Series: AWM95 Australian Army commanders' diaries [Vietnam]

Headquarters units

Item number: 1/4/18

Item: Headquarters, 1 Australian Task Force

Commanding Officers After Action Report

[COAAR]

Operation Bundaberg

[1-30 Nov 1966]



92

1st AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE VIETNAM



COMBAT OPERATIONS AFTER ACTION REPORT OPERATION BUNDABERG

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AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

HEADQUARTERS, 1ST AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE VIETNAM

R723-1-5 .

/8 November, 1966

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SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report.

TO: Commanding General

II Field Force Vietnam (5)

ATTN: AC of S, G3

APO 96266

COPY TO: HQ AFV (5)

HQ NZ Force Vietnam (2)

1. Reference is made to:

a. Maps: VIETNAM: 1:5,000 HOA LONG (Special).

Name and Type of Operation: Operation BUNDABERG - A County Fair Operation.

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- Dates of Operation: The operation was conducted during the period 300100H to 311300H October 1966.
- 4. Location: HOA LONG Village YS 4264.
- 5. Control Headquarters: 1 ATF in coordination with Phuoc Tuy Sector.

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- 6. Reporting Officer: Brigadier O.D. JACKSON, OBE.
- 7. Task Organization:
 - a. 1 ATF:

HQ 1 ATF Tac
5 RAR
6 RAR
1 APC Sqn
TF Artillery
One tp 1 Fd Sqn RAE
3 SAS Sqn
Det 1 Div Int Unit
Two H13s 161 (Indep) Recce Flt
Four UHIBs 9 Sqn RAAF

b. Phuoc Tuy Sector Forces:

Sector Forces HQ

1/43 Inf Bn ARVN

1 National Field Force Police Coy

1 CT/CG Coy

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/8. Supporting Forces:

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8. Supporting Forces:

- Planned Support: a. HEAD SUABILES, 184 AUSTRALIAN THEK, FORCE VIETHAM
 - One psywar voice aircraft. (1)
 - (2) One light fire team.
 - (3) DUSTOFF UHIB.
 - (4) Phuoc Tuy S2 Interrogation Centre (40 interrogators).

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCE

- Extent of Employment and Effectiveness:
 - (1) The psywar voice aircraft flew over HOA LONG Village at 300530H October and broadcasted instructions to the civilian population to remain inside their homes and assured them that they would not be harmed. The aircraft's audio broadcast produced the required result.
 - (2) The light fire team was on standby at LZ KANGAROO in 1 ATF Base Area but was not used as no suitable target was forthcoming.
 - (3) DUSTOFF facility existed as normal.
 - (4) Phuoc Tuy S2 established an interrogation centre at BARIA Stadium. YS 393620. Forty interrogators were provided by Sector S2. Interrogations terminated at 311300H October.

Intelligence:

General: a.

Until late May 1966 the village of LONG PHUOC YS 4464 (1) was VC dominated. It was used as a VC base area and safe haven and was extensively fortified and tunnelled. As a result of a joint US/ARVN clearing operation, the village of LONG PHUOC was cleared and the population resettled in HOA LONG YS 4264 and LONG DIEN YS 4359. 1,460 persons were settled in HOA LONG.

3001008 to 2112008 Cotobor 1966.

LOSALTON: HOA LONG, VILLEGO YS AREA.

- (2) Until late May 1966 the NORTHERN part of the village of HOA LONG was also VC dominated; (the only government forces in HOA LONG being located in the District Headquarters YS 420637 in the SOUTHERN portion of the village.
- (3) The population of HOA LONG (GVN census Sep 66) is 3,756. Many of these people are known to be VC cadre members, procommunists, or relatives of hard core VC. Many are openly hostile to the GVN. Iwo Mise 161 [ledgel] Reace Fit
- (4) Since the arrival of 1 ATF much effort had gone into pacifying the inhabitants of HOA LONG by:
 - (a) Civil aid programmes e.g. Medical and Dental aid, a new market, new village administration building and repairs to schools. I Mestand Field Forge Poitor Coy
 - Assistance to the Regional/Popular Forces in HOA LONG (b) with armour, artillery and infantry support aimed at providing security for the village.
 - (c) Supporting the operations of the Civil Administration Officials in efficiently carrying out their duties. Despite this aid, there were still VC guerillas, and procommunists carrying out terrorist activities within and without the village.

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- (5, The following hostile elements are a threat to the effective pacification of HOA LONG:
 - (a) The Province Mobile Battalion (860 or D445),

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- (b) CHAU DUC District Company; C20 (approximate strength 100)
- (c) Local VC guerillas from HOA LONG and LONG PHUOC areas (estimated at platoon strength).
- (d) VC intelligence agents and cadre members
 - (e) Families and relatives of VC.
 - (f) Previously neutral villagers and refugees who are antigovernment and anti-allied forces owing to recent resettlement and curfew restrictions.
- (g) VC sympathisers.

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- (6) VC activities in the vicinity of HOA LONG have been:
 - (a) Attempts to aggravate the obvious grievances of those mentioned in paragraph 8.a.(5)(b) above, in order to recruit VC sympathisers, agents and guerillas, and to foster anti-GVN/Australian sentiments.
 - (b) Continual intelligence gathering activities by VC agents within the village.
 - (c) Infiltration of the village in order to:
 - Commit acts of terrorism against government officialand pro GVN citizens.
 - ii. Pick up intelligence.
 - iii. Collect food and taxes.
- iv. Visit relatives and friends.
 - (d) Attempts by larger forces to carry out harrassing and intimatation raids against friendly forces in the village.
 - (e) Attempts at mining, booby trapping and sniping, primarily directed against government and allied forces in the area especially along Inter Provincial Route 2.

/(3) The known VC infrastructure

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- Enemy strength, location and disposition anticipated in the b. objective area on 30 October 1966 was follows:
- (1) The known VC infrastructure of HOA LONG was as follows:

(a) VC Cadres HOA LONG: the the Province Mobile Section design and the

Chief: SAU THANH

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WOMENS ORGANIZATION

LIBERATION YOUTH

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Chief Medical Sect Ldrs:

Officer:

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Members:

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/(b) VC Cadres ex LONG PHUOC:

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(b) VC Cadres ex LONG PHUOC:

Chief: THUAN (alias SAU THAO)

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CONG (alias XE)

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CIVIL AND GUERILLA SQUAD . MILITARY SELF DEFENCE

FINANCE AND ECONOMIC LIBERATION YOUTH ORGANIZATION

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Manbers: MAI (alias TUNG) NGOC LY

BARAU (alias)

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SAI (alias

NAM TAN QUYEN)

Members:

HUYEN

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MEDICAL SECTION

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ORGANIZATION

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COMMUNICATIONS

SECTION

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Chief: RUNG (alias TRUNG) Member: DA (alias DANG)

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- . (2) The numbers of VC suspects in HOA LONG were as follows:
 - Part 1. Distribution of Communists in HOA LONG by Hamlets:

AP BAC (Area A) 40 32 AP DONG (Area B) 110 AP TAY (Area C) AP NAM (Area D) 3 41 V10

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(b) Part 2. Persons to be arrested by Hamlets:

RGA	VA STRUCT SAN A MA WAR SAN A MA M		ALL FEMALE COMMUNISTS	COMMUNISTS OVER 50
AP	BAC (Area A)	119	16	15
AP	DONG (Area B)	70		AT 16
AP	TAY (Area C)	121	61	18
AP	NAM (Area D)	33	NIL	1
Tot	al	343	90	50

- A list of names of known communists to be arrested was also compiled.
- Enemy Strength and situation found in the area:

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- A total of 640 persons were apprehended and evacuated for interrogation. Of these 556 were returned to the village because they were innocent or their offences in support of the VC were very minor and did not warrant arrest. 84 persons were arrested and detained for further interrog. ation. Owing to subsequent operations of a similar nature at LANG PHUOC HOA YS 2762 and LONG SON Island centre of mass YS 2756 further interrogation of the 84 has not yet taken place and they are still detained at the BARIA JAIL.
- (2) The initial interrogation of these people has revealed:

Member D445 Bn Members CHAU DUC District Coy Ex Member of Baria Province Defence Cell, currently an agricultural worker VC intelligence agent RF deserter who joined VC 用据证据 (187) 1999年1773日 Committe member of Female Liberation Front Village guerillas (TEYOD satist Previous Rallier to GVN now returned to VC 1 Suspected intelligence Agent COMMUNICATIONS Other suspects, including draft dodgers 73 Chief: Rolls (altem Trons) Manbers Daline Daws

TOTAL 84

- (3) There was no attempt made by any VC to escape through the cordon and only three of thos arrested had attempted to avoid capture by hiding. .. The others were identified by VC ralliers or by interrogation.
- (4) There was no interference with the operation by VC outside the village. / (5) Although the operation

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- (5) Although the operation was successful in capturing several VC and even more VC suspects it is still possible that the VC infrastructure in HOA LONG has not been destroyed. Several known or suspected VC were not apprehended during the search and it is not known whether they were absent from the village, hid and remained undetected or whether in fact they even exist. By the use of aliases and by being in possession of GVN identity cards it is possible that several VC cadre members were not identified and were released. A detailed check of police records against the names of people apprehended and interrogated has not yet been made because of the current operations referred to above. The results of this check, when completed will indicate the reliability and value of the information produced by the Census Gricvance organization through the Police Special Branch.
 - d. Terrain and Vegetation: The village of HOA LONG is surrounded by an earth embankment varying in height from three to six feet, forward of which is a ditch of corresponding size. The embankment provided some cover for movement and provided ready-made OPs to observe into the village and fire positions from which to cover any attempts by persons to break into or to escape from the village. To the WEST, NORTH and EAST of the village, the terrain is generally flat and is covered with a variety of vegetation open grassland, fruit plantations, and tangled secondary growth, none of which constituted a serious obstacle to movement. To the SOUTH and SW, the village is surrounded by rice paddy, which due to the imminent rice harvest, dictated that 1 APC Sqn cordon their sector of the village dismounted in order to prevent unnecessary damage to the paddy.
 - e. Weather: There was a full moon on the night 29/30 October, and 30 October was fine and hot with 97 percent humidity. This tended to make sustained occupation of fire positions uncomfortable, particularly on those parts of the embankment without shade.

Mission: 1 ATF and Phuoc Tuy Sector Forces were to jointly cordon and search HOA LONG Village YS 4264 in order to remove VC influence from the village.

Concept of Operation:

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- a. 1 ATF was to cordon HOA LONG Village along the general line of the ditch and embankment using two infantry battalions, 3 SAS Sqn, and 1 APC Sqn. Annex P.
- b. Cordon was to be established by first light 30 October and was to be maintained throughout the day. Dependent upon progress of the search it was considered that it might have been necessary to maintain the cordon during night 30/31 October and 31 October.
- c. Phuoc Tuy Sector Forces were to carry out the search of all wwellings in HOA LONG Village and to arrange for evacuation of selected villagers.
 - d. Sector was responsible for the security and interrogation of evacuees. Determination of status of evacuees after interrogation was to be carried out jointly by 1 ATF and Phuoc Tuy at BARIA Stadium.

/12. Execution.

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12. Execution: and function and second and analysis in the second and second in the second and second in the second and s

a. 5 RAR: ash and ABH and mutourdashin' dv and dans

- (1) Moved from base camp location during night 29/30 October.

 Two rifle companies moved with 1 APC Sqn to FRENCH FORT

 YS 3962 and established night leaguer by 291700H October.
- (2) Placed cordon around WEST and NW section of HOA LONG by 300530H October. Annex P.
 - (3) Prevented VC/VCS escaping from HOA LONG.

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- (4) Left equivalent of one rifle company in battalion base camp.
- (5) Returned to 1 ATF Base Camp at 301700H October.

b. 6 RAR:

- (1) Moved from base camp location during night 29/30 October.
- (2) Placed cordon around EAST and NE section of HOA LONG by 300530H October. Annex P.
- (3) Prevented VC/VCS escaping from HOA LONG.

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- (4) Left equivalent of one rifle company in battalion base camp.
 - (5) Returned to 1 ATF Base Camp at 301700H October.

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- (1) 1 APC Sqn minus one troop, with two companies 5 RAR and 3 SAS Sqn, established night leaguer in vicinity of FRENCH FORT YS . 3962 by 291700H October.
- (2) Placed dismounted cordon around SW sector of HOA LONG by 300530H October. Annex P.
 - (3) Prevented VC/VCS escaping from HOA LONG.

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(4) Returned to 1 ATF Base Camp at 301700H October.

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d. 1 Fd Regt RAA:

- (1) Continued current affiliations.
 - (2) Remained in 1 ATF Base locations.
 - c. One tp 1 Fd Sqn RAE: Provided six combat engineer teams prepared to assist Phuoc Tuy Sector forces in the search, with emphasis on destruction of booby traps and exploration of tunnels.

f. 3 SAS Sqn:

- (1) Moved from base camp location during night 29/30 October with 1 APC Sqn and established night leaguer in vicinity of FRENCH FORT YS 3962 by 291700H October.
 - (2) Placed cordon around SE section of HOA LONG by 300530H October. Annex P.

£(3) Prevented VC/VCS

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- (3) Prevented VC/VCS escaping from HOA LONG.
- (4) Returned to base camp at 301700H October.
- g. 161 (Indep) Recce Flt: Provided two Hl3s in direct support

 1 ATF from first light (0643 hours) 30 October. Aircraft were
 based at 1 ATF HQ Main (LZ KANGAROO).

at 50.06368 Setober. During this among Twomay tag page 11

- h. 9 Sqn RAAF: Maintained four UHIBs on standby at LZ KANGAROO from 300730H October.
- 1. 1/43 Inf Bn ARVN:

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(1) Bn (minus) was trucked to YS 419636 where it detrucked at 300600H October.

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(2) Initiated a sweep of Area A at 300630H, moving in a northerly direction and evacuating all adults. The initial sweep was conducted with two rifle companies on line with Bn HQ to the centre rear. Area A was thoroughly covered and the initial search was completed at 300830H.

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- (3) Initiated a detailed search. Each company was assigned an area of responsibility with orders to conduct a detailed search of each structure and its adjacent grounds. The search was completed with negative results at 301300H.
- (4) Bn HQ was established at YS 418635. Bn prepared for night defence and placed ambushes around the village at YS 426633, YS 422629, YS 418631, YS 414633, YS 413634, YS 413639, YS 407544, YS 409645, YS 414646, YS 417650, YS 424652, YS 428647, YS 431644, YS 429640, and YS 428637. No contact was made at the ambush sites. At 302100H elements of the lst Coy captured two unarmed VC at YS 413643. After four hours of interrogation these VC revealled the location of five other VC and two tunnels. A search of the homes of the five VC at 310600H revealled that the males had fled, however, five females were taken into custody.

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(5) Returned to BARIA by road between 310800H and 310820H.

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(6) Four US Advisors accompanied the battalion during the operation.

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- j. 3 Coy 1/43 Inf Bn ARVN and 2d PF P1:
 - (1) Deployed from HOA LONG Compound YC 120636 at 300630H and began a northward sweep of Area B.
 - (2) Completed sweep of Area B at 301100H.
 - (3) Commenced detailed house to house search at 301100H.

 During this search three VC were found hiding: One VC at
 YS 424645 in a hole; One VC at YS 424641 hiding in a womans
 room; and one VC at YS 423646 hiding in a grain storage room.

 Search was completed at 301700H when the Coy (plus) returned
 to the compound.

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- (4) Coy HQ was mobile during the operation.
- (5) Was accompanied by three US and one AUST advisor.

/k. 1 NT/CG Coy:

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k. 1 CT/CG Coy:

- (1) Organization consisted of six 9 man search teams and a Coy HQ of five personnel and one advisor.
- (2) Trucked to the area dnd began initial sweep of Area C at 300635H October. During this sweep, twenty two people were evacuated for interrogation. The sweep concluded at 301000H.

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(3) Searched Area C in detail. One VC was found hiding in a house at YS 423633. The house had previously been noted as the residence of a VCS.

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- (4) Coy HQ was mobile during the operation.
- (5) Was accompanied by one AUST advisor.
- (6) Withdrew at 301700H.
- 1. 1 National Field Force Police Coy:
 - (1) Arrived by truck at 300615H October to commence search of Area D.

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- (2) Received briefing.
- (3) Commenced sweep of Area D at 300630H and completed sweep at 300830H. At this stage, control was lost and all operations were negative with the exception of finding one male in a woodshed at YS 416631 at 300910H, and one tunnel with a concealed entrance under a woodpile at YS 418635 at 301030H. At 301145H the Chief of NFFP Coy, after urging by the advisor and orders from the Province Chief, contacted his platoon leaders and outlined three subareas for detailed search operations.
- (4) Commenced detailed search of Area D at 301300H October.
 At 301305H 25,000 piastres were found in a house at
 YS 417634. This money was later proved to belong to the
 District Finance Officer and cleared as legitimate). One
 YCS was apprehended at YS 414634. Three additional young
 men were found in a house at YS 415634 at 301520H. One
 was discovered at YS 420631. Another tunnel, found at YS
 418631 at 201610H was 20 metres long and contained two rounds
 of expended ammunition. Two women in the area were taken
 into custody at 301625H. Four males were apprehended at
 YS 414634 and evacuated.
 - (5) Terminated search at 301700H and withdrew to BARIA.
 - (6) Coy HQ was mobile during the operations.
 - (7) Was accompanied by two US advisors.
- m. 1 ATF Operd 1-12-66 was issued at 260800H October 1966.
- n. A coordinating conference between HQ 1 ATF and Phuoc Tuy Sector HQ was held at HQ 1 ATF at 281000H October 1966.

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o. The operation commenced at 300100H October and terminated at 311300H October 1966.

/p. There were no contacts

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- p. There were no contacts or incidents between 1 ATF and enemy forces, although some suspected areas were investigated with negative results.
- q. A statistical summary of results is given in paragraph 13.
- r. HQ 1 ATF Tac and the Sector SA and Staff Tac HQ operated adjacent to the VN Sector HQ YS 420637 throughout the cordon and search phases of the operation.

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s. 1 ATF Civil Affairs/Psyops Section provided support for both the civilians evacuated to the PIC at BARIA Stadium and to those civilians permitted to remain in HOA LONG. Every effort was made to display to the civilians, that the action being taken was for their own benefit and with sincere intentions.

(1) BARIA Stadium:

- (a) Medcap: Two medical posts were established to attend to civilians in need of medical treatment.
 - (b) Community Relations: Vietnamese entertainment type movies and music were provided for the civilians, and furnished to the Province Chief with 10,000 plastres for the purchase of food. The food was prepared and distributed under arrangements made by the Province Chief.
 - (c) Psyops: 1 ATF CA Section provided psyops support to the VIS located at the Interrogation Centre. Support consisted of showing educational movies, distributing literature, and making voice broadcasts.

(2) HOA LONG:

- (a) Medcap: Two medical teams conducted mobile medcaps throughout the village area.
- (b) Dentcap: A dentist conducted a mobile clinic and provided emergency dental treatment to those in need.
- (c) Community Relations: Two CA teams assisted with supply of food to needy families.
- (d) Psyops: A leaflet was issued to each household explaining the reasons for the actions being taken, requesting their support, and advising them to report any complaints in relation to projectly damage.
- (3) Psyops in support of Search Parties:
 - (a) An audio broadcast aircraft flew over HOA LONG Village at 300530H and broadcast instructions to the civilian population to remain inside their houses and assured them that they would not be harmed.
 - (b) An audio broadcast vehicle was also used with ground troops.

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(1) Liaison officers with radios from 1 ATF cordon units were attached to Scotor Force search and clearance units as follows:

of december 20 - 11 - 1/(a) 5 RAR:

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- (a) 5 RAR: One Liaison officer to 1/43 Inf Bn ARVN. (b) 6 RAR:
- - i. One liaison officer to 1/43 Inf Bn ARVN.

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- ii. One liaison officer to 2d PF Pl.
- (c) 1 APC Sqn: One liaison officer to 1 NFFP Coy.
- (d) 3 SAS Sqn: One liaison officer to 1 CT/CG Coy.
- (2) Lisison officers, less 3 SAS Sqn liaison officer, moved to HOA LONG YS 420637 with 1 ATF Tac HQ and joined their respective Sector Force units on arrival.
- (3) 3 SAS Sqn liaison officer joined 1 CT/CG Coy at FRENCH FORT YS 3962 on night 29/30 October.
- san pier memon Indited out prombon (a) Deception Plan: In order to conceal that HOA LONG was the objective u. area, the Province Chief employed a deception plan in which the Sector units involved in the operation were advised that LANG PHUOC HAI YS 5153 was the objective area. Sector units were only briefed on the opera ion on their arrival in the vicinity of HOA LONG on 30 October. This deception plan covered the deployment of Friendly Forces and it is considered that it prevented a possible leak of information to VC or VC Sympathizers concerning the actual cordon and search of HOA LONG. In addition, own troops were initially only briefed on a need to know basis in order to prevent possible compromise of security by personnel proceeding on Rest and Convalescent leave prior to the operation.

13. Results:

- The interrogation of 640 evacuess resulted in 38 VCC, 41 VCS, a. and 46 draft dodgers being apprehended.
- There were no easualties sustained by friendly forces. 61
- . Seen at people of forefront talent venepeers behavior 14. Administrative Matters:
 - tim bedetass seres A2 out send bed the effection (b) Accomodation: a.
 - (1) Eight tents GP medium were provided from 1 ATF resources and erected at BARIA Stadium to house evacuces. Additional tentage was requested by Sector HQ but 1 ATF was unable to supply from available resources. There is a requirement for a pool of fifteen squad tents (marquees) to be held within 1 ATF for use on operations of this nature.
 - Transport: page act novo wull approve transports transport of the of (a) b.
 - siziale and co susiferalsol despesons bas Hottoos de (1) Six TCVs were made available from 1 ATF resources to the Province Chief from 300530H to assist in conveying evacuees to BARIA.
 - the bridge broadenst wastelle and slan was fire arranged of the by (4) (2) A requirement existed to return the two battalions to 1 ATF Base Camp in TCVs. This requirement was partially met by using ad hoc transport pooled from units, including & ton, \$\frac{3}{4}\$ ton, 2\frac{1}{2}\$ ton vehicles and tippers and proved inadequate both numerically and functionally. Whilst the distance from the area of operation in this instance was only 3 mile from 1 ATF Base Camp and elements of the force were able to return to the base by foot in lieu of TCV, the deficiency of organic TCVs within 1 ATF could adversely affert flexibility in operations further removed from the base camp as airmobile

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companies are not always available and the troop/equipment carrying capacity of 1 APC Sqn is understandably limited.

c. Traffic Control:

- (1) Inter Provincial Route 2 (LT2) was closed to civilian traffic on 30 October.
- (2) There was no 1 ATF resupply convoy on 30 October, and only military vehicles intimately involved in Operation BUNDERBERG were permitted into HOA LONG.
- (3) Checkpoints were established on Inter Provincial Route 2 as follows:
 - (a) Checkpoint SOUTH of HOA LONG was manned by National Police.
 - (b) Checkpoint NORTH of 1 ATF Base Area was manned by 5 RAR.
- (4) Evacuees: Determination of status of detainees was conducted jointly by 1 ATF/Sector. Det 1 Div Int Unit represented 1 ATF during screening at BARIA Stadium.
- (5) Medical: DUSTOFF facility existed as normal. DUSTOFF aircraft was on standby at 1 ATF DUSTOFF Pad from 0530 hours to 1700 hours daily.

15. Commander's Analysis:

- a. The operation was planned and initiated jointly by HQ 1 ATF and Sector HQ. It turned but to be an extremely successful one as is evident from the results achieved.
- b. We had approached the task with some tropidation as we did not know what the reaction of the villagers would be towards being evacuated from their homes. We need not have worried. Most of the people seemed to thoroughly enjoy the outing and the only adverse comment came from the village elders who complained because they had been left behind and missed seeing the movie shows. A special screening was arranged for them later in the village.
- c. The success of the operation indicated that security was good and that the operation had not been compromised. In this regard the employment of a credible cover plan by the Province Chief was a significant factor.
- d. The conduct of a jointoperation with ARVN proved to be no great problem while the two HQ were co-located.
- e. There seems little doubt that the presence of US/FWMF increases the efficiency of command as well as the morale of ARVN forces.

Annex: P. Operation Overlay.

FOR THE COMMANDER

Jan 6. Handihoon Capt RICHARD R HANNIGAN
Maj, RA Inf

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