

3rd Brigade 101st Airborne Division (Ambl)

Operational Report – Lessons Learned

For period ending- 30 April 1970

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Headquarters 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)
APO San Francisco 96383

3-187
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AVDG-CA-E

5 May 1970

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SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned
Headquarters 3rd Bde, 101st Abn Div (Aml) for period
ending 30 Apr 70. RCS for 65 - (R2)

Commanding General
101st Abn Div (Aml)
AFIN: AVDG-GC-H
APO San Francisco 96383

CLASSIFIED BY: cb 101
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO YEAR
INTERVALS
DECLASSIFIED ON: 31 DECEMBER 1976

1. (C) Section I, Operations: Significant Activities:

The 3d Bde accomplished coordinated and combined operations in assigned AO; conducted extensive operations in the piedmont regions to locate, interdict and destroy enemy forces in order to provide maximum security for the population; conducted pacification operations in PHONG DIEN and HUONG DIEN districts to train and up-grade territorial forces and eliminate the VC/LF/VCI; on order, conducted extensive patrolling and surveillance and quick reaction, limited operations within brigade patrol and surveillance zones; conducted quick reaction, limited objective operations into northwest QUANG TRI province in response to hard intelligence or to reinforce MAI LOC Special Forces Camp.

(1) The 1st Bn (Aml), 506th Inf operated in the lowlands and mountains south of Camp Evans between 1 February and 25 February 1970. During this period two (2) companies were employed in ambush operations in the lowlands, while the other two (2) companies were employed in patrol and surveillance operations in the mountains in the southern portion of the AO. From 25 February until the end of the reporting period, the battalion occupied one (1), occasionally two (2) firebases and conducted patrol and surveillance operations. The lowlands were turned over to other units and the battalion began to operate further south into the mountains as the reporting period progressed. PSB's MOONEY, GRANITE and RAKKASAN were occupied successively as operations proceeded to the south and the reporting period culminated with a two (2) company operation south of the RAO TRANG river, vicinity PSB MAUREEN (YD428121) commencing on 25 April 1970.

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DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS
DOD DIR 5200.10~~

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FSB MOONEY was occupied on 25 February by D Company and remained open until 15 March. FSB GRANITE was opened by C Company on 11 March and remained open until 28 March. On 20 March at 0210H, FSB GRANITE received a sapper attack from an estimated company size element which resulted in 18 NVA KIA, 10 US KIA and 31 US WIA. On 28 March, a company opened FSB RAKKASAN and occupied the fire base until 10 April. On 10 April, D Company assumed the mission of construction and security for the firebase for the remainder of the reporting period.

(2) During the period 1 Feb 70 thru 31 Mar 70, the 2d Bn (Aml), 506th Inf continued participation in the 3d Bde operation, RANDOLPH GLEN. The battalion operated in the piedmont and mountains to the west of Camp Evans. Three (3) maneuver companies and the Recon Platoon conducted patrol and surveillance, and SRRP operations in assigned AO with one rifle company located at FSB JACK (1 Feb to 17 Mar 70). During the period 1-30 Apr 70, the 2d Bn (Aml), 506th Inf participated in the 3d Bde operation, TEXAS STAR. The battalion operated jointly with the 2d and 4th Bn of the 1st ARVN Regt in AO PEAR, vicinity FSB RIPCORN. From 1-11 Apr 70 the battalion forward TOC was located at FSB GLADIATOR. From 11-30 Apr 70 one rifle company and the battalion forward TOC were located on FSB RIPCORN with three (3) rifle companies and the recon platoon operating in the battalion AO.

(3) From 1 February 70 to 31 March 70 the 3d Bn (Aml), 187th Inf conducted: offensive operations and assisted GVN agencies with pacification efforts in assigned AO; conducted advisory training and liaison missions with GVN forces; conducted combined operations to deny the enemy access to population and resources in AO with emphasis on resettlement areas; coordinated the entire effort of all US and GVN forces in the AO through OPCON, integration of forces, and close coordination of independent unit operations in assigned AO.

2. (C) Section II, Lessons Learned: Commander's Observations, Evaluations and Recommendations:

a. Personnel:

(1) Personnel Rotation.

(a) Observation: A high percentage of personnel rotated during the last two (2) weeks of March and throughout the month of April.

(b) Evaluation: A high number of enlisted personnel received adjusted DEROS dates, allowing them to DEROS earlier than had been planned. The unexpected rotation of personnel interrupted the smooth flow of operations. This was particularly noted in relation to NCO status.

(c) Recommendation: It is felt that the infusion program initiated by Division AG in late March will preclude recurrence of this problem.

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(2) Combat Casualties:

(a) Observation: The 3d Bde experienced a high number of combat casualties during the last six (6) weeks of the reporting period.

(b) Evaluation: The high number of combat casualties, during the latter part of the reporting period, had an adverse effect on the battalion's capability to maintain adequate "foxhole" strength in line companies. The basic problem stems from the many wounded personnel who have been returned from hospitals after treatment, yet have not sufficiently recuperated, to be returned to duty in the forward areas of the AO. These personnel are counted against the units assigned strength and effect the lowering of "foxhole" strength due to their incapacitation.

(c) Recommendation: That personnel in the aforementioned category be transferred to a medical holding detachment so that replacements may be obtained.

(3) Present for duty strength losses, through Reenlistment leaves:

(a) Observation: This brigade has highly accelerated its reenlistment program resulting in a large number of personnel not present for duty due to reenlistment (30 day) leaves.

(b) Recommendation: This headquarters recommended to Division Headquarters, that personnel in the aforementioned category be reassigned to the gaining unit upon reenlistment to alleviate the assignment of replacements. The recommendation was approved and is being accomplished.

b. Intelligence: None.

c. Operations:

(1) Use of Scout Dogs:

(a) Observation: On 31 Mar 70, a platoon of B/2-506 Inf was on patrol in the Bn AO. The platoon was breaking trail and not walking on an already existing one. A scout dog and handler were attached to the platoon.

(b) Evaluation: Because the platoon was breaking trail, the dog was not walking point, but was walking third in the formation. The platoon was engaged by an estimated enemy squad from approximately 5-7 meters, and the dog did not react to the presence of the enemy.

(c) Recommendation: The inability of the dog to break trail did not enable him to be used in the most effective way, that of walking point. Wet weather conditions also decreased the dog's ability to detect the enemy. The combination of working in mountain areas, in thick underbrush, and during monsoon weather has made the use of the scout dog generally unsatisfactory.

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(2) Tracker Dog Support:

(a) Observation: Responsiveness of tracker dog support was not always in time to be of value in assisting in the location of the enemy.

(b) Evaluation: The requirement for tracker dog support occurs both day and night. Response time for the employment of a tracker dog team is especially critical in the lowlands since the trail may be destroyed following a night contact by innocent civilians moving from hamlet areas to work sites. Tracker teams must, therefore, have the capability of being employed with a minimum reaction time.

(c) Recommendation: Tracker dog teams should be on a 24 hr basis. In addition, air assets should also be on call on a 24 hr basis in order to deploy tracker dog teams in an objective area. The requesting unit must maintain the capability for marking landing zones both day and night for insertion of tracker dog teams.

(3) LZ Construction:

(a) Observation: To complete the Division requirement for maximum number of LZ's constructed within the area of operation, the 2d Bn (Ambl), 506th Inf employed the use of two man LZ cutting teams which rappel into an area to cut an LZ. Military dynamite and TNT are not practical in the field because they cannot take the abuse of the field and weather conditions; they crumble and become unusable within a short period. LZ kits, consisting of axes and cross-cut saws, are being dropped into units to try to reduce the noise of chain saws, and as a back-up when chain saws are in maintenance.

(b) Evaluation: The LZ cutting team's equipment includes chain saws and enough demolition to cut a one ship LZ. One rifle platoon secures the area and helps in the construction of the LZ.

(c) Recommendation: Recommend that C-4 and det cord be made more readily available; line units could then carry enough demolitions to construct an LZ, and would not have to waste time waiting for an LZ cutting team to arrive. At a minimum, the ground unit could start the LZ and prepare an area for a safer rappel.

(4) Employment of ARA in Canopy:

(a) Observation: On 8 Apr 70, the 3d Platoon of D Company, 2d Bn (Ambl), 506th Inf employed a Pink Team on a suspected enemy location. The smoke shifted under the jungle canopy and a friendly fire incident occurred resulting in 12 US casualties.

(b) Evaluation: The ARA aircraft called for smoke to mark the friendly location. Smoke was employed, but before the smoke rose through the canopy to be observed by the aircraft, the wind blew the smoke behind the friendly troops. When the ARA fired forward of the smoke, it fired into the platoon because the smoke had shifted, inaccurately marking the friendly loc.

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(c) Recommendation: One way to alleviate this problem is the use of M-79 smoke canisters. The round is fired through the canopy and a parachute type device catches on the canopy, thus the smoke is emitted above the canopy marking the friendly location more accurately. This is being used on an experimental basis within the Battalion. Much care should be taken on the direction of the wind when employing smoke to mark locations.

(5) Internal Subsector Communication:

(a) Observation: Communications between subsector and the hamlets is not on a 24 hr basis.

(b) Evaluation: Regardless of the civil or military situation at subsector level, communication is the key to positive control. Population, resources control and protection require that the subsector maintains the capability for communicating with villages and hamlets on a 24 hr basis. The absence of positive communications within the subsector will allow the enemy to operate at will, to exert his influence on the population and resources of a subsector. Piecemeal information referred to the subsector by an outside source will cause the subsector to over or under react.

(c) Recommendation: Command emphasis, at all levels by US commanders and advisors, should be placed on the Vietnamese in an effort to establish a positive communications system with the subsector. It is only after positive communications have been established that the subsector will be capable of providing the required protection for population and resources within the subsector.

(6) Vietnamese Chain of Command.

(a) Observation: The Vietnamese will not respond to commands from US forces, since the Vietnamese commander is indoctrinated to act only on order from his next immediate commander. Local initiative is not encouraged.

(b) Evaluation: The Vietnamese chain of command must be thoroughly understood and exercised by US forces if any degree of success is to be achieved in employing Vietnamese forces in combat operations.

(c) Recommendations: In order to elicit effective performance from Vietnamese forces, orders must come down through their chain of command. For Regional Forces, the order should originate from sector level, and; in the case of Popular Forces, the order should originate from the sub-sector level. This action is required to insure that RF and PF units conduct operations which are necessary for the successful accomplishment of their military missions.

d. Organization:

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(1) Sniper teams:

(a) Observations: During the reporting period it was noted that there were difficulties in the scheduling of periodic sniper team re-zeroing and technical inspections of sniper team equipment.

(b) Evaluation: All sniper teams were consolidated and assigned to Co E of their respective battalion. This enables the snipers to be controlled and employed more effectively by the battalion commander. Periodic re-zeroing and technical inspections can be planned, and by placing all of the snipers under one commander (within the battalions), better control is attained.

(c) Recommendations: That all sniper teams be placed under one command at battalion level.

e. Training: None.

f. Logistics:

(1) Forward Resupply Points:

(a) Observations: Resupply from the forward area would allow resupply to be accomplished faster with fewer aircraft hours.

(b) Evaluation: It was found that conducting resupply from Camp Evans required approximately 40 minutes per resupply mission. With 4.5 hours allotted blade time, this meant that only nine (9) resupply sorties could be made per day. This is further reduced to approximately seven (7) sorties when refueling time is considered.

(c) Recommendation: That resupply of basic items such as food, water and ammunition be made from the firebase. One CH-47 sortie per day should be flown from the base camp to the firebase to maintain the necessary level of supplies at the forward resupply point. The blade time for the log helicopter should be computed from the time the log helicopter reports until it is released, rather than from take off at the base camp until it shuts down at the base camp upon completion of its mission.

g. Communications:

(1) Establishment of additional communications:

(a) Observations: During this reporting period the 3d Bde had for the most part four Bn's OPCON to its Area of Operation. It was necessary to establish additional communications with the maneuver battalions.

(b) Evaluation: With this number of maneuver battalions OPCON to the brigade, Opns and Intel secure net became overloaded.

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(c) Recommendation: Recommend that the Brigade install another Brigade secure net (Cmd Secure) with all Bns.

(2) Utilization of KY-28's.

(a) Observation: Problems were experienced when the Battalions did not utilize the KY-28 secure equipment in C & C aircraft.

(b) Evaluation: Coordination is required to stimulate the Battalion communications personnel and the Battalion Commanders to use their secure equipment on the Bn Cmd/Secure net; this way they are able to communicate with the Bde commander by secure means.

(c) Recommendation: Recommend that all KY-28's be hand-receipted to the HHC communications sections. This section is then responsible for installing and insuring that the equipment is operational prior to dispatching the aircraft to the Battalion.

(3) Secure radio teletype communication AN/VSC-2:

(a) Observation: Problems were experienced in establishing and maintaining secure teletype nets for Admin/Log communications at FSB's.

(b) Evaluation: Coordination is required between 801st Maint Bn and DISCOM to insure that requisitions for all components pertaining to the radio set AN/VSC-2 are valid and received in a relatively short period of time; that experienced maintenance personnel are available to provide a contact team to the Bde as needed.

(c) Recommendation: That a maintenance contact team include a radio repairman, teletype repairman, crypto repairman, and a wheeled vehicle mechanic that has a M-151 Jeep electrical background; the Division be provided with the latest teletype secure equipment such as the AN/GRC-142 to replace the AN/VSC-2 (with only one AN/VSC-2 authorized to each Bn, it is necessary to establish the same float criteria as Avionics radio equipment which is 20% of authorized TO&E equipment).

(4) Delay of Communications.

(a) Observation: It has been noted that communications are delayed and not of the best quality at some FSB's.

(b) Evaluation: That antennas are not located at the highest points of the FSB and not located close enough to the command post; that the commander of the FSB does not appreciate that he must have immediate and reliable communications.

(c) Recommendation: Recommend that the highest point possible be utilized for locating antennas; that the best location be provided for the communications section and once established, that it not be moved, as long as there are good, reliable communications.

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UNCLASSIFIED(5) Radio teletype capability:

(a) Observation: RTT communications capability is necessary to pass lengthy written reports from battalion to brigade when the battalion TOC is located on the firebase.

(b) Evaluation: Transmitting lengthy, recurring reports such as the daily plans summary by secure radio is unsatisfactory. The possibility of error is too great and the length of time required is excessive.

(c) Recommendation: A RTT net with secure capability should be established between battalion and brigade TOC's.

h. Material: None.

i. Other: Civic/Psyoops Operations.

(1) Night Aerial Broadcasts:

(a) Observation: Night aerial broadcasts cannot be heard on the ground when the aircraft is guided by radar in mountainous regions.

(b) Evaluation: When the aircraft flying an aerial broadcast mission over mountainous regions is guided by radar, it is often necessary to fly at such heights, because of high terrain, that the broadcast cannot be heard on the ground.

(c) Recommendations: That night aerial broadcasts in mountainous regions be conducted only on nights when it is light enough to see reference points on the ground, or only in places where the terrain will permit the aircraft to be guided on radar at a sufficiently low altitude (1000 ft above the level of the ground) for broadcasting.

(2) Civic Action:

(a) Observation: US units involved in civic action/pacification have a tendency to become impatient with the Vietnamese because of the speed at which they accomplish a project/program.

(b) Evaluation: The display of impatience on the part of an assisting US unit, result in a loss of rapport by the US unit accomplishing the program/project for the Vietnamese.

(c) Recommendation: That the US support of civic action/pacification efforts be planned to give long lasting results. All US efforts must be oriented to supplement and further enhance the existing Vietnamese programs rather than initiating new programs. US endeavors must provide the technical knowledge in the form of training and serve as a motivating force for the Vietnamese people to become self-sufficient. The US unit must always

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be on guard against impatience; this may lead to US personnel actually doing the job for the Vietnamese, thereby resulting in a loss of effectiveness of the program/project.

Julius C. Trepagnier, Jr.
for: W.J. BRADLEY
COL Infantry
Commanding

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- 1. Task Organization
- 2. Roster of Key Personnel

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ROSTER OF KEY PERSONNEL

- 1. Bde CO:
 COL William J. Bradley 1 Feb - Present
- 2. Bde DCO:
 LTC Hugh C. Holt 1 Feb - 1 Mar 70
 LTC Peter G. Fleming 1 Mar - Present
- 3. Bde XO:
 LTC Otis W. Livingston 1 Feb - 17 Apr 70
 LTC Jules C. Trepagnier, Jr. 2 Apr - Present
- 4. a. CO, 1-506 Inf:
 LTC David R. Pimney 1 Feb - 2 Mar 70
 LTC Hugh C. Holt 2 Mar - Present
- b. CO, 2-506 Inf:
 LTC Howard G. Crowell 1 Feb - 4 Mar 70
 LTC Andre C. Lucas 4 Mar - Present
- c. CO, 3-187 Inf:
 LTC Herbert Y. Schandler 1 Feb - Present
- d. CO, 2-319 Arty:
 LTC Robert D. Hammond 1 Feb - 25 Apr 70
 LTC William A. Walker 25 Apr - Present
- e. CO, 1-501 Inf:
 LTC William B. Middlemas 1 Feb - Present
- f. CO, 2-501 Inf:
 LTC Bobby F. Brashears 1 Feb - 18 Apr 70
 LTC Otis W. Livingston 18 Apr - Present
- g. CO, 2-502 Inf:
 LTC Roy J. Young 8 Apr - 12 Apr 70
- h. CO, 1-327 Inf:
 LTC Donald A. Yoder 18 Mar - 1 Apr

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TASK ORGANIZATION DURING THE REPORT PERIOD

HQ 3rd Bde 101st Abn Div (Ambl)

HHC 3rd Bde 101st Abn Div (Ambl)
1st Bn (Ambl); 506th Inf (OPCON 1st Bde 30 Apr -)
2nd Bn (Ambl); 506th Inf
3rd Bn (Ambl); 187th Inf (OPCON 2nd Bde 1-30 Apr 70)
1st Bn (Ambl); 327th Inf (18 Mar-1 Apr 70)
2nd Bn (Ambl); 501st Inf (1 Apr-19 Apr 70)
2nd Bn (Ambl); 502nd Inf (-) (13 Apr-19 Apr 70)
A Co, 2d Bn (Ambl); 502nd Inf (8 Apr-12 Apr 70)
D Co, 1st Bn (Ambl); 501st Inf (30 Apr -)
3d Bde Recon and Security Plat (OPCON XXIV Corps Hqs
(3 Apr - 30 Apr 70)
2nd Bn (Ambl); 319th Arty (DS)
B/326th Engr (Ambl)(DS)
3rd FSSE
C/326 Med Bn (Ambl)
Fwd Spt Plt/A/426th S&S Bn (Ambl)
3/265th RRU
3/101st MP Co (Ambl)
58th Inf Plt (Sct Dog)
Team 101st MI Co (Div)
Spt Tm, 501st Sig Bn (DS)
Co C/158th AHB (DS)
TACP, 20th TASS
34th PI Det (Field Service)
Cbt Weather Team
5th Weather Det
A/2-11 Arty (GSR 2-319)
C/4-77 ARA (GSR 2-319)
A/1-39 Arty (GSR 101 Div Arty)
C/2-94 Arty (GS XXIV Corps)

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