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Title: Combat Operations - After Action Report - Operation Leeton

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[redacted]

7th Battalion
The Royal Australian Regiment
AP AN PHU

14 Jun 67

OPERATION LEETON
COMBAT OPERATIONS AFTER ACTION REPORT

References A. 1 ATF SOP Annex A, Appendix 4.

B. 1 ATF Frag O 2/67 (Op LEETON) of 231435 May 67.

C. 7 RAR OP 4 of 24 May 67.

D. Maps: VIETNAM 1:25,000 Sheet 6429-1 NW.

Name and Type of Operation

1. Operation LEETON, designed to erect a wire barrier.

Dates of Operation

2. 240800H May - 011600H Jun 67.

Location

3. Area SOUTH EAST of NUI DAT YS 4367, centre of area YS 5154.

Command Headquarters

4. HQ 7 RAR.

Task Organization

5. 7 RAR with:

a. Under Op Control from 250600 H May

One tp and two mortar APC A Sqn 3 Cav Regt

One tp 1 Fd Sqn

b. In Direct Support

106 Bty 1 Fd Regt

One OH13 161 (Indep) Recce Flt

c. At Priority Call

161 Bty RNZA

d. In Support

Max effect 9 Sqn RAAF

LSM

Two dozers 17 Const Sqn

E1/7

...Rebro..

[redacted]

CH 47 sorties (as required)

Supporting Forces

6. Tp A Sqn 3 Cav Regt

a. The troop of APC was employed initially to lift D Coy, one section of mortars plus a section of the Aslt Pnr Pl to PHUOC HAI YS 522540 leaving 7 RAR base camp at NUI DAT at 240800H. Until the main force of 7 RAR arrived the following day, the troop assisted D Coy in its tasks on 24 May 67 as follows:-

(1) Surveillance and patrolling of the EAST approaches to PHUOC HAI.

(2) Knocking down and clearance of scrub along the proposed fence line.

(3) Establishing the mortar section fire base with the M 125.

b. From the time of arrival of 7 RAR main body until conclusion of the operation on 1 Jun 67 the troop assisted the battalion in carrying out its task. In particular, the main tasks of the troop included:-

(1) Surveillance of likely enemy approaches, both by day and night.

(2) In conjunction with troops on foot and engineer dozers, clearance of the general line and precincts of the fence of old mines, booby traps, blinds and foliage.

(3) The rapid movement and layout of all stores from various LZs to selected points along the barrier.

(4) Resupply of water and rations to companys operating along the fence lines.

106 Bty

7. Although 106 Bty was in Direct Support of 7 RAR and accordingly provided BC, FO parties, liaison and communications, 106 Bty remained at NUI DAT. Direct artillery fire support had it been required, was the responsibility of 161 Bty RNZA, located at the HORSESHOE feature YS 495620. Protection of the gun position at the HORSESHOE was not the responsibility of 7 RAR.

8. During Operation LEETON troops of 7 RAR were located relatively close to local inhabitants, particularly the towns of PHUOC HAI and LC GOM. Because of this factor the planning of artillery DFs each afternoon presented a problem since it was virtually impossible to guarantee 100% safety to civilians after allowing for troop safety distances.

....However...

However the need to use DFs did not arise. The problem was overcome to a degree by the planned use of mortars where line of fire and smaller splinter distance, in this case, was more satisfactory.

9. Each FO party has now had individual experience on past operations and TACR patrols and co-operation with company commanders is good.

Tp 1 Fd Sqn

10. Although two dozers of 17 Constr Sqn were in location at PHUOC HAI with effect from 25 May 67, the Engr Tp did not arrive in the area until 27 May 67. During the period 27 - 30 May 67 the troop, in conjunction with 7 RAR Aslt Pnr Pl, sewed a three strip (density1)minefield within the eighty metre gap of the wire barrier consisting of type M16 US anti-personnel mines and M 26 booby traps. Details of the minefield are as follows:-

a. Fast strip: 50% of the mines in this strip were fitted with anti-lift devices made up of M26 grenades fitted with US MK V pressure release switches and instantaneous detonators. All anti-lift devices were layed by the field troop without assistance from the pioneers.

b. Trip wires were laid on the outside cluster of each 12 o'clock mine.

c. Centre strip: This consisted of M16 mines only, with no trip wire attachments or anti-lift devices. This strip was laid by the pioneer platoon.

d. West strip: NORTH of the LO GOM gap, 50% of the mines in the strip were fitted with anti-lifting devices and trip wires were layed as for the EAST strip. SOUTH of LO GOM gap the WEST strip was layed as for the centre strip.

11. An accident involving the engineers which resulted in one death and two injuries (one serious) occurred when a mine detonated on 30 May 67. Whether the explosion was the result of a personal error or caused by a faulty fuze is not known. No further M16 mines were laid after the accident and the remaining 500 fuses on site were destroyed.

17 Const Sqn

12. Two dozers from this unit were provided to assist 7 RAR in the construction of the wire barrier. Both dozers were employed continuously by day in an effort to prepare the ground for both the wire and the mine field. On many occasions all work on the fence had to cease until the dozers had sufficiently prepared the way.

13. It is considered that additional dozers would have allowed 7 RAR to construct the barrier more quickly providing the wiring stores had also been available. The capacity of the battalion to construct the wire barrier in a given time was, perhaps, a little underestimated. It was found that there were two primary factors which regularly restricted more rapid and continuous progress of the barrier:

....a...

a. The limited working capacity of the two dozers

b. The amount of barrier stores being delivered into the AO by the limited number of daily CH 47 Chinook sorties.

14. Aust Aviation

a. One OH13 Sioux was in direct support of 7 RAR and was held on standby either at NUI DAT or more frequently at a secure LZ adjacent to Battalion Headquarters where it was tasked as required. The aircraft was used for the following:-

(1) Liaison.

(2) Reconnaissance.

(3) Arty and Mor OP.

(4) Battlefield surveillance.

(5) Casevac/Medevac.

(6) Movement of stores and light equipment by landing and lowering.

(7) Communications.

b. As usual the Sioux was of great assistance to the battalion and all tasks performed were carried out effectively and professionally.

c. 9 Sqn RAAF

5 x UHIBs and 1 x UHID were used initially to fly 7 RAR less D Coy, sect mors and Aslt Pnr Pl into an LZ EAST of PHUOC HAI at YS 523542 on 25 May 67. In addition, the following troop lifts occurred:-

(1) Tp of engineers was flown into the AO on 27 May 67.

(2) Aslt Pnr Pl and Fire Aslt Pl less a section were flown back to NUI DAT on 31 May 67.

(3) A and B Coy were lifted on 30 May 67/from YS 507561 to NUI DAT base.

d. RAAF air was also used extensively to lift water, rations, mortar ammunition and other miscellaneous stores to various parts of the AO as required.

e. The following casualties were evacuated using RAAF and AUST air and in two cases by use of CH 47 Chinook aircraft:-

25 May 67	1 x medevac	
26 May 67	2 x medevac	
27 May 67	4 x medevac	
29 May 67	4 x medevac	
30 May 67	(1 x medevac	
	(2 x casevac)	- Dustoff
	(1 x KIA)	Dustoff

f. Good co-operation with the RAAF was continued during Operation LEETON.

15. US Aviation

a. In troop lifts Chinook CH 47 aircraft were used to lift C Coy, Battalion Headquarters and one section of mortars on 30 May 67 from YS 516549 to NUI DAT base camp.

b. Sorties of CH 47 were used daily to deliver the necessary wire and mine stores to the AO as follows:-

(1) 25 May 67

7 x sorties of wire stores
3 x sorties of mine stores

(2) 26-29 May 67 incl

6 x sorties of wire stores
3 x sorties of mine stores

(3) 30 May 67

4 x sorties of mine stores
3 x sorties of wire stores

... c. Total amounts of barrier stores delivered by types is included at Annex C.

d. Owing to the limited number of daily CH 47 sorties allotted, 7 RAR was confined to building an average of only 800 metres of each fence daily during the period 25-27 May 67 using two companies, one on each fence.

e. It is worthy of note that a rifle company can build 1200 metres of double cat wire type 2 fence daily.

f. US Aviation was particularly co operative and receptive to the needs of the battalion at all times.

Intelligence

... 16. See Annex A.

Terrain

17. The terrain fell into three main categories viz; sand dunes, padi and flat open country covered with light scrub.

18. The first two days of the operation the weather was hot and humid and no rain fell. The remaining days however were cool and cloudy with moderate showers falling during the late afternoon and evenings.

Mission

19. 7 RAR was to erect a wire barrier from the ARVN pl outpost at approximately YS 523541 to link the RF pl outpost at YS 511549 and the proposed outpost at YS 507560.

20. The task was to begin on 24 May and end on 30 May 67.

21. General Outline

a. The operation was to be carried out as follows:-

(1) D Coy, with under command sect mors, Aslt Pnr Pl, Bn Navigation Party, AQ Cell and Tp of A Sqn 3 Cav Regt was to move in APCs to PHUOC HAI YS 522540 departing NUI DAT at 240800H. Tasks included securing NORTH EAST of PHUOC HAI, clearance and layout of proposed fence line and securing of beach for landing of stores by LSM by 1100 hrs 24 May 67.

(2) Starting at 250730H, 7 RAR was to be hel lifted into the LZ secured by D Coy. Order of flyout was to be A Coy, B Coy, Battalion Headquarters, Fire Aslt Pl and C Coy.

(3) Tasks in the AO were to be:-

(a) A Coy to erect WEST fence and protect it by night.

(b) B Coy to erect EAST fence and protect it by night.

(c) C Coy to provide protection in depth to cover the EAST and NORTH EAST approaches.

(d) D Coy to provide local protection.

(e) Fire Aslt Pl to protect Battalion Headquarters.

(4) 7 RAR was to be responsible for the AO EAST of route 44. ARVN were to be responsible for the area WEST of route 44. Accordingly 7 RAR located members of the unit as LOs in each ARVN outpost as follows:-

1 Coy 3/48 Bn located	YS 515535
One Pl 1 Coy 3/48 Bn	YS 514541
2 Coy 3/48 Bn	YS 500570
612 RF Coy (-)	YS 502558
3 pl 612 RF Coy	YS 511549
36 PF Pl	YS 515536

(5) Each LO remained on the Battalion Command Net at all times. The LOs were positioned on 24 May 67 and withdrawn on 31 May 67. Unit interpreters accompanied each LO.

22. Execution

In conjunction with dozers, the APCs were employed to cover every inch of ground methodically, up and down, to ensure the entire area was free of enemy laid booby traps and mines. In addition, the pioneer platoon continuously employed eight (8) mine sweepers.

Constant difficulty was encountered by the pioneer operators during clearing owing to the great quantity of shrapnel in the area. The task of the Battalion Navigation Team commanded by IO 7 RAR was to lay out the direction of the barrier and clearly mark each fence line. 7 RAR had expected to find enemy laid booby traps and mines in the area but only blinds were encountered.

23. A and B Coy were continuously employed in the construction of the WEST and EAST sides of the fence respectively. The barrier consisted of a type 2 cat wire fence constructed each side of an 80 metre gap. Within the gap was sewn the M16 anti personnel minefield. Along the inside of each fence an apron was constructed.

24. Each company building the barrier adopted slightly different systems of organization as follows:-

a. B Coy

The coy was divided into six groups of half platoon strength. Five groups each constructed 100 metres before midday and a further 100 metres after midday thus, in theory, the coy constructed 1000 metres daily - In practice the length of each side of the fence constructed daily was as follows:-

25 May 67	530 metres
26 May 67)	
27 May 67)	800 metres
28 May 67)	
29 May 67)	
Total	3,730 metres.

b. The sixth group was employed in a close protection role and this group was changed daily.

c. The stores were laid out by APCs working with the coy and was coordinated by the Bn 2IC.

d. A Coy

On Day 1 (25 May) A Coy adopted the six group system but on Day 2 reverted to using each platoon, less a section for protection, to build a separate portion of the barrier.

e. It is worthy of note that A Coy's progress was identical to that of B Coy as in para 24 a. above.

25. An enlarged diagram of the AO showing details of the ... barrier including the minefield is attached at Annex B.

26. Mine-laying commenced on 27 May 67 with the arrival of the engineers starting at YS 517545 from the NORTH edge of the sand dunes in the manner described in para 10 up to YS 516548, the edge of a 100 metre belt of wet padi. The minefield then continued NORTH WEST from YS 515548, the NORTH side of the padi, to YS 507558. No M16 mines were laid further NORTH of YS 507558 for the reasons described in para 11.

An effective booby trap field however was sewn from YS 507558 to YS 506560.

27. Booby traps were also sewn in the 100 metre belt of padi and, in addition, SOUTH from YS 517545 to the southern tip of the barrier at YS 523541.

28. Battalion Headquarters, up to 27 May 67, was located with the section of mortars mounted in M125s at YS 524542 and relocated during the afternoon of 27 May 67 to YS 517548 where it remained until extraction on 30 May 67.

Rehearsal

29. On 24 May 67 (D minus 1) the battalion Pioneer platoon held a demonstration at NUI DAT base for officers and NCOs of A and B Coys. By explanation and demonstration the exact method of constructing a cat wire No 2 fence was clearly indicated. It is thought that the results achieved on operation LEETON indicate the value of such a demonstration.

Commanders Analysis and Recommendations

30. In the event, the LSM could not land on 24 May 67 owing to the unsuitable nature of the beach shore. A delay in the arrival of the first barrier stores was therefore unavoidable. Stores had to be flown in by CH 47 Chinook and only up to 7 sorties per day were made available to 7 RAR. Because of the risks involved it was NOT practicable to move stores to the barrier by road convoy.

31. The limited amount of stores being flown in only allowed two companys to be employed concurrently on construction of the barrier. Had additional stores and more dozers been available to prepare the ground, 7 RAR could have increased its fence laying capacity by employing more troops on the actual construction.

32. It is thought that the speed with which the barrier was constructed, together with nightly protection of work completed and the ground over which the fence was scheduled to pass throughout its entire length prevented:-

a. Enemy reaction

b. Small parties laying booby traps.

In addition it is emphasised that the rapid construction of a major obstacle can only be carried out effectively if an efficient flight control of stores organization/distribution centre exists. This function was handled by the Bn 2IC through the unit AQ Cell.

33. It should also be mentioned that on two occasions a CH 47 Chinook jettisoned its load. The first time accidentally and whilst over the South China Sea and the second occasion deliberately when the plane was coming in to land and lost power. The lessons here are clear:-

a. Look up when an outside load carrying CHINOOK passes overhead.

b. Keep well clear of the LZ when a load is being dropped.

34. The use of LOs from the unit with each of the six ARVN posts in the area proved valuable every night e.g.

a. On the first night 24/25 May ARVN sent out a patrol to the EAST (apparently orders had not come down from Sector directing ptls only to the WEST of Route 44).

b. I[illegible] GOM outpost wanted to open fire to the NORTH on night 29/30 May. Had they done so A Coy would have come under fire.

c. Many mortar reports of fighting to the WEST were received through LOs and passed back to 1 ATF.

35. Finally it is considered that stores available should always be one day ahead of requirement in order that ground positioning can be carried out before last light to permit troops at first light to start on actual construction in the cool hours of the day.

E H Smith

(Eric H Smith)
Lieutenant Colonel
Commanding Officer

Enclosures

Annex A: Enemy Intelligence before the Operation.
Annex B: Plan of the Barrier and Minefield.(External addresses only)
Annex C: Analysis of Barrier stores delivered by CH 47.
Annex D: Stores Control. Administrative Aspects.
Annex E: A Coy Operational Analysis Report.
Annex F: B Coy Operational Analysis Report.
Annex G: C Coy Operational Analysis Report.
Annex H: D Coy Operational Analysis Report.

Distribution

A Coy
B Coy
C Coy
D Coy
Admin Coy
Sp Coy
Mor Pl
Sig Pl
F/Aslt Pl

CO
2IC
Adjt
S3
CP
FCC
OC Sp Coy
BC
IO
RSM
File (2)
Comd's Diary (5)
Spare (IO)

External

HQ 1 ATF (4)

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Annex 'A' to 7 RAR
Combat Operations After Action
Report
dated 14 Jun 67

EN FORCES

1. The AO lies astride the southern approach route used by the VC to enter and/or harass the populated areas of southern PHUOC TUY. PHUOC HAI has been the target for mortar attacks; LO GOM was attacked by a VC Bn on 21 Mar, and other villages on Route 44 have suffered attacks and harassment by main force, provincial and district units.

2. Main base areas used by VC are the thickly timbered country NORTH of the SONG BA DAT and the LONG HAI hillsto the WEST. VC def posns (incl up to coy size posn), camps and food caches have been found recently NORTH and SOUTH of the RACH ONG HEM, specifically in squares 5256, 5355 and further to the EAST in 5556.

3. The areas has been used as an AO by 2 Bn 275 Regt. It is a traditional AO for D445 Bn, and the LONG DAT District Coy makes forays against it from the LONG HAI hills.

4. VC production units (generally small groups) may be encountered working the fields or sending livestock throughout the AO. These people are contacted by commo-liaison personnel from either VC province procurement cells or VC logistic representatives of Group 84. Logistics units of Group 84 up to coy strength may also be discovered on procurement missions in or close to the AO.

5. No main force units are believed to be presently in the AO. Elms of D445 have recently been identified in the northern base area and the LONG DAT Coy is believed to be in base areas in the LONG HAI hills. In the last week there have been minor clashes between ARVN and VC in DAT DO and near PHUOC LOI. LO GOM is a target for spasmodic mortar attacks and this contingency should be considered in planning.

6. There is increasing evidence that the fence is proving to be a growing source of annoyance and inconvenience to the VC and maximum preventative action should be taken to prevent him from conducting either close recce or undetected assembly for counter-attack at any level against our ops.

7. Once the VC can judge the intended direction of the fence he may attempt to booby trap along that line.

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Annex C To 7 RAR
Combat Operations
After Action Report
dated 4 Jun 67

ANALYSIS OF FENCE STORES DELIVERED BY CH 47 CHINOOK

Serial	Date	Concertina wire rolls	Wire rolls 28 lb	Picquets 6'	Picquets 8'
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
1	25 May 67	447	216	1680	-
2	26 May 67	288	200	1050	1270
3	27 May 67	224	158	650	1195
4	28 May 67	328	174	600	1488
5	29 May 67	360	185	660	1443

Annex D To 7 RAR
Combat Operations After
Action Report
dated 14 Jun 67

ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS

General

1. This Annex deals with those administrative aspects of the operation worth consideration when planning for similar operations is undertaken. Some comments are, by necessity, of an operational nature, but they effect the administrative effort.

Pre-Planning

2. Wiring Equipment. It is essential that adequate wiring equipment as dollies (both 4 inch and 3 inch incl, dependent on the type of picket used), wire cutters, gloves and windlassing sticks are readily available. The quantities required depend on the type of fence to be constructed and the number of working troops involved. A reserve is needed to make good inevitable losses in sandy and swampy ground.

3. Wiring Stores. Stores such as concertina wire, barbed wire coils and both long and short pickets must be delivered on a proportional basis. The amount of fence which can be erected is directly related to the particular item in shortest supply. Excesses of any items create movement problems to new locations where they can be used. It is best to order wiring stores on a "distance" basis; the "distance" being the capacity of the working troops involved. As a guide one rifle company with no movement resources can erect 1200 yards of catwire type 2 in one day. This assumes ground clearance of trees etc for both the fences and the minefield strips is not a retarding factor.

4. Reserves of Wiring Stores. It is tempting to establish a reasonably large reserve of wiring stores. Care must be taken in this regard as, unless adequate movement resources exist, the reserve may:

a. Create a protection problem at some distance from the present working site.

b. Require a major lift over 1,200 yards or more, usually over rough country.

c. To an extent this problem can be overcome by accurate positioning of further deliveries but this in itself can produce protection problems.

5. Training. To ensure that the fence was correctly constructed with the minimum confusion it was found beneficial to conduct a demonstration for all Cpls and above. The time involved was well spent.

Construction

6. Positioning of Stores. Helicopters are extremely flexible equipments and it was possible to place stores of all types exactly where they were wanted. Desirably, stores for a days work should be positioned late on the previous day because:

a. The days progress is known and accurate locations can be assessed for the resupply.

b. Any mistakes in type or quantities of stores can be rectified before work has to commence.

/c

c. Protection of the dumped stores is usually not a problem at that time because of the relative positions of the protecting troops.

d. The troops are able to commence work in the cool of the day.

e. Morale is improved if there are no delays in commencing work.

f. The order of fly-in of stores is not of great consequence.

7. Movement of Stores. APC's are ideal for the task (top-loading, not inside-loading). Care must be taken not to overload the APC's. Firm control of the movement resources is essential. Tasks, routes and priorities must be laid down and adhered to. A potential trap in the selection of routes is that once mining commences, routes become quite limited and passages through the wire non-existent. If a vehicle is placed on the wrong side of a fence it may have a trip of up to 6,000 yards to arrive at a destination 100 yards away.

8. Protection Force. Protection normally takes two forms; one in depth and one for close protection. The close protection group must maintain communications with the wiring companies, as continual redeployment is necessary as the fence progresses.

9. Clearing Ground. Unless sufficient dozers are made available the tasks of clearing fence lines and the central ground between the fences for the mine strips can unduly delay the wiring companies. As only two dozers were made available it was found necessary to leave 15 yard gaps in the fences every 100 yards to allow the rubbish from the central ground to be pushed out from between the fences. The gaps then had to be closed with stores previously positioned.

10. Danger to Aircraft. Once mine laying is commenced there is a danger that low flying helicopter can set off armed mines by the down pressure of their rotors. This particularly applies to CH 47 helicopters. An air control must be permanently established on the Unit Air Frequency and detailed flight directions must be given to all aircraft, these include:

a. Direction of Fly-in.

b. Direction of Fly-out.

c. Description of areas containing armed mines.

d. Locations of arming parties.

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Annex 'E' to 7 RAR
Combat Operations After
Action Report
dated 14 Jun 67

A COY OP ANALYSIS REPORT
OPERATION LEETON

Reference: Map DAT DO SW 1:25,000.

1. Sub Unit. A Coy 7 RAR.

2. Comd. Maj E J O'DONNELL.

3. Operation. Op LEETON.

4. Duration. 250730 H - 301420 H May 67.

5. Outline of Tasks. Construct Type Two cat wire fence from the coast at GR 526539 to Route 326.

6. Sequence of Events. See Appendix I attached.

7. Assessment of Operation. The fence was completed to specifications in the time allotted. If more wire and pickets had been available, about 1½ days could have been cut from the time of construction. Stores were frequently not available when required. The soldiers of the coy worked extremely well and the organization within the coy was a credit to the coy 2IC.

(E J O'DONNELL)
Maj
OC A Coy

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Appendix I to Annex 'E'

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

25 May. At 0730 hrs the coy flew by RAAF IROQUOIS to LZ at GR 526539. There was a delay until 1200 hrs before work could commence because of the lack of stores and the late arrival of bulldozers to clear the area. 700 metres of fence were constructed by last light.

26 May. Work did not start until 1000 hrs because of unavailability of stores until that time. 800 metres of fence were constructed and the padi at GR 516547 was reached.

27 May. 1 pl was able to start work at 0615 hrs but the other two platoons were again held until 1015 hrs because of lack of stores. 700 metres of fence were constructed for the day and the fence reached GR 511551. There was an incident during the evening when a Vietnamese woman put a lantern close to 1 pl's position at GR 551549. The lantern was taken by the platoon and given back to the woman in the morning.

28 May. Two platoons were unable to start before 1000 hrs because of the late arrival of stores. 700 metres of fence was constructed and a 15 metre gap left outside the LO GOM fort. The coy established a night position on the projected Northern end of the fence at GR 507560 because of reports that D445 Bn might try to move through the area that night. There was no incidents.

29 May. The remaining 550 metres of fence was completed and the gaps closed. A strong coy position at GR 507560 was prepared and the APC tp, Aslt Pnr Pl and attached engr tp were placed under comd for possible enemy sabotage of the fence. Again there was no incidents. The company was subjected to a mild experience of tear gas during the morning of 29 May 67. Friendly air had apparently dropped tear gas on suspected VC locations, several thousand metres away in the foothills to our WEST. The prevailing wind at the time caused some of the gas to drift across to the area of the barrier. However, no harm was done.

30 May. The coy was flown back to LUSCOMBE field at 1400 hrs on completion of its task.

Annex 'F' To 7 RAR
Combat Operation After
Action Report
dated 14 Jun 67

B COY OP ANALYSIS REPORT
OPERATION LEETON

1. Sub Unit. B Coy 7 RAR.

2. Comd. Maj D J MEALEY.

3. Tasks. Fly in to battalion AO, erect EAST fence of barrier and secure fence by night.

4. Sequence of Events.

a. Fly In. This was uneventful.

b. Fence Building. A total of 3650 metres of cat wire fence type 2 was constructed. The system used was as follows:

(1) Each platoon was divided into 2 half platoons giving a total of 6 work parties.

(2) One of these parties was used exclusively in a close protection role.

(3) The remaining 5 groups were each given a unit of 100 metres of fence to complete. The company then worked on and completed 500 metres of fence before progressing to the second unit.

c. Using the above system with the necessary stores available, one company is capable of completing 1200 metres of fence in one day.

d. Clearing the Route. The terrain required considerable effort by two bulldozers to clear the line of fence of undergrowth and timber. Generally the work of fence construction was held up awaiting the arrival of the dozers which had other tasks. (e.g. construction of an ARVN fort, clearing lanes for minelaying).

e. Bn Administration. Food, water, tools and stores arrived by heli on time as requested. After four major operations the company has complete confidence in the unit maintainence system.

f. Use of ARVN tps. It is not considered to be successful to use ARVN troops as labourers.

g. Use of APCs. These were invaluable. They were used almost exclusively by the coy 2IC for the laying out of pickets, wire and other defence stores. The crews were cheerful and cooperative.

5. Suggested Sequence of Fence Building.

D - 1 a. Secure area - Fly in stores and equipment.

b. Clear route of mines and booby traps.

...C...

c. Layout route especially for day 1.

d. Clear fence line along route prepared for day 1.

e. Layout wire, pickets etc for day 1.

f. Fly in coys and picquet prepared line of fence.

D Day a. Commence wiring.

b. Layout wire and pickets for day 2.

(D J MEALEY)
Maj
OC B Coy

Annex G To 7 RAR
Combat Operations
After Action Report
dated 14 Jun 67

C COY OP ANALYSIS REPORT
OPERATION LEETON

1. Report by C Coy, 7 RAR commanded by Maj G K CHAPMAN.

2. Duration. 251000H - 301500H.

3. Tasks. C Coy was to provide protection for companies employed on construction of the barrier by providing close protection and patrols in depth.

4. Sequence of Events.

a. 25 May 67. Fly in to a secured LZ. After concentration by pls, C Coy started the initial clearance of the coy AO by pl ptls up to 1000 metres out from the proposed barrier route. By night C Coy established three pl ambushes on possible VC routes.

b. 26 May 67. Pl patrols in depth to 3000 metres. Again C Coy established three pl ambushes ni 26/27.

c. 27 May 67. Three sects with APCs were employed in close protection tasks whilst the remainder of the sub-unit patrolled in depth. By night C Coy provided a pl ambush in depth and three defensive locs close to the barrier route in conjunction with the cav tp.

d. 28 May 67. Close protection of the barrier by two pls with a pl patrolling in depth. At night C Coy concentrated and occupied a defensive posn as depth coy of the bn layout.

e. 29 May 67. Close protection of the barrier with one pl and patrolling and securing in depth by the remainder of the company. At night two pls and Coy HQ provided close protection of the barrier while the third pl occupied a ni ambush posn outside the AO on a likely VC withdrawal route.

f. 30 May 67. Close protection of the barrier. Test firing of weapons and fly out in Chinook hels during the afternoon.

4. Comments

a. Continued ni ambushes without the use of mosquito nets could increase the number of malaria cases. Since the op C Coy has issued every man with a face veil to help eleviate the problem.

...b...

b. The close protection of bull-dozers is a very tiring and exacting task which requires the assistance of APCs to give the group reasonable mobility.

c. Civilians encountered within the AO can become a problem unless the commander on the ground is given some flexibility in the subsequent handling of them.

d. An "apprehend and evacuate" order can become extremely difficult to carry out if the numbers get into double figures.

5. Assessment of Op

The tasks given to C Coy were successfully completed and the lack of VC contact may, in fact, have been due to continuous patrolling by this sub unit in depth.

(G K CHAPMAN)
Maj
OC C Coy

Annex 'H' To 7 RAR
Combat Operations After
Action Report
dated 14 Jun 67

D COY OP ANALYSIS REPORT
OPERATION LEETON

Reference: 1. 7 RAR OP 4 (OP LEETON) dated 24 May 67.

General Outline

1. a. Duration of Operation 0800 hrs 24 May 67 to 1300 hrs 1 Jun 67.

b. Command OC D Coy Maj D E PATERSON.

c. Summary of Tasks Security of Bn LZ, beach landing site and of personnel and material whilst a barrier was erected and a minefield laid from approximately YS 523541 - YS 511549 - YS 507560. In addition, the escort of two bulldozers from LO GOM 5154 to TAM PHUOC 4458 along Route 326.

Sequence of Events

2. 24 May Move at 0800 hrs by APCs to beach east of PHUOC HAI 5153. Prepared to assist beaching of LSM VERON STURDEE. Beaching aborted after two attempts due to weather, sea and beach conditions. Secured LZ for fly in of battalion and stores.

25-27 May Clear and secure area through which fence and minefield would be constructed.
Close protection to east of wiring parties using platoon mounted in APCs.

28-31 May Security of completed fence and protecting mine laying parties.

1 Jun Escort two bulldozers from LO GOM 5154 to TAM PHUOC 4458 along route 326.

Incidents

3. a. One 4 gallon petrol can of polished rice found in cache at approximately 525553.

b. 12-18 CBUs found in general area south half square 5255 and north half square 5254. CBUs were not found in any pattern and were not set as mines or booby traps.

c. Located enemy position at 481559. Constructed of five weapon pits with OHP in an area about 40 metres and had been used recently. Consider this position could have been used as patrol base for VC operations northeast of PHUOC LOI 4957 during the period of OP LEETON. This position was not destroyed.

Own Casualties

4. Nil.

Assessment of Operation

5. Successful.

(D E PATERSON)
Maj
OC D Coy

Appendix I to Annex H

ESCORT TASK ON 1 JUN 67 ON ROUTE 326

Reference: 1. VUNG TAU - 6429/IV/NORTH E
2. PHUOC HAI - 6429/I/NORTH W

Situation

1. When the two bulldozers had completed their task on OP LEETON on 31 May 67 that had to be moved from LO GOM 5054 to TAM PHUOC 4458 for further movement by lowloader to the HORSESHOE 4961.

2. The dozers could not cross the narrow bridge at 510563 on Route 44 or by-pass the bridge because of wet ground conditions. Movement was limited to Route 326, however this road had been cut in three places by the VC restricting the movement of a low-loader and thereby limiting the speed of the dozers to 2 MPH. The flooded paddi to the north of Route 326 prevented the dozers from moving off the road in this direction. Movement was also restricted to the south of Route 326 in most places due to terrain conditions.

3. At least two companies of D445 and a local guerilla coy were believed to be in the LONG HAI hills South of Route 326, and there had been several enemy contacts in the general area of Route 326 during the period of OP LEETON. The VC could have expected to have mined the road and the ground near the road.

4. The following troops were available for the escort task:

D Coy 7 RAR with:

Under Command
- One tp APCs
- One sect of Mors in APCs
- One sect Fire Aslt Pl (trained as pioneers)
- One SIOUX helicopter

Under command for movement
- Two engineer bulldozers

In direct support
- FO party 106 Bty RAA
- 161 Bty RNZA

In support
- One med Bty (US)
- Light Fire Team (US)

In addition 7 RAR liasion officers used in ARVN posts during OP LEETON and stationed along Route 44, had to be collected.

Concept of Operations

5. The plan was not to make contact with the enemy but to neutralize likely enemy ambush positions using artillery, the rapid deployment of infantry in APCs to secure both ends of the road, and establishment of a fire base on the most dominating feature in the centre of the route.

...This was....

This was coupled with continuous search of the road for mines, with mine sweepers from each end of the route, and clearance of the timber on the sides of the road with infantry. They were to search for enemy parties and cables to command detonated mines. Speed and security were essential to prevent the enemy reacting to our movement.

The Execution of the Task

6. A reconnaissance by helicopter was carried out just before last light on 31 May 67. The helicopter did not fly directly over the route and only made one pass.

7. A platoon mounted in APCs was sent on a long but fairly secure route from PHUOC HAI 5153, along route 44 to DAT DO 4860, along route 23 to LONG DIEN 4359, to TAM PHUOC 4458. It was accompanied by a pioneer element with their minesweepers and an FO ack. Its task was to clear Route 326 to the south east.

8. Another platoon mounted in APCs and accompanied by a mortar FO and pioneers with their minsweepers moved from PHUOC HAI to 5153 to the junction of routes 44 and 326 in square 5055. Its task was to clear and secure route 326 to the north west and escort the dozers after they were handed over by the third APC/platoon group.

9. The third platoon of D Coy mounted in APCs, (together with CHQ and Tp HQ) escorted the two dozers from the military post at LO GOM 5164 to the location of the platoon on Route 326 moving north west, collected the LOs at the ARVN posts along Route 44, then secured a fire base in the vicinity of 476570. During the latter stage of this move the artillery FO was picked up by helicopter to register then neutralize a likely enemy ambush position in the timber between 475566 and 482558. The helicopter was left on the task of route surveillance until this move was complete.

10. Whenever the ground would permit, the dozers were moved off the road to save the time required to clear the road with minesweepers. The dozers were also used to fill and repair culverts that had been destroyed by the VC so that they could cross.

Conclusion

11. The dozers were escorted to TAM PHUOC and handed over to Engr escort party with the low loader without incident.

Comments

12. The following points arose during this move which could prove of value under similar circumstances:

a. The need for exceptionally close co-operation between the APC and Infantry commanders during the planning and execution of such a move.

b. Practice by troops riding in APCs to avoid:

(1) Pl Comds "jamming" the net when they use armoured veh wireless sets for communications.

(2) Confusion by infantry commanders with the large number of callsigns on the armoured nets.

...(3)...

(3) Pl comds giving inaccurate locstats when moving in APCs

(4) Bad packing of heavy infantry packs in APCs so that infantry cannot get out of APCs easily

(5) Troops riding on top of APCs (many troops do not like being enclosed inside APCs).

c. The value of the SIOUX helicopter for route surveillance and its capacity to pick up an artillery observer from the escort force to engage likely targets, or the commander of the group for co-ordination and control under certain circumstances.

d. The need for a high powered APC mounted wireless in Tp HQ that can be used by the infantry commander of the administration/air net in addition to the set now used on the battalion command net.

ANNEX 'B' TO 7RAR
COMBAT OPERATION AFTER ACTION
REPORT DATED 14 JUN 67.

MAP 6530 III
1: 25,000

OP LEETON

