

**Series: AWM95**  
**Australian Army commanders' diaries**  
**[Vietnam]**

**Headquarters units**

**Item number: 1/4/21**

**Item: Headquarters, 1 Australian**  
**Task Force**

**Commanding Officers After**  
**Action Report**

**[COAAR]**

**Operation Robin**

**[1-31 Dec 1966]**



# 1st AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE VIETNAM



## COMBAT OPERATIONS AFTER ACTION REPORT OPERATION ROBIN

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AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

HEADQUARTERS, 1ST AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE VIETNAM

NUI DAT

R723-1-5

28 December, 1966

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report

TO: See Distribution

1. Reference is made to:
  - a. Maps: VIETNAM: 1:50,000 Sheets 6429 IV, 6430 III Series L701
2. Name and Type of Operation: Operation ROBIN - Route Security.
3. Dates of Operation: The operation was conducted during the period 101200H October to 161200H October 1966.
4. Location: Highway 15 between BARIA YS 375610 and PHU MY YS 253744.
5. Control Headquarters: II Field Force Vietnam in coordination with USARV and 1st Log Comd.
6. Reporting Officer: Brigadier O.D. Jackson DSO, OBE.
7. Task Organization:

- a. Troops taking part were:

1st Inf Div  
173d Abn Bde (Sep)  
1st ATF  
3d Bde, 4th Inf Div  
II FFORCEV Arty  
12th Avn Group

- b. 1st ATF task organization comprised:

5 RAR  
6 RAR (-)  
Elements 1 APC Sqn  
103 Fd Bty RAA  
Bty A 2/35 Arty (-)  
Elements 1 Fd Sqn RAE  
One H13 161 (Indep) Recce Flt  
Six UH1Bs 9 Sqn RAAF

8. supporting Forces:

- a. US Army Aviation:

- (1) Planned Support:

- (a) One light fire team was on standby at LZ KANGAROO in 1st ATF base camp from 0700 hours to 1700 hours daily.

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- (b) Firefly illumination helicopter support was available by night during the period 10 to 15 October.
- (c) One airmobile company medium was in support from 1300 hours to 1600 hours 10 October.
- (d) Dustoff facility existed as normal. Dustoff UH1B was based at 1st ATF Dustoff Pad YS434665 from 0700 hours to 1700 hours daily and was on standby at YUNG TAU during the hours of darkness.

(2) Extent of Employment and Effectiveness:

- (a) The light fire team was employed on four separate occasions during the operation to neutralize suspected enemy positions.
- (b) Firefly support had been requested with a view to employing the illumination helicopter in the area WEST of Highway 15 each night during the period 10 to 15 October inclusive. This support was not used on the request of the Province Chief. The request was made because fishermen were operating in the area during the hours of curfew in an effort to offset the effects of a lean fishing season.
- (c) The airmobile company medium was used to redeploy 5 RAR less B Coy elements from AO WHITE to positions along Highway 15 between 1300 and 1600 hours 10 October.
- (d) The Dustoff UH1B was used on three separate occasions to evacuate casualties, namely the pilot and passenger from a crashed H13, a sapper wounded by a booby trap, and two RF/PF soldiers and one A/6 RAR soldier also wounded by booby traps.

b. USAF:

- (1) Planned Support: Aircraft were available for airstrikes from US Seventh Air Force.
- (2) Extent of Employment and Effectiveness: Two combat proof strikes were made at YS258672 at 112140H October. Both strikes were slightly SW of the target but would have had good demoralizing effects. The area was subsequently checked by ground patrols with negative results.

9. Intelligence:

a. Enemy strength, location, disposition and situation anticipated in the area of operations was as follows:

- (1) During August and September there had been many agent reports of VC units up to battalion size moving throughout the area. However, it was not thought that there were any enemy forces larger than company size permanently based there. It was expected that the forces in the area were local force VC from the CHAU DUC District Company, and that their main communication routes were in the foothills to the WEST of NUI THI VAI YS294712.
- (2) Operation CANBERRA confirmed intelligence estimates that because of its location in relation to Highway 15 and a known VC supply route leading NORTH to the HAT DICH, the NUI THI VAI area was used as a resupply point, to provide observation posts covering Highway 15, and as a rendezvous for couriers.
- (3) The areas considered most likely to be used by the VC were re-entrants at YS2871, YS2870, and YS3071.

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(4) The enemy was known to maintain a limited sabotage capability and could destroy any of the bridges and culverts along Highway 15 from BARIA to PHU MY. A force to carry out these tasks could also approach the selected targets from the canals and swamps to the SOUTH and WEST of Highway 15.

(5) Main Force VC were believed to be located as follows:

(a) One bn 274 Regt approximately 10 kilometres NE of PHU MY.

(b) Two bns 274 Regt EAST of Inter Provincial Route 2.

(c) Remainder of 5 VC Div EAST of Inter Provincial Route 2.

(6) It was not considered likely that Main Force VC would make any attempt to interfere with friendly operations in the area.

b. Enemy strength and situation encountered in the area:

VC activity seemed to be directed mainly towards observing and harrassing the operation. Snipers operated individually and in pairs. Ground fire was received by aircraft on four occasions, one H13 crashing as a result. One VC squad was contacted by A/6 RAR at 101858H October with negative results, whilst at 131210H ARVN troops reported that small arms fire, heavy machine gun fire, and suspected light mortar fire was falling in the vicinity of the PF outposts along Highway 15 in the general area of YS 306610.

c. Terrain and vegetation: Highway 15 proceeds generally NNW to SSE, covering a distance of approximately 100 kilometres from BIEN HOA City to VUNG TAU. Highway 15 has a bituminous surface in fair to good condition which varies in width from fourteen to sixteen feet. The highway traverses a sparsely settled alluvial plain from BIEN HOA City to PHU MY, whilst SOUTH of PHU MY it frequently passes through or adjacent to the mangrove swamps. Those portions of the highway which lie in close proximity to the mangrove swamps require frequent maintenance, due to the poor drainage and relatively heavy traffic. Thirty-one bridges, with widths of ten feet or less are interspersed throughout the 100 kilometres from BIEN HOA City to VUNG TAU. Due to their narrow width the bridges constitute critical points. WEST of Highway 15, the terrain is generally open, whereas the area to the EAST of the Highway is generally wooded. Movement off the road to the EAST is restricted by swamps in the SOUTH and heavy vegetation and marshlands in the central and northern areas. To the WEST, movement off the road is restricted by swamps in the SOUTH and rice paddies in the north. Three hill masses, NUI DINH YS 334653 elevation 491 metres; NUI THI VAI YS 294712 elevation 467 metres; and NUI TOC TIEN YS 309705 elevation 428 metres, dominate the Highway and afford observation of the route from VUNG TAU to PHU MY.

d. Weather: The weather was fine and warm by day and cool to mild by night. Occasional thunderstorms were experienced.

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10. Mission: 1st ATF was to secure Highway 15 from BARIA YS 375610 to PHU MY YS 253744 for personnel carrying vehicle convoys between 0900 hours and approximately 1600 hours each day during the period 11 to 15 October 1966 inclusive.

11. Concept of Operation:

a. The overall concept of operation was that:

(1) 3d Bde, 4th Inf Div was to arrive in RVN as follows:

(a) Main body - personnel were to disembark from vessel at VUNG TAU 12 to 15 October and move to base camp at BEAR CAT.

(b) Vehicles and equipment were to arrive at SAIGON Port during the period 7 to 20 October and move to base camp at BEAR CAT.

(2) Transport for the personnel move was to be provided by 1st Log Comd. Fifty troop carrying vehicles were to move from LONG BINH to VUNG TAU on 11 October for this purpose.

(3) Two convoys of approximately fifty vehicles were to move from VUNG TAU to BEAR CAT each day. A third convoy would be sent whenever possible, if necessary with the vehicles remaining overnight at BEAR CAT and returning to VUNG TAU the following morning.

(4) Convoy movement on Highway 15 was to take place between 0900 hours and 1600 hours each day. Traffic control was to be provided by 1st Inf Div.

(5) Route security of Highway 15 was to be provided by 1st ATF from BARIA YS 375610 to PHU MY YS 253744, and by 173d Abn Bde (Sep) from PHU MY YS 253744 to BEAR CAT.

b. The concept of operation for 1st ATF was as follows:

(1) Route was to be secured by 5 RAR and one company 6 RAR with elements of 1 APC Sqn and 1 Fd Sqn RAE under command. Artillery was to be located to cover Highway 15 from BARIA to PHU MY.

(2) Road security was to be achieved by maintaining company bases and conducting infantry and APC patrols of the road with emphasis on likely ambush places and approaches to them.

(3) A company size patrol was to operate in the NUI DINH Hills area overlooking Highway 15 during the period of the operation.

12. EXECUTION:

a. 1st ATF Frag Order 1-11-66 was issued at 080800H October 1966. The Operation was initiated at 101200H October and terminated at 161200H October.

b. Contacts were of short duration at short to medium ranges. Communication capability during these actions was adequate.

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- c. Medcaps were carried out by 5 RAR during the operation in the villages of AP LONG CAT and AP ONG TRING DP YS2568. A dentcap was also carried out in AP LONG CAT. All projects achieved good results.
- d. 5 RAR deployed from AO WHITE on completion of Op CANBERRA on 10 October to company bases on Highway 15 between PHU MY YS253744 and creek at YS306610. Annex P. A/6 RAR deployed to position on Highway 15 between creek at YS306610 and BARIA YS375610. D/6 RAR commenced a company size patrol in the NUI DINH hill area overlooking Highway 15. One company 6 RAR remained in 1 ATF base camp as ready reaction force. 103 Fd Bty RAA and Bty A 2/35 Arty (-) remained at fire support base YS258682 used during Op CANBERRA. 103 Fd Bty RAA was in direct support of 5 RAR and in support of A/6 RAR. Battery A, 2/35 Arty (-) was in support of 1st ATF and at priority call to 5 RAR. 2 Tp 1 APC Sqn together with four combat engineer teams and a troop HQ were placed under command of 5 RAR, whilst one APC section and one combat engineer team were placed under command of A/6 RAR. 103 Sig Sqn continued to maintain a rebroadcast station of VC Hill 2645, whilst a light aircraft was available for aerial rebroadcast as required.
- e. During the period 11 to 16 October Highway 15 was cleared prior to 0900 hours and secured until completion of convoy movement each day. 5 RAR was responsible for the daily clearance and security of Highway 15 between PHU MY YS253744 and creek at YS306610, whilst A/6 RAR was responsible for the daily clearance and security of Highway 15 between creek at YS306610 and BARIA YS375610.
- f. The area of Highway 15 allotted to 5 RAR was divided into 5 sections. Four sections were each secured by one rifle company with one APC section and one combat engineer team patrolling and piquetting within the sector. The fifth and smallest sector was located centrally and contained 5 RAR Bn HQ and the fire support base. Patrolling and piquetting of the road within this sector was carried out by the Anti Tank and Assault Pioneer Platoons. A/6 RAR with one APC section and one combat engineer team patrolled and piquetted their sector of Highway 15 in a similar manner.
- g. A statement of events in chronological order is as follows:
- (1) D-1 (10 October):
- (a) 1200 hours D/6 RAR commenced patrol in the NUI DINH Hill area overlooking Highway 15.
- (b) 1230 hours A/6 RAR moved by 2½ ton vehicles from 1st ATF base camp to YS343612 then moved by foot to YS342615 and established a company base.
- (c) 1327 hours. 2 Tp 1 APC Sqn was carrying B/5 RAR from YS283721 to YS251726 where the company established a company base.
- (d) 1400 hours. A/5 RAR was helilifted from YS283719 to YS287634 where a company base was established,

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- (e) 1415 hours. D/5 RAR was helilifted from YS 288697 to YS 273658 and established a company base.
- (f) 1435 hours. C/5 RAR was helilifted from YS 283719 to YS 253705 and established a company base.
- (g) 1502 hours. S RAR Bn HQ and Mor Pl were helilifted from YS283719 to fire support base at YS258682.
- (h) 1732 hours. An H13 crashed on take off from C/5 RAR base at YS 253705 after receiving ground fire. The wounded pilot and injured passenger were evacuated and the H13 was recovered.
- (i) 1858 hours. Approximately ten VC walked into A/6 RAR base perimeter at YS 342615 and were engaged by one rifleman. One VC was dressed in green. The VC fired two rounds and withdrew NORTH. No follow up action was taken as darkness was falling.
- (j) 1910 hours. C/5 RAR discovered and deloused a minor booby trap under a sandbag lying beside the road at the company base.

(2) D Day (11 October):

- (a) 0700 hours (first light). Road clearance commenced. A/6 RAR encountered M26 grenade booby trap at YS 344612 which was rigged to a wire three metres from the road.
- (b) 0705 hours. One sapper initiated a booby trap near D/5 RAR base location whilst clearing the area with a mine detector. He sustained minor shrapnel wounds and was evacuated.
- (c) 0710 hours. Numerous ARVN booby traps were being found in all company areas. It appeared that most culverts were wired or booby trapped. In A/5 RAR area some agitated friendly Vietnamese told the troops that they were in the middle of an unmarked ARVN minefield. Phuoc Tuy Sector HQ confirmed that ARVN troops had laid numerous booby traps and unmarked minefields and that locations had not been recorded.
- (d) 0730 hours. Road was picquetted and mobile patrols deployed.
- (e) 0940 hours. An unidentified explosion occurred in vicinity of YS 256681.
- (f) 0950 hours. First Convoy entered 1st ATF AO.
- (g) 1042 hours. First convoy cleared 1st ATF AO.
- (h) 1148 hours. VC sniper fire was directed at elements of A/5 RAR and 2 APC Tp at YS 306610. Two VC snipers fired seven rounds at one APC from a distance of seventy five metres and moved EAST. The APC was forced to close down due to the accuracy of the VC fire and withdrew whilst 3 pl A/5 RAR conducted a sweep of the area with negative results. The road was cleared prior to the arrival of the second convoy which proceeded unhindered.
- (i) 1345 hours. C/5 RAR reported wood smoke in vicinity YS 292716.

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- (j) 1400 hours. Companies withdrew road picquets and concentrated in patrol bases.
  - (k) 1602 hours. One UH1B received ground fire in vicinity of YS 258672. The area was subsequently engaged by a light fire team and artillery and mortar fire.
  - (l) 2100 hours. 5 RAR reported considerable traffic along Highway 15 contrary to the 1900 hours to 0500 hours curfew restrictions. Phuoc Tuy Sector HQ were requested to establish a road block WEST of BARIA.
  - (m) 2140 hours. Two Combat proof airstrikes were conducted on YS258672 in area of ground fire received by an UH1B at 1602 hours.
- (3) D + 1 (12 October):

- (a) 0900 hours. A/6 RAR reported that its sector had been cleared and secured.
- (b) 0915 hours. 12 P1 D/5 RAR was fired on by Sector troops in a compound at YS 282646. No casualties were sustained. Phuoc Tuy Sector HQ was notified.
- (c) 0945 hours. One H13 received ground fire from YS 264668. D/5 RAR subsequently searched the area with negative results.
- (d) 1000 hours. 5 RAR reported that its area had been cleared and secured.
- (e) 1025 hours. Convoy reached BARIA ex VUNG TAU.
- (f) 1042 hours. Unexplained irregular puffs of smoke were sighted over a two minute period at YS 287687.
- (g) 1305 hours. One H13 received ground fire at YS 296666 B/5 RAR investigated with negative results.
- (h) 1344 hours. Convoy departed BEAR CAT.
- (i) 1514 hours. B/5 RAR detected two VC at YS 289718 moving NORTH. Area was engaged by light fire team.
- (j) 1515 hours. Convoy cleared 5 RAR area.
- (k) 1525 hours. 1st Inf Div advised that convoy movement had been completed for the day.
- (l) 1900 hours. Companies were concentrated in company base locations less elements of A/6 RAR which laid a night ambush at YS 346616.
- (m) 2000 hours. D/6 RAR had searched all known VC camps in NUI DINH Hills but had found no sign of movement or occupation in the area since Operation VAUCLUSE.

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(4) D - 2 (13 October):

- (a) 0800 hours. Highway 15 had been cleared and secured and the convoy subsequently proceeded without incident.
- (b) 0830 hours. D/5 RAR apprehended two Vietnamese filling in holes in the road. Matter was checked with Phuoc Tuy Sector HQ which advised that legitimate road workers operated from each village.
- (c) 1310 hours. D/6 RAR was helilifted from YS 373683 to 1st ATF base camp on completion of its patrol in the NUI DINH Hills.

(5) D + 3 (14 October):

- (a) 0900 hours. Highway 15 had been cleared and secured.
- (b) 1100 hours. Convoy passed through the area without incident.
- (c) 1210 hours. ARVN reported that small arms fire, heavy machine gun fire, and suspected light mortar fire was coming from the vicinity of a ruined pagoda at YS 323628 into the vicinity of PF outposts along highway 15 in the general area of YS 306610. The suspected fire base was engaged by a light fire team and artillery fire and subsequently investigated by a patrol from A/6 RAR with negative results.
- (d) 1225 hours. One APC at YS 306610 received heavy small arms fire. Suspected location of VC was engaged by artillery and a light fire team with negative results.
- (e) 1900 hours. Companies were concentrated in base location less ambush patrols which were located as follows: 6 P1 B/5 RAR YS 266734; 9 P1 C/5 RAR YS 272697; 12 P1 D/5 RAR YS 282666; 2 P1 A/5 RAR YS 303648.

(6) D + 4 (15 October)

- (a) 0900 hours. Highway 15 had been cleared and secured and convoys subsequently proceeded without incident.
- (b) 1900 hours. Companies were concentrated in base locations.

(7) D + 5 (16 October)

- (a) 0710 hours: An RF/PF patrol in passing an A/6 RAR patrol moved off the Highway and detonated two hand grenades rigged as booby traps at YS 331611. It was thought that they had been laid by ARVN troops. Two RF/PF soldiers and one A/6 RAR soldier were evacuated with shrapnel wounds.
- (b) 0800 hours. Highway 15 had been cleared and secured and the final convoy passed without incident.
- (c) 0935 hours. 1st ATF was released from participation in Operation ROBIN. 5 RAR companies concentrated at company base locations in preparation for subsequent deployment on Operation QUEANBEYAN.

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(d) 1200 hours. A/6 RAR returned to 1st ATF base camp in 2½ ton vehicles.

## 13. Results.

### . Casualties:

Friendly		VC	
KIA	None	KIA	None
WIA	4	WIA	None
MIA	None	CAPTD	None
WPNS	None	PW	None
		WPNS	None

b. Equipment and Material Losses: None.

## 14. Administrative Matters:

- A combination of twenty-four hour ration packs, C rations, and ten man ration packs were used during the operation. Some fresh rations were also brought forward to the static company base locations.
- Resupply was effected daily by both helicopters and road convoys. This included water as the local water was not used for drinking due to the proximity of villages.

## 15. Commander's Analysis.

- The dangers of laying unmarked minefields, and of not recording booby trapped areas and minefields, were most apparent. Phuoc Tuy Sector HQ confirmed that ARVN troops were responsible.
- Whilst a list of known minefields in Phuoc Tuy Province has been promulgated the total number of unrecorded "dirty" areas is not known.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

*S.J. Maizey*  
S.J. MAIZEY  
Major, RA Inf  
S3

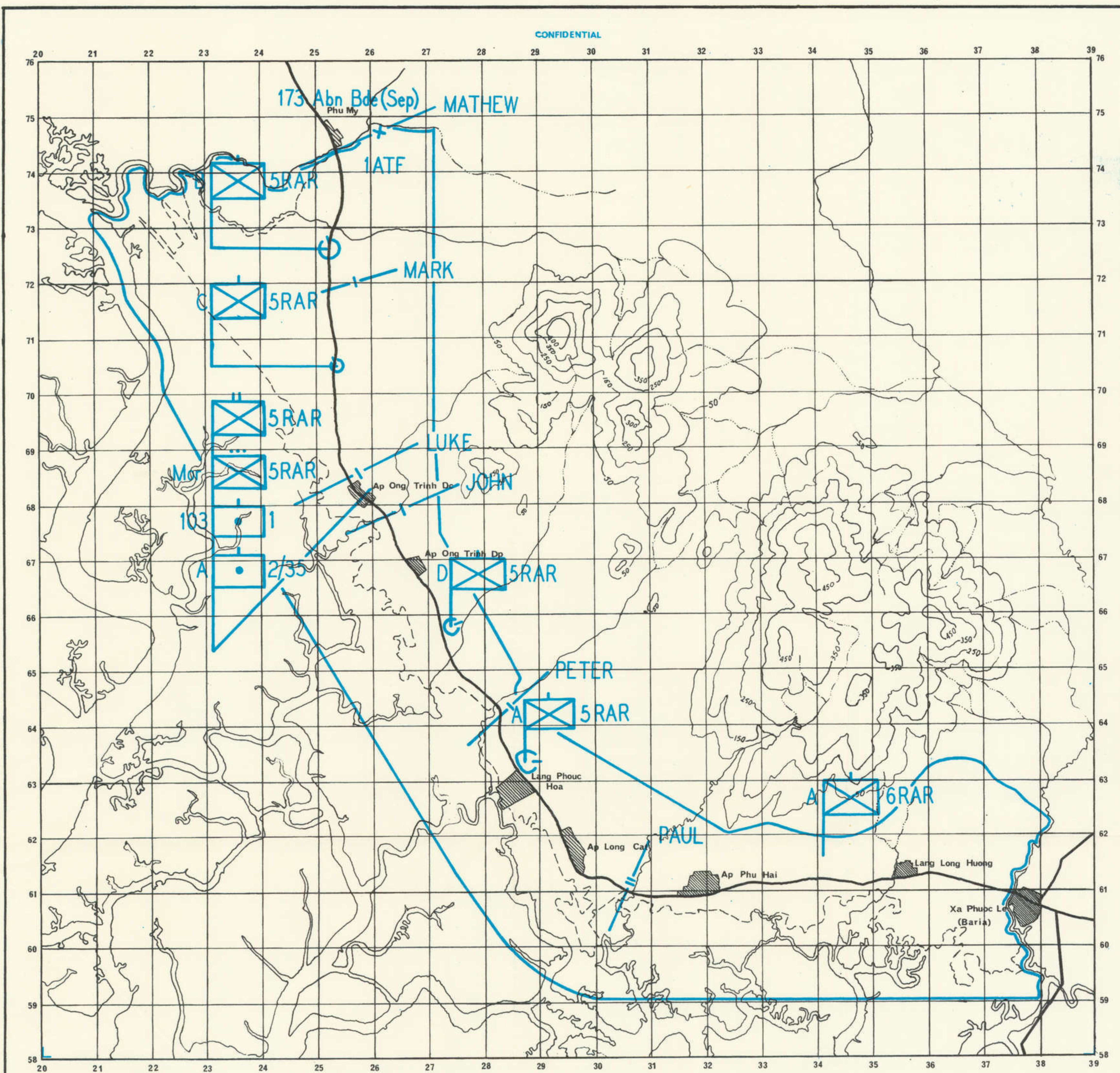
Annex: P. Area of Operation

### DISTRIBUTION:

5 - 5 RAR  
5 - 6 RAR  
2 - CG II FFORCE V, Attn: D&T and AC of S  
5 - HQ AFV  
2 - HQ NZ Force V  
2 - Comds Diary  
1 - File

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ANNEX P (AREA OF OPERATION) TO COMBAT OPERATIONS AFTER ACTION REPORT (OPERATION ROBIN)

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