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OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST COMPANY, 8TH ARMORED CAVALRY  
REGIMENT (ARVN), ALONG NATIONAL HIGHWAY 21, REPUBLIC  
OF VIETNAM, 5-9 MARCH 1967. (PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF  
A TANK COMPANY ADVISOR.)

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Infantry Officers Advanced Course 1-68

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OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST COMPANY, 8TH ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT (ARVN), ALONG NATIONAL HIGHWAY 21, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, 5-9 MARCH 1967. (PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A TANK COMPANY ADVISOR.)

### INTRODUCTION

"To perform reconnaissance and surveillance and to provide security for the unit to which assigned or attached is the mission of the Armored Cavalry Regiment. It may also engage in offensive, defensive, or delaying action as a part of the main battle or be employed in an economy of force role."(4:3)

#### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ARVN A/C REGIMENT

The ten armored cavalry regiments in the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN) are generally organized with a headquarters and headquarters troop, one scout car troop, two armored cavalry troops, and a tank company (Table 1).

The Vietnamese tank company organization reflects the current United States (U.S.) Armor doctrine. The company consists of a headquarters and headquarters platoon and three line platoons (Table 2). The headquarters platoon has two U.S. built M-41 tanks and two U.S. M-113 armored personnel carriers (APC). The line platoons each have five M-41's.

The M-41 (Walker Bulldog) is a light reconnaissance tank used by active duty U.S. units until 1959. It is particularly well suited for use in Viet Nam because of its low ground pressure of 10.2 pounds per square inch (Table 3).

The M-113's used by the ARVN armored cavalry troops

and tank companies are standard-issue U.S. APC's. However, they are slightly modified, with one Browning .30 caliber machine gun mounted on either aft deck. In the tank headquarters platoon, one of the M-113's is used as a command vehicle and the other as a maintenance track.

#### THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE 8TH A/C REGIMENT

The ARVN 8th Armored Cavalry Regiment is organic to the ARVN II Corps. Its headquarters and tank company are stationed in the central highlands at the Provincial Capitol of Ban Me Thuot. Its scout car troop is located at Phan Rang. The two cavalry troops are deployed along the coastal plains. One is at Bon Song, and the other one is at Phan Thiet (Map 1).

#### THE MISSIONS OF 1/8

The 1st Tank Company of the 8th Armored Cavalry Regiment (1/8) has four missions: (1) to provide a reaction force for the defense of Ban Me Thuot; (2) to provide a relief force for the Special Forces Camps in the area; (3) to assist in the opening and securing of routes into and out of Ban Me Thuot; and (4) to conduct limited offensive operations in the 23rd ARVN Division tactical area of responsibility.

#### THE AREA ANALYSIS

The terrain in the Ban Me Thuot area of the central highlands consists mostly of rolling hills covered with 3-5 feet high elephant grass. Little of this area is

cultivated, but there are a few very large rubber plantations. The average elevation is about 400 meters.

The specific area discussed in this paper is located at coordinates BQ 3017, along National Highway 21 (Map 2). This highway is a two lane, high speed, macadam road built by the U.S. Corps of Engineers in 1959-60. It runs generally west from Nha Trang through Ban Me Thuot. At coordinates BQ 3017, the road forms a series of "S" curves. In this area, long range observation and fields of fire are possible north of the highway. However, to the south, these are limited by dense bamboo thickets. This bamboo affords good concealment and some cover. It is also an obstacle to all vehicles, including the M-41 tank. However, this is the only obstacle. All the streams in the area are fordable and the swamp is passable.

#### THE ENEMY SITUATION

The Viet Cong (VC) forces operating in the Ban Me Thuot area consist of small (platoon size) local units. They regularly operate tax collection points along Highway 21, near Khu Kuck mountain.

During February 1967, intelligence reports indicated the presence of a VC regiment south of Ban Ea Pal 1, coordinates BQ 3412 (Map 2). Although the Vietnamese scheduled numerous day and night patrols around Ban Me Thuot, there had been no recent enemy contact.

#### THE FRIENDLY SITUATION

In the past, 1/8 was a battle-proved, combat pro-

ficient unit. It had earned valorous recognition at the battles of Du Co and Plie Me in 1965. However, during 1966, the unit had not sustained any casualties nor had it killed any VC. In fact, the unit had made no enemy contact in over a year.

By March of 1967, the unit had absorbed numerous raw recruits. Thus, less than 60% of their total strength had seen any combat.

However, the unit had just finished a rather comprehensive training program. All of the tank crews had successfully fired their main guns and sub-caliber weapons within the past month. The unit had practiced battle formations, but had not worked adequately with dismounted infantry.

The leadership in the unit was outstanding, by Vietnamese standards. The company commander, Dai-uy Tam, had led the company for the past six months. He was a graduate of the Vietnamese Military Academy, the Vietnamese Armor School, and the Armor Basic and Armor Advanced Courses at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Dai-uy Tam had been a cavalry troop commander in the Mekong Delta for two years. There he had received numerous awards for gallantry in action. He was also recommended for the U.S. Bronze Star for Valor because of his attempt to save his U.S. advisor's life.

Like most ARVN tank companies, 1/8 had two U.S. advisors. I was the senior advisor and my assistant was Corporal (E-4) Linus Perkins.

I had served 10 months in Viet Nam. Six months with 3/8; one month each with 2/8 and 4/8; and the past two months with 1/8. Corporal Perkins had been

with 1/8 for four months. He was a combat veteran of both the Korean War and World War II.

The company executive officer (XO), first sergeant (1st/Sgt), and all of the tank commanders were combat veterans and well qualified tankers.

#### THE OPERATION BRIEFING

At 1600 hours on 4 March 1967, I received a warning order from Major Snell, the staff advisor of the 45th Infantry Regiment. By 1730 hours myself, my counterpart (Dai-uy Tam), and the commanders of all other units involved, assembled at the 45th Infantry Regimental Headquarters (ARVN) to receive the operation order.

My unit, 1/8, was placed under operational control of the ARVN 45th Infantry Regiment commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Canh. We were assigned a three-fold mission: (1) to assist, on 050600 March, in the opening and securing of National Highway 21; (2) to be prepared to provide night security for the regimental command post and ; (3) to be prepared to conduct daylight, combat and reconnaissance patrols in support of the road opening operation during 5-9 March 1967.

#### THE ORGANIZATION FOR COMBAT

In addition to operational control of the 1/8, Lieutenant Colonel Canh's task organization consisted of his own headquarters, the 3rd Battalion of the 45th (3/45) and the ARVN 23rd Division Reconnaissance Company. Also, division allocated one platoon of engineers

in direct support. For indirect fire support, Canh had one battery-minus of 105 and 155 howitzers.

Except for the first morning of the operation, he had no ARVN air support available. To compensate, the staff advisor, Major Snell, requested American Air Force support. Colonel Muller, the Air Force unit commander at Ban Me Thuot, assigned a forward air controller (FAC) for the duration of the operation. Also, American MEDEVAC helicopters and gunships, stationed at Ban Me Thuot, volunteered to assist if needed.



## NARRATION

### THE PREPARATION

After receipt of the order from the 45th Regimental Commander, my counterpart and myself returned to the tank company's base camp. There, Dai-uy Tam prepared the operation order for his company. I was able to assist in preparing this order because I was familiar with the area. In fact, just the previous day, I had conducted a thorough aerial reconnaissance from Ban Me Thuot to Khanh Duong. Thus, with the up-to-date information I supplied and Dai-uy's analysis of the mission, we completed the operation order.

The committed tank unit would consist of eleven tanks formed into three platoons. The 1st platoon and 3rd platoon would have four tanks each, but the 2nd platoon would have only three tanks. Of the six tanks left behind, two were dead-lined (one needed a transmission, the other needed a new main gun) and the other four would be used to form a mobile reserve for the defense of Ban Me Thuot.

The order of march was in accordance with the unit standard operating procedure (SOP). The 2nd platoon would lead, followed by the 1st platoon, headquarters platoon-minus, and the 3rd platoon. This organization was used because the 2nd platoon was commanded by the XO, who was the most experienced lieutenant in the company.

The HQ platoon consisted of only the command vehicle. The two HQ tanks were attached to the line platoons.

The maintenance track and one 1200 gallon gasoline tanker followed with the combat trains.

Because of the inherent mobility of the tank company, and the lack of medical APC's in the ARVN regimental organization, no ambulances were requested or attached. However, the company did take along one medic from the regiment. This soldier was one of the few school-trained Montagnard medics. Thus, he could provide not only medical support to the company, but also he could work with the S-5 in the local Montagnard villages. During the movement phases of the operation, the medic rode in the last tank of the 3rd platoon.

The basic load of the M-41 tank consisted of 2,000 rounds of .50 caliber machine gun ammunition, 3,000 rounds of .30 caliber machine gun ammunition, plus 57 rounds of 76mm main gun ammunition. The main gun ammo included 47 rounds of cannister, 5 rounds of High Explosive (HE), and 5 rounds of White Phosphorus (WP - Smoke). The M-41A1's had the same basic load, plus 10 additional rounds - 5 were HE and 5 were WP.

After inspecting the basic load and weapons, Dai-uy checked the radios and intercoms. All of them were working properly so he issued the new company frequency. (All the tanks worked on a common frequency. There were no platoon frequencies.) Finally, stand-to was ordered for 0500 hours the next day.

#### THE MOVEMENT FROM BAN ME THUOT

At 0500 hours, a final pre-combat inspection was conducted. This included the opening of the company

radio net, the issuing of rations, and the checking of the headspace and timing on the machine guns. The 1st of the 8th, which was to spearhead the task force, crossed the IP, as ordered, at 0700 hours on 6 March 1967.

The move from Ban Me Thuot went flawlessly. There was no enemy contact and no vehicles fell out. All during the move, the column was "covered" by the assigned Air Force FAC. The airborne FAC reported no sign of enemy activity. By 1100 hours, we had traveled approximately 50 kilometers (km) and arrived at the location chosen to be the task force command post. Here, the artillery and the field trains assembled and set up a base camp. My unit, 1/8, continued on another 25km to Khanh Duong. There we rendezvoused with one of the regional force (RF) units who were responsible for opening the road into Nha Trang.

At 1500 hours a convoy, which had departed Nha Trang that morning, passed our location. We escorted it back as far as the task force base camp. The convoy continued on to Ban Me Thuot without incident. My tank company formed a laager and established security around the CP area.

During the hours of darkness. it would have been difficult to conduct effective mounted patrols. Yet, my tank company didn't have sufficient strength, nor desire, to employ dismounted night patrols. Thus, we had to rely on local. two-man outposts for our early warning.

To help compensate for this lack of depth, Dai-uy

Tam ordered one man per tank awake all night. In case of a VC attack, this would give us immediate response with eleven .50 caliber machine guns. In addition to the shock effect of this massive fire power, the noise would alert the whole CP.

The effectiveness of this defense was not tested by the VC during the night.

#### THE ROAD OPENING

The task force had the responsibility of opening Route 21 for a distance of 25km on either side of base camp. Not only was this a long distance to clear, but also the mission had to be completed each day by 0800 hours.

To accomplish this mission, my counterpart sent one platoon west and one platoon east along the highway. At base camp he kept one platoon in reserve.

On the morning of the 7th, there was no enemy contact and the road was opened at 0745 hours. The two tank platoons then conducted reconnaissance patrols away from the highway and returned to base camp at 1200 hours. The same defense was used during the second night. In addition, the artillery fired harassing and interdictory fires (H and I) to the south. Again, the night was uneventful.

#### THE THIRD DAY

At 0600 hours, two tank platoons moved out and opened the road. Still, there was no enemy contact. However, about 1200 hours, a Montagnard civilian re-

ported that, during the night, a VC battalion had moved into an area just south of Ban Ea Pal 1. The Air Force FAC also reported the trace of heavy foot movement near 60km bridge (BQ 3117).

Upon analyzing this information, the 45th Regimental Senior Advisor, Major Wiegand, and the staff advisor, Major Snell, concluded that the VC were planning to attack our base camp. If this were so, then the most likely avenue of approach would be from Hill 458 to the north.

Thus, Major Snell proposed a plan for a spoiling attack on Hill 458. His recommendation was accepted by Canh and an operations order was issued. The plan called for team 1/8 to execute a coordinated attack to seize Hill 458. The team consisted of the 1/8 tank company with the 1st company 3/45th attached (Map 3). The team was to depart on 9 March, at first light.

During the night, the artillery fired an intense and coordinated H and I program. This included firing in a 6400mil arc into every grid square for a 6km depth. There was no detected enemy activity during the night.

#### THE AMBUSH

The morning of 9 March was extremely foggy with a visibility of only 1km. Due to this limited visibility and a 50 foot ceiling, our FAC was not airborne. However, the two 105's and two 155's were supposed to be prepared to fire instantly.

Confidently, at 0645 hours, team 1/8 left base camp. Their order of march was SOP. The first company

of the 3/45th mounted one platoon of infantry on each platoon of tanks. However few, if any, of these men had ever operated with tanks.

Although the infantry platoon leaders rode on the tanks with their men, the infantry company commander rode on the command track. With him were his American advisors, Lieutenant Myers and Staff Sergeant Easter, and his forward observer(FO) and his FO's radio operator. These men were in addition to the normal crew of a driver, a .50 caliber and a .30 caliber machine gunner, a loader, an E-8 operation sergeant, the Vietnamese company commander and myself. Corporal Perkins remained with the combat trains at base camp.

After leaving the CP area, the team headed east along Route 21. Approximately 2km from camp, the lead tank received light sniper fire. The tank returned fire with its .30 caliber, co-axial machine gun and the column continued to march. As the lead platoon advanced along the road at BQ 302176, the sniper fire increased.

At this point, Dai-uy Tam, the commander of team 1/8, ordered the HQ APC forward to join the lead platoon. We reached the 2nd platoon (lead platoon) at BQ 304175.

At this location, the ground rises slightly on the south side of the road. Also, the bamboo growth is extremely dense to within 10 meters of the paved surface.

Just as our vehicle slowed down behind the 2nd platoon, the VC company sprung its ambush (Illustration 1).

Two 57mm recoilless rifles (RR) were fired from the south at a range of 13 meters. The HE rounds struck the first and second tanks. Simultaneously, heavy and accurate automatic weapons fire raked the lead platoon and HQ M-113. Then, two more 57mm RR rounds exploded. One detonated against the right front shock absorber of the third tank, and the other landed two feet in front of our APC.

In this initial burst of enemy fire, the tank company XO (2nd platoon leader) and the .50 caliber gunner on my track were killed. The 1/Sgt. and my .30 caliber gunner were wounded. Lieutenant Myers, who was sitting next to me, was killed instantly. His counterpart was wounded. Both of them fell off the APC. The artillery FO, although not wounded, also fell off. His radio operator and radio remained in the APC. The infantry platoon, riding on the lead tanks, was decimated. The remaining infantry dove off the tanks and hid in a trench to the north of the road. Throughout the ambush and counterambush attack, not one South Vietnamese infantryman fired a round.

The immediate reaction of the tanks was to return fire and to drive out of the "kill zone". The team commander ordered the following platoon (1st platoon) to lay down a base of fire. The last platoon (3rd) was ordered to cover the south flank and rear. This was to prevent the VC from hitting us from behind.

Simultaneously, my counterpart and myself called base camp for artillery. In addition, I requested the help of TAC air and gunships. Major Snell assured me

that the air request was submitted to division and that a MEDEVAC ship was also requested. The Vietnamese artillery failed to respond.

It took approximately 2 minutes for the tanks and the HQ APC to clear the "kill zone". During that period, the HQ APC was fired at three more times. All three 57mm RR rounds exploded within two or three feet of the vehicle. Although none of the 57mm RR rounds hit us, the APC did sustain 120 hits from small arms fire.

As the lead elements cleared the ambush site, they were ordered to regroup on the high ground to the northeast. As the tanks pulled off Route 21, they again came under small arms fire. This was from the VC outpost which directed the ambush (Illustration 1). This outpost was easily overrun and the VC fled.

My counterpart and myself again asked for artillery but we were told that the FO had to request it. Major Snell informed me that one MEDEVAC and two gunships were airborne from Ban Me Thuot. Flight time to our location should be about 20 minutes.

After regrouping on the high ground, Dai-uy Tam ordered the unit to prepare to counterattack. For this, the middle platoon was to provide a base of fire while the lead platoon was to be the maneuver element. To prevent the VC from withdrawing, all available artillery was again requested.

With the infantry company commander wounded and the advisor killed, the infantry was completely disorganized. The platoon leaders failed to exercise any



leadership. None of them would take command. To remedy this, the 3rd Battalion Commander and his S-3 proceeded to the ambush site by jeep. As they passed the middle tank platoon, their jeep was hit with a 57mm RR round. This wounded both the commander and the S-3 and destroyed the jeep.

Upon receiving word that this second echelon of command had been disabled, Mj. Weigan, Mj. Snell, and Lt. Col. Canh rushed to the battle site.

By this time Mj. Snell was in radio contact with the gunships and MEDEVAC. They reported that they were about 10 minutes from our location.

My counterpart ordered the tanks to attack. Each tank of the middle platoon fired maximum rate of fire with all three of its guns. The canister rounds of their main guns were most effective. The lead platoon attacked with two tanks abreast and one following. As they closed with the enemy, the VC fled to the south. The enemy covering force was quickly killed or driven off. However, the tanks could not pursue the fleeing VC because of the dense bamboo thickets.

Lieutenant Colonel Canh was now at the ambush site. However, even he could not get the artillery to fire. Major Snell contacted the advisor with the artillery and told him that he was at the ambush site and could adjust the fire. Still the Vietnamese refused to fire without their FO, or without somebody using their pre-arranged artillery plan. The FO couldn't be found. So, as nobody else had a copy of this fire plan, no artillery was fired at all during the ambush.

I again contacted Mj. Snell and requested that the MEDEVAC land at my location. My counterpart had already ordered the maintenance APC to come forward. This APC was used most efficiently to evacuate the wounded under fire and to move them to a safe pick-up point.

Major Snell called me back and said that both the MEDEVAC and gunships were lost. It was later learned that the division tactical operations center had told them we were 50km outside of Ban Me Thuot on Highway 14. Neither the MEDEVAC or gunships ever arrived.

Major Weigan and Lieutenant Colonel Canh had managed to organize at least one of the platoons of infantry and Canh ordered them to pursue the retreating VC. The pursuit lasted almost 10 meters! Then, one of the lead men stepped on an anti-personnel mine planted by the VC. His leg was traumatically amputated at the knee. This, plus some long range sniper fire, ended the pursuit.

The VC were allowed to escape.

#### SUMMARY

Although the operation may sound like an ARVN defeat, it really wasn't. In fact, for 1/8 it was an outstanding victory. The company suffered only two K.I.A. and two W.I.A.. It killed nine VC by body count. A later operation proved that the VC company had consisted of 70 soldiers. Of these, 30 had been wounded and 20 had been killed. All of the dead had been killed by canister rounds from the tanks. In addition to the VC we killed, we also captured one B.A.R., one

AK-47, one SKS type 56 rifle, twelve ChiCom hand grenades, and the VC operations order for the ambush.

The road opening operation ended two days later. There was no further Viet Cong contact.

## ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

### FRIENDLY

1. The lack of enemy contact during the first day can be directly attributed to Lieutenant Colonel Canh's ability to quickly organize and execute an operation. The 1st of the 8th crossed the IP just 14 hours after the receipt of the warning order. This relatively fast reaction time was, in effect, a security measure that prevented the VC from reacting immediately.

2. Likewise, with the knowledge of the enemy situation vague, and an extremely long distance to be covered in so few hours, it was sound tactics to have the tank unit lead. This allowed maximum fire power to the front of the column. Also, had the VC mined the road, the tanks would have denonated these mines. The resultant damage would have been better sustained by a tank than by a thin skinned vehicle.

3. The light tanks were also well suited for convoy escorting. Their high speed (45mph) allowed the convoy to travel as fast as the road conditions permitted. Their numerous radios (one per tank) could have been used for relaying and/or convoy control. Finally, their fire power gave the convoy good protection.

4. The use of the tanks for a static perimeter defense was not ideal. The largest platoon of 1/8 had only sixteen men in it. Even at 50% alert, this meant

that only eight men were awake. Each of the four tanks had to have one man awake in the turret. This left enough soldiers to man 2, two-man outposts, per platoon! Upon enemy contact, these outposts would have to withdraw in order to effectively man their tanks. It is clear that in a static defense tanks must have infantry with them.

5. The morning of the ambush, we had no air cover available. This of course was due to the weather. Yet we made no additional plans for fire support. The tanks should have reconned by fire, and the artillery should have registered on the few likely ambush sites. In addition, the column should have been covered by the artillery all along the route.

This could be accomplished by planning staggered artillery concentrations on either side of the road. The concentrations on the right side (south) could be even numbered and the ones on the left (north), odd numbered. A copy of this fire plan should then be distributed to every commander and every radio operator.

As the column moves out and reports its location along the highway, the artillery must track it. That is, they should lay half of their guns on the concentration nearest to the column location. The other half could be laid on the next concentration. Thus, if the column is attacked, the artillery could respond immediately. Even more important, if the FO were killed anybody with a radio could call for artillery.

6. Our most costly mistake was the concentration

of all the leaders on the same vehicle. Had Lieutenant Myers, or his counterpart, been on one of the rear tanks, he may not have become a casualty. Thus he would have been able to organize his troops.

If a concentration of leaders is mandatory for control, then a complete alternate chain of command must be established. This secondary command must never ride on the same vehicle, or be in the same area, as the primary command. Also, the secondary command must be allowed to rehearse. This can easily be done by using it during training or routine missions.

7. The immediate reaction of the lead tank platoon was to return fire and to move out of the kill zone. This action undoubtedly accounted for its low casualty rate. However, the infantry failed to react. There were two reasons for this - lack of training and lack of small unit leadership.

The infantry company had never before operated with tanks. Thus they were not aware of armor tactics or of the tank's characteristics (especially the tank's speed and the noise of its main gun). The latter severely frightened them, but the former proved to be the most detrimental.

When the VC sprung the ambush, the infantry dismounted. Maybe they had intended to attack. However, it appeared to them that the tanks were retreating. With this "routing" of the tanks, the would be infantry attack perished. Each man was now concerned only with preserving his own life. At this point, if the unit had had good squad leaders and dynamic platoon leaders,

they still could have reorganized and attacked.

8. The leadership shown by Dai-uy Tam directly influenced the battle. His order to counterattack led to the smashing of the ambush. Although the terrain limited their maneuver space, he employed his tanks properly - as offensive weapons.

9. The use of the maintenance track to evacuate the wounded was not novel. So it does point out the need for a medical APC at tank company level. In addition to speed and mobility, it offers adequate small arms protection to the crew and to the wounded.

10. We never did receive MEDEVAC because DTOC misdirected them. To prevent this from happening again, the FAC and myself developed a simple method of locating our position. The FAC would climb to 5000 feet and contact the radar tracking station at Ban Me Thuot (Pyramid) and request a "fix". The FAC would have them record this fix and would give the information to me. It would consist of a radar azimuth and a direction (in nautical miles). I in turn would relay this to DTOC and would plot it on my map. Then if air support were needed, they could easily be vectored to our exact location regardless of the ceiling or visibility.

#### ENEMY

1. The VC company moved into the area the day preceding the attack. This is a standard Viet Cong tactic. They usually move to within one night's march of the attack site. There they will make final prep-

arations. This includes cleaning weapons and equipment, rehearsing the plan of attack, and making rice balls to eat during the next night.

2. The VC choose to attack during a time of limited visibility. This guaranteed them freedom of movement to and from the ambush site. It was in keeping with their doctrine of hitting when the "enemy" is weakest.

3. They picked an area less than 3km from our base camp. This enabled them to attack when the "enemy" least expected it.

4. The Viet Cong's choice of target was foolish. We were mounted, they were on foot. We had eleven tanks. They didn't have any heavy anti-tank weapons. We had 76mm main gun; they had only 57mm RR. We had two men killed. The VC had 20 men killed.

5. The VC covered their withdrawal with anti-personnel mines and snipers. This was a good tactic, but they should have used anti-tank mines on the road.



## LESSONS LEARNED

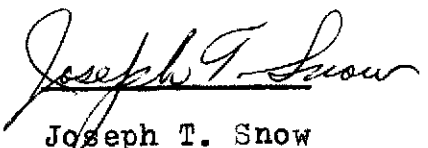
1. To insure security, the time between the receipt of an order and its execution must be kept to a minimum.
2. In a counterinsurgency situation, where the knowledge of the enemy is vague and a long distance must be covered quickly, maximum fire power must be well forward.
3. A light tank is well suited for convoy escorting.
4. Tanks used in a static perimeter defense must have infantry attached to them.
5. The unit commander must ensure that his supporting artillery plan is adequate, well disseminated, and simple. The artillery must track the unit and be immediately responsive to it.
6. Unit commanders must not concentrate in one location. Also, a secondary chain of command must be designated and trained.
7. Armor and infantry must train and work together.
8. An ARVN tank company should have a medical APC attached to it.
9. A unit's exact location can be plotted in terms of an aerial vector.
10. Small unit leadership is the ultimate factor

in a counterambush situation.

11. The VC move to within one night's marching distance of an attack site a day or two prior to the actual attack.

12. The VC usually attack just before, during, or immediately after limited visibility.

13. They (VC) will often ambush very close to base camp.

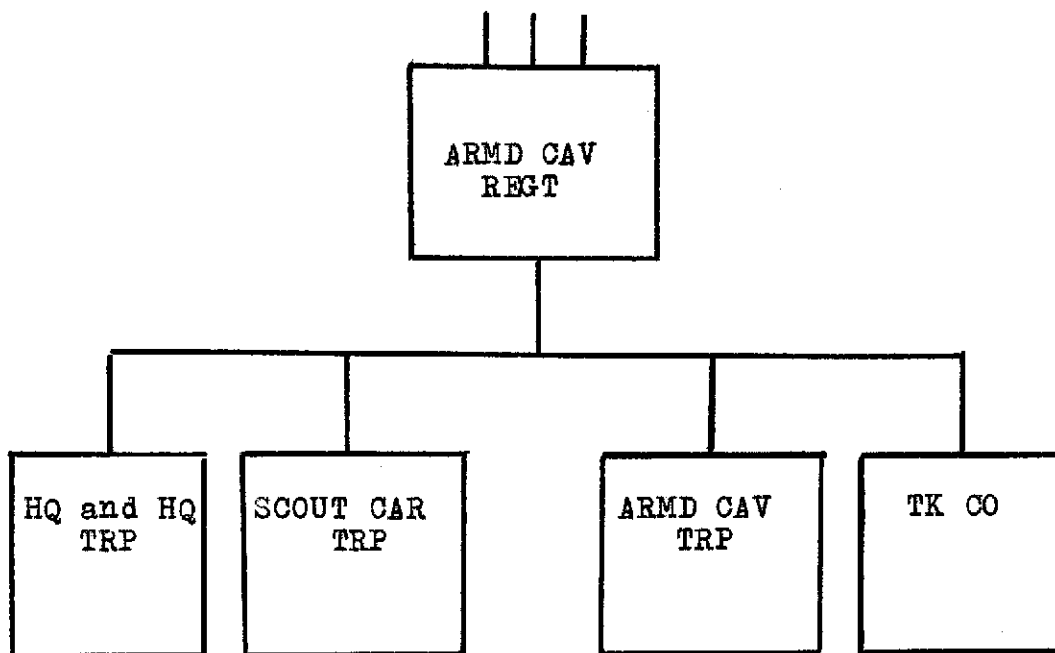


Joseph T. Snow

Captain, Armor

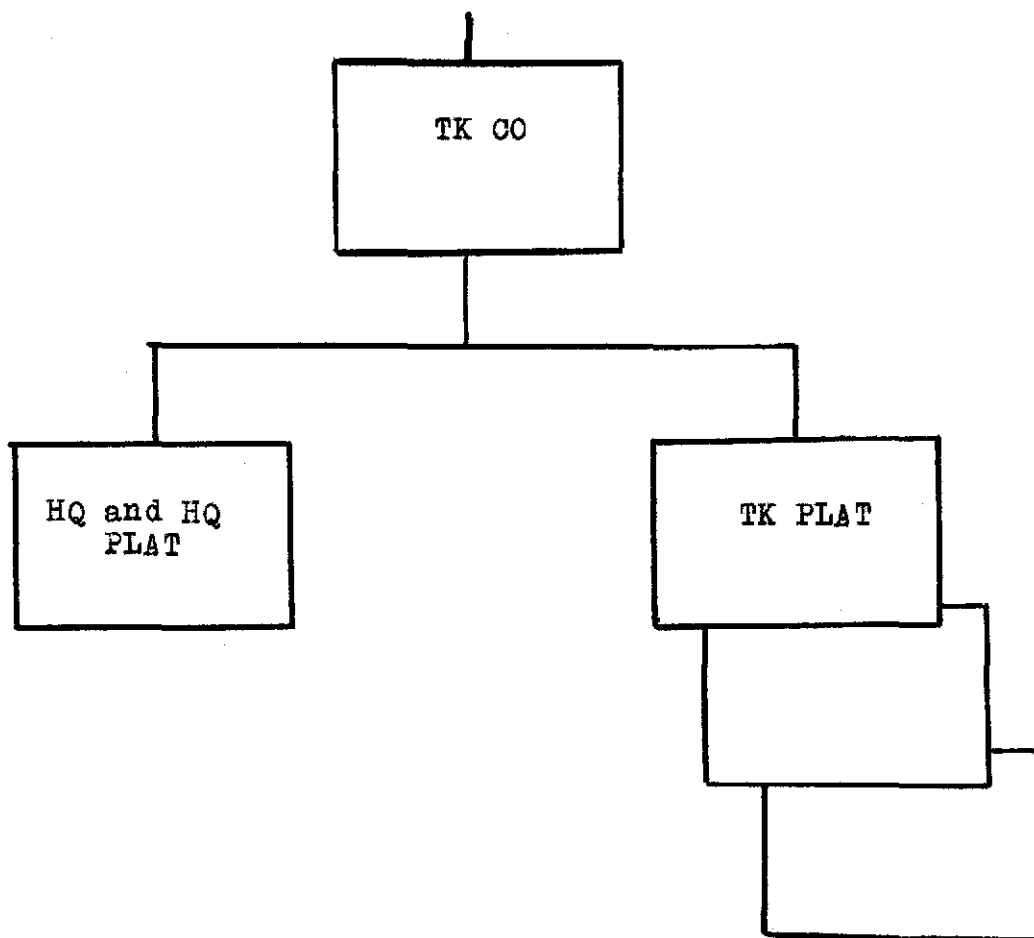
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Organization of ARVN Armored Cavalry Regiment

TABLE "1"



Organization of ARVN Tank Company

TABLE "2"

Tank, M-41  
(See TABLE "3A")

CREW

1-Driver  
1-Loader  
1-Gunner  
1-Tank Commander

STATISTICS

Length	23'1"
Height	10'2"
Clearance	1'6"
Ford	3'4"
Ground Pressure	10.2 psi.
Fuel	70 gal. per side = 140 gal.
Range	.7 mile/gal. = 100 miles (160km)
Speed	Max. 45 mph
Engine	Continental 896 cu. in., 6 cyl., 500 hp

WEAPONS

Main Gun	76mm M-32 HV Flat Trajectory
Heavy Machine Gun	.50 cal. M-2 HB
Coaxial Machine Gun	.30 cal. M-1919A4E1

MAIN GUN AMMUNITION

TYPE

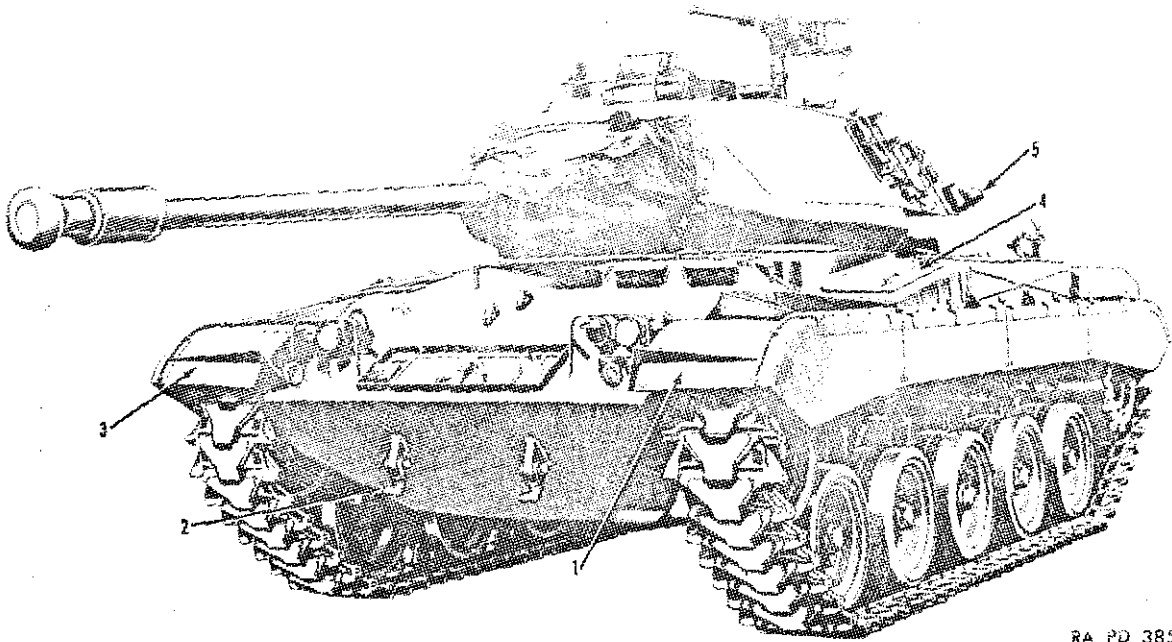
Armor Piercing  
High Explosive  
Hyper-velocity Armor Piercing  
White Phosphorus  
Canister

STORAGE

Turret Racks	23 rds.
Ready Racks	11 rds.
Hull Racks	33 rds.

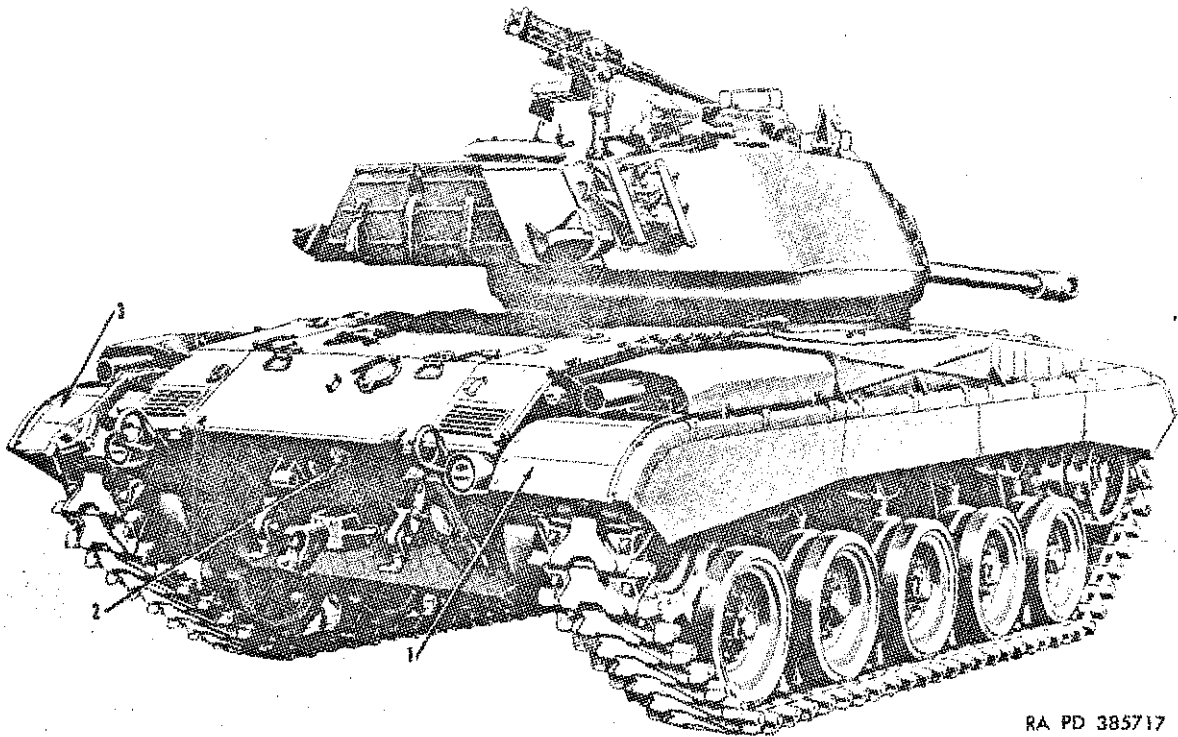
Tabulated Data, Tank, M-41

TABLE "3"



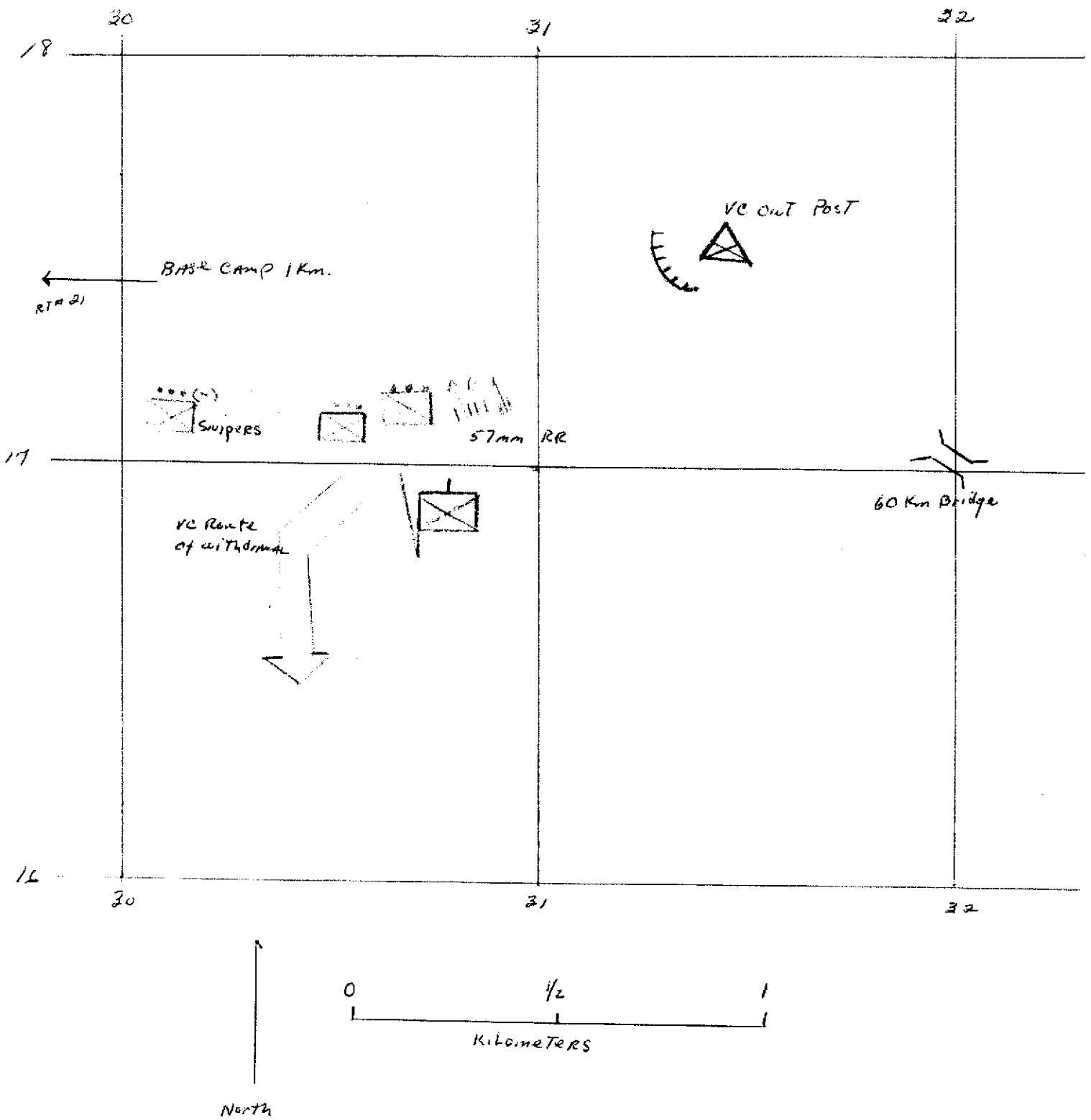
RA PD 385716

FIGURE 80—FRONT FENDERS AND STORAGE BOX



RA PD 385717

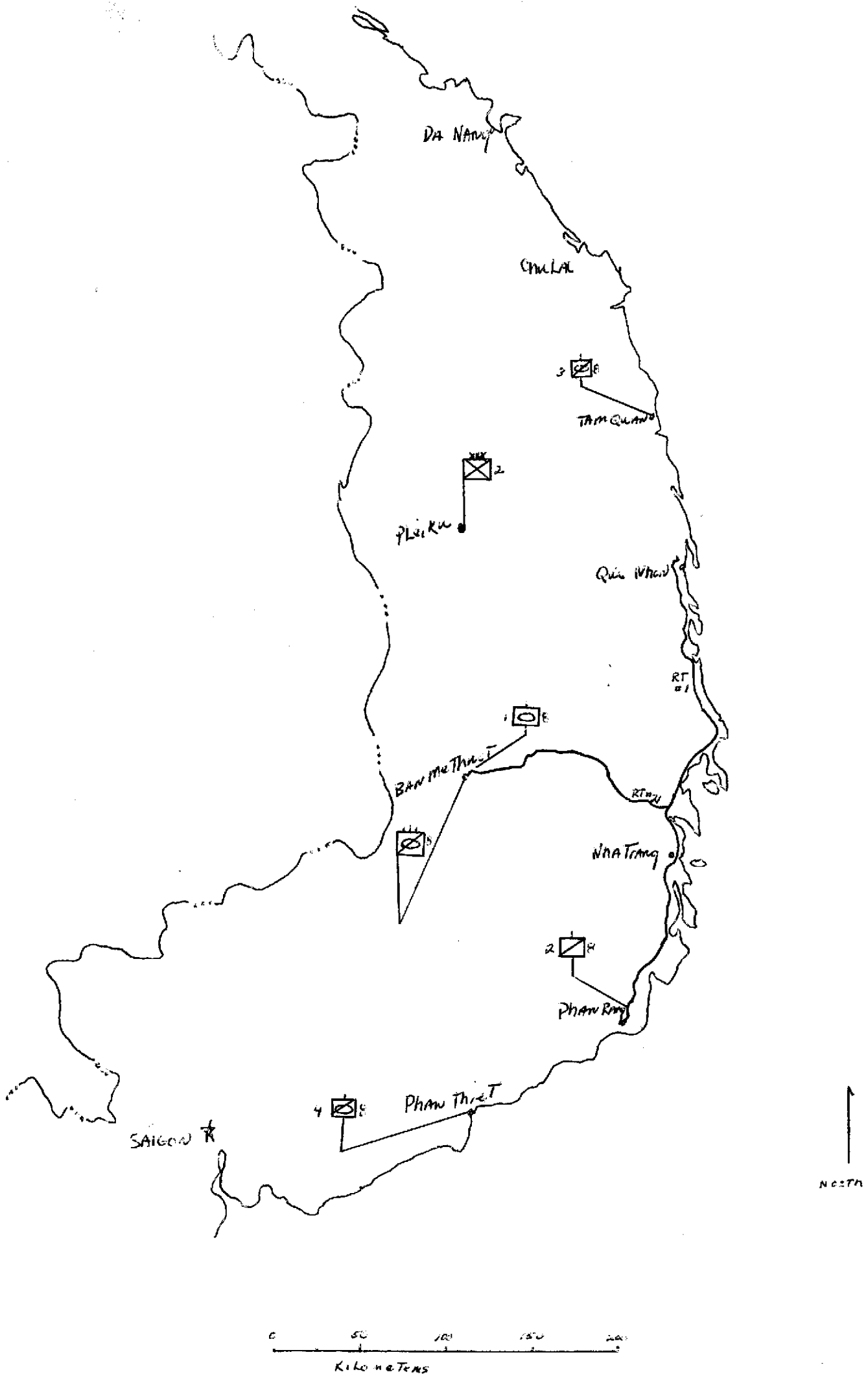
FIGURE 81—REAR FENDERS



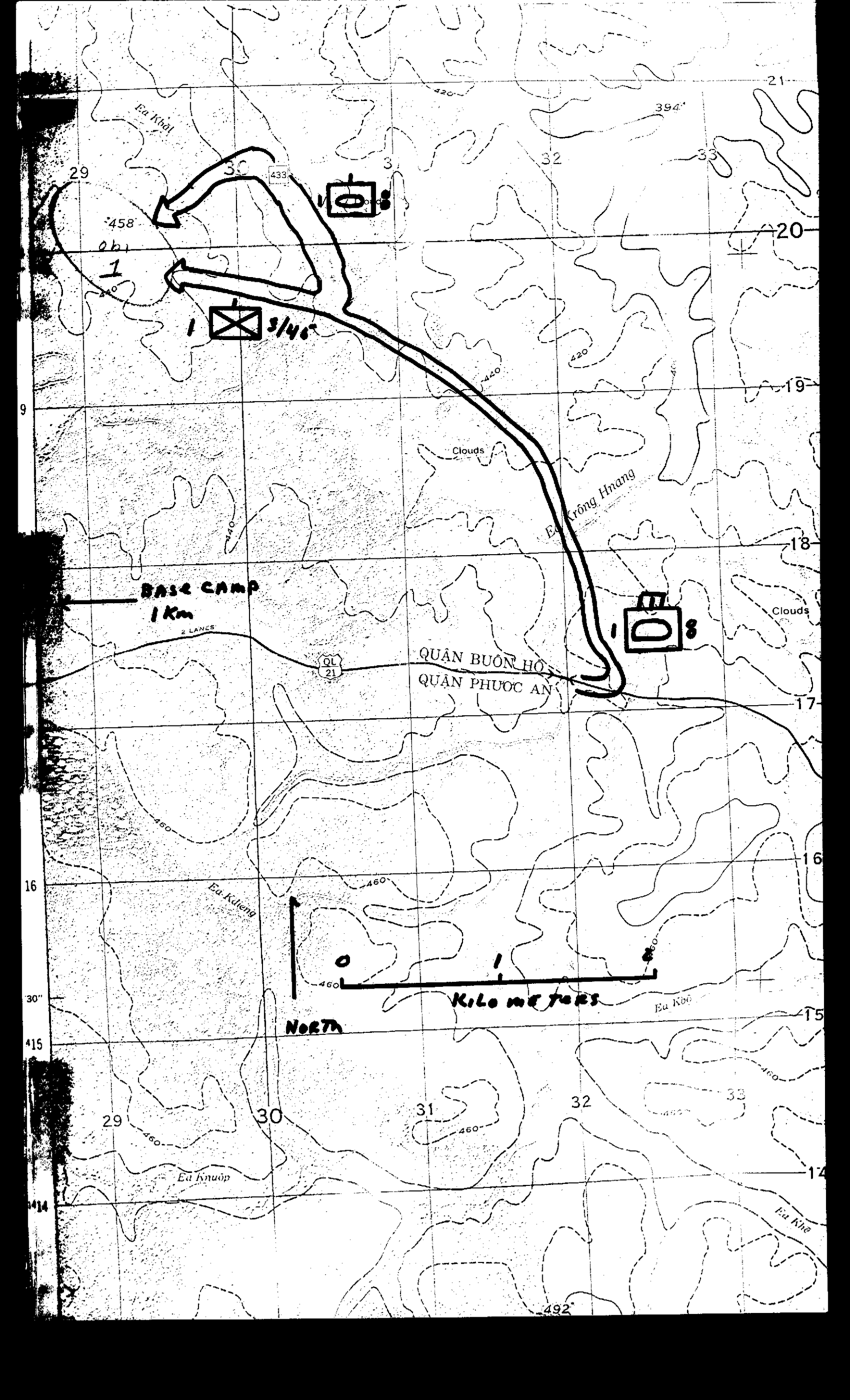
Viet Cong Ambush Plan

ILLUSTRATION "1"





Deployment of 8th Armored Cavalry Regiment  
 MAP "1"



Ea Khol

394'

29

30

433

31

32

33

21

458

0.6

1

1 3/4

20

9

Clouds

Ea Krong Huang

19

BASE CAMP  
1 Km

2 LANES

QL  
21

QUAN BUON HO  
QUAN PHUOC AN

1 0 8

Clouds

18

17

16

450

Ea Klueng

460

NORTH

Kilo meters

460

460

Ea Khe

16

15

NORTH

29

30

31

32

33

15

Ea Knuop

460

460

460

14

14

Ea Khe

492

OPERATIONS REPORT

1. MISSION

- a. Type: **Road Opening**
- b. Time Received; ~~082200~~ **March 1967**
- c. Control Headquarters: **45th Regt (ARVN)**
- d. Location: **Route 21 (BQ 304175)**

2. OPERATIONS

- a. Commander: **Dai-uy TAM**
- b. Size and composition of friendly force (Include number of APC's on opn):  
**11 M41 tanks and 1 M113 APC, 1 Infantry Co. mounted.**
- c. Departure (Date/Time): ~~090700~~ Return (Date/Time): ~~091600~~
- d. Advisors present: **Cpt. Snow and two Inf. Advisors (Lt Myers and SSgt. Easter)**
- e. Was fire effective: **Yes**
- f. Was commo satisfactory: **Yes-however the VN Artillery was not monitoring their fire request net.**
- g. Was maintenance satisfactory: **Yes**
- h. Were 57mm RR carried on operation: **No** Used:
- i. Were 81mm mortars carried on operation: **No** Used:
- j. Brief description of operation (to include tactical employment):

3. RESULTS

- a. Enemy:
  - (1) VC Contact:
    - (a) Size of force encountered: **Est. one VC company reinforced**
    - (b) How many times on this operation: **Once**
    - (c) Approximately how long in contact: **20 minutes**
    - (d) Were 57mm RR used against APC's: **Yes- three M41 tanks were hit but not seriously damaged**
    - (e) Were mines used against APC's: **No- but anti-personnel mines were used to cover the withdrawing VC force**
    - (f) Other comments:

- (2) VC Killed
  - (a) Estimated: 20
  - (b) Body count: American-9
- (3) VC Captured
  - (a) Men:  $\emptyset$
  - (b) Women:  $\emptyset$
- (4) Suspects Captured
  - (a) Men:  $\emptyset$
  - (b) Women:  $\emptyset$
- (5) Weapons Captured: 1 BAR, 1 AK-47, 1 SKS Type 56, 12 Hand Grenades
- (6) Documents Captured: VC operations order for the ambush
- (7) Supplies Captured: 2 canteens
- (8) Other Comments:

b. Friendly:

- (1) Killed in Action: 1 1Lt (ARVN), 1 PFC (ARVN)
- (2) Wounded in Action
  - (a) Seriously: 1 1/Sgt, ~~1 1Lt (ARVN)~~
  - (b) Not Seriously: 1 PFC (ARVN)
- (3) Missing in Action
  - (a) Presumed Captured: None
  - (b) Not Known:
  - (c) Circumstances why missing:
- (4) Documents Lost: None
- (5) Weapons Lost: None
- (6) Supplies Lost: None
- (7) Vehicles Lost: None
- (8) Vehicles Damaged: 3 M41 tanks, 1 M113
- (9) Did any APC's fall out for mechanical reasons: No

4. GENERAL COMMENTS

a. Suggested Improvements:

1. Artillery must maintain radio contact all elements, track the unit, and should be able to respond immediately.
2. Tanks and APC's must have gun-shields. Two of the KIA and one WIA were cal 50 gunners.
3. Gun tubes must be oriented. To move the main gun from the front to the side requires  $3\frac{1}{2}$  seconds AFTER reaction time.
4. Control Hq should plot the units progress and always know within 2 km the exact location of all elements.
5. DTOC should plot the unit's general location in order to assist in directing gun-ships, Medevac, etc.
6. It may be possible to mount Claymore mines on tanks.
7. Recon by fire is a must for lead vehicles.

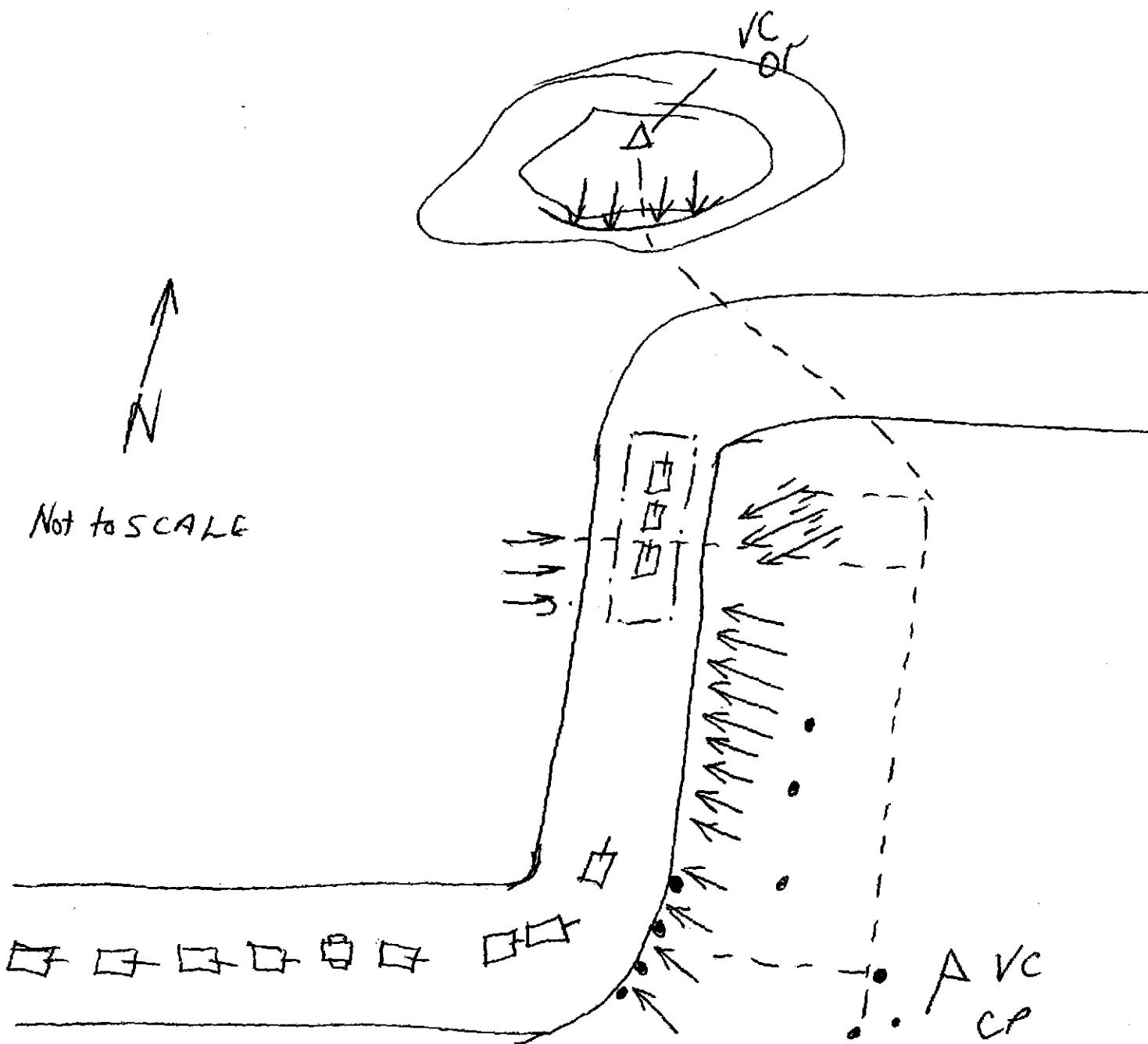
b. Reasons why this mission was successful or unsuccessful:

1.

- A. Unit was taken by surprize. This unit had not been fired at in more than 18 months.
- B. There was no flank security.
- C. No Q1A cover
- D. Gun-ships took more than one hour to arrive.
- E. Medevac got lost.
- F. Infantry riding on tanks did not return fire and did not assault the VC position.
- G. Artillery did not fire until about 30 minutes after the VC broke contact.
- H. The Infantry did not pursue the VC.

2.

- A. Tanks and APCs immediately drove out of the "kill zone".
- B. Unit regrouped and attacked violently.
- C. Initially 76mm cannister was used
- D. The cal 50 fire was heavy, accurate, and well controlled.
- E. The VN unit commander had complete control of the unit at all time.



- ←= 57mm
- ← AK47, BAR
- AP MINES
- WDI WIRE
- — KILL ZONE
- △ OUT POST
- P COMMAND POS
- ☐ - TANK M41
- ☐ - APC M113

At approximately 0700 hours the unit departed the CP area. the formation was column with 2d Plt. leading, 1st Plt., Hq. Plt, and 3dnPlt. The weather was bad so that O1A could not fly. The Artillery FO and attached Infantry Company Commanders were riding on the command track with my counterpart and myself.

As the 1st Plt. rounded the corner the received light sniper fire. They stopped and engaged the enemy with cal 30 machine gun fire. The Tank CO could not see the action so he proceeded up to the lead platoon. Just as we reached the area, the three lead tanks were struck with 57MM recoilless rifle fire. The VC began to fire at the APC and mounted infantry. The initial burst hit and killed the infantry advisor, the gunner on the APC, and the XO in Hqs tank. It wounded the Infantry CO, APC assistant gunner, first sergeant, and five or six infantry soldiers.

The lead platoon(2nd) and Hq platoon drove out of the kill zone, re-organized and attacked the ambush position. They employed 76MM cannister, cal 30 and 50 machine guns. Artillery was called for but did not respond. Gun ships were requested but they got lost. the infantry did not fire a shot.

The violent assault of the tanks caused the VC to withdraw. Because of the terrain the tanks could not pursue.

N.B. This draft was written by myself immediately after the ambush. Upon further investigation and analysis I made slight changes (i.e. para. 2.f. and para. 4.b.1.D.) prior to submitting it to corps.

Draft of Operations Report, 9 March 1967

APPENDIX "1"