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24 JAN-61 MAR 1966
K717.0413-10
2601

PROJECT CHECO SOUTHEAST ASIA REPORT

P.R.C.

**OPERATION
MASHER
& WHITE WING**

SPECIAL REPORT

PROJECT CORONA HARVEST

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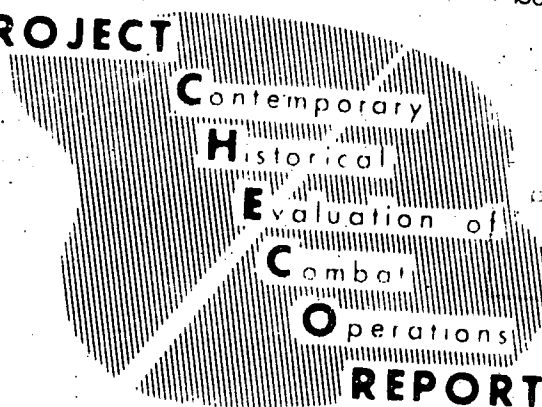
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PROJECT



REPORT

K 717.0413-10
24 Jan - 6 Mar 1966
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P.R.C.

OPERATION MASHER & WHITE WING

9 SEPTEMBER 1966

Group 1
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HQ PACAF

**Directorate, Tactical Evaluation
CHECO Division**

**Prepared by: 1st Lt William E. Bates and
Mr. Kenneth Sams
S.E. Asia Team**

DOPEC-66-03511

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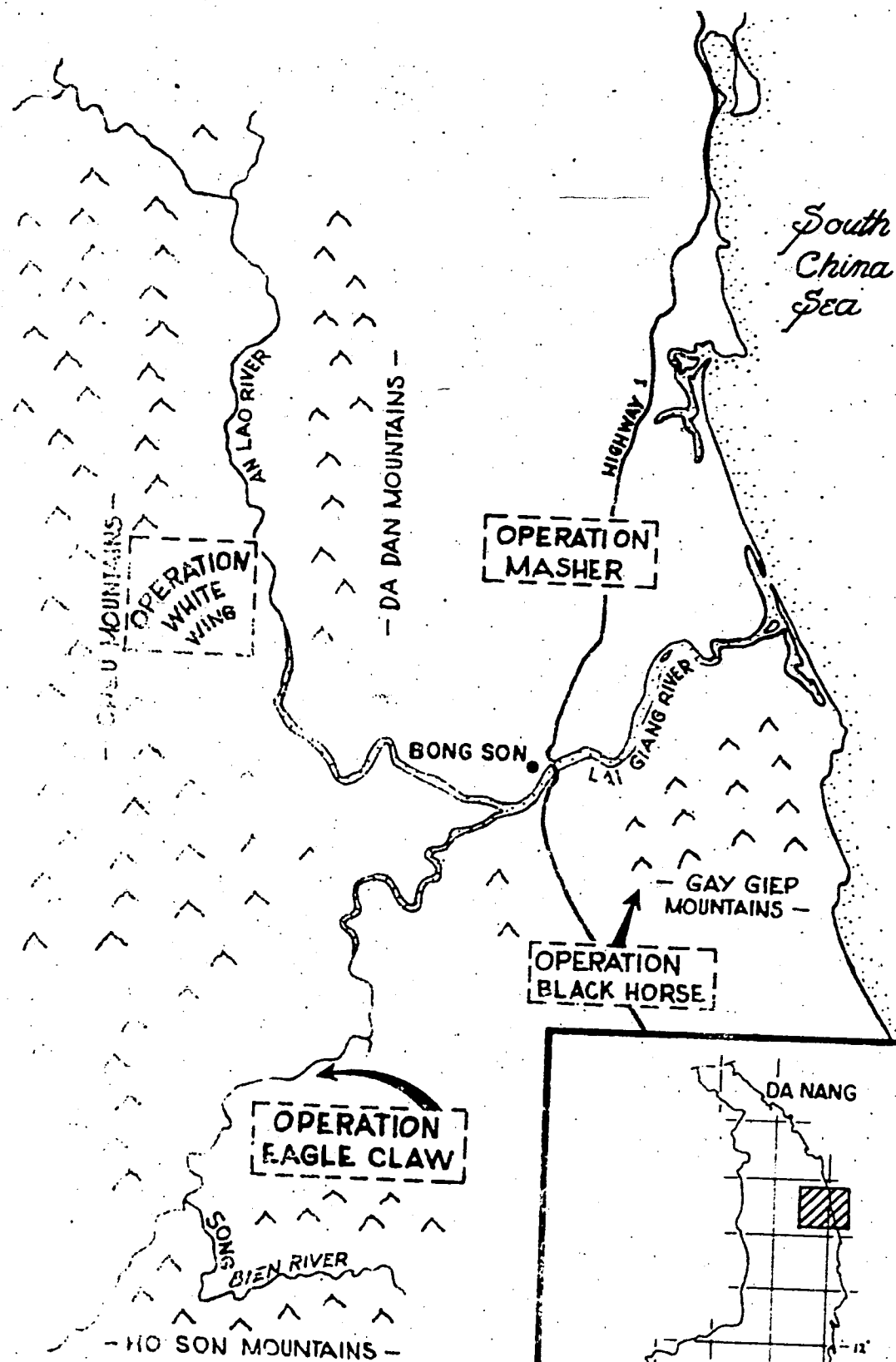
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OPERATION MASHER AND WHITE WING

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INTRODUCTION

Operation MASHER/WHITE WING, comprising elements of the U.S. 1st Air Division, the 22nd ARVN Division plus one ARVN Brigade and one Battalion of the ROK Capital Division was the largest ground operation to take place through February 1966. It was conducted along the coastal area in the vicinity of Bong Son (in the northeast corner of II Corps) about 300 miles north of Saigon. During the operation (24 January to 6 March), all three brigades of the 1st Air Cavalry Division were committed plus the 22nd ARVN Division, an ARVN Brigade, and the 3rd Battalion, 1st Regiment, of the Korean (ROK) Capital Division.

The air support furnished was extensive and, in many instances, provided the necessary margin for overcoming enemy resistance. Over 1100 Air Force, Navy, Marine, and VNAF strike sorties were flown during the period, expending nearly 2000 tons of ordnance. In addition, night illumination was provided by USAF C-123's (Smokey Bear) and C-47 flareships with fire support from "Dragon" AC-47's.

Airlift support by the USAF continued throughout the period of operation. On 25, 26, and 27 February, C-130's were used the first time for in-theater, close logistic support by assault landing at Bong Son. In total, over 1000 tons of supplies and equipment were flown into Bong Son by C-123's and C-130's. Ground forces support material was also airlifted to other points where it could be trans-shipped by ground lines of communication to the area of operation.

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This document deals only with the 1st Air Cavalry participation of the operation and does not deal with the ARVN or ROK forces. The ARVN area of operation was primarily to the north and west of the 1st Cavalry, between the coast and Route 1. The ROK units took over the security of the roads, to the south and west of the area of operation, freeing elements of the 1st Cavalry for commitment to the operation. Both the ARVN and ROK forces engaged in heavy fighting and were responsible for a large number of Viet Cong casualties.

This 1st Air Cavalry operation was actually conducted in four distinct phases: MASHER, WHITE WING, EAGLE CLAW, and BLACK HORSE. Each phase is covered separately in the overall report.

To assist the reader in identifying abbreviations used in the report, a glossary of terms is listed on page 30.

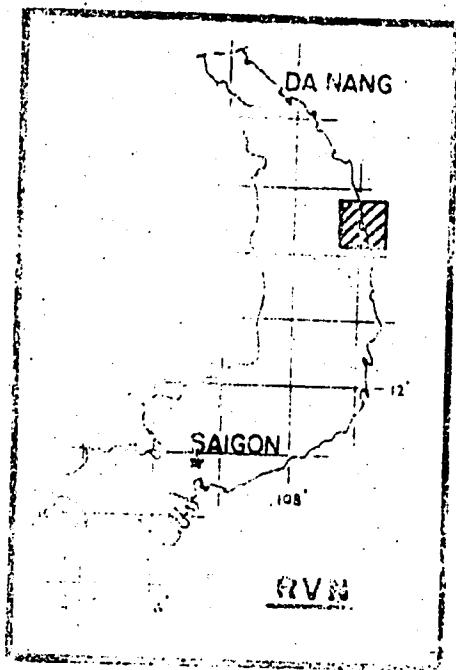
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OPERATION MASHER

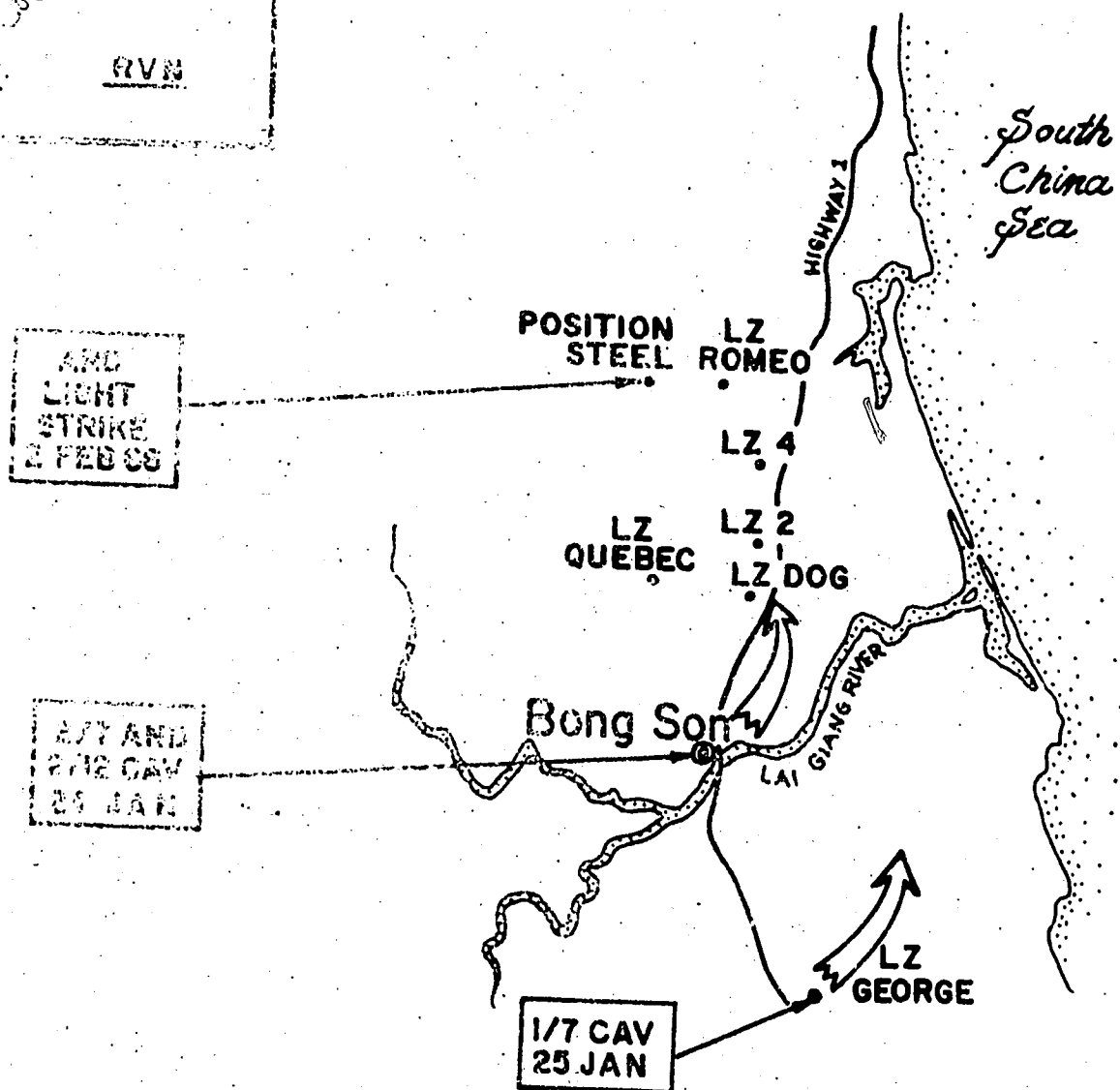
MASHER was a multi-battalion search and destroy operation conducted by the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Air Cavalry Division to the north of Bong Son. The terrain fought over consisted of a vast rice paddy along the South China Sea Coast, bounded on the west by the Da Dan Mountains, beyond which lies the An Lao Valley. The brigade intelligence estimate of VC/North Vietnamese Army units amounted to four battalions, with a possible reinforcement capability of two regiments.

Operation MASHER was conducted in three phases. Phase I, beginning on 24 Jan 66, was the movement of the maneuver battalions to the operation area by USAF C-123's, Army UH-1D's and CH-47's, and ground vehicles. Phase II, planned for the morning of 25 Jan 66, began with the 1st Battalion of the 7th Regiment (1/7 Cav) making a diversionary attack on a hill mass to the southeast of Bong Son, (GEORGE). The 2/7 Cav was to move to the north to secure Position DOG for the Brigade Command Post. Phase III was to start on 28 Jan 66, with airmobile and ground attacks north up the coastal plain by the 2/7 Cav, air landing of the 1/7 Cav on the high ground to the west, then attacking to the east. The 2/12 Cav was to be landed in the northern end of the area of operation and would attack to the south. Thus, with the ARVN on the east, the enemy would be hit from four directions. Poor weather caused a change in the Phase III portion which will be discussed subsequently. ^{1/}

Phase I (movement to the area of operation) commenced on the morning of 24 Jan and was completed on 27 Jan. Participating units



OPERATION MASHER



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included 1/7, 2/7, 1/12, 2/12, 1/5, and parts of 1/9 Cav. The 2/7 and 2/12 Battalions were moved from An Khe to Bong Son by C-123. On 25 January, a C-123 crashed on the east side of An Khe Pass, killing 42 men from 2/7 Cav's "A" Company and the four crew members. ^{2/}

Phase II (the diversionary attack) was initiated on 25 Jan 66 when the 1/7 Cav was airlifted to area George and attacked to the east. ^{3/} 1/7 Cav continued the diversionary movement through the 27th with little significant contact.

On 26 January, at 0800H, close air support was called for when 2/7 Cav began an assault on LZ Dog. ^{4/} At 0630H, two A-1E's had hit Viet Cong defensive positions immediately west of Dog. The forward air controller reported 100 percent target coverage with four confirmed Viet Cong KBA and six structures destroyed. Between 0810H and 0815H, two A-1E's struck Viet Cong trenches to the NW. The FAC report indicated 90 percent coverage, but damage assessment was not possible. ^{5/} Both flights provided air cover during the assault.

At 0921H, 50 to 100 Viet Cong dressed in khaki uniforms were observed to the northeast of Dog. "B" and "C" Company of 2/7 Cav moved into the area and received small arms fire. ^{6/} An air strike was called for and the FAC directed two A-1E's onto the Viet Cong, which attacked with GP's, napalm, white phosphorous, and 20mm. ^{7/} "B" Company moved into the area and, although no enemy were found, there was evidence of movement out of the area. This provided

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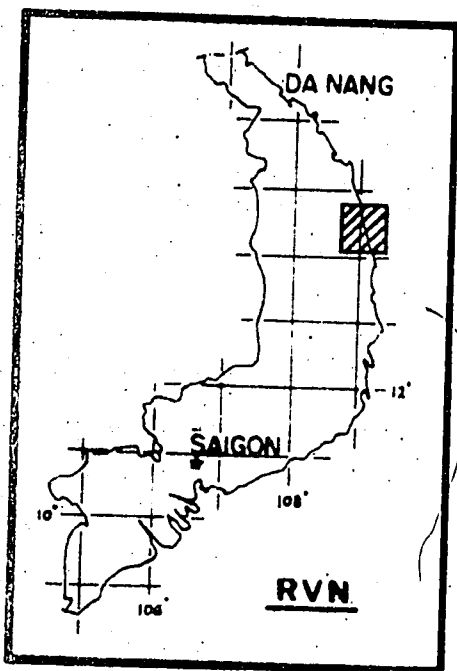
the first indication of the presence of North Vietnamese Army units in the area of operation.

During a ground operation on the 27th, approximately 7NM SSW of Bong Son, circling helicopters received heavy automatic weapon fire. An immediate air strike was called. Two A-1E's responded and were on target within 20 minutes. Upon completion of the strike, a squad was airlifted into the area. It reported two KBA and a heavy smell of burned flesh. Additional KBA were suspected, but the squad was unable to locate their bodies or any weapons. ^{8/}

For the period 25 Jan 66 through 27 Jan 66, a total of 45 sorties were provided with all of these being immediate requests. Most of these sorties were responsive to requests for air cover during the daylight hours. C-123's, AC-47's, and C-47 flareships were utilized for night support.

Phase III (the main attack) of Operation MASHER was launched at 0800H on 28 Jan 66 in extremely poor weather. Rain and low ceilings prevented movement of troops onto the high ground north and west of the area of operation. Consequently, the attack plan had to be modified.

1/7 Cav moved into LZ PAPA on the 28th. On the morning of the 29th, the battalion received orders to move to the east, make contact with ARVN forces, then attack to the north. Between 0908H and 1420H, 29 Jan 66, three air strikes were delivered on enemy positions in the vicinity of the LZ. During the strikes 2/12 Cavalry was brought in on the right flank of



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I/7 CAV

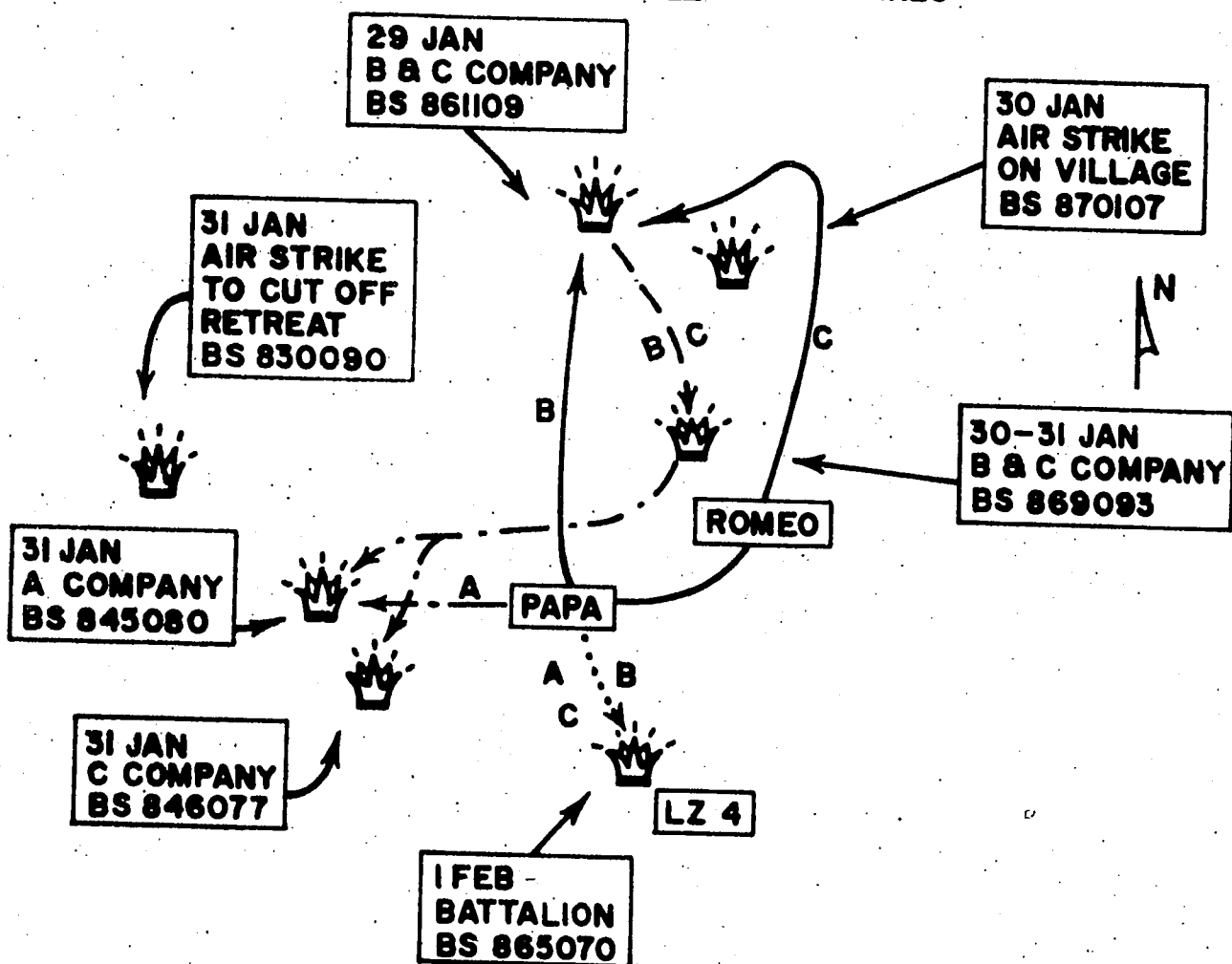
29 JAN TO 1 FEB

LEGEND

— 29 JAN
 - - - 30 JAN
 - . - 31 JAN
 1 FEB

0 1000 2000 3000
SCALE (METERS)

= AIR STRIKES



SECRET

SECRET

2/7 and immediately after the strikes two companies attacked north and cleared the area. This area contained an elaborate fortification system, with trenches, bunkers, holes, and tunnels. It was estimated that a company had originally manned this position, and had moved out at night leaving a platoon with automatic weapons to fight a delaying action. ^{9/}

At 1445H, four A-1E's from the 602nd Fighter Squadron struck the enemy trenches and AW emplacements with GP's, napalm, and white phosphorous.

At 1650H, the enemy broke contact and withdrew to the north. The day's activities cost the enemy a total of 44 KIA (body count) and 60 KIA (estimate). The 1/7 Cav losses totaled two KIA and 18 WIA. ^{10/}

On 30 Jan 66, the battalion began moving south toward ROMEO. Sorties were flown against a village to the east from which sniper fire was emanating. The strikes resulted in two secondary explosions and numerous structures destroyed. While attempting to cross a river, the battalion encountered heavy resistance and had to dig in for the night. Four A-1E sorties were flown before dark, drawing heavy fire from the target area. The strikes resulted in one secondary explosion. Sniper and mortar fire were received all night and a flareship was utilized continuously. The intensity of enemy fire noticeably increased upon each occurrence of a dud flare. ^{11/} At 0515H, 31 Jan 66, the battalion's perimeter began receiving heavy automatic weapons and mortar fire. The attacking enemy force was estimated to be two companies. Two FAC-directed A-1E's hit the enemy in a tree line with resultant 90 percent target coverage. ^{12/} At 0900H, the North Vietnamese withdrew to the

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southwest and the battalion moved out in pursuit. "A" Company contacted a small covering force and an air strike was called for at 1620H in order to cut off any withdrawal of the enemy to the west. Two heavy fire fights developed. The fire was so intense that it was impossible for "C" Company to link up with "A" Company. At 1745H, "B" Company was committed to help extract "A" Company from its position. Air strikes were called in, and ten sorties were flown against automatic weapons positions and Viet Cong concentrations before all friendlies were clear. Prior to this, the fighting had been at such close range that it was difficult to bring in support fire. "C" Company, meanwhile, was able to withdraw and link up with the rest of the battalion. The Viet Cong forces broke into small bands and began a withdrawal to the northwest, and west. The days encounter cost the enemy 67 KIA (body count) and 105 (estimated) and 110 WIA (estimated). Friendly losses were 13 KIA and 33 WIA. ^{13/}

On the 30th, 2/7 and 2/12 Cav made a sweep north with both battalions receiving sporadic resistance. Extensive use was made of air support to neutralize dug-in positions. ^{14/}

The 1/7 Cav moved south on 1 Feb 66. Four B-57's dropped on a tree line where dug-in positions were blocking the battalion's objective. After the strike, the battalion closed on the LZ. On 2 February, at 1000H, a B-52 strike was conducted on Position Steel. The 1/7 Cavalry entered the strike area after the strike to assess the damage and reported only one incident of small arms fire. ^{15/}

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On 1 Feb 66, a ground patrol from the 1/9 Cav made and then lost contact with a Viet Cong force approximately two miles NNW of Bong Son. One of the helicopters flying cover received a number of hits and was able to pinpoint the fire about 200 meters from the friendly troops. An air strike was requested while the armed helicopter made firing passes to keep the enemy pinned down. Two B-57's responded within ten minutes with napalm, general purpose and fragmentation bombs, and 20mm providing "excellent coverage". The fire was silenced, but BDA was impossible due to foliage and impending darkness. The ground troops were safely extracted without further contact. ^{16/}

From the 1st to the 4th of February 66, remnants of the 7th and 9th North Vietnamese Battalions were reported moving west toward the hills, with some wounded being carried on stretchers. Stragglers were spotted in many places and taken under fire or captured. From 4 to 6 February, there was no contact and Operation MASHER was concluded. During this period the 3rd Brigade prepared to enter the An Lao Valley.

Operation MASHER was considered highly successful, costing the enemy, at a minimum, the better part of a regiment. Enemy casualties for the operation are as follows:

VC KIA/KBA (BC)	603
VC KIA/KBA (EST)	956
VC WIA (EST)	357
VC Captured	242
Individual Weapons	49
Crew Served Weapons	6

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The Air Force support to the 1st Air Cavalry during the operation was summed up by Lt Colonel R. L. Kampe, 1/7 Cavalry Battalion Commander, 17/ in his after-action report:

"Once again TAC Air was responsive to our demands."

A total of 213 air strike sorties were flown by the Air Force, including 48 immediate requests which were all fulfilled.

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OPERATION WHITE WING

Operation WHITE WING took place in the An Lao Valley which is to the west of the coastal plain where Operation MASHER was conducted. The valley is 30 kilometers long from north to south and three kilometers wide and is bounded by the Da Dan Mountains on the east and the Chew Mountains on the west. Prior to the initiation of the operation, the 1/9 Cavalry had received intensive small arms and automatic weapons fire while flying over the valley. Captured documents indicated that either the 8th or 9th Battalion of the Quyet Tam Regiment had been in the valley. Also, small groups of wounded NVN were reported moving from the coastal plain (MASHER) to hospitals in the valley. There was no evidence that the units had left the valley prior to the start of the operation.

Tactical air was utilized for landing zone preparation during the assault on the high ground to the west of the valley. The landing took place without contact. The battalions continued to sweep through the valley and surrounding hills through the 10th of February without any significant contact and on 11 February, the 3rd Brigade moved south to prepare for EAGLE CLAW.

On the 11th, "C" Company of 1/5 came under small arms and automatic weapons fire while searching for a suspected hospital in the southern end of the valley. "B" Company was lifted into the area and immediately encountered heavy automatic weapons fire and mortar. An air strike was

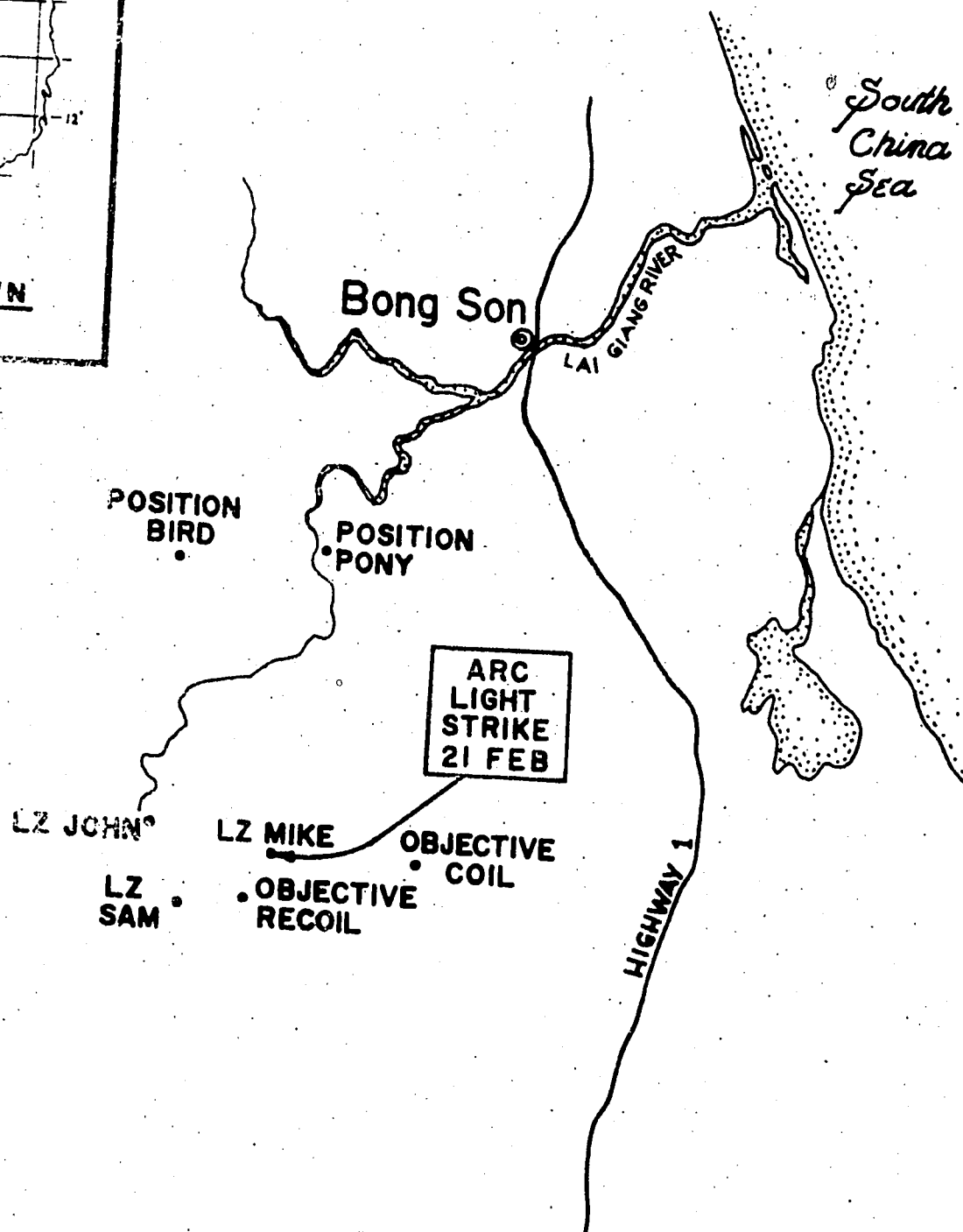
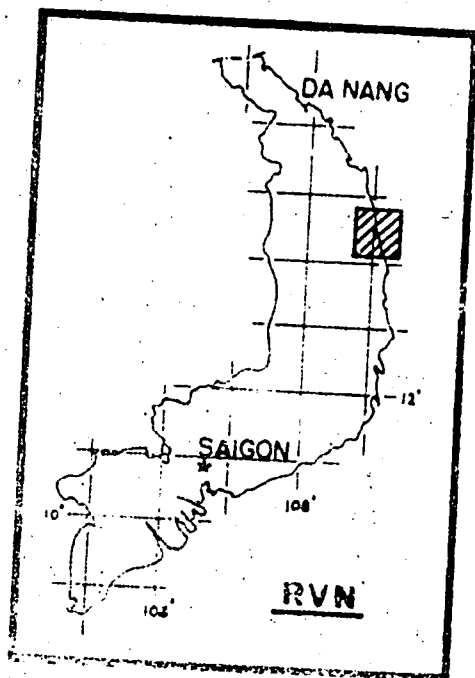
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called for and at 1810H two A-1E's struck the target, resulting in several secondary explosions. By 1815H, the enemy had broken contact. Sporadic contact was made through the night with Smokey Bear providing illumination. ^{18/}

On 15 February 66, the 2nd Brigade Headquarters was moved to Position Pony to prepare for Operation EAGLE CLAW. This terminated the operation in the An Lao Valley. From 7 through 15 February, 47 Viet Cong were confirmed killed and 180 were estimated to have been killed. ^{19/}

During the period there were 126 strike sorties flown in support of WHITE WING. Forward air controllers reported 335 structures destroyed, 29 Viet Cong killed by air, and 11 secondary explosions. ^{20/}

OPERATION EAGLE CLAW



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OPERATION EAGLE CLAW

Operation EAGLE CLAW was a continuation of WHITE WING and was conducted in the area to the south of the An Lao Valley from 11 February through 27 February 1966.

On 11 February, three battalions moved into positions around BIRD. Ambush positions were set up in the river valley to the northwest and southwest of BIRD. In addition, the 1/9 Cavalry moved into Position Pony and upon landing, received small arms and automatic weapons fire. ^{21/} Elements of the brigade engaged in fire fights with PAVN units throughout the period of operation. The Air Force Forward Air Controller serving with the 1/9 Cavalry related the following accounts of the air strikes in his after-action report.

"...On 12 February approximately 30 uniformed troops were seen moving up a trail into a tree line about 10NM southeast of Bong Son. An air strike was requested and although the weather was poor (2000 foot ceiling with rain and surrounding mountains obscured), two A-1E's responded within 20 minutes. White phosphorus, frags, and general purpose bombs were dropped with good coverage. No assessment was possible because of the dense foliage.

On the same day 15 to 20 uniformed troops fired at helicopters from foxholes on a ridgeline approximately 8NM south of Bong Son. An immediate air strike was requested and two A-1E's responded in 15 minutes with CBU, napalm, and 20mm. The fire was suppressed and five bodies were counted. Fire was received from the lines which were also struck. This fire was suppressed and additional kills were estimated. The following day Cavalry troops were put on the ridgeline and encountered additional resistance which was overcome. Ten bodies and some enemy weapons were found plus additional indications of other casualties. The exact breakdown of KBA and/or KIA by ground fire or helicopters could not be determined.

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During a ground operation on the 17th of February approximately 20NM south of Bong Son friendly troops were unable to advance due to heavy fire from dug-in positions. Artillery was used but the fire stopped. The troops advanced with no contact, but found packs, ammunition, and traces of blood...." 22/

The only significant contact for the 3rd Brigade occurred on 15 February 1966. At 0900H, the 2nd Platoon of the 2/7 Cavalry's "B" Company began receiving small arms and mortar fire. After developing the situation, the company commander determined that the enemy was dug-in along a hillside. ARA and artillery fire was brought in with good results and "B" Company began maneuvering against the flank of the positions. The enemy was forced to retreat in disorder, and an air strike was called in on them while they were in the open. The action terminated at 1745H, with a body count of 57 Viet Cong and an estimated 93 killed. 23/

The 3rd Brigade was withdrawn from the area of operation and returned to the division's base camp at An Khe on 16 and 17 February 1966. The brigade, together with supporting air strikes, accounted for 290 enemy killed during its portion of Operation EAGLE CLAW while losing only seven men.

The Air Liaison Officer felt that the Brigade Commanding Officer was well pleased with the air support he received. 24/

"...On two occasions the 1st Brigade C.O. was on site while close air support strikes were in progress. He was impressed with fighter aircraft capabilities and accuracy. He relayed his appreciation to the flights concerned. It was his feeling that TAC Air was directly

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responsible for destroying the 18th Regiment Command Post and routing the enemy...."

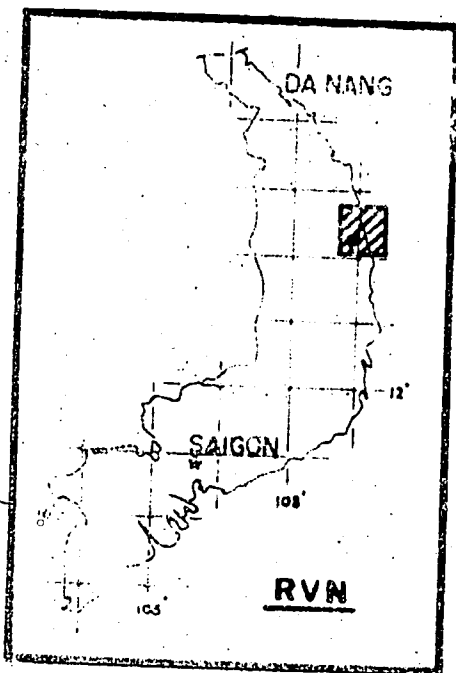
Captain David R. Brown, the FAC for 1/12 Cavalry, gave the following accounts of air support for the battalion: ^{25/}

"...On 22 February TAC Air was called in to support "B" Company which was engaged by an unknown number of Viet Cong. Aerial post-strike reconnaissance revealed nine Viet Cong bodies. On 23 February both "A" and "C" Companies were heavily engaged by a large force of Viet Cong. Immediate air support was requested and 12 sorties were provided.

On one of its probes, the 1/12 Cavalry came under heavy fire and the 2/8 Cavalry was directed to sweep the hill mass to the NE of BIRD where the activity had taken place. On the fourth day "A" Company encountered a large PAVN force in the late afternoon. The FAC serving with 2/8 Cavalry related the following: ^{26/}

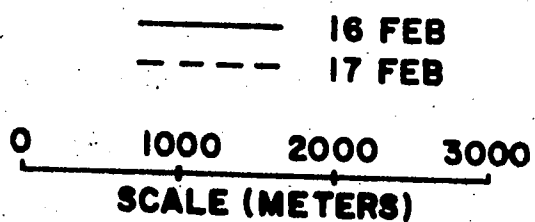
"...The enemy position were well dug-in and considerable automatic weapons fire was experienced. Close air support could not be employed because of the proximity of the friendlies to the enemy line. Under the cover of darkness separation was achieved and an immediate strike was obtained. Smokey Bear provided the light, F-4C's provided the fire, and the airborne FAC and ground ALO provided the coordination. Rockets and 20mm were expended with extreme accuracy; however, the napalm was short of the target. ...A significant number of KIA/KBA were policed up...."

The 2nd Brigade portion of EAGLE CLAW took place from 15 to 27 February in the Ho Son Mountain area southwest of Bong Son, and to the southeast of the 3rd Brigade area of operation. The Song Bien River flows in a southwesterly direction through the heart of the area of

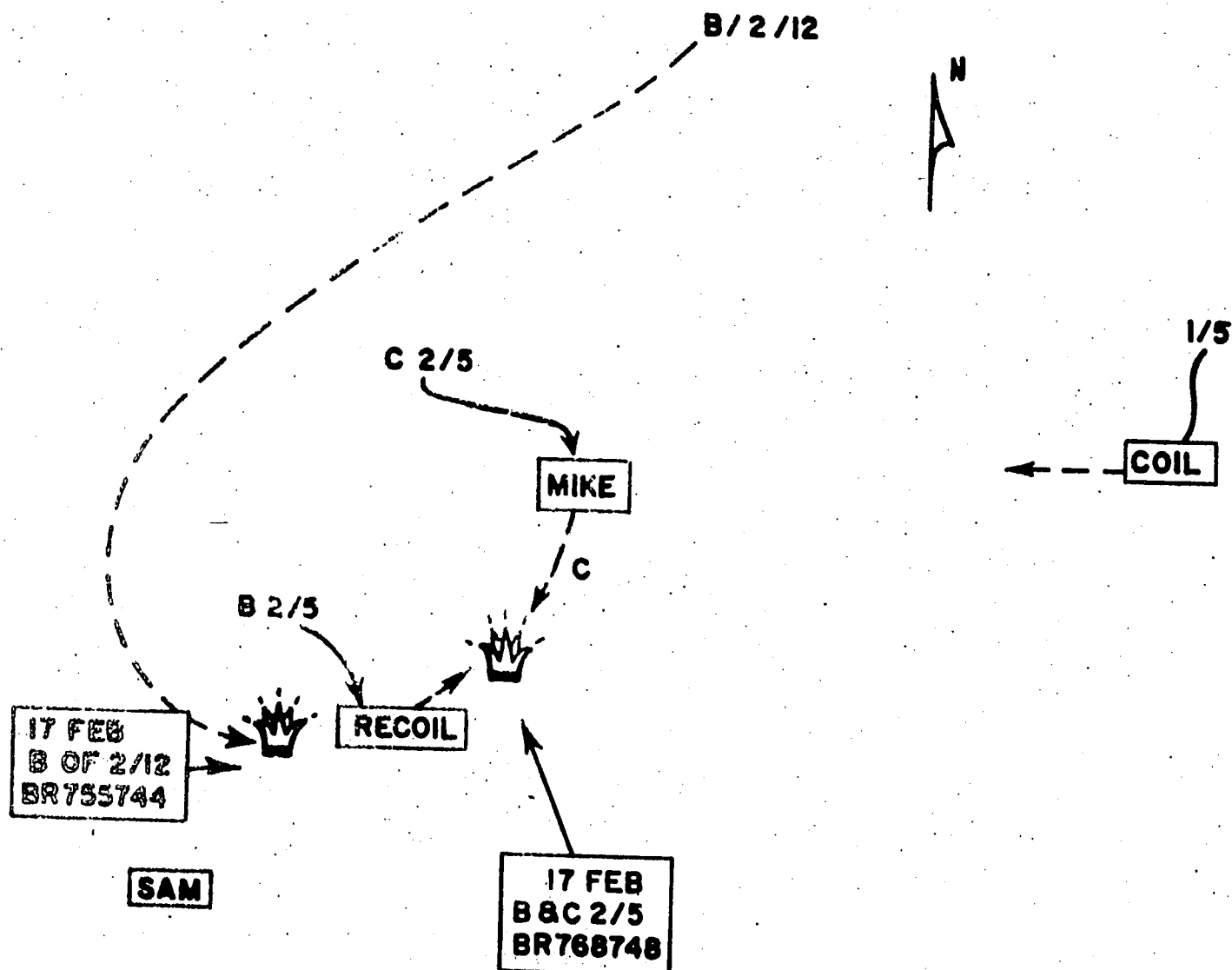


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2 ND BRIGADE 16-17 FEB

LEGEND



 = AIR STRIKES



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operation. The river valley is covered with elephant grass five to six feet high and the surrounding mountains are heavily forested. The area was so dense with jungle growth that landing zones were extremely limited in size and number.

Because of the intense fighting that took place in this area, it was nicknamed "The Iron Triangle". Based on the defensive positions and number and type of weapons encountered, it was estimated that elements of the 93rd and 95th Battalions of the Quyet Chien (2nd VC) Regiment and elements of the Regimental Headquarters and Weapons Battalion were engaged in the "Iron Triangle".

Extensive TAC Air was used to prepare landing zones, and air cover was used throughout the operation to strike at pockets of enemy resistance. Also during the operation, SAC provided a B-52 strike on the "Iron Triangle". The attack was made with two flights of three aircraft each with excellent coverage. ^{27/}

The operation commenced on 16 February with an air strike on objective COIL followed by a 20 minute artillery preparation. 1/5 Cavalry was airlifted into COIL, 2/5 Cavalry closed into RECOIL, and "C" Company of 2/5 Cavalry was moved to LZ MIKE to round out the blocking positions. ^{28/}

At 0630H, 17 Feb 66, artillery fired preparatory rounds into the area between COIL and RECOIL and two companies of 1/5 Cavalry moved west from COIL toward the blocking position set up by 2/5 Cavalry.

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Artillery and Tactical Air was utilized to support the ground troops. By 1800H, the enemy had broken contact after losing an estimated 227 men (127 body count and another 100 by estimate). From the heavy weapons, automatic fire, network of bunkers, and communications wire found in the area, it was determined that 2/5 Cavalry had attacked and destroyed a heavy weapons battalion. ^{29/}

Earlier on the morning of the 17th, "A" Company of 2/12 Cavalry operating southeast of PONY had come under heavy enemy attack by an estimated Viet Cong Company at 0415H. Artillery and Smokey Bear, a flare aircraft, were used in support of the company with the enemy breaking contact at 0700H. The Viet Cong lost 15 men by body count along with numerous weapons and ammunition which were found in the battle area. ^{30/}

On the 18th, the 1/5 Cavalry continued to push west toward the blocking positions. At 1205H, the 3rd Platoon of "B" Company became engaged with an estimated company size force. At 1350H, the 2nd Platoon of "A" Company became engaged in the same vicinity. Air strikes were called in on the enemy position. Eight A-1E's attacked in pairs at 1250H, 1340H, 1715H, and 1910H. ^{31/} The two platoons remained pinned down by extremely heavy automatic weapons fire until dark, at which time they were able to break contact and retrieve their dead and wounded. From the volume of fire received and the numerous bunkers in the area, it is believed that contact was made with a heavy weapons battalion. ^{32/}

2ND BRIGADE 18, 19, 20 FEBRUARY

AIR STRIKES

SECRET

20 FEB
A 2/12
BR 735758

19 FEB
A & C 1/5
BR 783758

COIL

SECRET

2/12

JOHN

MIKE

A & B
1/5

BLOCK
3

18 FEB
A & B 1/5
BR 779757

C 2/5

RECOIL

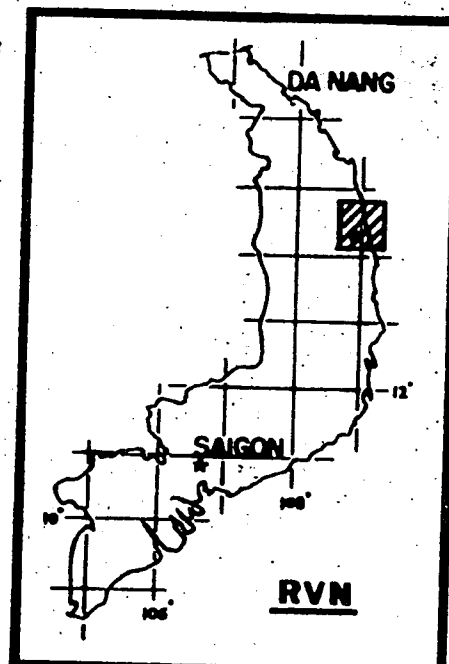
SAM

19 FEB
C 2/5 B 2/12
BR 750740

LEGEND

—	18 FEB
- - -	19 FEB
- . -	20 FEB

0 1000 2000 3000
SCALE (METERS)



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On 19 February 1966, 2/12 Cavalry was moved into LZ SAM, southwest of the "Iron Triangle," and conducted sweeps in the area. "C" Company, 2/5 Cavalry, conducted a sweep toward LZ SAM and at 0910H made contact with a Viet Cong platoon. "B" Company, 2/12 Cavalry, became engaged with another enemy platoon. Both companies broke contact while two flights of A-1E's and artillery raked the area. Both units maneuvered to the high ground and conducted a coordinated attack against the enemy positions causing the enemy to withdraw. After the action, 36 Viet Cong bodies were found in the area. ^{33/}

On 20 February 1966, "A", "B", and "C" Companies of 1/5 Cavalry were still in blocking positions around the "Iron Triangle". "C" Company attacked the enemy stronghold after a heavy artillery preparation, but once again was stopped by concentrated fire power from well constructed positions. The company withdrew, and once again artillery and tactical air began to pound the area.

On 21 February 1966, most of the activity involved clearing troops from the area of the "Iron Triangle" to prepare for a B-52 strike later in the day. One platoon of "C" Company moved into the area early in the morning and once again received heavy fire from the same position as before. The platoon was withdrawn. At 1000H, the first flight of B-52's dropped its bombs and at 1601H, the second flight struck. Colonel William R. Lynch, 2nd Brigade Commander, was airborne to observe the strike and witnessed the first bomb when it detonated. "That first explosion was right on the money, and the target coverage was fantastic." ^{34/}

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By darkness "A" and "C" Companies were backed up to the area where they stayed for the night.

On the morning of 22 February 1966, 1/5 Cavalry attacked into the "Iron Triangle". They encountered no resistance but found 41 bodies and numerous weapons throughout the area.

From the 23rd through the 27th, there was no major action.

The 2nd Brigade portion of EAGLE CLAW resulted in 339 Viet Cong KIA/KBA (body count), 409 Viet Cong KIA/KBA (estimated), 1023 WIA (estimated), and 17 Viet Cong captured. American losses were 48 KIA and 211 WIA.

The significant role played by tactical air was pointed out in the 2nd Brigade after-action report:

"...The extensive use of artillery and tactical air inflicted great losses on the enemy. The exact number will never be known, however, blood trails and bloody bandages found throughout the area indicated that the enemy suffered more casualties than were counted."

Several thousand rounds of artillery and approximately 20 sorties of tactical air were fired into the "Iron Triangle". All of the above described firepower, including the B-52 strikes, was necessary to prevent heavy casualties to the infantry which had attacked the area from three directions on the two previous days...." 35/

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OPERATION BLACK HORSE

On the first of March, the 2nd Brigade moved into the Cay Giép Mountains to the southeast of Bong Son to initiate Operation BLACK HORSE. The Brigade made very little contact with the enemy as evidenced by the small number of Viet Cong killed. Through the 4th of March when the operation was terminated, only 19 Viet Cong were reported killed.

Tactical air was used to prepare landing zones and to strike at suspected Viet Cong targets throughout the area of operation. Colonel Lynch, the Brigade Commander, was very well pleased with the job done by tactical air in the clearing of landing zones. ^{36/} Because of the extremely dense foliage, air strikes had to be used to clear away enough of the cover to allow troops to be lowered into the area by ladder to finish the job with chain saws.

On the 4th and 5th of March, the 2nd Brigade moved from Bong Son back to the base camp at An Khe thus completing the movement of the 1st Air Cavalry out of the area of operation. ^{37/}

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SUMMARY

In the WHITE WING-MASHER operation, the Viet Cong lost 1342 killed (body count), another estimated 1746 killed, 1348 estimated wounded and 633 Viet Cong captured, including a battalion commander, mortar company commander, and the executive officer of a regimental headquarters company. There were 485 Cheiu Hoi ralliers and 1087 Viet Cong suspects detained. There were 208 individual weapons and 52 crew served weapons captured during the operation. Friendly losses were 228 killed, (including 42 1st Air Cavalry personnel killed in a C-123 crash on 25 Jan 66), and 788 wounded. In addition, four USAF crew members were killed in the C-123 crash and two USAF FAC's were killed in an O-1 crash on 2 Mar 66. ^{33/}

There were 600 USAF tactical air sorties flown throughout the operation, an average of 14.6 per day. USAF tactical aircraft dropped 427.25 tons of GP bombs, 165.30 tons of napalm, and 265.32 tons of frag bombs. An estimated 102 enemy troops were killed by USAF aircraft with another 20 killed by air according to body count. Fifty of the estimated Viet Cong killed by air were accounted for on 29 Jan 66 during the heavy contact of the 1/7 Cavalry when A-1E's of the 602nd Fighter Squadron raked enemy trenches with GP, napalm, and WP. ^{39/}

Airlift, both Army and USAF, played a heavy role during the operation. Between 25 January and 6 March 1966, 9700.9 tons of cargo were airlifted along 93,351 passengers. In all 78 infantry battalions and 55 artillery batteries were moved by air. The division kept at least four infantry

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battalions (and six for the majority of the period) in sustained operations for 41 days at an average distance from the Division ^{40/} An Khe base of 65 kilometers.

The Division after-action report commented on the role of air. One significant remark was that attacking ground units could best exploit close artillery and air support in mountainous terrain when the directions of flight or gun-target lines generally paralleled the long axis of the objective area (i.e., the valley floor or ridge-line). In this way, the ground force could attack from a direction perpendicular to the line of flight or fire with greater safety. Also, more of the ordnance could be expended in the intended objective areas than when the direction of flight or firing was "cross" compartment. ^{41/}

A U-10 psywar aircraft of the 5th Air Commando Squadron was used throughout the operation on day and night missions, carrying normal leaflet and loudspeaker messages as well as funeral dirges and wailing sounds over enemy areas following a period of heavy contact. The aircraft was used to play on the superstitious beliefs of the enemy. ^{42/}

Commenting on the reaction time of USAF tactical air support, the division noted that all immediate requests had a 15-30 minute reaction time. Immediate requests were submitted by Air Force radio nets while pre-planned requests were submitted by Army communications (land line). DASC Alpha at Nha Trang handled all tactical air requests. Of the total sorties flown, 390 were pre-planned and 210 were immediates. ^{43/}

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The USAF ALO with the 1st Brigade, which was in the field between 17 February and 27 February 1966, pointed out several problem areas in tactical air support. He noted that the requirement for submitting pre-planned requests by 1000H of the previous day did not permit realistic planning after the initial move or assault. A more realistic time would be 1900H, he said, to allow for realistic planning at all levels. In one case, three pre-planned requests were not filled because the G-3 tried to use the air CAP which had previously expended on immediates. There was some misuse of air, according to the ALO, 1st Brigade, Major James H. Mullins. The 1/8 Cavalry called for objective preparations by tactical air and then the objective was never taken. ^{44/}

Major Mullins reported that the average time from receipt of immediate requests for fighters to fighters overhead was less than 15 minutes. Tactical air was responsible for saving elements of the 1/8 and 1/12 and the Brigade Commander felt that tactical air was directly responsible for destroying the enemy's 18th Regiment CP and routing the enemy.

On one occasion, division struck a target within the Brigade TAOR without informing the Brigade. This created a problem of safety for friendlies and it alerted the enemy in an area planned for assault in the next few days. On another occasion, an assault was delayed because an air strike was conducted over the area where choppers were trying to move out artillery. ^{45/}

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Communications between ground stations and between ground and air was poor, Major Mullins said. He suggested use of the PRC-71 on the next operation. Also, the use of a FAC in the TOC ship was found to be very effective. Air Force-Army coordination was expedited and the exact location of friendlies was more accurately determined by the airborne FAC. ^{46/}

Major Mullins recommended that a FAC not be sent to the field. Two FAC's could be placed at Brigade and if the need arose, one could go forward to provide FAC service. The Brigade Commander visited each unit twice a day and coordination could be accomplished by the ALO at this time. This would also put more airborne FAC's on duty and increase chances of survival by having two FAC's and FAC aircraft up at the same time. ^{47/}

The FAC with the 1/8 Cavalry, Captain Loring K. Latimer, reported that CBU effectiveness in jungle terrain was questionable. Many unexploded bombs were found and in several cases, troops were handling them, not knowing what they were. He recommended that all troops be briefed on the size, shape, and color of bomblets and that CBU be used in open terrain to reduce the "dud" rate. ^{48/}

Many FAC's involved in the operation reported that commanders of their units were highly impressed by the performance of air during MASHER/WHITE WING. The response time for immediate requests was particularly impressive. Considerable praise was also given to B-52 support

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which was considered to have contributed heavily to the reduction of friendly casualties.

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OPERATION MASHER AND WHITE WING

Glossary

ALO Air liaison officer
ARA Aerial rocket artillery
ARVN Army of the Republic of Vietnam
AW Automatic weapons
BDA Bomb damage assessment
CAP Combat air patrol
CP Command post
FAC Forward air controller
GP General purpose
KBA Killed by air
KIA Killed in action
LZ Landing zone
NVN North Vietnam
ROK Republic of Korea
TOC Tactical Operation Center (Army)
VC Viet Cong
WP White phosphorous

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OPERATION MASHER AND WHITE WING

Footnotes

(References as noted provided in one copy to AFCHO and in DOPEC file copy.)

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- 8/ (S) Field Report for Operation MASHER/WHITE WING, FAC 1/9 Cav Sq, 6 Mar 66 (Doc 2).
- 9/ Combat Operations After-Action Report, Operation MASHER/WHITE WING, 3rd Brigade, 1st Air Cav Division, 10 Mar 66 (Doc 1).
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- 11/ (S) Operation MASHER/WHITE WING, After-Action Report, FAC 1/7 Cav, 11 Mar 66 (Doc 3).
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- 26/ (S) After-Action Report, Asst, ALO 1st Brigade, 24 Mar 66 (Doc 8).
- 27/ (C) Combat Operations After-Action Report, Operation EAGLE CLAW, 2d Brigade, 1st Air Cav Division, 16 Mar 66 (Doc 9).
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- 35/ (C) Combat Operations After-Action Report, Operation EAGLE CLAW 2d Brigade, 1st Air Cav Division, 16 Mar 66 (Doc 9).

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- 36/ (C) Combat Operations After-Action Report, Operation BLACK HORSE, 2d Brigade, 1st Air Cav Division, 16 Mar 66 (Doc 10).
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- 43/ Ibid.
- 44/ (S) After-Action Report, ALO, 1st Brigade, 1st Air Cav Division, 24 Mar 66 (Doc 6).
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- 46/ Ibid.
- 47/ Ibid.
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