the area on 10 May was the 4th Battalion, 1st ARVN Regiment which assaulted into a landing zone at coordinates YD 241041 and began their operations in the immediate area of the Laotian Border.

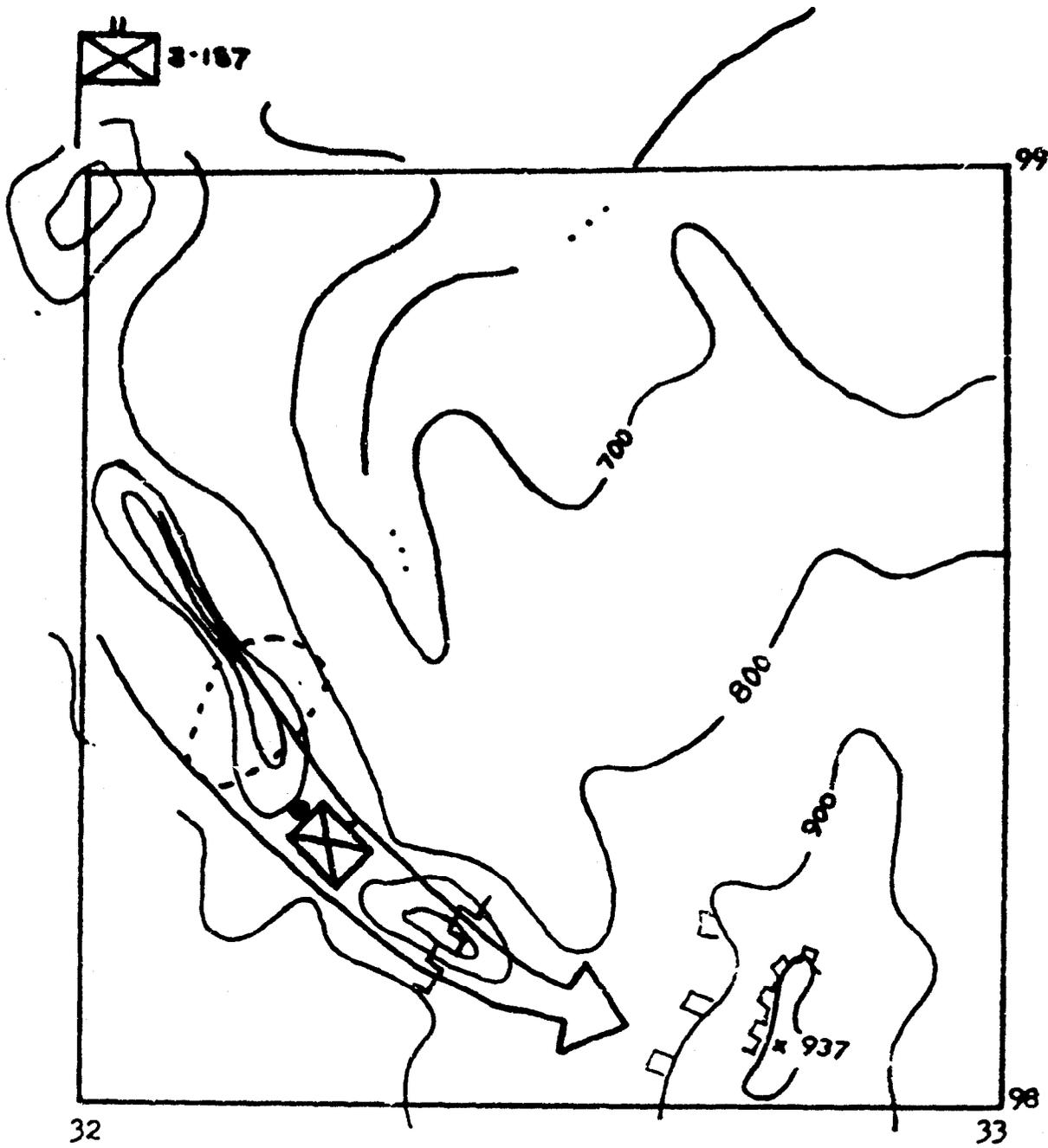
To round out one of the most fantastic days of airmobile operations for the 101st Airborne Division, one company from the 2d Battalion, 1st ARVN Regiment was sent into FB Tiger (YD 252090) to secure the fire base for the assault of 2/1 ARVN on the following day. This brought the total units lifted to four battalions and one company and coupled with the ten batteries of artillery which were moved the day before, indicated the thoroughness of planning and preciseness of execution of the Division airmobile operations. The days' activity pointed out the tremendous influence of the helicopter on modern military operations.

Once on the landing zones and security established the battalions maneuvered throughout the area of operations. Following a brief encounter, the 3d Battalion, 187th Infantry moved toward the high ground to the east. It was from this position—northwest of Dong Ap Bia—that the Battalion headquarters controlled and supported operations throughout the period 10-21 May. At 1645H, B Company, 3-187th received two RPG rounds and one burst of sniper fire fifty meters to the southwest of their position (YC 328981). They engaged the area with organic weapons, artillery, aerial rocket artillery (ARA) and air strikes resulting in two NVA killed, and suffering three wounded (evacuated 1720H). The air strikes continued to pound the suspected enemy location until darkness. Initial impressions were that the enemy were probably trail watchers, but after sustaining casualties it was evident that the fire was too well controlled for trail watchers and that stiffer resistance would be encountered.

The other battalions involved in the operation continued to maneuver in their respective zones and discovered numerous small caches containing mixed small arms, mortar rounds and crew-served weapon ammunition.

11 May

On 11 May, B Company, 3-187th conducted a first light check of the previous day's contact and found numerous blood trails (seven) and three additional bodies, besides one AK-47, one light machinegun, one RPG rocket launcher, and miscellaneous equipment.



11 May Bravo Company patrolling toward Hill 937 runs into a well defended hut and bunker complex (327982). After fighting to recover wounded, the company pulls back to a night defensive position.

Later that day as they maneuvered in the vicinity of the Laotian Border due west of A Loui. B Company, 3-187th made contact (1624H) with an unidentified size enemy force well entrenched on the ridge line in the vicinity of Hill 937 (YC 327983) (See Sketch 1). Receiving enemy heavy machinegun, small arms, RPG, and mortar fire the company employed ARA, air strikes, and artillery support in addition to small arms fire which resulted in five NVA killed. These were discovered while the unit was searching the hut and bunker complex. B Company's lead platoon suffered three killed and nineteen wounded in the contact and was forced to withdraw a short distance to regroup, leaving the wounded where they fell. The company initiated a second advance to retrieve those initially wounded and suffered additional casualties. On the third attempt LTC Honeycutt, the battalion commander, instructed them to increase their volume of fire and push up past the wounded rather than trying to retrieve them under direct enemy fire. This was accomplished at 1645H.

At 1700H during a med-evac for B Company a cobra gunship accompanying the med-evac inadvertently banked and fire six rockets into the Battalion command post, D Company, and the mortar platoon leaving one killed and thirty-five wounded in its wake. The battalion commander, S2, S3, and artillery liaison officer were wounded, and all were evacuated except the battalion commander and the S3. By 1900H the wounded had been evacuated and the companies began establishing their night defensive positions.

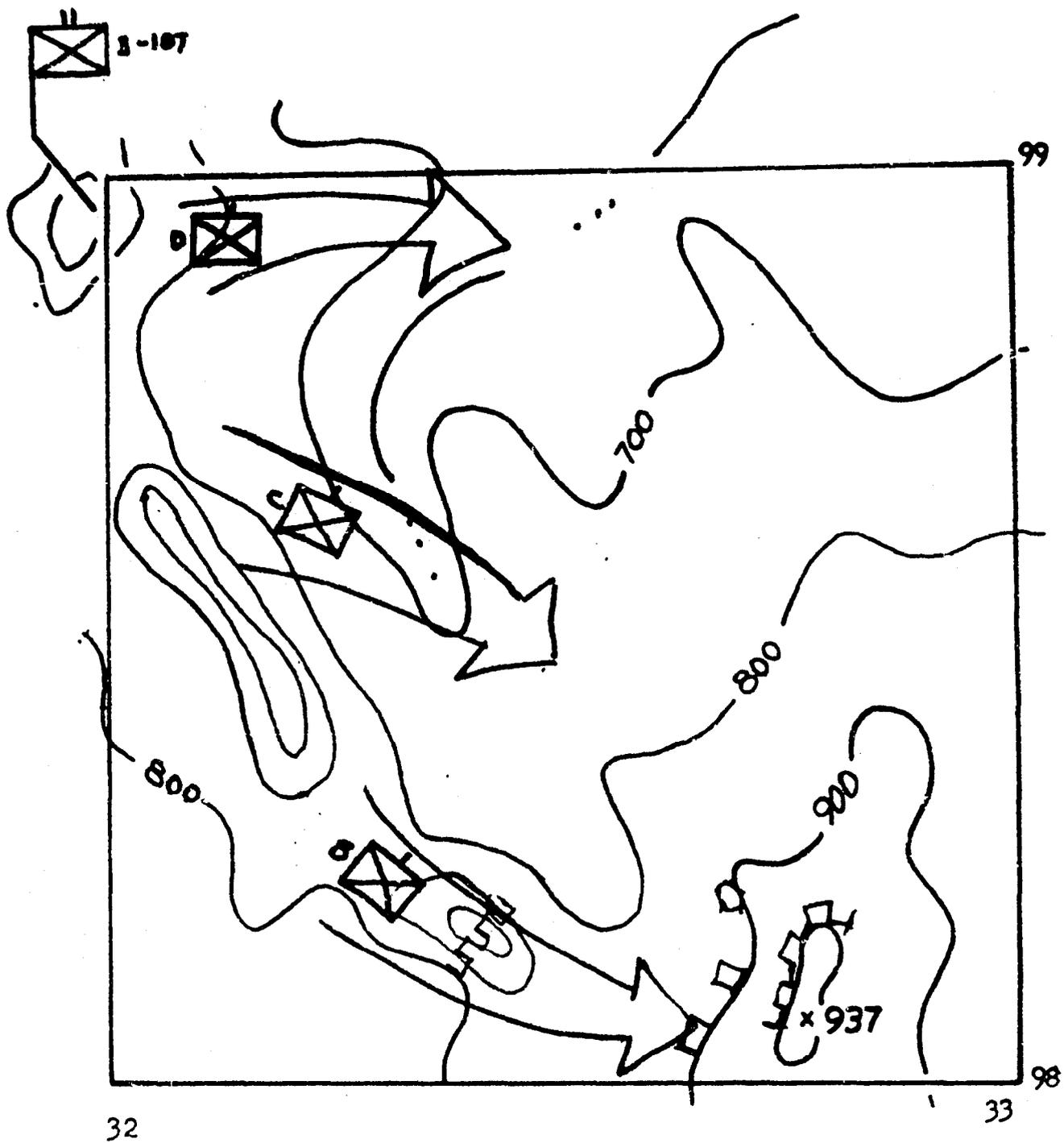
A significant discovery in the area by the 3-187th was a group of documents identifying the unit involved in the contacts as the 29th NVA Regiment. The documents indicated that the 29th Regiment had returned from North Vietnam in April and had been conducting reconnaissance operations between Base Area 611 in Laos and Route 548 in the A Shau Valley.

Elements of the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry while maneuvering near the Laotian Border west of Ta Bat received mixed 60mm and 82mm mortar rounds resulting in seventeen wounded, all of which were later evacuated. The 2d Battalion, 501st Infantry, on the other hand, encountered minimal contact during the day, but resulted in five enemy killed.

With the battalion's command post at FB Bradley, elements of the 2/1 ARVN Battalion combat assaulted south of Fire Base Tiger (YD 252090) to search out the area of operations.

12 May

On 12 May the 3-187th continued their push through the thick bamboo and elephant grass along the rough ridges of Dong Ap Bia. Two air strikes were requested and completed at 0804H in support of B Company's advance up the hill and C Company's advance to the north-east of B Company. At 0913H B Company began receiving sniper fire from their rear and by 0921H they were receiving intense automatic fire from the front and incoming mortar rounds. To aid in the evacuation of the wounded the battalion commander requested engineer



12 May Bravo Company cannot dislodge the enemy from their bunkers. Delta and Charlie move to assist.

support to blow a landing zone for B Company. Attempting an insertion at 1024H the engineer ship was hit by RPG and small arms fire causing it to crash and burn resulting in seven casualties.

B Company continued to maneuver against the well disciplined force, estimated at two companies, which were dug in about 200 meters to their front (See Sketch 2). The battalion called for ARA and artillery fire in order to dislodge the enemy from his fortified position, but the enemy held fast and throughout the day the 3-187th continued to receive heavy automatic weapons and RPG fire interspersed with mortar fire. Heavy air strikes consisting of 500 and 1000 pound bombs (high drag and delayed fuse), in addition to napalm and artillery fire, were continually placed on the enemy's position.

Meanwhile, the other battalions — 2-501st and 1-506th — continued to conduct reconnaissance in force operations throughout their areas of operation encountering limited contact. B Company, 1-506th while maneuvering in the vicinity of coordinates YC 309941, encountered three NVA, killing one and capturing his AK-47.

While on reconnaissance in force operations in the immediate area of the Laotian Border 3/1 ARVN Battalion discovered a small cache of miscellaneous equipment and weapons — eight individual and twelve crew-served weapons.

Simultaneous with the maneuvering of the battalions on the ground,

A Troop, 2d Squadron, 17th Cavalry conducted air reconnaissance in support of the ground forces throughout the area of operations.

13 May

The situation remained unchanged for the 3-187th on 13 May as the companies conducted reconnaissance in force operations in their immediate areas. A Company moved to the battalion command post and relieved D Company of the security mission, and D Company moved to assist B and C Companies. Throughout the day the enemy employed small arms, RPG, automatic weapons, and mortars from well entrenched positions against the maneuvering elements of the 187th. The 3-187th returned fire and employed additional artillery and tactical air which heavily pounded Dong Ap Bia's western slopes.

During the day a med-evac helicopter, while extracting wounded from D Company (1536H), was shot down by small arms fire from suspected enemy locations YC 328993 and YC 324988, resulting in six killed and one wounded. The third platoon of A Company moved to link up with D Company at the crash site and assisted in the evacuation of the wounded back to the battalion headquarters.

Earlier in the morning of the 13th (0330H) Fire Base Airborne, defended by A Company, 2d Battalion, 501st Infantry and three Artillery batteries, C-2-11 (4 155 How), B-2-319 (2 105 How) and C-2-319th, was assaulted on three sides by elements of two NVA battalions supported by 82mm mortars and RPG fire. After infiltrating through the concertina wire on the north side of the perimeter the

attacking force systematically criss-crossed the northern portion of the fire base tossing satchel charges and grenades in the bunkers they encountered. In the glow of the burning powder in the ammunition storage area the men of Airborne drove the attacking force from the hill, killing forty of the attacking force, while suffering twenty-two killed and sixty-one wounded in addition to five howitzers that were damaged or destroyed. Later in the day B, C, and D Companies, 2-501st were extracted from the field, reinserted into Airborne, and conducted reconnaissance in force operations to the north, south, and east of FB Airborne in search of the attacking force.

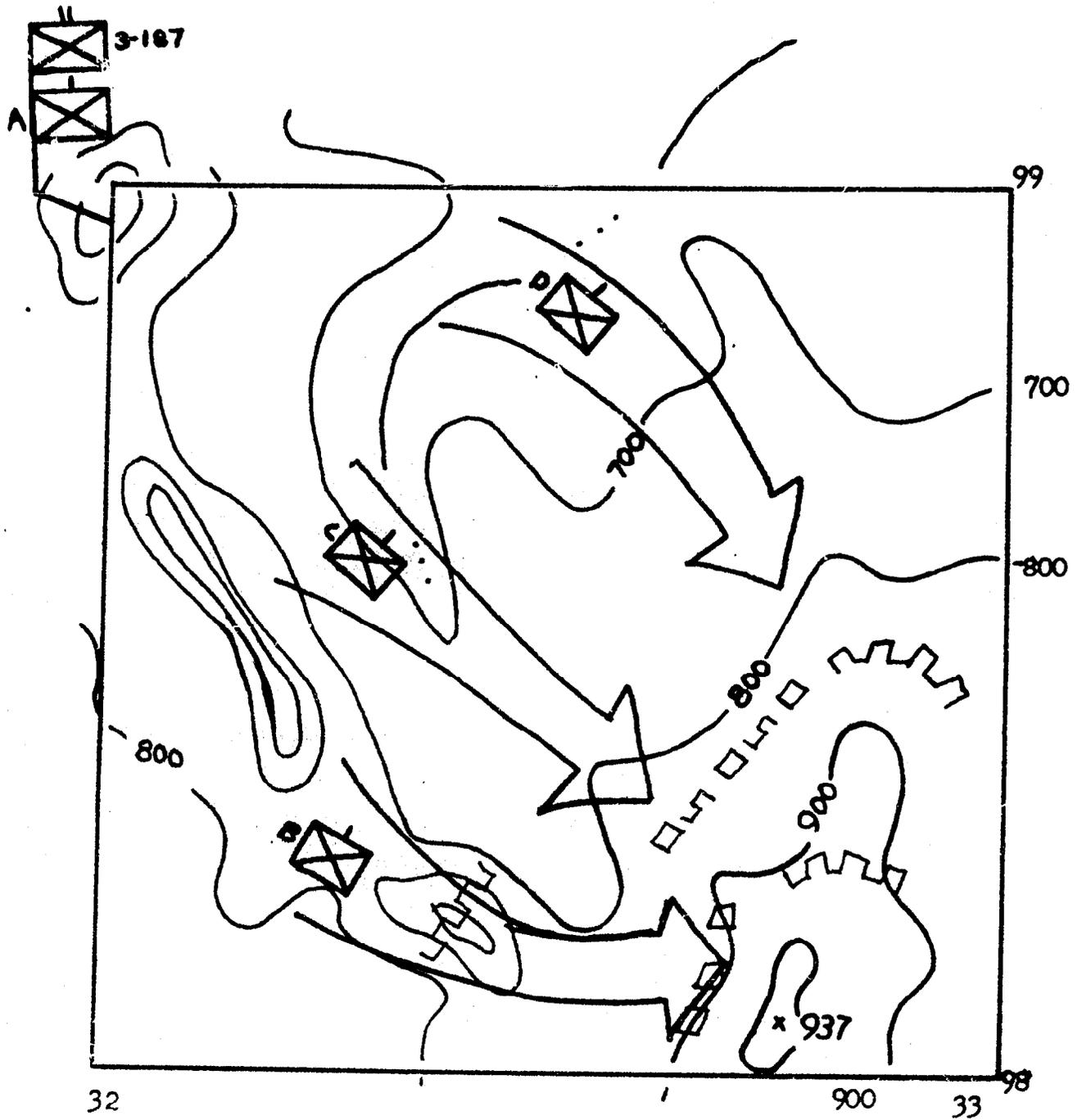
The 1-506th continued search and destroy missions in its assigned area of operations moving northwest along high ground checking extensive along the slopes of the A Chau Valley. During the day A Company found eight huts, which were considered to be part of a possible staging area, and small amounts of ammunition.

While searching the cache area discovered the previous day, 3/1 ARVN Battalion found a large cache consisting of eight vehicles, seventy-eight individual, and twenty-five crew-served weapons.

14 May

On the morning of the 14th, B, C, and D Companies of the 3-187th once again received intensive small arms, automatic, and RPG fire as they began a deliberate fire and maneuver on the Dong Ap Bia complex, under artillery, tactical air and gunship cover. This was the first,

FIGURE 3



14 May The first concerted drive to gain Hill 937. C and D Companies run into command detonated claymores and stiff resistance. B Company gets two squads on top of 937 but is forced to withdraw when C and D can not advance.

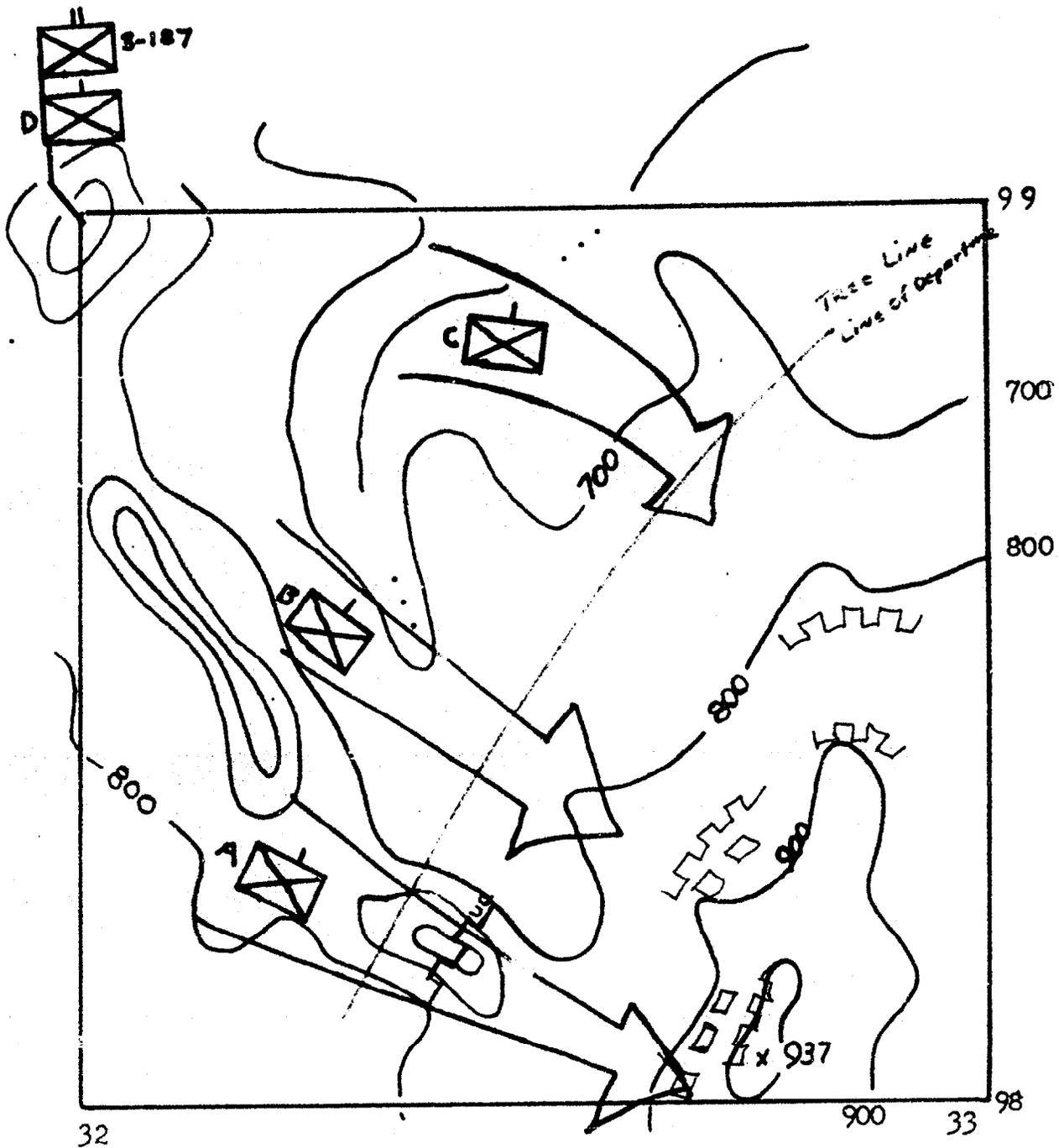
concerted effort to seize Hill 937. B, C, and D Companies were in the attack echelon, when heavy contact was established (See Sketch 3). By 1500H B Company reported having two squads on top of the hill, but B and C Companies had received heavy casualties due to command detonated claymores and were unable to advance and the battalion was forced to break contact. Throughout the day Light Observation Helicopters used as med-evacs were called in to evacuate all the seriously wounded from a small landing zone on the ridge down to the battalion landing zone. This method of shuttling the wounded worked y well and drew much praise from the men on the ground. A rapid count on the battlefield resulted in forty-seven NVA killed by small arms fire and twenty-nine killed by air strikes. The 3-187th lost five killed and fifty-eight wounded.

The other maneuver battalions involved in APACHE SNOW continued to accomplish their search and destroy missions in the area of operations encountering light enemy resistance. Many of the contacts were with enemy trail watchers and the remnants of the retreating Airborne attack force.

15 May

The 3-187th, with A Company relieving C Company, continued its drive along the ridges of Hill 937 on the morning of 15 May. As the line companies maneuvered toward their objective under heavy enemy fire they discovered fourteen NVA bodies from the previous days' contact. B and C Companies, once they reached the line of departure,

FIGURE 4



15 May A Company broke out of the tree line and secured the small knoll when B Company came under heavy fire. The ARA ships attempting to suppress the enemy fire inadvertently hit the lead platoon of B Company.

found claymores implaced by the enemy the night before. By 1300H all companies were in extremely heavy contact and suffering casualties. B Company requested an ARA strike to suppress the heavy enemy fire to their front. A Company was on the right of B Company with C Company approximately 200 meters to the left when the ARA arrived on station at 1400H. (See Sketch 4) Instead of coming in from the rear of B Company and finding its target on the hill, the ARA ships came from the right overflying A Company and raked the lead platoon of B Company with rockets slowing the momentum of the attack. A Company at the same time came under heavy enemy fire and at 1630H the companies had to withdraw under heavy pressure to the landing zone in order to evacuate the wounded. Later in the day the battalion command post was hit by RPG rounds wounding several of the paratroopers. Among those wounded was the battalion commander, LTC Honeycutt, who received RPG fragments in the back, with one piece lodged close to his spine. He refused evacuation and remained in control and was able to continue his duties following medical aid administered him in the field.

Rates of fire experienced during the day were extremely heavy and the enemy skillfully employed command detonated claymores, satchel charges, and grenades, which they rolled down the hill into the advancing US forces. Estimates of the size of the enemy force ranged as high as a regimental headquarters. The enemy were well entrenched — occupying bunkers in concentric rows which afforded

maximum utilization of the terrain available. Similarly they were well trained, experts at concealment and camouflage, hard to detect, and delivered a tremendous volume of accurate fire into advancing US troops. It was suspected that enemy reinforcements were being brought into the contact zone continuously because each day the enemy force had fresh haircuts, clean uniforms, and new weapons.

The intensive bunker to bunker fight of the 3-187th left more than sixty-two NVA soldiers dead. As of the 15th, Operation APACHE SNOW losses in terms of friendly casualties were thirty-eight US killed and 245 wounded.

Due to the heavy contact 3-187th was experiencing, the 1-506th was ordered to move northward to link up with 3-187th and support the attack on Dong Ap Bia with 3-187th acting as a blocking force on the northeast. Light contact was experienced by the 1-506 on its maneuver into the vicinity of Hill 937.

2-501st, still on reconnaissance in force operations in the area surrounding FB Airborne, encountered light enemy resistance in the form of trail watchers, two to three man groups which continually harassed the lead elements. FB Airborne at 1915H on the 15th received six 82mm mortar rounds causing little damage, indicating that the NVA were still very much interested in this area.

Throughout the night of 15-16 May elements of the 3-187th were involved in moderate contact. At 2310H C Company heard movement outside of their perimeter and responded with grenades until the movement

ceased at 2330H. Later that night (160110H) they began receiving grenades, satchel charges, and small arms fire from probes on all four sides of their night defensive position. A Spooky (AC-47 flare ship with mini-guns) was requested and arrived on station working in conjunction with a Shadow (C119 with searchlight). ARA gun teams were also employed, working under the searchlight throughout the rest of the night. One rocket pass resulted in three secondary explosions. The enemy broke contact at 0530H and a first light check of the area surrounding their night defensive position revealed fourteen bodies and many blood trails.

During the days of 15 and 16 May, 3/1 ARVN Battalion continued to exploit the cache area discovered on the 12th west of La Dut. Added to the already impressive list of captured items were ten individual weapons, one 82mm mortar tube, in addition to large quantities of ammunition and the graves of forty NVA soldiers recently killed by air strikes.

16 May

Throughout the morning of 16 May, 1-506th maneuvered north to effect its link up with the 3-187th leading with the reconnaissance platoon and followed by A and C Companies. At 0830H A Company received RPG, automatic weapons and machinegun fire from heavily fortified bunkers in the vicinity of Hill 916 (YC 3196). Artillery, gunships, air strikes and the battalions' organic weapons were employed to suppress the enemy's fire, but as soon as the friendly fires let up the enemy

would re-engage the advancing troops. Contact was broken at 1435H resulting in one US killed and seven wounded. Enemy losses were one killed and one AK-47 captured. B Company later in the morning engaged one trail watcher with small arms fire which brought out additional enemy fire. Artillery and air strikes were employed and contact was broken at 1335H resulting in one US killed and seven wounded with unknown enemy results.

Because of the heavy enemy fire A, B, 1-506th were having difficulty getting into position for the attack on Dong Ap Bia and reported that they would probably not be in position before the morning of the 17th. The CS artillery preparation of the hill was then delayed until the 17th in anticipation of the link up of the two battalions and the coordinated attack on Hill 937. Protective masks and flak jackets were dropped to both battalions (1-506th and 3-187th). The flak jackets were requested as a preventative measure against the increasing amount of shrapnel wounds of the chest, abdomen, and back regions of the body.

Three companies of the 2-501st continued on 16 May to conduct reconnaissance in force operations and saturation patrols in the vicinity of FB Airborne. The day's contacts resulted in one NVA killed.

The 1-506th began closing on Hill 937 to the southwest of the 3-187th and began moving up the hill in the early morning. While moving up they received twenty 82mm mortar rounds all of which impacted

out of the line of the advancing troops. To counter the enemy's heavy fire three air strikes were placed on the high ground to the 1-506th's front. Throughout the morning they experienced light and sporadic contact which impeded their movement considerably.

At 0945H the 3-187th experienced radio interference on the command net when a Vietnamese voice repeated "Blackjack, Blackjack" for several minutes very rapidly. LTC Honeycutt, whose call sign is "Blackjack," answered with artillery fire and the resulting explosions were heard over the net.

At 0955H LTC Honeycutt was evacuated by the Assistant Division Commander, Colonel Smith, to have the shrapnel removed from his back. Major Collier assumed command of the 3-187th as they moved into the blocking positions they would occupy the next morning in support of the main attack by the 1-506th. At 1415H XXIV Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Stilwell arrived at the 3-187th's location to receive a first hand briefing on the situation on Dong Ap Bia.

17 May

The plan of attack on Hill 937 was formulated on 17 May. Elements of the 3-187th were moved to the west up to the high ground and would support the attack from vicinity YC 323983 with 90mm, machinegun and small arms fire. In addition there was to be a one minute artillery preparation utilizing the 105mm CS howitzer round (approximately 200 rounds). The wind on the morning of the attack was ideal with the flow to the east. The CS preparation would be followed by fifteen

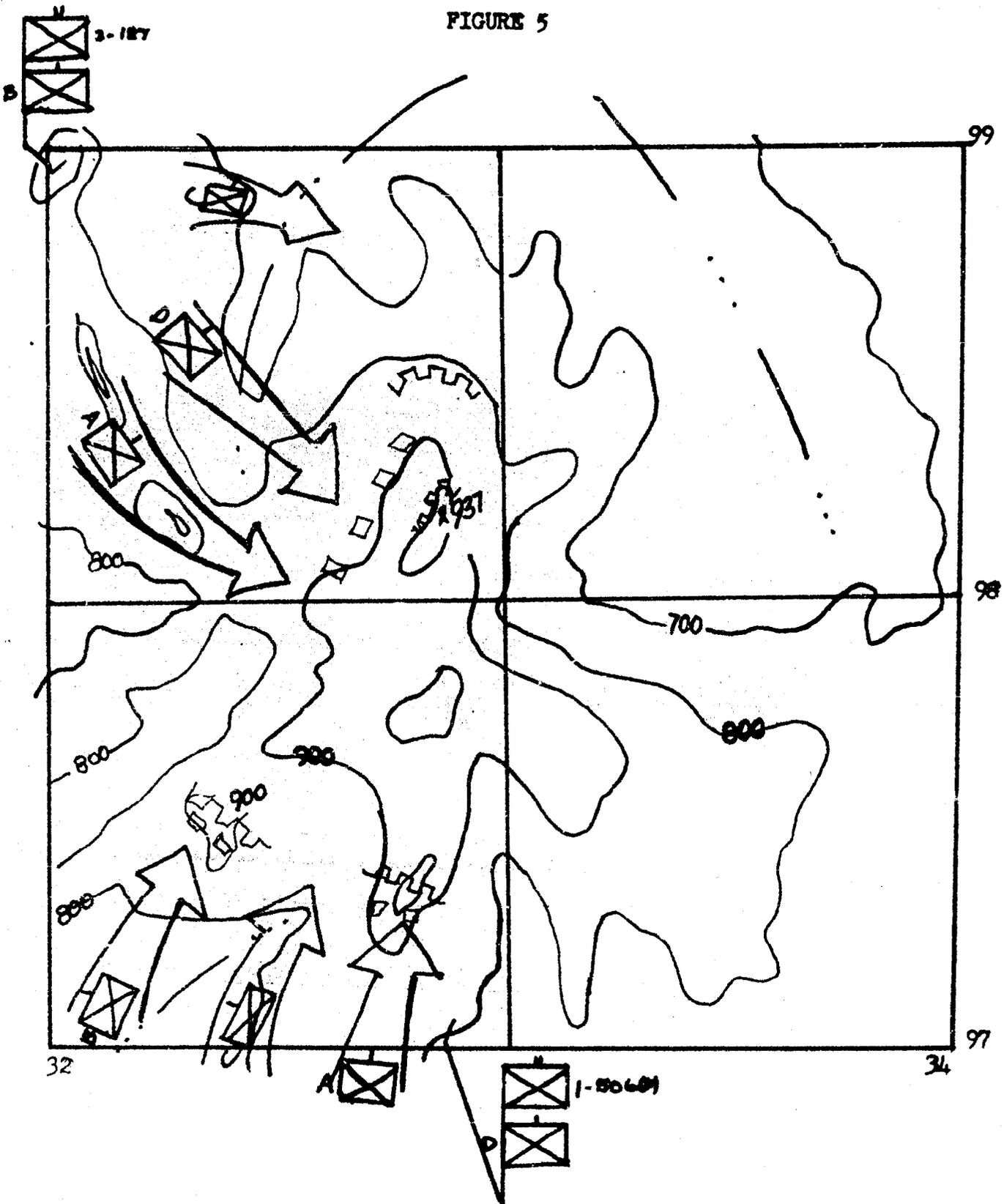
minutes of VT and HE artillery fire. At 1000H the attack would commence with A, B, C/1-506 on line. At that time the artillery fire would be shifted to the east and Pink Teams, Air Cavalry Reconnaissance forces consisting of one Huey gunship and one Light Observation Helicopter, would screen the area and air strikes would be on call. The attack was delayed until 1130H when it was learned that all elements were not in position.

As the elements began their attack the fire they faced was intense. Additional CS drops were requested at 1330H by the 1-506th and placed to the front of A Company's position to get the company across the line of departure; the drops were completed at 1405H. At 1450H an additional drop missed the target and as a result A Company was still pinned down and unable to move. B and C Companies were maneuvering to assist A Company, but due to the intense fire the three companies were unable to get to their objective.

Although the enemy possessed gas masks, the CS attacks were effective and caused them to leave their bunkers and were thus exposed targets to the attacking forces. At 1550H A Company, 1-506th and gunships caught eight NVA coming out of their bunkers and killed all eight.

Throughout the 17th the 3-187th remained in blocking positions on the northeast of Dong Ap Bia supporting the 1-506th with organic fires and in conjunction with the 3d Brigade's forward air controller, directed

FIGURE 5



18 May Joined by the 1-506 Inf., 3-187 continues to try and dis-
lodge the enemy.

air strikes on the bunker complexes to their front. The NVA continually popped violet smoke grenades to confuse the forward air controller and pilots as they came in for their runs.

The 2-501st continued their search and destroy missions to the north, and west of FB Airborne encountering bunkers and equipment caches. Little contact was experienced during the 17th.

The 2/1 ARVN Battalion searching an area southwest of FB Bradley discovered four Russian trucks, five bulldozers, and 3,000 pounds of TNT, all of which were destroyed.

18 May

By 180717H May the two battalions were in position around Dong Ap Bia and started up the hill. (See Sketch 5) Two air strikes were put in as the attacking forces began their move and six additional strikes were completed by 0830H to suppress the enemy fire. 1-506th made initial contact early in the morning with an unknown size enemy force on the southside of the ridge and contact continued periodically throughout the day. The enemy delivered a heavy volume of RPG and small arms fire as the attacking forces employed air strikes, artillery, CS gas drops and small arms fire.

At 0800H artillery was registered on target with 105mm howitzers in position at FB Currahee. At 0820H a fifteen minute artillery preparation commenced. When the artillery preparation was completed three companies of the 1-506th attacked from the south and three companies of the 3-187th attacked from the north.

At 1100H D Company, 3-187th, with A Company on its right flank, made initial contact by killing two NVA. At 1132H D Company was slowed and heavily engaged by entrenched enemy forces 200 meters directly to their front firing RPG's and automatic weapons. At 1200H D Company Commander was severely wounded and by 1225H D Company had over 50% casualties with only one wounded Lieutenant and one NCO left in command. Weather closed soon after as both D and A Companies had depleted their resources -- both men and ammunition. D Company at this time had a total of fifty-seven men who were able to fight. In order to evacuate the wounded and dead the 3-187th had to withdraw from the crest of the hill to the landing zone. The same day the 2-506th was alerted and deployed to FB Blaze for a possible combat assault into the area to reinforce the 3-187th. At 1645H A Company, 2-506th was combat assaulted into the area to reinforce the beleaguered 187th. The remainder of the 2-506th was to stay at FB Blaze and on the 21st would assume responsibility for Airborne.

At 1700H the 1-506th was still in contact and still advancing, fighting from bunker to bunker. At 2000H they withdrew and established their night defensive position just below the crest of the hill.

In the evening of 18 May agreement between Lieutenant General Stilwell, Major General Zais and General Troung the 1st ARVN Division Commander was made to employ the 2/3 ARVN Battalion to assist the 3d Brigade. The battalion was to be picked up the following day at Hue and helilifted to FB Currahee (See Map). They would then combat

assault into a landing zone east of Dong Ap Bia and attack west up the Dong Ap Bia ridge.

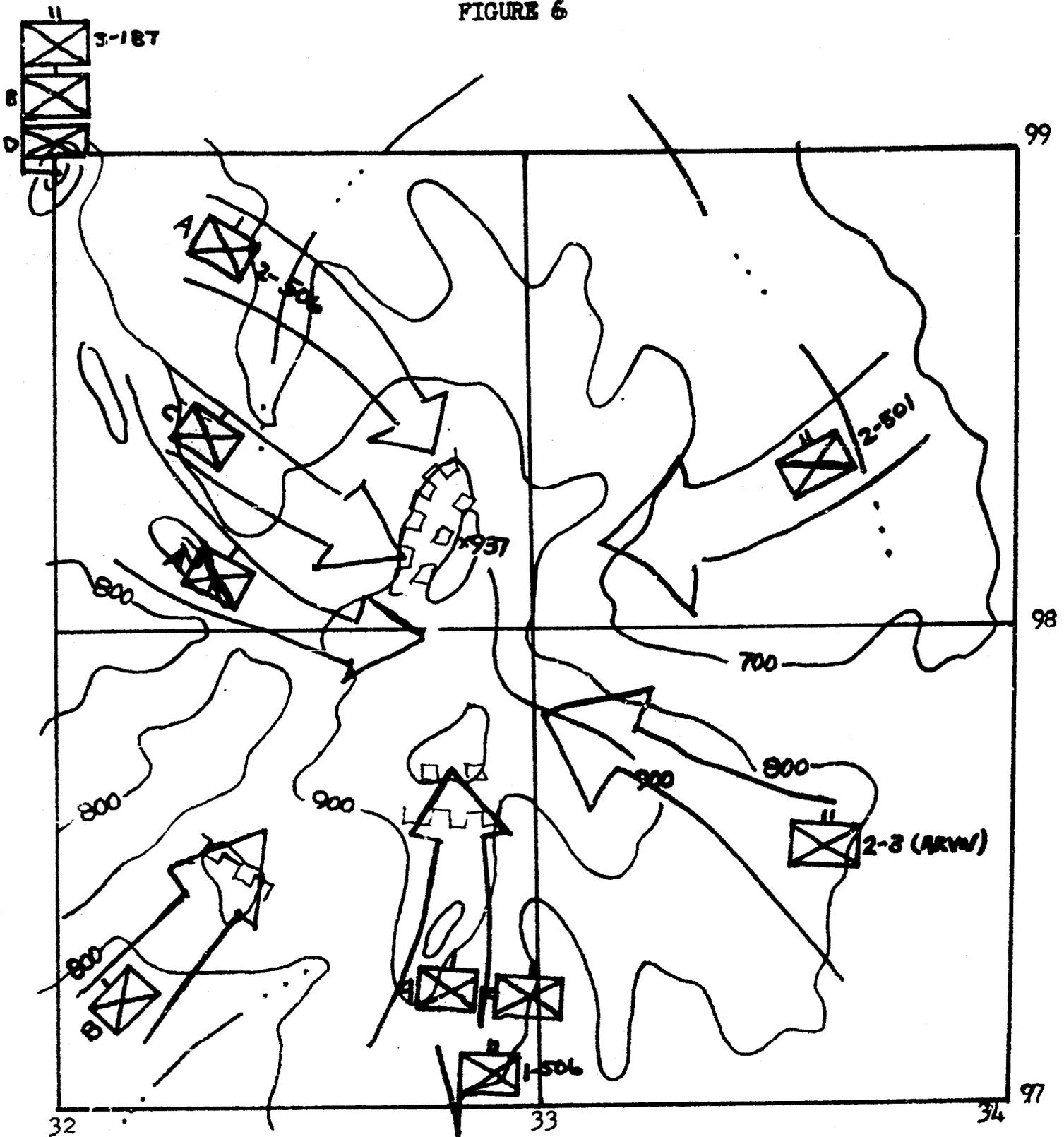
19 May

The 2/3 ARVN Battalion moved by CH-47 at 190830H from Hue to LZ/PZ at FB Currahee. From Currahee the ARVN battalion was air assaulted at 1305H into a two ship landing zone vicinity YC 341970 and began advancing up the ridge to an attack position approximately 500 meters from the crest.

Following the move of the 2/3 ARVN Battalion three companies from the 2d Battalion, 501st Infantry were extracted from a PZ in vicinity of FB Airborne and assaulted into a landing zone vicinity YC 333997 for the purpose of reinforcing the attack on Dong Ap Bia. Their extraction was delayed due to a downed ship on the pick up zone at 0930H, but by 1515H the air assault was completed. From the landing zone the three US companies were to move to their attacking position vicinity YC 332992.

The 1-506th encountered heavy enemy fire during the day as they progressed up the hill to their attack position. Air strikes were called in again and again on the enemy's location, in addition to artillery barrages. The 3-187 moving from the north encountered no enemy resistance. By late afternoon the three forces had discovered numerous enemy bodies in bunkers that had been collapsed by air strikes. The 1-506th moving north encountered bunker complexes as they continued up the hill fighting from bunker to bunker. C Company

FIGURE 6



20 May Four battalions attack Hill 937. 3-187 reaches top of hill at 1145 H.

working in conjunction with A Company were faced with the problem of clearing out a complex of twenty bunkers to their front. By 1500H contact became more intense and C Company was in the lead and became very heavily engaged and took several casualties and C Company was able to move. This leap frog movement continued until dark when the contact tapered off. At the termination of the contact A and C Companies were only 200 meters from the crest of the hill with B Company slightly below them.

The ARVN Battalions — 4/1 and 2/1 — maneuvering in zone encountered moderate enemy contact with unknown size enemy forces. Contact lasted for a short period of time then terminated.

20 May

Late in the morning (1000H) of 20 May, following an artillery preparation, the four battalions executed a coordinated assault on Hill 937 (See Sketch 6).

3-187

At 1100H 3-187th with A Company on the right, C Company in the center and attached A Company, 2-506th on the left, moved southeast for a coordinated attack on the Hill when they received concentrated RPG and small arms fire. The attacking elements returned the fire with organic weapons and continued to fire and maneuver up the hill. As the elements approached the crest they again came under heavy small arms fire from the west and RPG and small arms fire from the south, in addition to CS gas (it was later determined that the gas was errant friendly 40mm gas grenades). The attacking elements of the

3-187th returned the fire with organic weapons and employed artillery, ARA, and gunships on the suspected enemy location (YC 324997) and continued with A Company, 3-187 reaching the top of Hill 937 first at 1145H. The attacking force received additional fire as the enemy attempted to cover its withdrawal to the southwest into the 1-506th locations. The elements continued to return small arms fire and employed ARA, artillery, and gunships on the retreating enemy. The contact terminated at 1600H and a sweep of the area revealed seventy-eight NVA killed and one prisoner of war.

Throughout the day--3-187th company commanders noted--the noise level was so great that they could not ascertain if friendly artillery was being employed, the crack of small arms fire drowned out any other sounds. The inability to use radios due to the noise level made it imperative that messengers be used to relay messages and directions to the forward elements. In addition various colored smoke grenades were detonated by the NVA making it extremely difficult to place effective air strikes on the desired targets, and to control friendly fires.

1-506

At 1055H A and C Companies, 1-506 moved north to assault the hill and encountered heavy enemy resistance. Elements continued to receive small arms, RPG, and mortar fire from the same location throughout the day. The companies involved returned small arms fire and employed ARA, artillery and gunships for support on suspected enemy locations.

Contact terminated at approximately 1600H, but the attacking elements continued to receive sporadic fire throughout the night. A sweep of the area revealed eight NVA killed.

B Company, 1-506 continued to attack the hill from its position on the left of A and C, and encountered heavy resistance while moving north toward the hill. To counter the enemy small arms, RPG, and mortar fire they employed air support on the suspected enemy locations with B Company being between the enemy and the Laotian Border.

2-501

A, B, and C Companies of the 2-501st while moving southwest up Hill 937 encountered no enemy resistance. As the elements continued to move they discovered numerous huts and bunker complexes vacated by the retreating enemy.

2/3 ARVN

At 0715H the 2/3 ARVN Battalion while moving northeast for the coordinated attack on Hill 937 encountered light enemy resistance and discovered moderate sized caches of assorted ammunition, in addition to a six foot wide road with a power cable which they followed to their objective. Continuing to advance toward the top of the hill they received concentrated small arms fire and employed air and artillery support to destroy the enemy location. Contact terminated at approximately 1600H and a sweep of the area was made revealing six NVA bodies and three AK-47's.

During the day PSYOP missions were conducted in the vicinity of

Dong Ap Bia entreating the enemy to give up and live or be destroyed. To bring out what pressure the defenders of Dong Ap Bia were under, several shirts were captured with signs sewn on them demanding: "Kill Americans, Kill the Vietnamese," and "Stay and Fight and Not Run."

As the attacking elements maneuvered up the hill they encountered well prepared positions. The small bunkers they encountered were 4x4 foot with 8-16 inches of over head cover, and were constructed of sod and logs, firing ports to the front and supplementary foxholes to the sides. The larger bunkers were 8x10x5 foot with one foot of over head cover and were similarly constructed of sod and logs. These larger bunkers appeared to have been sleeping areas with the fighting position to the front. One very unique feature of the bunkers discovered on Dong Ap Bia was their tent like construction, forming an extremely strong fighting position (See Sketch).

21 May

The coordinated four battalion assault on 20 May resulted in the successful seizure of Dong Ap Bia and rendered the 29th NVA Regiment combat ineffective. A systematic search and destruction of the bunker complex was initiated on 21 May, while pursuit operations were launched by the 2-17th Cavalry Squadron followed with a ground pursuit by the 2-501. The 2-501st encountered extensive bunker complexes in the vicinity YC 3298 which it meticulously searched and destroyed while moving on a multiple platoon axes west to the Laotian Border.

The 1-506th continued to encounter pockets of resistance of platoon

size elements in heavily fortified bunker positions along the southern ridges of Dong Ap Bia which were eliminated with organic weapons, air and artillery support. Throughout the 21st, 1-506th accounted for forty-six NVA killed in these small unit actions.

2/3 ARVN Battalion made a detailed search of the high ground and the ridges to the east of Dong Ap Bia. At the end of the day they had accounted for twenty-nine NVA killed.

The 3-187th was extracted from the Northern A Shau Valley and inserted at FB Blaze where they became OPCON to the 2d Brigade. Following a short respite at FB Blaze the battalion was placed on stand down status and its elements went to Eagle Beach for Rest and Reoperation.

The 2-506th deployed from the lowlands to the mountains of the northern A Shau Valley in place of the 3-187th. A and E Companies completed their air move to FB Airborne with the rest of the Battalion to be deployed the following day.

The Dong Ap Bia operation cost the enemy a total of 630 soldiers killed. In addition to these confirmed casualties, a prisoner of war captured during the operation indicated that 80% of the units in his unit were casualties.

22 May

On 22 May the 1-506th continued to systematically search and destroy the bunker complexes of Dong Ap Bia and adjacent areas, in addition to destroying points of resistance and accounting for fifty-four enemy

killed. The 2-506th deployed from FB Blaze to FB Airborne — B (1121H), C (1126H), D (1455H) — and continued search and destroy operations in all directions around FB Airborne encountering a large enemy base camp area.

The 2-501st continued ground pursuit operations against the retreating enemy forces, following the 2-17th Cavalry Squadron's pursuit. While on the pursuit west to the Laotian Border the battalion continued to search the extensive bunker complex vicinity YC 3298 that was discovered the previous day.

The 2/3 ARVN Battalion was given the task of searching and destroying enemy in the area bounded by coordinates YC 3399, 3599, 3595, and 3395. While patrolling the area they discovered a large ammunition and weapons cache which they evacuated.

23 May

On 23 May all units continued missions in their respective areas of operation. 1-506th continued its search and destroy operations of the bunker complexes of Dong Ap Bia and adjacent areas, silencing pockets of resistance and discovering ten additional NVA bodies. They also found trees with the bark stripped off and inscriptions written with magic markers telling the NVA soldiers to "stay and fight, this is a good place to fight from." 2-506th, which was conducting reconnaissance in force operations and saturation patrols in the vicinity of FB Airborne, encountered light enemy resistance composed of two to three NVA soldiers in groups in addition to a bunker

complex and miscellaneous equipment. 2-501st continued their pursuit west to the Laotian Border and continued to search and destroyed an extensive bunker complex discovered two days previously finding additional NVA bodies. The 2/3 ARVN Battalion continued reconnaissance in force operations in their area of operation concentrating on the south central portion of the A Chau Valley. Also on the 23d the 4/1 ARVN Battalion discovered forty huts containing four 60mm mortar tubes, one RPG-2 launcher, one RPG-7 launcher, and seven NVA killed by air strikes.

24 May

On 24 May operations continued as in the previous day with significant activities being the destruction of bunker complexes of Dong Ap Bia and discovered by 1-506th of fifty-one individual weapons. 2-501st continued pursuit of the enemy west to the Laotian Border turning north along the border and then back to the east.

25 May

Operations on 25 May continued with little change from the previous day. B Company, 2-501st Infantry became involved at 1245H with an estimated enemy squad while on reconnaissance in force operations near the Laotian Border. The contact continued throughout the day with small arms, artillery, and gunships adding support, resulting in one NVA killed.

26 May

The mission of the three infantry battalions continued without change

on 26 May with preparation being made for redirection of reconnaissance in force and search and destroy operations. 1-506th was to be prepared to conduct reconnaissance in force operations to the east to locate and destroy enemy forces, bases and caches in the vicinity of Pa Du (2) (YC 361973) and Pa Du (1) (YC 394966). The 2-501st was also alerted to redirect their reconnaissance in force operations to the north and east in the vicinity of Ale Ninh (2) (YD 323013) and Ale Ninh (1) (YD 344003). The 2/3 ARVN Battalion was similarly alerted and was to be prepared to conduct reconnaissance in force operations southwest to Hill 996 (YC 314940) and conduct a detailed search of the area.

Operations continued until 7 June, but the NVA forces were no longer interested in maintaining contact. Sporadic engagements with small groups was the normal situation. On 7 June the forces were reoriented towards the east and Operation APACHE SNOW was terminated. The combined ARVN and US statistics were 898 enemy killed, four prisoners of war, 560 individual weapons and 142 crew-served weapons captured.

Operation APACHE SNOW was directed toward defeating the North Vietnamese Army in the Northern A Shau Valley. Through intense close-in fighting the 101st Airborne troopers contributed another gallant victory to the Vietnamese War effort by almost completely eliminating one North Vietnamese Regiment and putting the Valley under Free World control for the first time since 1965. Though APACHE SNOW is over the 101st Airborne Division continues their aggressive hardhitting attack to return control of Thua Thien Province to the

Republic of Vietnam.

OPERATION APACHE SNOW
COMBAT ASSAULTS
10 MAY 1969

LZ LIGHTNING

FB ABNEY

FB BRADLEY

FB TIGER

FB AIRBORNE

FB BLAKE

FB MONTESANO

FB YD

FB YC

FB CURRANEE

FB MAIN REGT

FB BDE

FB 101

FB 101

FB 101

FB 101

FB 101

LZ

LZ

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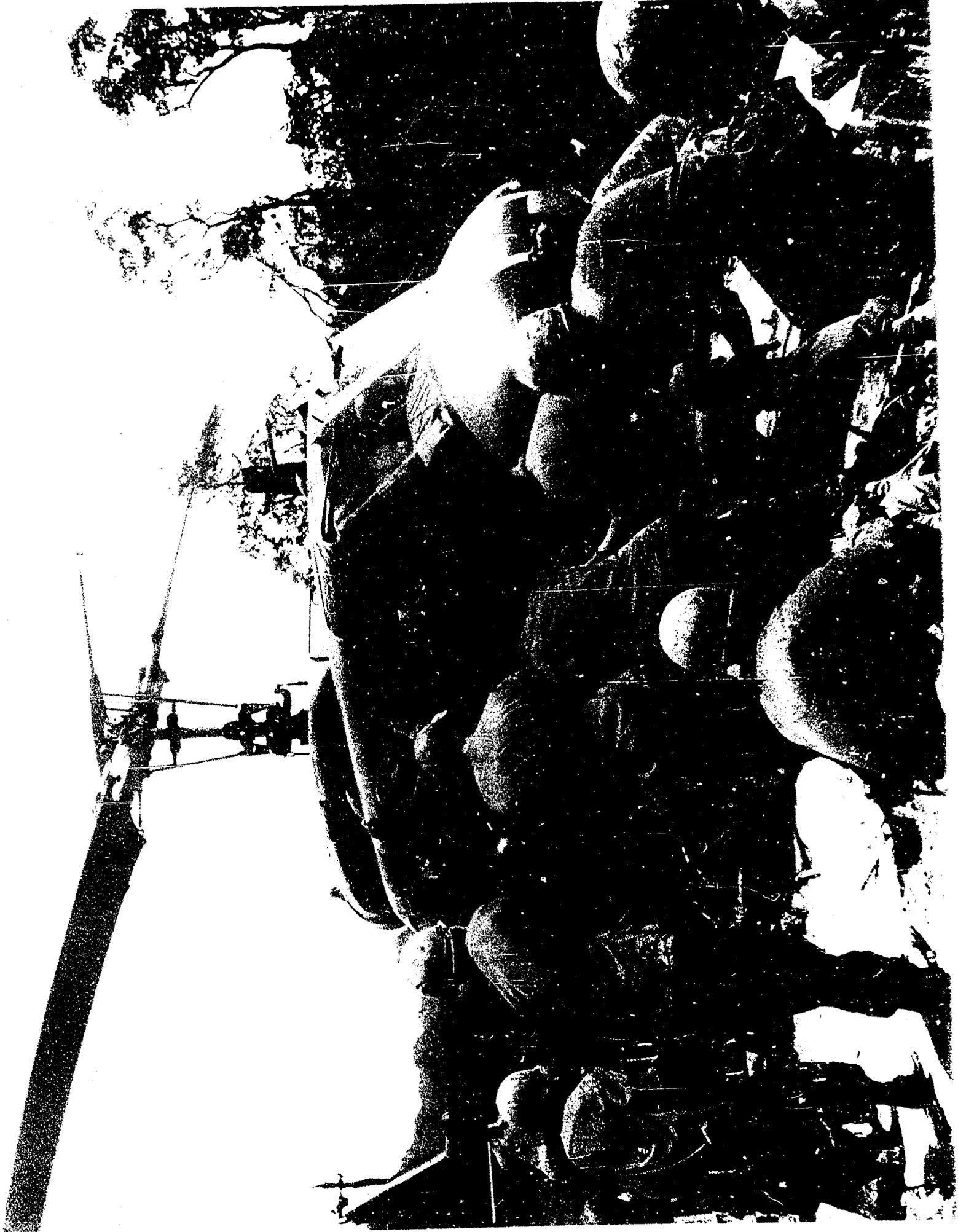
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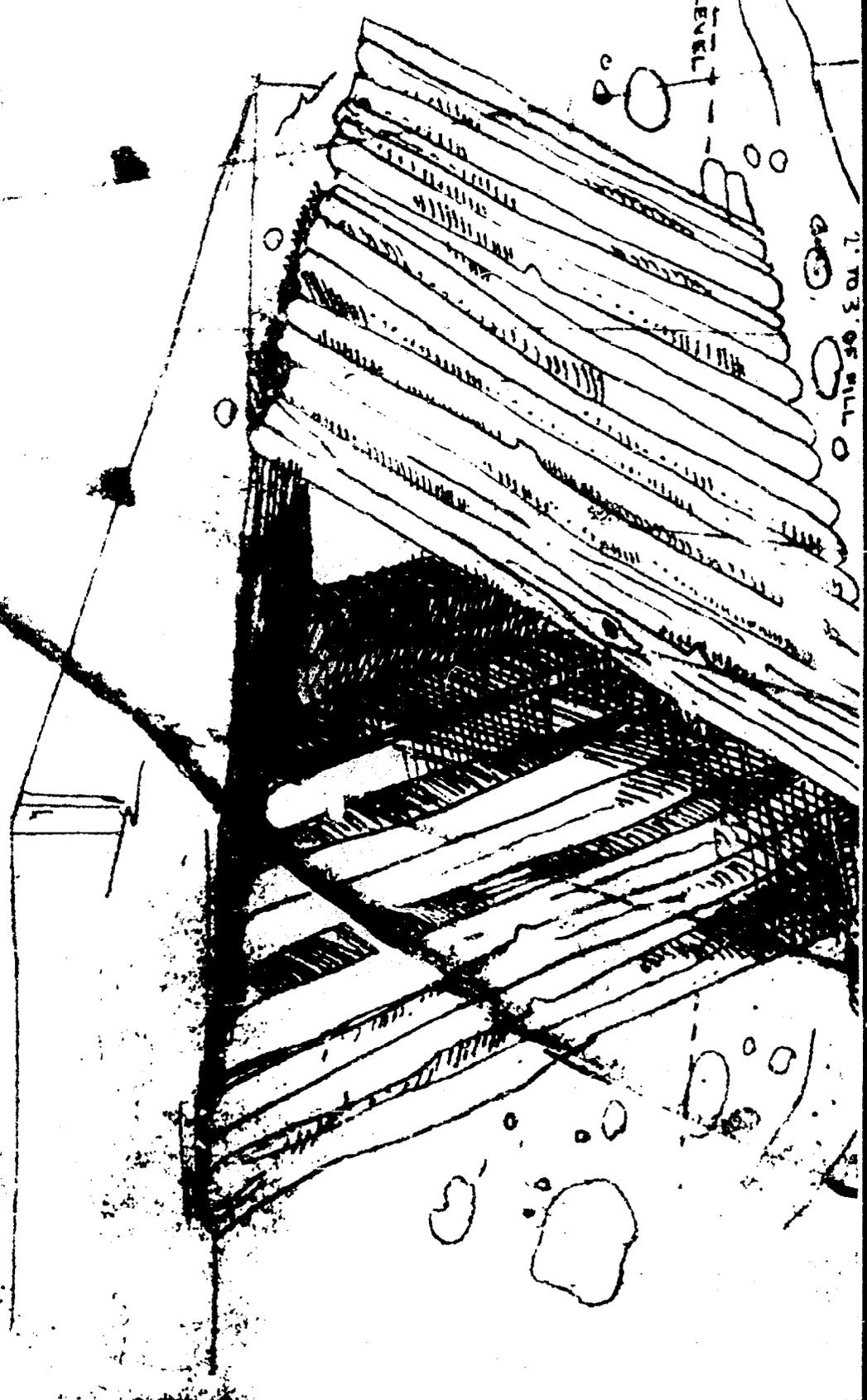




GROUND LEVEL

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1. TO 3. OF BILL



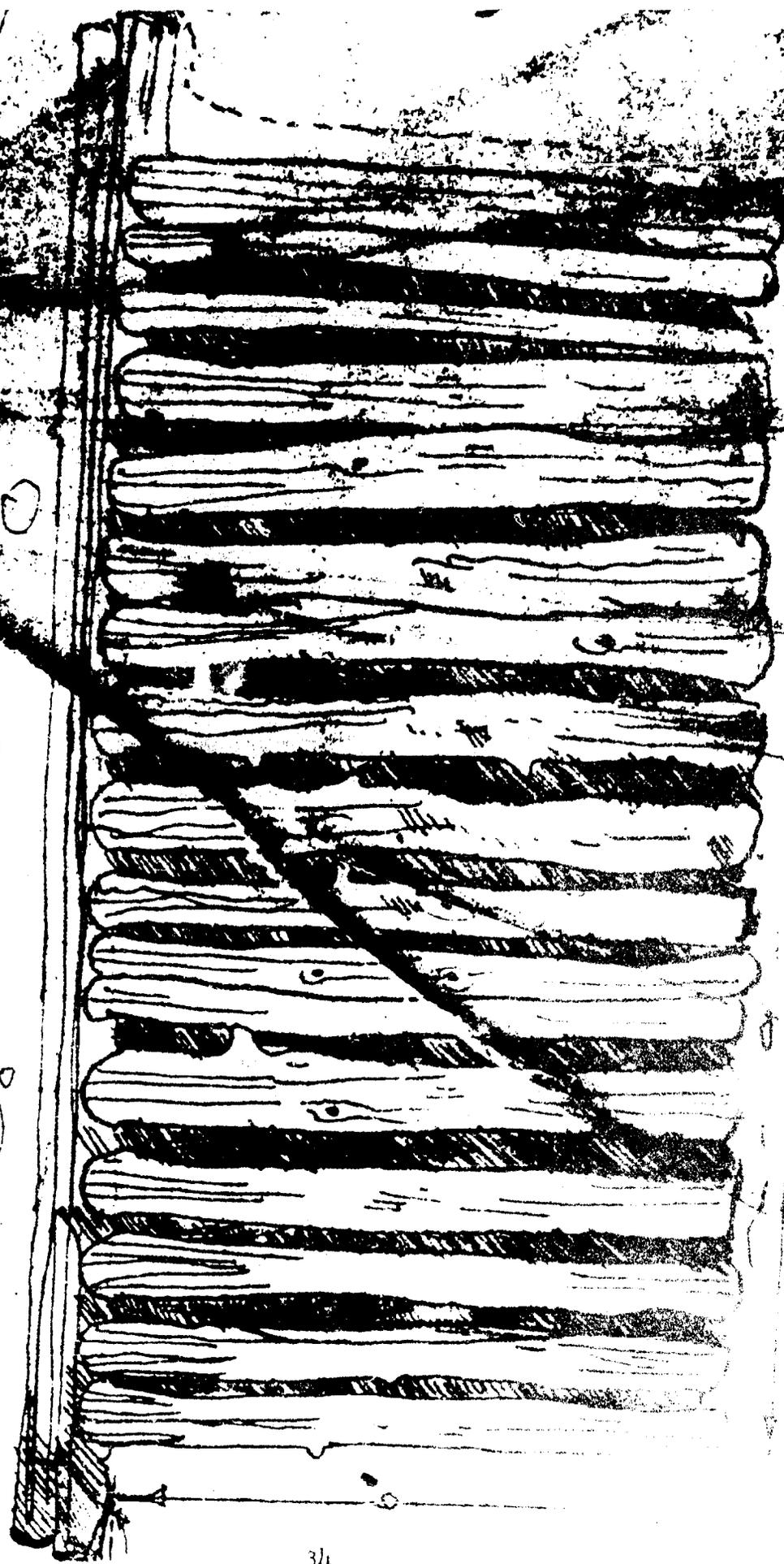
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MIL. DIST. VE 320983 25 MAY 1969

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COVERED WITH APPROXIMATELY

6



EXISTING GROUND LEVEL

3 SUPPORT LOGS
REST ON EXISTING
LEVEL

8'

2. VARIOUS KINDS OF WOODS, SUCH AS PINE, OAK, AND
CYPRESS, ARE USED FOR THE LOGS.

EXISTING GROUND LEVEL

