Outline History of Company D, 1962-70

Written by:
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ANNEX D to 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) 1st Special Forces Outline History.

1. (U) As the compilation and writing of the Company D history draws to a close, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to those who helped to make this project a successful one in the briefness of the time allotted to it.

2. (U) First, I wish to thank those on the Historian's Staff, who devoted full time and effort towards making a success of this work: Sgt Kenneth D. LEEKE, formerly of Binh Than Thon, a medic, but one individual without whom the researching of the files, which of necessity precedes the actual writing of the history, could not have been completed in the allowed time. Miss Nguyen Thi HIEN, who devoted her full time to typing the draft of this history, a painstaking task, made no easier by my handwriting, and yet produced relatively fine work with few errors. Maj Robert L. JOCHIK, Commander of Co. D who took time out of a demanding schedule to read through the draft and give helpful advice, especially on certain poorly documented activities of the company, and whose enthusiasm over seeing the work progress was also an inspiration to me. The various people who contributed eyewitness evidence to the history, Sfc Fred KIRCHEN, Sfc Evert J. BEAIR, SSg Jeffery BARRE and Sgt Artie CHERRY. Also, I wish to thank Cpt Andrew DOBSON and his staff, who provided guidance from Group, gave valuable ideas for source material and conducted the interviews for the Group History.

3. (U) I would like to dedicate this work to all the courageous individuals who served in Co. D from its organization in 1963, to the close in 1970, and also my wife Dianne, who has patiently endured the separation imposed by my tour of duty, and has been an inspiration to all my work.

4. (U) This history will, I hope, endure as a remembrance of the efforts of all the personnel of Co. D and as a lasting record of the successes they achieved. If I have failed to give proper credit to anyone, where adequate records survived, I ask pardon for the oversight.

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ANNEX D (Company D Unit History) to the Outline History of the 5th Special Forces (Abn) 1st SF, Participation in the CIDO Program 1961-1970

(U.S. Army, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne))

(U) Introduction: In the research and writing of the Co. D history, several considerations concerning sources had to be taken into account and reflected in the material presented in this history. The records available at Co. D go back to mid-1968, with a few documents of an earlier date. These early documents are chiefly special studies which were kept because of their special nature or restricted classification. For the year 1968, some of the regular records of the company are still in existence; two documents survived with reference to the Tet 1968 offensive. These describe the action at Gao Lam and Moc Hoa, both cities having witnessed outstanding SF operations against fierce VC attacks. For the last quarter of 1968, the Operational Report—Lessons Learned (ORLL) is available. This valuable series of documents describes all facets of Co. D's operations in outline form. It is this series of documents which comprises the backbone of this history, as it is a continuous, chronological survey of events. The ORLLs are supplemented by Operational Plans, After Action Reports, updates and special studies—in short, by all other documents which describe the daily activities of Co. D.

(U) This history is not meant to be a highly detailed account; such a document would entail hundreds of pages, so extensive are the existing sources. Instead, it will attempt to follow major developments in Co. D's fulfillment of its mission, at the same time giving a close look at many of the more routine operations, through the description of selected events which will serve as examples. All major operations will be covered insofar as records of these still exist. Co. D has a long and productive history in Military Region 4, but the record contains failures as well as successes. The value of history is that it gives those who come after the event a picture of what occurred, hopefully an accurate one; but it has a greater value—it can teach its student the mechanics of human development, showing where our predecessors erred and where they succeeded, and why. Hopefully, the student of history will then utilize the record of the past to progress further in the future, profiting from the experience of those who preceded him and avoiding the errors which slowed their development.

(C) The original introduction of Special Forces into Vietnam was similar to the WHITE STAR OPERATION in Laos 1959-1961, where the teams were introduced slowly, and at first, covertly. Prior to 1961, SF participation in Vietnam was limited to the Temporary Mobile Training Teams dispatched from Okinawa on a TDY basis to assist training ARVN units.

(C) In November 1961, the Combined Studies Division (CSD), utilizing USASF and VNSF troops, became involved in the training of Montagnard tribesmen to enable these Highlanders to defend themselves against VC depredations. Socio-economic programs were also introduced to guarantee the Montagnard peoples greater material welfare. This dual mission of providing assistance and training to cope with the VC threat and of improving the living conditions of the people has been the heart of the SF role in Vietnam. Many of the programs adopted in MR-1 originated among the Montagnard tribes of the Central Highlands. A key program was the training of local people in the basic skills of warfare, so that they could serve as para-military forces. Considering the situation in MR-2
almost non-existent GVN presence, where due to past conflict and discrimination the Vietnamese were as much an enemy as the Viet Cong—the program evolved by Special Forces was an excellent one, for while it provided protection against the V.C., it also gave the Montagnards pride and a sense of accomplishment, because for once, they were working for themselves, and not for the profit and well being of a people living far from the mountains and the tribes. In the Spring of 1962, this paramilitary program was designated as the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG); it was later to play an extensive role in MR-4, Co. D's AOR, where exists a large Cambodian minority, also traditionally hostile to the Vietnamese.

(U) Late in 1962, the first 'C' detachment was introduced into MR-4 as the headquarters of the 5th Group (Provisional). In June of the same year, the Department of Defense transferred operational responsibility for the CIDG from the GSD to the US Army; after a one year phase-in period, the CIDG were fully under Army control; Special Forces received the task of operating the program in February 1963. The first SF camp in MR-4 was established about 10 kilometers southwest of the present B-43 camp, Chi Lang. The strategic value of the Seven Mountains in the struggle to control the Delta was recognized swiftly. Early in 1963, a 'B' camp was established adjacent to the Can Tho Airfield; this was part of an enlargement of the CIDG program occurring throughout MA-4.

On 26 October 1963, SF received an additional mission, responsibility for the Border Surveillance Program. Until this time, the program had been under the GSD, since its inception in June 1962. Units involved in border surveillance were formerly called "Trail Watchers" and "Mountain Scouts". In November 1963, this program was integrated into the CIDG mission. Their functions remained essentially unchanged, to provide reconnaissance and intelligence along the Cambodian border concerning the mounting rate of enemy infiltration into South Vietnam. Here is an example of a continuous trend in the USASF role— the ever increasing interest in the border areas, where the twin factors, ethnic minorities and a weak GVN influence, made the VC threat particularly powerful.

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(U) In May 1964, operational control of SF 'A' detachments was assigned to the Senior Advisor of each Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ), and control went through the 'B' detachment, assigned at Corps level. This arrangement enabled the Camp Commanders to integrate CIDG operations into the context of Corps operations. It was a valuable asset, for the VNSF-USASF directed CIDG were intimately familiar with their AOR, since they were indigenous to the region; the intelligence potential of the arrangement was also enormous. Further, the close cooperation between CIDG and USASF provided a good paradigm for counterpart relations at higher levels.

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With the large scale infusion of US conventional units beginning in 1964, the SF and CIDG troops assumed a still greater military role, for their experience in guerrilla warfare and their detailed knowledge of the countryside were valuable assets to the fresh, untired conventional units whose last major action had been in the quite conventional Korean War. Thus the CIDG program was also being drawn away from the non-military aspects it originally possessed, in a way, an unfortunate development, for the war in Vietnam is on all levels, not only the military. However, the new arrangement did have an advantage; with their TOE, their relatively loose discipline, their "irregular" status, the CIDG were not at their best fighting large scale actions, requiring overwhelming
fire-power and complex organizations working in conjunction with conventional units, they could serve as reconnaissance teams, guides and locators of the enemy, leaving his destruction to the better armed, better controlled regular units.

(C) In line with the US buildup, the 5th Special Forces Group was ordered to Vietnam in July 1964 to replace the provisional contingent introduced in 1961. In December 1964, the 'B' detachment at Can Tho was replaced by the present Co. D, which was given command and control of SF elements in MR-4; these elements at this point, consisted of two 'B' and ten 'A' detachments. Also in 1964, the MIKE forces were organized under unilateral SF command; these forces passed under Joint USASF/VNSF command in December 1966.

(U) In February 1965, due to the increasing need for a pacification program, the concept of sub-sector in districts where SF 'A' detachments were co-located with district capitals, was evolved. Three camps were so situated, Tinh Bien, An Phu, and Binh Thanh Thon, and these served as test sites for the new concept. So successful did the experiment prove, that the program was expanded, in April 1965, with the resulting proliferation of 'A' camps, the 'B' detachments were re-introduced, B-11, at Moc Hoa in Kien Tuong Province, and B-12 in Chau Doc Province. Two new camps were also created in early 1965, Cai Gai, A-131, and Tuyen Nhon, A-115. In May 1965, two more detachments were created, with only a sub-sector role; two reduced 'A' teams, TD, were assigned from Okinawa to Tri Ton and Tan Chau, in Chau Doc Sector. Later in 1965, an SF 'A' detachment was assigned to Hai Yen Special Sector, the location of Father Hoa's 'Village That Wouldn't Die'. In October 1965, still another 'A' detachment, TDY, from Okinawa, opened a new CIDG camp at Ap Bac; in March 1966, this camp became a permanent team.

(Gp.3) In July-August 1965, 626 former KKK guerrillas rallied at Tinh Bien and they were incorporated into the CIDG program. At this point, it becomes necessary to digress and survey the development and history of the KKK, a powerful and important group in the Seven Mountains Region, with its large Cambodian population and strategic location.

(Gp.3) The KKK, KHMER KAMPUCHEA KRON, was created in November 1961, out of the old CAMHESSO Party, by order of Headquarters in Phnom Penh, with Chau DARA appointed as its Commander. The KKK was organized to regain the "Lower Provinces" of Cambodia; these are the lower provinces of Vietnam, namely, An Giang, Kien Giang, An Xuyen, Ba Xuyen, Chuong Thien and Phong Dinh, which were allegedly annexed from the Khmer Empire; in fact, there is a historical basis for this contention, as in the course of the 15th-19th centuries, the Vietnamese had conquered a large part of present day South Vietnam from the Khmers. The lower part of the Delta was the most recently annexed region, and consequently, large pockets of ethnic Cambodians still resided in the Delta. In 1961, many of these people fled to Cambodia because of VC deprivations and GVN officials' demands for military service and labour; they settled around Bangkok Mountain, VS 906 690, and many of them joined the various Cambodian organizations which sprouted in the early 1960's around this issue.

(Gp.3) The KKK's other objectives were to exterminate the Cambodian Opportunistic Parties-KHMER SERAI, ISSARAK, and KHMER PHOM, to prevent infiltration of ARVN into Cambodia and to impress upon world opinion that the Cambodians in Vietnam were suffering oppression. Communist China was swift to realize the exploitable

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possibilities of the situation, and it proceeded to make an agreement with CPT Thach CHANH, G-2 of the KKK, promising to provide weapons and ammunition. The VC were in no position to profit from the situation, because the KKK were against all Vietnamese, GVN or VC. As a result of this dual dislike, the KKK operated mostly as an independent guerrilla group, centered in the strategic Seven Mountains Area, where they lived much as a band of brigands, raiding the nearby Vietnamese villages.

(C) KKK strength in lower MH-4 could be placed at two-three battalions: 980(+) men, armed with an assortment of mostly obsolete weapons. As of January 1964, 220th KKK Battalion, consisting of six companies and a headquarters, with an estimated total of 63 men, was the main force. Another independent battalion operated in the area; it claimed four companies with a total of 480 men, and it was operative until disbanded in July 1966. There were several additional smaller size units, operating in An Giang, Vinh Long and Tay Ninh Provinces and the Seven Mountains. This force was a power to be reckoned with for anyone who was interested in controlling the Delta.

(C) The career of Chau DARA, subsequent leader of the KKK, started in 1960, while he was a Buddhist monk in Cambodia. Late in that year, he emerged from the monastic life, and joined the CANSENSO Party, created by Smout SENG and centered on Phrom Den Mountain in Cambodia. In November 1961, he was elected as Commander of the KKK; shortly thereafter, Smout SENG introduced him to the Cambodian government, which was interested in keeping the support of so powerful a leader. Phnom Penh now gave open support to the KKK's efforts in Vietnam, by publishing two Cambodian language newspapers for the ethnic Cambodians resident in Vietnam; these were called "SANKHOM MANOUS", "Human Trust", and "SATHIS KIMERS KRONE", "Voice of Cambodia in the Lowlands".

(C) After it's establishment in November 1961, the KKK, in December, moved to Nui Cam. Further, it established three subordinate headquarters at Ha Tien, Kien Giang Province; Tri Ton, Chau Doc Province; and Loc Binh, Binh Long Province. Another group was established in Tay Ninh Province, another area with strong Cambodian elements in the population. The KKK's association with the South Vietnamese and the USASF began in 1963, November 19, when Chau DARA, its leader was captured in Tri Ton District by local forces. At the time, he was ill with malaria and therefore, unable to escape, but the rest of his band successfully evaded the VN forces. Early in 1964, Maj. SOKAN, of Tri Ton Sub-sector, tried to induce a KKK element under Chau YEM, the new leader of the group, to rally to the GVN; the attempt was unsuccessful. Early in 1965, Chau YEM left the KKK, and Chau UCH became the C.O. Maj SOKAN contacted him also, and on July 29-31, 1965, a group of 134 KKK under Chau UCH, rallied; they turned in 58 weapons and were subsequently converted into Regional Force troops and were assigned to Tri Ton District. Then, between 5 and 13 August 1965, USASF advisors helped the Tinh Bien commander to induce 626 KKK with 74 weapons to rally with their commander, Chau HIEN. These troops were formed into a battalion of three companies, with Chau HIEN as the Battalion C.O., and they were assigned to Camp Ba Xoai on 27 March, 1967, after basic training at Tinh Bien. This action was to have far ranging effects for Ba Xoai, as subsequent events would show; the former KKK group, possessing ethnic unity, similarity of ideas and their own chosen leaders, were to be a power in the camp, which showed itself dangerously in an incident involving the accidental destruction of a Buddhist temple gate in early 1970.
(c) Attempts to recruit the KKK to the GVN continued when Tach SAR, another KKK commander met with Chau Doc Province officials, MI5B and USASF advisors, and expressed an interest in rallying with his group. The meeting's outcome was inconclusive. On 8-9 March 1966, Capt. Chau KET, C.O. of a group of 600 KKK called KINH XANH XD, (White Scarf), met with a Vietnamese agent who reported that three USASF advisors were with Chau KET; again, however, the negotiations were inconclusive. On 20 June, 1966, three more KKK members visited Maj Chau SOKAL, the Tri Ton District Chief, with a proposal to rally in exchange for RF commissary of this group, Chau SON, with 38 men finally did rally, on 18 January 1967.

(c) In September 1966, a certain Dieu NOT was captured in action; he proved to be C.O. of the 290th KKK Regiment. This unit supported the TO KHAMER KAMPUCHEA KROM, (Red Scarf Party), a splinter group from the KKK, which was against all foreign powers and also demanded the return of the six lower Vietnamese provinces; their regimental headquarters was at Kampong, near Ha Tien. The unit claimed 1,000 men.

(c) On 20 January 1967, a USASF Mobile Guerilla from MIF 189, contacted Chau DARA in the Seven Mountains; the KKK leader, claiming to control 1,000 men, made a proposal, under the terms of which he and his men agreed to fight for the USASF, as a regular MIF unit, including advisors, equipment and pay; terms were as follows: a) No attempt would be made to induce Chau DARA's men to rally. b) Weapons would be exchanged for current MIF issue on a one-for-one basis. c) Military uniforms and equipment would be issued to the former KKK. d) The troops and families would get MIF pay and allowances. In return, the KKK agreed to Remain in the Seven Mountains and keep them clear of VC and NVA; they would clear Nui Cam, Nui Giai and Nui GoTo of all VC influence, but they were to be employed nowhere else. They would also turn all POW's, weapons and documents captured, over to the USASF. On the 23rd of January, a certain Thach NHUT discussed a proposition to rally with 80 men and their weapons to the MIF 189. Finally, on the 29th, Chau DARA brought in five KKK VC with two weapons, as a gesture of good faith. These five returned to their unit on the 1st of February, to induce the rest to rally to the MIF. On the 4th, Thach PENH was reported as interested in bringing in his forces as ralliers; he claimed 160 men, 107 KKK and 53 VC. Chau DARA's procrastination and lack of action prompted the USASF advisors to approach other KKK leaders, including Thach NHUT, Thach PENH and Chau NGHUN.

(c) In July 1966, it was learned that the KKK was under the direction of the Committee Supporting the Liberation Front of Lower Cambodia. This committee included some high officials of the Cambodian Government, including Long NOL, then Lt General and Minister of Defense.

(c) Another influential Cambodian group was the KHAMER SERAI (Free Cambodia); it was a clandestine, political-military group, operating chiefly underground, out of exile, in the border areas of Viet Nam and Thailand. It was a pro-Western, anti-Communist group, strongly opposed to Prince Sihanouk's regime, and also inimical to the KKK. When reported in 1966, it was conducting clandestine radio broadcasts, and on occasion, distributing propaganda. A number of CIDG units had large groups of Khmer Serai members as troops. In MR-4, two companies of CIDG at Binh Thanh Thon were reported to be members of the organization.

(c) Son Ngoc THANH was the leader of the Khmer Serai; his ideas were nationalist, and favoured independence for Cambodia, but Sihanouk had driven him under...
ground in the mid-1950's; in fact Sihanouk often cited Son Ngoc THANH and his Khmer Serai as the cause of his anti-West shift in 1963.

(C) The main strength of the Khmer Serai was in Vietnam, but the members' loyalties were to the group and Cambodia. This created a problem for the CIDG who was also a Khmer Serai, and also posed a delicate situation for the USASF advisors, one of whose aims was to win support for the GVN.

(C) In late 1965 there were reports that the Khmer Serai were planning operations against Sihanouk's regime in several Cambodian provinces. There was a news report dated 29 December 1965, which stated that an attack in four Cambodian provinces on the Thai border had taken place.

(C) Khmer Serai and USASF Camps: On 7-8 December 1965, a Khmer Serai official approached the USASF camp C.O. at Dong Xoai and proposed the following offer:
- a.) That USASF personnel accompany Khmer Serai on cross border operations
- b.) That USASF supply compasses, maps, flashlights, boots and other supplies.

The Khmer Serai representative also attempted to implicate U.S. and Vietnamese high officials in his plans. The incident was reported and guidance was issued from the USASFL Political section as follows:
- a.) U.S. high officials were opposed to the Khmer Serai plan and would not give it any support.
- b.) U.S. advisors were to make every effort to avoid involvement in such schemes, and were to urge the Khmer Serai to work for Vietnam, against the V.C.
- c.) No material support was to be issued to the Khmer Serai for independent operations. Most of the Khmer Serai CIDG were located in III MR, but IV MR had a group of 229 located at Binh Thanh Thon.

(C) Other Cambodian Minority Groups: the ISARAKH: The Isarakh were an anti-imperialist, pro-communist group which operated primarily in Cambodia. They were of little direct concern to the Special Forces operations in IV MR.

(C) Beginning in 1965 we see the phenomenon of KKK and Khmer Serai people negotiating with USASF advisors and GVN officials for admittance into the para-military program. There is some evidence available concerning why this occurred; one possible reason was that the Cambodian organizations were trapped in the escalating struggle between Viet Cong/NVA and GVN/U.S. Forces. Conflicts between KKK and VC are recorded; one occurred in August 1962, when 400 VC attacked four KKK companies at 0 To Pa bridge, VS 961608, between Bon Tri and Chau Lang; another incident occurred in September 1962, when five KKK companies claimed they were attacked by about 1000 V.C. By November 1962, conditions became difficult for the KKK; in Tri Ton district several deserted and more would have followed, but for the threats of their leaders. Eventually, however, in 1965-1966 whole KKK units were rallying, no doubt impelled by the worsening situation via a vis the Viet Cong.

(C) USASF units were placed in an especially difficult position by the ethnic situation in IV MR. The large Cambodian minorities were a definite military power, which could be a nuisance if operating independently, and a benefit to either the allied forces or the Viet Cong, should they choose sides. Persuading them to fight on the allied side was a difficult task, for both the KKK and Khmer Serai were opposed to the GVN regardless of their feelings towards the
Viet Cong; both their programs featured the regaining of the six lower provinces for Cambodia as a key point. There was a further danger for USASF advisors involved with these groups; in return for opposing the VC they could ask USASF to help their own causes in Cambodia, as indeed they did in the meeting of 7–8 December 1965 at Camp Dong Xoai. The portion of Co D history involving the Cambodian groups is but another part of the highly successful dealings of USASF elements with the ethnic minorities of Vietnam.

(C) On 15 January 1966, Detachment B-42 received a new "A" site, was to operate in the Ba Chuc vicinity of the Seven Mountains area, and would have three companies of former KKK troops operating out of Ba Chuc and Ba Xoai, directed by VNSF.

(C) In late 1967, a battalion of Montagnards was transferred from II MR to Ha Tien, and an equal number of ex-KKK members were assigned right out of A-442 Phu Quoc training center to II MR. The rationale behind the troop transfer was to test the adaptability of Montagnards and Cambodians to warfare in a different type of terrain. However, the experiment proved to be a failure, for both Cambodians and Montagnards disliked the idea of fighting away from family and home, and the desertion rate at both Ha Tien and in II MR was very high. Finally in the Spring of 1968, the pilot project was abandoned, and the remaining troops were returned to their original Corps areas. This unsuccessful attempt at expansion of the CIDG role proved that the paramilitary nature of the troops limited the extent of their employment and also that much of their morale and spirit for the fight stemmed from the fact that under the CIDG program they were defending home and family.

(C) In February 1966, the first recruits for C-4's MIKE Force, drawn from the Nungs from the Indo China 5th Nung Division which had fought for the French against the Viet Minh, arrived in Can Tho. The first company of these troops was ultimately assigned to Don Phuc, where they were to be joined by two additional Nung companies drawn from Hai Yen; Regional Force troops were scheduled to replace the Nung Companies. The Nungs were a Chinese group, another ethnic minority which Special Forces dealt with successfully. At the time of the recruiting drive for the MIKE Force, a new concept in operations, the Nungs were living along the Cambodian border in III – IV MR, retired from their military service with the French. Their past fighting experience against the Viet Minh made them ideal candidates for the establishment of a new, highly mobile element, where they were to serve as the backbone. In addition to Don Phuc, they were assigned to Ba Xoai and Ha Tien as well.

(C) The MIKE Force (Mobile Strike Force) concept was evolved for Special Forces operations in early 1966. The MIKE Force was designed as a multipurpose reaction force to be stationed in each Corps Area and also at SPOB in Nha Trang. Its mission was to constitute a Corps reserve force, to conduct raids, ambushes and combat patrols, and also to reinforce CIDG camp forces when a new camp was under construction, to allow the CIDG to concentrate upon building activities while the MSF assumed the responsibility of camp defense, as well as to reinforce camps which were under heavy attack. Command of the MSF was to be a joint responsibility

1 Material in this paragraph is based on an interview with SSG Jeffery Barnes, Co D S-1.
of USASF and VNSF. The troops of the MSF were airborne qualified and also more highly trained than the CIDG in conventional operations. The MSF was organized as a mobile, rapid reaction force, with the ability of reaching the furthest points of their AOR in a minimum period of time. Their turn-over rate, due to desertion and other non-combat loss factors, was lower than the CIDG attrition rate, mainly because of better pay scales and a good esprit de corps. MSF lacked, however, the detailed knowledge of local areas which the CIDG units possessed, due in part to their Corps wide TAOR. Logistical support of the MSF also was a more complicated affair, since aviation support was almost mandatory for their operations.

(c) Concept of MSF Deployment and Command Relationships: To facilitate rapid reaction, each USASF "C" detachment commander and his VNSF counterpart were given authority to deploy the MSF without the prior approval of the C.O. 5th SF Gp and VNSF CG. The group commander and his counterpart, however, reserved the right to transfer the MSF of one Corps area to another in order to support special missions.

(c) Also created in 1966, in October, was the Mobile Guerrilla Force (MGF). It was organized as a force for entering V.C. sanctuary areas, under USASF leadership, to conduct guerrilla operations against the V.C. The idea behind the MGF was to carry the enemy's own tactics of insurgency into areas considered safe by him, by neutralizing his infiltration routes and base areas wherever possible. Each MGF unit was trained to operate as an independent organization without reinforcements or mutual support; MEDEVAC, when needed, was to be carried out with the utmost precaution, to avoid compromise of the MGF unit.

(c) Mission, Capabilities, Liaison and Command Relationship: The mission of the MGF was to locate, observe, and where possible, raid or else harass V.C. base camps. Enemy lines of communication were to be cut by means of raids and ambushes, or interdicted through the use of mines and booby traps. Storage areas were also to be located and destroyed. Another part of the MGF mission was to direct airstrikes and then assess the results.

(c) The MGF was designed as an economy-of-force operation to be used in remote and isolated areas. Insertions of the MGF had to be as unobtrusive as possible, and once the element was inserted, it was on its own, and became, in essence, a friendly guerilla team. The MGF concept required total freedom of action; the MGF "owned" its A.O.R., to include the use of aerial support. MGF was entirely under USASF command.

(c) Project Delta was another of the new concepts employed in IV MR, during the 1967-1968 Nui Co To operations. It brought together assets of the VNSF, ARVN and USASF to create highly mobile long range reconnaissance forces. Its mission was to serve as reconnaissance patrol elements, directing aerial and artillery strikes, guiding friendly forces to targets, and, in conjunction with the 81st ARVN Ranger Battalion, conducting raids, ambushes, search and destroy operations, and relief missions for reconnaissance teams throughout Vietnam. Project Delta's TO&E consisted of a headquarters element, eight Road Runner teams, sixteen reconnaissance teams and the 81st ARVN Ranger Battalion.

(c) Capabilities, Concept of Operation, Command Relationships and Liaison. Project Delta's teams were capable of tracking and observing VC units, installa-
tions and activities and even of destroying small targets. They were able to remain in an area for an extended period of time with limited support. A major limitation in Project Delta usability was the large number of command co-ordinations required to start an operation; this factor was due to the diversity of units working in the project. Another drawback was the small sizes of the units involved, rendering them very vulnerable to enemy attack and destruction.

(C) Road Runner teams and reconnaissance teams were infiltrated overland by parachute drop, heliborne or else waterborne, and were capable of operations up to five days without resupply. The operational area of a Project Delta Reconnaissance team must be separated, concealed and covered from populated areas, for compromise of the team can occur very easily. Preferably, all the teams, but especially the reconnaissance teams, were inserted after darkness had fallen. Road runner teams were made to operate at peak efficiency in relatively open terrain and where VC trails existed, and were capable of operating in populated areas. The personnel were indigenous and could, if required, identify and merge with the local populace, or in a VC/NVA secure area, even equip themselves like the enemy, and operate openly, disguised as VC.

(C) The 81st ARVN Airborne Ranger Battalion was set aside as a reserve reaction force for the support and reinforcement of the reconnaissance and road runner teams.

(C) Liaison for Project Delta was through 5th Group and the VNSF to JGS and MACV, and also through MACV alone when the operation was unilateral. The command relationship of Project Delta is similar to CIDG procedure; coordination with and agreement by the VN MR C.O. is required before an operation can be initiated.

(C) Project Omega and project Sigma were also developed in 1966 by Special Forces, however, neither project has been used in MR IV, hence a detailed description of the operations isn't required. The concept of operation for both projects is similar to Project Delta; project Omega is under IFFV operational control, and project Sigma is under IFFV. Both projects are commanded by USASF.

(C) Also dating from this period (1967), and part of the document used as the source for the preceding description of MSF, MGF, is a description of the CIDG program. The paramilitary CIDG concept was developed to provide a force to fill the vacuum in remote and underpopulated areas where ARVN units were incapable of deploying effectively and where GVN influence was practically non-existent. In many instances these outlying areas were close to the Cambodian and Laotion borders, hence the extra problem of enemy infiltration had to be countered. Thus the USASF and the CIDG program acquired the mission of border surveillance, interdiction of enemy infiltration, and destruction of VC base areas. Ancillary missions were the gathering of intelligence and the conducting of civic action and psychological operations. The CIDG camps were under the joint command of USASF and VNSF, and had VNSF and USASF advisors.

(C) Some of the advantages of the CIDG soldier have already been discussed as well as some of the disadvantages. However, a few more that weren't brought out are the lessened support and weight-saving factor for air transport of the CIDGs. The CIDG soldier eats indigenous rations, hence does not require the resupply that a conventional American troop would, and furthermore, the CIDG troop
can live off the land as a final expedient. For an air insertion, due to the CIDG soldier's lighter weight and equipment, up to eleven of the troops can be transported on a UH-1D helicopter at sea level, on a two hour fuel capacity.

(C) In the range of problems, owing to less rigid training schedules, the CIDG's fire discipline is somewhat lax. Some of the troops become overly eager and fire prematurely, others have a difficult time lift and shifting fires, and communications difficulty due to language exists between the advisor and the CIDG. Another problem is the lack of heavier weapons in the CIDG company. The organic TO&E of a CIDG company requires only 1x60mm mortar and 2x.30 calibre MG, 3xM79 grenade launchers of 3 recoilless rifles.

(C) The CIDG is especially suited for setting up blocking forces, screening forces to secure the flanks of larger units, and light reconnaissance in force. A tactic that has worked well is for a CIDG force to search out an enemy force, contact and hold it down, until an air cavalry force can arrive and annihilate the hostile force. CIDG units are also good for searching out and destroying small size enemy units, as well as for searching out and securing LZs and DZs. They are not, however, generally suited for defensive roles because of lax fire discipline and lack of organic support fires. Another practice to avoid is splitting up CIDG units thus depriving them of group coherence and familiar leadership, both of which play a large part in their fighting ability. Their fire discipline and training also make them unsuitable for use as reserve or reaction forces.

(C) Liaison and Command Relationships for CIDG Operations. Whenever a major tactical commander is interested in a CIDG TACR or part there-of, the "B" detachment having command and control of the "A" camp will provide a liaison officer to the Division or separate Brigade; the officer should be a major or a senior captain, with considerable S.F. experience. His duties include advising the tactical unit commander and staff officers concerning the employment, capabilities and limitations of the CIDG troops. He should assist in preparing any plans utilizing CIDG or USASF forces, and should also accompany the command and control elements during operations to assist the tactical commander and also maintain liaison with the S.F./CIDG unit, keeping them abreast of all developments. Further it is the liaison officer who must coordinate fire support between the conventional unit and the CIDG, especially considering the CIDG lack of heavy weapons support. He must also keep informed about the CIDG unit's activities and how well it is carrying out the mission assigned to it. Finally he must maintain close liaison with the special operations officer to gain the information which the division or separate brigade commander may require.

(C) Use of the CIDG must be co-ordinated through the Vietnamese MR Commander. The responsibility for co-ordinating the employment of a CIDG camp and its troops with a conventional unit commander is delegated to the responsible "B" detachment C.O. and his VNSF counterpart. An essential element in CIDG command relationship is that Vietnamese commanders at all levels must concur with the concept of operations and tasks to be assigned to the camps.

Co D Operations and Development 1966-1967

(u) Company D's records are particularly sparse for 1966 and 1967, these
files having been backloaded or destroyed after the specified two year period. The history is dependent almost entirely upon interviews conducted with selected individuals whose experience dates back to those years. Evidence of this type inherently is subject to errors, as it is dependent upon human memory. A few documents are available from 1967. These include some surviving daily staff journals covering the end of 1967 at Detachment B-44, Phu Quoc Island, another staff journal covering December 1967 at B-41, Hoc Hoa, and an after action report concerning the conversion of A-119 to VNSF command.

(C) The chief sources for this period were SPC KIRTCHEK, whose experiences made reference to events from 1964 to 1966, SPC BEAIR, whose experience covered 1966–1967, and SGT E-5 artie CHERRY, who provided information about the residence of the son and family, at Camp Ba Xoai, A-421, of a VC Colonel operative in the Seven Mountains Area. This data obtained from the above named individuals is most valuable, and the researchers of the history extend most grateful thanks for their cooperation to these personnel.

(C) On 26 December 1965 SFC TORRELLO, Carl H., camp Chau Doc, together with Major ARMN, John O., also of Chau Doc were killed by mine on the road between Ba Xoai and Chi Lang; a Filipino technical representative accompanying the 2 USASF was also wounded by the explosion.

(C) Personnel and Commander of Camp Ba Xoai during 1966 were the following: CPT WAPP, Commanding Officer; 1st LT Eugene MAJURE, Executive Officer, killed in action on 18 August 1966, SGT Everett BOYD, Weapons Sergeant and SGT George GARRISON, Communications.

(C) Phu Quoc island during 1966 (the document doesn't have a date) served as a training center for IV CTZ's Mobile Guerrilla Force, whose organization was described earlier. Another source for Phu Quoc activities was SFC Beair's interview; he revealed more precise details about the MGF training. The first MGF to go through Phu Quoc island for training attended from November to December 1966. On 1 January 1967, having completed training, the 1st Co, MGF deployed to Chi Lang and ultimately to Nui Cam. They took the summit of Nui Cam with very little resistance but just as they reached the mountain top the whole company, in a body, quit. The reason given was that 6,000 VC surrounded them. The MGF troops concerned were all Hoa Hao and they were subsequently removed from the mountain, mustered out and sent home. In place of the MGF, MSF troops were inserted atop Nui Cam. Two days after their insertion a contact was made 50 meters from the bivouac area, and several casualties were taken. The MSF operation spent 30 days atop Nui Cam and some more time at the base of the mountain. Several contacts were made, and by the end of the operation, 70 VC were reported KIA; the allies suffered 2 USASF WIA and 10–12 MSF WIA.

(C) During a training exercise on Phu Quoc island, date unspecified, but sometime in the course of 1966, a hasty ambush was set up by the trainees to kill two approaching VC. The Cambodian point man however lost his “cool” and jumped up, shouting “halt”, “who are you”? The VC reacted at once and the Cambodian was slain, after which the VC made good their escape. The incident occurred in Pepper Valley, on Phu Quoc island, and underscores the serious task of the advisory training role.

(C) During 1966–67 the camps on Phu Quoc Island were B-44, A-402, A-403
The last time unspecified series of events for 1966 occurred at My Phuoc Tay, later to be camp A-411. According to SFC Kirtchen, it was one of IV CTZ's most active camps, and also possessed one of the largest TAOR's in IV CTZ. There were an estimated 10,000 VC in the region, elements of the 504th and 516th Battalions, which were organic to the 272nd VC Regiment. In an operation, the VC regimental headquarters, or part thereof was located 2,000 meters West of camp A-424, as well as an enemy battalion supply point. A company of friendly troops attacked the complex and seized it, losing only 3 KIA in the process. My Phuoc Tay became known as A-424-2, because originally Camp An Phu, converted in 1966, was A-424. My Phuoc Tay conducted some operations in A-413's (Binh Thanh Thon) TAOR owing to the high rate of activity at A-413.

For the rest of 1966, the events are dated, at least to the month. On Easter Sunday 1966, 200 VC were killed in a "hot pursuit" operation by Pack V Hovercraft.

In June of 1966 SFC Baniu and SGT Everett Boyd were blown clear of their vehicle when it struck and detonated a mine between Ba Xoai and Chau Doc. Both USASF were wounded, SFC Baniu being evacuated to the U.S. and SGT Boyd to the Long Xuyen Australian hospital. Also in June 1966, Camp An Phu, A-424, was turned over to the RF/PF. SFC Lobello, a former military policeman, helped train a platoon of An Phu local police. Until its conversion, A-424 was under the operational control of B-42 (Chau Doc.)

In July of 1966, the first B-52 raid was conducted against Nhi Coto enemy positions; 70 VC KIA were confirmed in a post-airstrike search. It was reported that a regiment of ARVN troops refused to follow up the strike. On 26 July 1966, SFC Donal L. Lehen was killed in action on Phu Quoc Island, but no details of the contact were available.

In August of 1966, SFC Kirtchen and a platoon of RF/PF were forced to withdraw from Nui Giai, due to the presence of a multi platoon sized enemy element, dug in on the RF/PF platoon's access trail to the summit.

On 7 August 1966, TRI Ton subsector assistant commander, MAJOR LONG, and 6 RF/PF troops were killed by a detonated mine between Tri Ton and Chi Lang. SGT Kirtchen was wounded in the same incident, and the RF/PF payroll, 300,000$ VN was captured by the enemy. During this same period, the commander of TRI Ton subsector was a Cambodian, Maj Chau Sho Quan; there were also 3 companies of KKK troops under his command.

On 26 August 1966, SP4 Jules Gitainer was killed in action on a Phu Quoc Island operation. In the same action, Maj Topp commander of IV CTZ MSF, was wounded.

In September of 1966, camp A-426, Tri Ton was converted to MACV control. A new A-425, on Phu Quoc Island, was opened to serve primarily as a CIDG training camp.

1Camp My Phuoc Tay was originally A-424-2 but was later number A-411.
(C) On 14 November 1966, SFC David S. Bold was killed in action; he was the first USASF killed on an airboat operation.

(C) For 1966-67 it was noted that most of the VC battalions were armed with MAS 36's, MAT 49's, Browning Automatic Rifles, German MG 34's and MG 42's. The MG 42 is a high firing rate weapon, putting out 1,200 rounds/minute. Only company level or larger units possessed these weapons. Also at an unknown time in 1966-67, CPT Long on a "Shotgun" mission was killed by hostile fire over Phu Quoc Island. There was a small number of enemy on the island at the time, but they were expert and dedicated guerrillas. In one instance 3 VC with one Browning Automatic Rifle killed six CSF and wounded nine more as they were returning to A-427. The CSF invited disaster by returning on the same route as they used to go out, but this doesn't diminish the skill demonstrated by Phu Quoc's Viet Cong.

(C) During these years, Co D controlled the equivalent of 16-17 battalions consisting of CIDG, MSF, MGF, and Airboat units. The better part of the war effort was produced by 5th SF Gp elements in IV CTZ during this period, including most of the activity in the vital Seven Mountains area. Special Forces also trained the Regional Force/Popular Force troops who subsequently manned the outposts and forward observer bases, such as Long Khot, which withstood a ferocious VC/NVA attack in late 1969.

(C) The high rate of mine casualties experienced in 1966 continued into the next year as well. At an unspecified time and date in 1967, PFC Wood and SGT Paul Michaud were both wounded by a mine (SGT Michaud lost half of his left foot) between My An and My Phuoc Tay. Both were evacuated to the 3rd Field Hospital in Saigon.

(C) My Phuoc Tay (A-424-2) continued the outstanding performance it started in 1966; it also sustained terrible punishment from the enemy, who for six weeks continuous daily shelled the camp with mortars, rockets, and probes, and additionally mined the surrounding roads. In the course of the year, three vehicles were destroyed within 500 meters of the base camp, so intense was the activity of the enemy. In another instance, SGT Carry Ward of A-424-2 displayed the greatest courage and heroism, for which he received the Soldiers Medal, when he entered a mine field to rescue SP5 Mark Atchison whose heel was blown off, as he was carrying a 4.2 inch white phosphorus round. The round had just barely cleared the perimeter wire of the camp, and the bore riding safety was missing from it. SP5 Atchison never once dropped the round, in spite of his injury, and Sgt Ward carried both the round and SP5 Atchison to safety. Such was the character of the Special Forces troops at My Phuoc Tay.

(C) Also in the course of 1967, every member of the original USASF team at A-433 (My An) was wounded in action, an indication of the level of action. Three of the members of the camp were killed; they were, SSG Ronald E. Pike; SP4 Michael G. Brown and LT Edwin L. Shubert, all killed in action, 28 June 1967 while travelling between My Phuoc Tay and My An. 75 CIDG were also KIA when the party was ambushed by an estimated VC battalion with a .51 calibre machine gun.

(C) For the more accurately dated events of 1967, in January, February, and March we have mention of an operation on Nui Cam, consisting of 1 Company of IV CTZ MGF, with LT Rubin Garcia, SFC Oscar Medrano and SFC Beair as their advisors. The operation lasted for 72 days, in the course of which, the Cambodian company seized the mountain top, but then quit for fear of the thousands of VC on the rest of Nui Cam.
(C) One of the sources remarked that SSG Thomas WALKES was perhaps the best communication man in all IV CTZ in 1967. From late 1966 to March 1967 he was responsible for establishing the communications shop at every newly established camp. SFC MORIN was Co D's engineer at the time and he did an outstanding job on a new camp construction, being a fine troubleshooter. He was one of the S.F. personnel, along with SFC's KIRKRMEN and FITZSIMMONS, who participated in the film, "The Green Berets".

(C) During 1967, US Air Force units provided excellent support. On one occasion, while flying between Cao Lanh and Can Tho, a "C" model huey sustained several hits and was compelled to execute a forced landing. A MAYDAY call went out, with coordinates, and very shortly after the damaged helicopter landed, sky raiders were above the location, and in twenty minutes the USASF rescue helicopter arrived.

(C) In May of 1967 an airborne assault was conducted against Nui Giai. Colonel KELLY, 5th Gp. Commander jumped in with the Nha Trang Mike Force. SPC BEAIR reports that many contacts were made; he himself was involved in securing the DZ, and sustained wounds from enemy fire. Three other USASF were wounded in the operation, which had a one week duration.

(C) Our final interview reference is by SFC Artie CHERRY and concerns the residence of a VC colonel's family near Ba Xoai camp. The enemy officer in question is Chau KIM, a hard core VC who operated in the Seven Mountains area. (He is currently believed to be dead, as he has not been seen for eight months, but since his death was rumored before, this is not to be taken as certain.) In 1968 Chau KIM's wife, daughter, and son were living in the pagoda within Ba Xoai's perimeter. Chau KIM sent for his family, but his wife, for some unknown reason, left the boy behind. At the time of the interview with SGT CHERRY, the boy was 9 years old, and he was living at the S.F. team house. On Easter Sunday 1970, the boy was wounded in an attack upon the camp, with shrapnel wounds in the abdomen and back, and had to be medevaced 3rd Surgical Hospital, where he stayed for 16 days. Under Psyops supervision, the boy made a tape requesting his father to rally. The lad, also named Chau KIM, likes the USASF at A-421 very much, and he is a valuable source for anti VC propaganda.

(U) This last item concludes the last of our interview references, and though not as accurate as a regular report on the two year period, they still serve to illuminate this undocumented part of the history.

(U) Co D, Operation and Developments for 1968:

For the year 1968, the documentary evidence is somewhat more extensive. There are several after action reports for the Tet offensive of Spring 1968, namely Moc Hoa (B-41) and Cao Lanh. The Cao Lanh report is more in the nature of a narrative, and is a highly dramatic report, with strong opinions expressed about the participating forces. Nevertheless, it is a valuable document. The Moc Hoa report is a standard after action report, but contains an excellent description of the action.

Some contact reports appear for Detachment A-441 (Phu Quoc Island) for April of 1968, and B-44, on Phuc Quoc Island is further represented by January and February contact reports. The reports are very meager in detail, giving
only the date and casualties reported for the action. B-41 Moc Hoa is also represented by these reports from January to March 1968.

The camp conversion ceremonies held in September 1970 produced a reference to camp Thanh Tri, and, for June 1968, Co D's MOPSU is available. In July 1968, the MOPSU for B-42 is the main source, and it is accompanied by an after action report for the conversion of B-42. Finally, dated 1 November 1969 was the ORLL report for Co D, followed by the 1 February 1969 report, the two documents covering August – December 1968. Thus the picture for 1968 is fair, even if not complete.

(C) For January and February 1968, the B-44 action reports noted a total of eight firefights with a total of 29 VC KIA, 41 VC WIA, and 19 friendly casualties, dead and wounded. The most significant individual actions appear to have occurred on 24 January 1968, when numerous contacts were reported with a total of 45 Viet Cong casualties, and on 7 February, when 60 VC were contacted, but casualties were relatively light. An undated, incomplete document concerning psychological operations on Phu Quoc Island, has reference to the situation on the island. Enemy forces were estimated at four VC platoons and one company; the VC were thought to be indigenous to Phu Quoc Island, residing with their families when not engaged in guerrilla activities. Their main mission was tax collection, which yielded about 33,000,000$ VN per year. The revenue produced thus went towards financing enemy operations in MR IV. Phu Quoc is famous as the center of the nuoc nam industry and a prosperous fishing industry, hence the vast sum the VC were able to collect.

(C) RF/PF forces were considered ineffective in coping with the VC problem, and one battalion, 5th MSF, was inserted to conduct search and destroy operations. MACV and IV CTZ supported the operation. A Psyops element from Co D, consisting of the S-5 Officer, C-4, a 2-man combat loudspeaker team from 10th Psyops battalion and a US Navy beachjumper unit from team 13, was inserted to conduct psychological operations, stressing aerial loudspeaker broadcasts.

(C) Detachment B-41 reported fourteen incidents for February 1968, including the Tet attack against Moc Hoa, for which an after action report exists. Aside from the Tet Attack, the most significant contact was on 4 February, immediately following Tet, when in a 70 minute fire fight 15 VC were killed, with an allied casualty of one Regional Force soldier KIA.

(C) The attack on Moc Hoa, 02-03 February 70: The reporting officer for the operation was CPT Charles B SABIN S-3, at B-41, and the task organization consisted of the following:

a. Kien Tuong Sector Headquarters.
b. All assigned and attached units at B-41.
c. 150th A and DSC company.
d. 23rd LOVB Boat company.
e. 155th Regional Forces Company.
f. HHC and one company, 4/11th Bn ARVN.
g. 1 Combat recon platoon, Moc Hoa, B-41.
h. 1 Combat Recon platoon, MSF, A-414.
i. Provincial Recon platoon and 2 RF platoons.
j. Province armored car platoon.
Local RD cadre elements.

Support was obtained from the following units:

a. 3A/71st Artillery, 105mm howitzers.
b. 2A/71st Artillery, 105mm howitzers.
c. 2 OIG VR US Army.
d. 1 OIG US Air Force FAC.
e. 1 OIV VN Air Force FAC.
f. 3 flights TAC Air.
g. 1 section Cobras.
h. 1 Armed CH 47 "spooky".

(C) Intelligence revealed heavy growth along the Van Co Tay river with good cover, and good concealment along the riverbank, in houses. To the South-east of Moc Hoa were foxholes, bunkers and fortifications. Fields of fire outside the city were excellent, the terrain being flat, but poor in the city; due to the presence of closely built structures. The mission of the allied forces was to repel and destroy an estimated reinforced battalion of VC which attacked the city in the early morning of 02 February 1968.

(C) At 0400 on 02 February, a reinforced VC battalion, supported by 82mm mortar fire, attacked from the South-East, striking first at the 150th A and DSL Co and 4/11 Battalion ARVN perimeter, concentrating upon the boundary between the two units. This practice of striking at boundaries between units was a favored VC/INA tactic, as this was viewed as the weakest link in the defense. The allied resistance proving too strong, the VC then turned against the center of the city, attacking it with RPG-2 and RPG-7 rockets. Gaining entry in this manner, the VC force split up into 10–15 man teams and fanned out through the city from the crossroads, using civilians as shields as they progressed further. Part of the VC main force, however, was either trapped, or remained intentionally outside the city, possibly to cover the enemy retreat. At 0555 the CH 47 "spooky" arrived on station and began firing at the VC. The attack progressed, however, and by 0645 small units were striking at specific targets, including the Province Chief's house, the Sector TOC, and the U.S. advisory Team compound. One to two squads besieged and gained entry into the church and school near the B-41 compound, and a company-sized unit maneuvered from the North towards the 23rd LCVP Boat Company and the Northern flank of the US and GVN compounds.

(C) By this time, the allied reaction was underway; the VC had failed to cut friendly communications, and so, the TOC was able to direct the "spooky" ship and other helicopters. An armored car platoon proceeded to root out the VC element which had seized the church and was firing rockets into the B-41 compound. The bottom level of the church was quickly cleared, but snipers remained in the steeple.

(C) At about 0730, RF Co 155 moved from the North side of the Van Co Tay and deployed to the South of the 23rd LCVP boat company to remove the VC pressure caused by the element which had maneuvered against it, and finally, the RF forces broke the VC attack. Meanwhile, the Provincial Reconnaissance unit, having eliminated the VC from the school grounds, joined with the ORP from B-41 and

1 See map attached to end of this section.
2 Cf map, crossroads marked (A)
3 Cf map, item E.
and made a sweep from North to South, cleaning up pockets of VC in the city. A 20-30 man VC element which had seized the watchtower offered heavy resistance to the sweep elements in its efforts to keep open the VC’s exfiltration route. With the main enemy assault shattered by 0800, the VC had split up into small elements and were hastily attempting to pull out of the city. One platoon-sized element succeeded in escaping by way of the watchtower, which the enemy stubbornly held, but was cut down in the fields beyond the city by the VR and Swampfox ships.

By 0845, a section of Cobra gunships arrived, and began attacking the enemy elements withdrawing to the South-East, and at 0910 a flight of F-100 fighters appeared, and directed by FAC 43, they dropped eight 750 lb bombs, and fired 20mm cannon on the VC fleeing through the rice paddies, S.E. of the city. The Swampfox now led cobra gunships to the river where large numbers of VC were attempting to escape by sampan, swimming, running or by whatever means they could find. The Cobras proceeded to strafe the flying VC and inflicted heavy casualties. Meanwhile, the LCVP boats started sweeping the river, cutting off the enemy’s escape route and cutting down those VC who succeeded in reaching the North bank. In the city a few snipers held out until mid-afternoon on the 2nd of February. In conclusion to the attack, allied elements swept the fields and river banks adjacent to the city.

(C) By 1500, 04 February 1968, 146 VC were recorded as KIA and 35 were CIA. Captured also was a substantial amount of ammunition and arms, including 10 AK 50 rifles, 21x 30 calibre carbines, and 3000 rounds of small arms ammunition.

(C) The estimate of the attack indicated that 500-600 VC were involved, these including the 276B Main Force battalion and the 504th Province Mobile Battalion, less one company, the 618th, which was probably badly mauled in an attack against Bac Chan II outpost, which occurred on 01 February. Documents captured in the aftermath of the battle, including a map of the city, avenues of approaching withdrawal routes and key targets, indicated that the VC intended to penetrate Moc Hoa, destroy military complexes and key targets, then withdraw into Cambodia. U.S. Military installations and the Province Chief’s house were the primary objectives of the attack. Reports were received as early as December 1967 stating that civilians were being abducted and forced to do compulsory labor for the VC, mostly transporting arms, ammunition, and supplies. There is a peculiarity in this attack; during the Tet offensive, other VC/NVA units attacking cities and towns came to stay, but the Moc Hoa VC attack was more in the nature of a raid. The reason for this divergent strategy remains unknown.

(C) Our next document concerns the siege of Cao Lanh during the Tet offensive. It does not contain a report of the principal officer or task organization as do the after action reports.

(C) The first indications of enemy activity close to Cao Lanh came on 25 January ’68 when civilians coming to work in the city reported seeing 100 VC moving along route 30 from the Northwest. (Later in the course of events, substantial caches were found around and even in the city; these must have taken one to six months to construct and accumulate.) An operation dispatched earlier
that same day, was diverted to contact and surround the VC force, and directed to destroy it at once. By 1130 hours, six RF companies and one ARVN infantry battalion were committed to deal with the enemy. Support was provided by 2 x 105mm how., 1 x 4.2 inch mortar, and 1 x 81mm mortar within the USASF compound; FAC also provided support. Shortly thereafter, two more RF companies were committed, and with the original four companies, took up blocking positions; the last two companies were from the Tan An RF training center. The ARVN battalion 2nd/16/9th division was ordered to drive the Viet Cong unit into the waiting RF blocking force. However, when contact was initiated, it was quickly realized that substantially more than 100 VC were involved, and moreover, they were well armed with recoilless rifles, mortars and machine guns. The second Battalion was soon pinned down, for it was also learned that the VC were well dug-in. Airstrikes and artillery strikes were called in, but the foxholes and bunkers occupied by the VC, were reinforced, and the maneuver failed. The VC had, in fact, set up a "U" shaped ambush, with mortars, small arms and automatic weapons fire, and the friendly air-strikes merely saved the battalion from near certain decimation; at this point the senior Vietnamese CO was requested to allow the blocking RF companies to reinforce the second battalion, but he refused. By the evening, the enemy forces withdrew, preparatory to recrossing the river, as they had sustained heavy losses from the air and artillery attacks. The senior Vietnamese CO, however, ordered the RF companies blocking the enemy's route to let him through by creating a two-battalion gap in their line. Once the VC were out, friendly forces found bunkers for 300 men in the battle area, all built in the previous week; the friendly troops failed to destroy them. Events which were to come indicated that the action of 25 January was the result of an accidental discovery of an enemy unit rehearsing or preparing for it's Tet offensive plan.

(C) On 01 February at 0130 hours the Province Headquarters sustained a mortar attack; of 50 rounds fired, about 30 landed within the compound. Friendly forces responded with artillery, some of which Special Forces provided, and also with the "spooky" gunships. That same night the VC probed six other outposts in Cai Lanh district. Reports of VC attacks countrywide began coming in, but Cao Lanh itself was quiet that night.

(C) 02 February, at about 1130 hours, the 2nd/16th Regiment plus two RF companies, while conducting an operation to the Southwest of Cao Lanh, along the road between the city and Tan Tich Airfield, encountered an enemy force. Friendly support in the form of artillery, FAC, and mortar fire was valuable. By about 1230, the emerging battle began to evolve along the same lines as the 25 January encounter. The two RF companies attempted to link up with the Second Battalion, but the battalion CO ordered his unit to withdraw! The VC now advanced and put the RF companies in a weak position, forcing them to withdraw. FAC air strikes slowed the hostile advance, allowing the ARVN forces to beat a retreat into Cao Lanh. The VC pushed to the city limits, then broke contact and halted. Enemy forces were estimated at 300 troops.

(C) With the siege tightening up, at 2300 on the 2nd of February, the VC launched a mortar and recoilless rifle attack against Cao Lanh from the Southeast. Mortars from within the city assisted the enemy attack. The VC also initiated a ground probe which lasted until 0130 3 February. Finally with the help of artillery, mortars, and "spooky" flights, the attack was stalled.
During the course of 03 February, the VC proceeded to eliminate RF outposts to the North of Cao Lanh by seizing the RF troops' families as hostages or else by displaying superior firepower. Friendly forces settled in for a siege of the city itself.

On the 4th of February again the VC attacked the city from the Southeast; they succeeded in penetrating Cao Lanh itself, and a number of VC remained in the city, unknown to the defenders. By 0230, the attack slackened and contact was broken. At 0555 elements left within Cao Lanh attacked the bridge south of the city in an attempt to escape. It was estimated that an enemy force of up to 500 troops was located about Cao Lanh. At this time the province chief organized a defense committee to deal with the siege problems. The situation was fast worsening; the populace was in a state of panic and hospitals reported treating VC WIA who swore to return. The elimination of friendly outposts continued until all early warning systems were destroyed. The VC proceeded to move positions to within 1-3 km of the city limits. The morning of the 4th February, a Company of RF from A-431 and a My An district RF company were airlifted into Cao Lanh. As the helicopters attempted to land at the airstrip, enemy harassing fire proved so strong that a secondary landing zone had to be selected near the market-place. Fire was received there also. Finally a secure landing zone was located behind the Special Forces compound.

05 February. Another friendly operation to the East of the city had to be aborted because of the inability of the ARVN to advance against the enemy. The outpost elimination and network of hostile earthwork moved closer to Cao Lanh, in an ever tightening noose. The only approach to the city remaining uncut was the road to Tan Tich Airfield, but it had three bridges, two of them guarded by RF outposts. The whole pattern of events was ominously reminiscent of Dien Bien Phu.

In the light of the other Tet attacks, what had occurred up to 05 February represented phase I - the softening up of a city's defenses, cutting lines of communication and supply. Now, on the 7th of the month, phase II was initiated. (Elsewhere in Vietnam Phase III was already underway at this time) Two battalions of VC initiated an intense mortar attack against the 44th STZ compound. B-40 and recoilless rifle fire followed, and a diversionary (as shown by later events) ground attack commenced from the Southeast. Friendly defensive efforts had mortar, artillery and "spooky" support. The main enemy offensive, however, was launched from the Northeast, against the 2/16th Battalions compound, utilizing combined sapper/human wave tactics. The allied compound held, and the VC were forced to withdraw, suffering 41 dead and taking many other casualties as indicated by pools and trails of blood. Three helicopter gunship teams, "spooky" and airstrikes were put in against the withdrawing VC Force. Ground troops also launched a counter-attack, but they stopped short of the VC earthworks.

The 08th of February was quiet and the allied offensive resumed; 3 km out along the Tan Tich Airfield road ARVN elements again encountered a VC force, and once again, were out-maneuvered and almost annihilated. The following night, the VC blew up the three bridges on the airport road, thus sealing off Cao Lanh. On the 11th, friendly forces reopened the road and repaired the bridges. That night the VC mortared the airfield but only the parking aprons sustained damage. On the 12th of February, the road to the Tan An Training Center was cleared of VC and repaired. The VC battalion meanwhile encamped about 6 km from the city;
outposts continued to receive harassment, and the VC made the rounds, promising to return to Cao Lanh, with two battalions to back up the attack.

(C) At this point the author of the document inserted an evaluation of the situation. The situation had settled into a stalemate and reinforcements were thought necessary to lift the siege. The Vietnamese senior commander had experienced four defeats, at least three of which he helped create by pulling out troops at critical moments. VC strategy now appeared to be an attempt to lure friendly forces out of the city, trap them and destroy them, thereby opening up the city defenses. Phase I, the surprise attack, had failed when on the 25th of January the VC’s intentions became known. Phase II, the intense display of enemy ability and firepower, with the implication for allied defenders, calculated to frighten and disconcert the city, was underway, but stalled by stiff resistance. The friendly inability to break out, however, was negating effect of the defense; Cao Lanh was still besieged.

(C) On the 15th of February 2/16th Battalion, 1 RF company and 1 CSF contacted a VC element Northeast of the city, at about 3,000 meters. The RF company Commander was killed and his unit broke and withdrew, exposing the CSF’s flank, and only the effects of air strikes and artillery saved the day. Friendly elements lost 8 KIA. On the 17th, an Air America helicopter pilot arrived with a message he had received from the VC. It stated that the enemy offensive would resume at 0300 against all cities.

(C) At 0100, 18 February, true to their word, only two hours early, the VC/NVA launched attacks against 47 locations in II, III, and IV Corps; Cao Lanh’s attack came at 0120. One enemy company attacked from the Southeast with rockets, mortars, recoilless rifles, automatic and small arms fire. The ground probe, however, was weak. The indirect fire was concentrated against 44th STZ headquarters, and action continued into daylight hours. At 1200 a HU20 “slick” gunship, parked in front of Province Headquarters, was hit by automatic and small arms fire from 200-300 meters. The pilot escaped, and indirect suppressive fires were put on the suspected VC position by USASF mortars. Meanwhile, the 2/16th Battalion and two RF companies were operating South of the city, in an attempt to secure the line of defense. The senior VN commander wanted to commit the MSF (3 USASF and 60 Cambodians) to search and clear to the Southeast. The USASF Commander agreed to the plan, but only after the Vietnamese commander agreed to let his forces join in. However, once the operations crossed a road, the RF refused to move further, and the MSF was pinned down by enemy fire. Once again the action of the ANVN endangered a whole unit.

(C) On the 19th of February another indirect fire attack occurred against Cao Lanh. The action commenced at 0325, and continued into daylight hours. So close were the enemy mortars that the rounds could be heard as they were dropped in the tubes.

(C) C-7A (Qaribou) rsupply flights began on 20 February, but as one plane made a low run to drop its cargo, VC mortars were fired at it on the second pass, and the pilot refused to make another run unless the fire were suppressed. Also on the 20th of February the 2/16th Battalion and one RF company contacted the VC 2,000 meters East of Cao Lanh. An airboat element sighted a river blockade at about 2,000 meters upriver and attacked it. The VC struck back with mortars and automatic weapons fire, driving the airboats back. Bunker complexes about the city were still creeping closer day by day; and the timely but desperate efforts of friendly air support and artillery continued to be the saving factor. On the evening of the 20th as the Second Battalion returned to the city for the night,
VC snipers from a woodline 300 meters from the VN compound fired upon the element. In another quarter, a Cambodian troop ambush squad encountered a VC element 200 meters southwest of the airboat site.

(C) The 21st of February became known as the "day of the cache" because of a bizarre and ominous action which took place. A sentry spotted movement in the evening hours in the Dep Hoang area, between the 2/16th Battalion and the Artillery compounds; he initiated fire, and the next day the vicinity was searched, and seven to ten two and one-half truckloads of ammunition, medical, signals and other supplies were uncovered. As USASF personnel tried to remove the cache, the Province Chief attempted to stall the work, claiming it was an RF supply dump. To disprove this however was the fact that the cache was unguarded and had Chi-Com grenades set up as booby traps. Evidently the VC were aware of and using the cache, and the province chief's allegation displayed greed and corruption at best, treason at worst. The cache was emptied by USASF, but only with strict U.S. insistence.

(C) Finally on the 21st of February, under U.S. persuasion, the 44th STZ announced that the 41st VN Ranger Battalion would be landed 3 km from Cao Lanh and would fight their way into the city, meeting up with the 2/16th Battalion which would push out and assume blocking positions. The VC however, failed to take the bait and remained securely lodged in their bunkers, airstrikes and artillery strikes being of no avail to the friendly forces. On the 22nd the VC came out of their fortifications, but an allied attack against their Southeast flank failed. Again, after several hours of indecision the ARVN units withdrew. The most incredible event was the order to the 41st Ranger Battalion to deploy about the STZ commander's home! The house was already guarded by 300 troops. A row ensued between the 44th STZ commander and the Province Senior Advisor over this event, but another more fantastic event followed. On the 23rd, while the Deputy commander of the 44th STZ was on the radio, the VC commander of the 502nd Mobile Battalion broke in, and an argument ensued between the two, with each attempting to convince the other to surrender.

(C) Due to this radio compromise the original operation plan for 24 February was scrapped and a new one drawn up; it called for Second Battalion (ARVN), the Ranger Battalion and 2 companies of RF to advance and sweep an area known as "the Island"; the Second Battalion brought up the center while the Ranger and RF companies secured the flanks. This sweep progressed without obstacle for 2 km; then the second Battalion was halted by VC in bunkers. The RF element halted on a parallel line, but made no contact, while the Rangers also came up against the bunkers. Air support was requested, but 44th STZ refused it until the ground elements resumed the advance. Midway into the afternoon, after much stalling by the ARVN element, the sweep element broke through, the 41st Rangers leading the way. In face of this new-found allied aggressiveness, the VC force withdrew, but the VC commander, evidently aware of the state of affairs counter attacked against the center - the 2/16th Battalion - and drove it back. The day's action concluded with this impasse, but that night the Second Battalion, not the Rangers, guarded the Province Chief's home, which by this time was known as "the castle" owning to the ridiculous number of troops utilized to guard it.

(C) The 25th of February is the last day covered in this report concerning TET 68 at Cao Lanh. The offensive on "the Island" was resumed, with the VC initially pushed back. The Second Battalion (ARVN) CO was wounded, however, and
half of his unit immediately beat a hasty retreat. A U.S. advisor and sergeant were left practically alone until the 4lst Rangers extended their front and covered the positions abandoned by the ARVN battalion. This force set up a night perimeter, with "spooky" on station to give air support. Meanwhile the VC resumed harassing outposts in Hong Ngu and Kien Van regions of Cao Lanh with indirect fires.

(C) There is an indication of how events were progressing in the document at Cao Lanh. On the 26th of February friendly forces continued to push against the VC; U.S. advisors were attempting to have the bunker complex destroyed, but progress was slow. The enemy was hurt in his attempt to capture Cao Lanh, but he was by no means incapacitated and his past actions illustrated that he was capable of waging a skillful and aggressive battle or of conducting a stubborn defense of his earthworks, waiting to exploit the all too often displayed ineffectiveness of some of the friendly units. In conclusion, the document states that the city was capable of defense against an all out, direct attack by the VC, but the enemy was still able to make indirect fire attacks, and friendly forces were unable to drive him from the field.

(C) The next document available for the Spring of 1968 refers to the opening of Camp Thanh Tri, A-414, on 15 March 1968. The camp's mission was to interdict infiltration out of the Crow's Nest area in Cambodia. VNSF team A-412 and USASF A-414 established the new camp at (XTOO5000). By 5 September 1970, a total of about 200 operations were credited to A-414, with 160 VC KIA, 72 WIA, 11 OTA, and 8 Hoi Chans. Two villages and five hamlets, with a population of 3,000 were secured for the government, and under the guidance of the POLWAR team, Medcaps and civic action, consisting of reconstruction of roads and drainage systems, took place.

(C) For April 1968, the daily journal file from Det A-411, Phu Quoc Island remains; it records a total of five engagements between 5 April and 22 May 1968, with 5 VC KIA and 2 CSF KIA. The largest of these contacts occurred 9 April, when five VC engaged a friendly unit in a ten minute firefight. Two VC were KIA with no friendly casualties.

(C) For the period 1-30 June 1968, the MOPSUM for Co D survives. The Commanding Officer was LT Col Carl J. NAGLE. Visitors for the month included the Commanding General for MR IV, the Commanding Officer and Deputy Commander of 5th SF Grp (A&C) and also the Command Sergeant Major.

(C) Intelligence (S-2) reported nine counter-intelligence inspections at the "B" and "A" Detachments to check physical security requirements. Two preplanned photographic missions were flown, one to assist the construction of a "New Life Hamlet" at A-416, the other to check out a suspected base area and infiltration route, a readout of the photographs revealed heavy fortifications and extensive trail activity. Co D continued its visual reconnaissance program (VR) with 519 sorties along the border with Cambodian in Kien Phong and Kien Tuong provinces. Attacks occurred against Ba Chue outposts and the Chi Lang ARVN training center; incidents of attempted infiltration increased as the water levels rose and transport became more readily available.

(C) There were a total of 926 operations, with 99 contacts, 65, friendly
troops KIA and 32 WIA. Enemy casualties were 158 KIA, 17 WIA, and 31 CIA, significant operations included the following:

a) On 01 June a combat reconnaissance patrol from A-415 joined with 9th Division elements in a combined attack against a Viet Cong battalion. 7 VC were KIA and 2 CSF WIA.

b) A company size operation from A-431 (Cai Cai) contacted 20 VC, killing one and capturing 106 x 840 rockets; one VNSF was wounded.

c) On 06 June, elements from A-414 (Thanh Tri) contacted a VC battalion; Cai Doi FOB was attacked and a company from A-414 went to reinforce the post. The 4/11th ARVN battalion from Moc Hoa made contact with another VC battalion. Thanh Tri sent in a second reaction force and "Spooky" and helicopter gunships provided air support. 2 USASF, 1 VNSF, 4 CSF were KIA; enemy losses were unknown. The USASF casualties were SFC Clarence HORNBUCKLE and SP4 Richard S. DAVIS, both from Thanh Tri A-414.

d) On 11 June a platoon of A-421 CSF were inserted on a Blackhawk operation against a VC company. Blackhawk ships, 155mm artillery and Ba Xoai’s 4.2inch mortar gave support – 10 VC were KIA and 40 KIA.

e) On 19 June, in the early morning hours, the VC attacked friendly installations throughout the Seven Mountains area. At 0200 La Quoc OP at Ba Xoai received 82mm mortar and 75mm recoiless rifle fire, and at 0227 an estimated VC battalion overran Ba Chuc OP after a preparatory mortar shelling. On the morning of the 20th, one company from A-419, 3 RF companies from Tinh Bien, and two companies MSF reacted to the previous night’s attacks. During the afternoon, Ba Chuc OP was recaptured and RF troops assigned to man it. 4 CSF were KIA, 7 CSF and 1 VNSF MIA also 1 x 4.2 inch, 1 x 60mm and 1 x 81mm mortar were lost. Subsequent to the operation, one CSF company from Ba Xoai was assigned to La Quoc OP and another OP atop Nui Giai Mountain.

f) From 25-30 June 1968, Co D held a multi-company operation along the Cambodian border, between A-431 and A-413 AOR. On 25 June at 0240 one company of MSF from A-413 and one company from A-431, plus a company of CSF from A-413, were inserted by helicopter. At 2120 contact was made with an estimated reinforced VC company by the MSF troops. The enemy attacked from three sides, and a 35 minute firefight ensued. "Spooky" and helicopter gunships gave aerial support to the MSF. The enemy lost 5 KIA; friendly casualties were 1 MSF KIA and 2 WIA. There were two other minor contacts before the operation terminated.

g) On 27 June a company of MSF on a Blackhawk operation contacted a reinforced VC company; the VC received reinforcements, and an additional MSF company was inserted. At 1400 the 4/11th Battalion plus three companies from A-412 (Kinh Quan I1) were inserted. Six airstrikes were called in during the evening hours. Results were 2 USASF KIA SP4 Manuel T. LOPEZ from Moc Hoa and LTF Jon W. LAYTON III, 4 USASF WIA, 8 MSF KIA, 21 WIA. Enemy casualties were 6 KIA; 3 weapons were captured. Finally, 2 companies of CSF and 1 CRP from A-415 were inserted into a suspected cache site; three caches were uncovered. Total finds included 300 small arms, 60mm, 82mm mortars, recoiless rifiles, 300,000 AK 47 rounds, several tons of machinery, including a metal lathe. The friendly element remained overnight on the cache site, and on the morning of the 29th yet another

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and at 1100 hours, MSF troops were lifted onto the mountain to conduct sweeps and searches; light, sporadic contact was encountered. From 14-16 July the sweep operations continued, and will be covered in the survey of individual detachment participation. As of July 16-17, the NSF were attempting to move into the caves on the western slopes near (VS978469), the 3/9 Cavalry had located a cave at VS939459; the 43rd Rangers gave support to the NSF element's. Only periodic sniper fire and light resistance was encountered.

(C) A-401 (Don Phuc) contributed the 43rd MSF Company with 4 interpreters, 2 VNSF and 4 USASF, 1st Daniel C. THURSTON, SSF George E. IIIPP, SSG Donald BLUE, and SGT John E. NESBITT. Support came from B-52 raids, F-104's, VNSF OLE's, Gunships, spooky and 105mm howitzers artillery.

(C) The mission of all the detachments was to seize the top of hill 614, part of Nui Coto mountain. A-401 troops were involved from 101200 July 1968 to 131100 July 1968. The two hoi chanhs provided to A-401 as guides knew nothing of the AO, and their value to the operation was negligible. The upper two thirds of the mountain had few indicators of enemy activity, but the lower third had many tracks, hooches, beds, clothing, cooking fires and trails.

(C) The terrain was covered with numerous boulders, heavy vegetation and vines, making movement slow and hazardous. At one point the company required 42 minutes to traverse 35 meters. The weather was clear with about one hour of rain per afternoon, around 1700 hours. 1400 to 0830, cloud cover restricted visibility to 50 meters on the upper half of the mountain. Obstacles were boulders, caves, dense vegetation and vertical slopes. Only one booby trap, a US M-14 mine, was discovered, at VS996467, and it was disarmed safely.

(C) On 10 July, at 1200 hours, the unit departed A-401 for Chi Lang by Chinook (CH-47); no specific instructions for an assembly area were given. The next day, a warning order was received to hold classes on unloading the H-34 helicopter and using the M-17 gas mask. Some of the troops wanted to visit home, as they were recruited from the environs of Chi Lang, but by 1900 hours, all troops, save two, were back in camp. At 0715 hours, 12 July, the unit moved out to the airstrip, where the 2 AWOL's showed up, and the company received orders to move out, being the third element in the order of insertion. At 1240 hours, the troops were inserted, and the LZ was secured. A linkup was then effected with A-403's 44th Company; the immediate area was swept and searched by platoon size units, but no contact resulted, and the troops went into RMR positions at the LZ.

(C) On 13 July, 0900, a patrol base was established at VX998466, and the rest of the day was spent patrolling in platoon size elements, searching caves in the vicinity; no contacts were made. On 15 July, an order came to redeploy for resupply to 44th Company's base; the move took five hours, and at 1430 the helicopter arrived, but crashed while landing, and the rest of day was consumed securing it and the supplies until a recovery ship could arrive. On the 16th at 1230 hours, after four hours awaiting a clarification of orders, the element moved out southwest, but received orders to reverse direction of march to the southeast, and a patrol base was finally set up at WSO01458. While setting up the base, a platoon of VC was spotted returning from a village in groups of two and three; they were retrieving weapons from the bush and moving on up the mountain. They were out of small arms range, and a gunship request wasn't answered until 45 minutes had elapsed, by which time, the enemy made good
Intelligence collection has produced unsatisfactory results; reports coming in are exaggerated, with large enemy units reported stationary for several weeks at a time. There is a great need for agents adequately trained in the process of gathering intelligence. The appointment of a new Province Chief is expected to improve the intelligence picture. It is the CO's judgement that Chau Doc is vulnerable to enemy indirect fire attacks and ground probes also.

Over 200 KKK (cf KKK chapter pp 3ff) converted to the GVN b. way of the Chieu Hoi program, 140 reporting to the Chau Phu, and 116 at Giang Thanh. 13 Viet Cong also rallied during July. The S-5 CA/PO assisted in the repair of foot bridges and schools; one new school was completed in Tinh Bien district. The POLWAR team sent out two-man armed propaganda teams to each subsector to conduct activities against the VC.

Plans have been initiated to cross-train MACV personnel taking over USASF camps, so that an adequate camp defense can be maintained after conversion.

There is a series of documents from the Nui Coto operation, mainly after action reports from some of the participating units and an overall operation summary.

Operation Nui Coto was conceived as part of a larger plan to deny base areas to the VC, and to disrupt their infiltration routes, supply and communications lines, and finally, to gather intelligence on future VC plans.

The summarized portion of the operation was to extend from 11 July to 18 July 1968, and thereafter, plans were to insert three companies of MSF as a stay-behind force to conduct guerrilla and interdiction missions for an undetermined time. In fact, friendly troops remained on the mountain until the conclusion of the large Nui Coto Operation of March-April 1969, during which the top of the mountain was seized.

The following troops were involved in the Summer 1968 phase of Nui Coto operations:

1) Command and Control Headquarters were at 44th STZ.
2) 5 companies of MSF.
3) 2 companies of A-421, Ba Xoai, CSF.
4) 1 company of A-149, Vinh Gia, CSF.
5) 1 troop 3/9th Cavalry.
6) 41st ARVN Ranger Battalion.
7) 43rd ARVN Ranger Battalion.
8) A, C, and D troops, 7/1 US Air Cavalry.

Support came in the form of 8 x B-52 raids, which produced 70 secondary explosions, destroyed 50 bunkers, damaged an additional 73 bunkers and killed an estimated 105 VC/NVA.

The operation itself killed 12 VC/NVA and captured 18 suspects, all detained; further, 1 light machine gun was destroyed, as were also 23 booby traps, and 1 LAW, 1 x M-16 and a VC flag were captured. Numerous caves and installations were discovered and probed.

On 11 July, the MSF and other troops moved to Chi Lang, and on the 12th the 3/9th Cavalry troops, 43rd Ranger Battalion and 7/1 Cavalry assets deployed around Nui Coto and attempted to force the enemy out of the village and onto the mountain; B-52 raids were held at 1900, 2115 and 2335 hours. On 13 July, more B-52 strikes were placed on Nui Coto, at 0250, 0510, 0710, 0900 and 0940 hours,
their escape. FAC adjusted artillery on the route of withdrawal, but darkness prevented an assessment of the damage inflicted.

(C) On 17 July, orders were received to stay in place and await resupply; meanwhile, the 47th and 48th companies were receiving fire from the location where air strikes had occurred the previous day; at 1000, a gunship accidently made a firing pass at 44th Company's location, wounding five MSF. Two medevacs were attempted, but small arms fire drove off the first one; two seriously wounded MSF were extracted by the second one. Word arrived, shortly afterward, that resupply couldn't be affected; movement off the mountain was then initiated. As the unit proceeded down, at 1120, the point element contacted three VC, killing one of them. At 1540, heavy sniper fire started coming from the mountain, but suppressive fires could not be placed, as a company was in movement on the slopes. At 1550, automatic and M-79 fire hit the friendly unit; the unit still on the mountain reported that the fire was coming from below their position. At 1650 hours, all the elements reunited, except for Sgt STUTER's group, which had become separated, and was without radio contact at the foot of the mountain. Sustaining a number of casualties, the units on the mountain decided to withdraw under the cover of gunships; Lt THURSTON tried to lead the way, but he received a severe wound in the right thigh. SSgt BLUE, determining that the lieutenant needed instant medical attention, took a ten man element, along with the wounded man, and started South, away from the fire. B-40 and 57mm RR fire now hit the remaining element; the troops lost control, but they did not abandon the wounded, and movement proceeded across the rice paddies. After traversing 500 meters, the unit took heavy and accurate sniper fire, and the troops had to take cover behind dikes in the paddies, until gunships arrived to relieve them. The helicopters successfully suppressed the hostile fire, and the troops were able to withdraw. As darkness descended, a medevac was executed for Lt THURSTON and SSgt DOLLAR, who had sustained a wound in the calf. The two companies, meanwhile, moved to VS 981 4h3 and linked up with an armored unit; the two units then moved to VS 962 4h4 where night perimeters were established. Another medevac for five wounded, and a resupply mission were completed by 0800 on the 18th, and at 1000, the 43rd Company was evacuated to Don Phuc. Also on the morning of the 18th, Sgt STUTER was located at the base of the mountain and returned to Don Phuc. Results of the operations were 2 MSF killed, 2 USASF and 18 MSF wounded; 3 VC were killed and 2 (unconfirmed) were wounded.

(C) In conclusion, resupply coordination was poor, but air support was timely and accurate, and the FAC was fully aware of the ground situation. The B-52 raids had little effect, since the strikes landed above enemy positions. The MSF lost an overly large number of gas masks, and the use of gas on the mountain was found to be futile. Napalm appeared to be the best air weapon against the enemy, since the caves and boulders protected them against conventional bombs of even the largest size, whereas napalm was able to ignite foliage, and thus could burn or smoke out the enemy.

(C) The next report on the Nui Coto operation concerns detachment A-403's participation. The narrative parallels A-101's closely, and as this was just discussed, only information which supplements the other report will be given.
Participating was the 114th MSF Company; support came from the 43rd Company and the attached personnel were an ARVN artillery lieutenant and an NCO, three RF troops as guides, three ARVN demolitions personnel and a VNSF 1st lieutenant, attached to the 'Bravo' element; air support was the same as in A-401's operations. The narrative parallels the Don Phuc report.

(c) The next report of action on Nui Coto pertains to A-402's unit. There were two companies of MSF, eight USASF, four interpreters, six VNSF, three ARVN engineers and two guides. The mission was to conduct searches and sweeps, and the operation started on 10 July, at 1015 hours. Obstacles encountered included 20mm reloaded shells with tripwire, rigged up as booby traps, M-72 LAW, CSV and French hand grenades, all booby trapped.

(c) At 1400, 12 July 1968, the unit was lifted by helicopter onto LZ Echo, in the vicinity of Hill 611, and the Tiger element secured and consolidated defensive positions at VS 996 469, while the Gator element secured positions at VS 993 473. The following day, the Gator searched and found a location for a CP at VS 995 479; at the same time, the Tiger element secured a hilltop at VS 991 476. Caves were found near the location of both elements, and upon investigation, they yielded a food cache and numerous booby traps, all of which were destroyed. Contact, however, was not made.

(c) On 15 July, at 0900, a resupply mission was flown to CP #11, and at 1000, both elements returned to LZ Echo for additional resupply. Both elements were then ordered to move to CP's #11 and #13 and to assault CP Tango #29. In the course of moving to this location, numerous caves were found and searched, but no contact resulted. At 0930 hours on the 16th, two VC squads were contacted, and after a brief firefight, the enemy withdrew, leaving behind two killed; friendly troops suffered no casualties. The objective was attacked and secured at 1030 hours, 16 July, but no enemy troops were encountered. Red smoke was placed to assist FAC in locating the unit and delivering a new operation's overlay; the aircraft, however, failed to appear, and the unit's position was compromised. Orders were received, however, to remain in place. Patrols were sent out to investigate neighboring caves which had been marked by VB missions, but no contact was made. A gun-ship made an accidental pass over the friendly element and wounded 2 MSF at 1400 hours, but at 1430, both wounded personnel were medevaced. At 1600, the Gator element moved to preselected, secured positions 500 meters West of Tango #29; enemy sniper fire was encountered while enroute to the new positions. The Tiger element remained on Tango #29 until 1900 hours, at which time the new overlays arrived; guides from the Gator element then led them to the RON position. Mortar and sniper fire, however fell on the positions, and both elements moved to locate in a more secure area. At 2000, an estimated company of the enemy attacked Tango 29, but the friendly unit was already on its way West to a pagoda at VS 974 453. On the route of March, at 2030 hours, from 200 meters to the South, automatic weapons fire was
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received; and the 1st and 2nd Tiger platoons were pinned down while the enemy maneuvered in between them and the 3rd and 4th platoons. The latter units, however, assaulted the treeline and forced the enemy to withdraw, after which the separated elements rejoined and established a perimeter around the pagoda at VS 974 453; results of the encounter were one KIA; missing and two VC killed. On the 17th, at 1040, both Tiger and Gator elements left the pagoda and moved towards CP #473; a grenade burst and automatic weapons fire; however, initiated an attack by an enemy company situated in caves above the CP, and the friendly troops were pinned down. Heavy machine guns and mortars were added to the enemy attack, and the elements had to withdraw to a treeline, to the North. The Gator element attempted to outflank the enemy by assaulting the hill, but the slope proved too steep; Tiger elements meanwhile returned the enemy fire. Airstrikes were then summoned to allow the friendly troops to withdraw to the rice paddies at the base of the mountain. When the units reached VS 991 440, a medical arrived, but it could only conduct it’s extraction under very heavy fire; nevertheless, the mission was successful. By 1200 hours, all the troops had safely returned to VS 990 442; detachment B-40, meanwhile, gave orders to secure another LZ for a helicopter extraction; the evacuation was completed by 1500 hours, and at 1930 hours, two new defensive perimeters were established at VS 993 472 and 992 477, and the units remained there until replaced by a fresh element on 21 July. Results were as follows: 2 USASF wounded, Capt Reynaldo A. GARCIA and Sp/4 George J. LEY, 1 VNSF wounded, 2 MSF killed and 7 MSF wounded. The enemy lost 7 killed.

(c) Observations made by the Commander included the following: Enemy units consolidate habitually from halfway up the mountain to the base. Friendly units should operate no more than 300 meters from the summit, along the 300 meter contour, while parallel units patrol 1,000 meters from the base in order to block exit from or access to the mountain itself. Thus, enemy links to their resupply centers in the villages will be effectively severed and friendly units will also command the high ground, above enemy positions; the operations, moreover, should be of indefinite duration, otherwise the strangulation effect will be lost.

(c) There exist three more documents which contain information about the later phases of activity on Nui Coto; two are from A-401, one from B-40.

(c) A-401’s documents cover from 31 July 1968 to 25 April 1969, and are excerpts from HOPSCOMS concerning all events of importance on Nui Coto, and from an after action report covering 21 July to 5 August 1968.

(c) On 31 July, A-401 reported that 1st Lt Daniel L. THURSTON, who was seriously wounded by hostile fire on 17 July, while leading an element of troops on Nui Coto, was medevaced to Japan, and his return to Don Phuc was considered unlikely. The 50th MSF Company replaced the 43rd on 19 July; the 43rd Company’s action was described on the preceding pages, and the 50th’s action will be described below. The after action report covers from 19 July to 5 August, 1968.

(c) The camps involved were Don Phuc, A-401, Moc Hoa, A-402 and Cam Tho, A-403; units were the 15th, 19th and 50th MSF companies. There were
9 USASF advisors, 5 VNSF and 2 interpreters accompanying the operations. Support came from gunships, 'Spooky' and 105mm howitzers, all provided upon request. The mission was to conduct base denial operations against the enemy, routine patrolling, search, destroy and ambush operations within areas in the vicinity of VS 960 465, 970 492, WS 010 482, and 910 449. The mission was successful in all but the search and destroy operations, where problems were encountered.

(C) Pre-battle intelligence revealed that enemy movement occurred daily between the villages at the base of the mountain and the mountain itself. On 4 August, at 1100 hours, Vietnamese Intelligence reported that enemy troops were moving Northwest at VS 010 455, and at 1600 hours on the 4th, about 150 enemy troops were reported moving North at VS 992 462.

(C) Movement to the staging areas at WS 004 534, was carried out in Chinook helicopters and the insertion to the LZ at VS 998 470, was carried out, starting at 1300, 21 July, by VNSF helicopter M-34, and the operation was completed in 22 missions. The standard issue of arms and equipment to the troops was an M-2 carbine, 2 x M-26 grenades, 2 smoke grenades, and a double basic load of small arms ammunition per man. Each squad had 4 x M-79's, 2 Browning Automatic Rifles and 2 x M-16's. The company carried an 82mm mortar with 20 x HE rounds, and 1 x M-60 MG with 7,000 rounds of ammunition. The VNSF carried M-16 rifles and 2 x M-26 grenades each, while the USASF had a grenade and a strobe light per man. Support was available from two companies of CSF at Ba Xoai and Vinh Gia. Terrain was as reported in the original Don Phuc report, and the weather ranged from 60-85° Fahrenheit, with a relative humidity from 70-90%, and daily rain at ½-1 inch. Obstacles were heavy vegetation, boulders up to 14 meters in diameter, steep rock facades and debris from airstrikes. In the vicinity of VS 998 470 and 966 470, there were numerous booby traps and mines.

(C) On the 21st of July, the three companies were air-lifted onto Nui Goto near VS 995 470; no contact was made and company sized base camps were established. At 2055, a platoon (+) size VC force contacted the 50th MSF Company, and a fifteen minute firefight ensued; the MSF took two casualties. On the 22nd, elements on local patrol sighted 5-6 VC, took them under fire, but were unable to determine the results. Again on the 23rd, two VC were sighted during a patrol and were fired upon, but no casualties were confirmed; the MSF sustained one wounded by sniper fire from the South side of the mountain.

(C) On the 24th of July, patrolling was attempted, but poor visibility made the going over the relatively rough terrain very difficult. Two VC were sighted during patrols on the 25th, but contact couldn't be initiated due to range. The following day, local patrols spotted a group of 20-30 VC, and friendly 81mm mortars fired on the position; the results, however, were unknown.
Another VC was sighted at still another location, fired upon, and killed, making the day's results, 1 VC KIA. On 27 July, 4VC were sighted at (N5007472), and sniper fire was placed upon them, but casualties were unknown. Somewhat later, 50 VC were sighted moving towards Nui Coto, at (N5013476), and friendly forces engaged them with mortar fire, but again, results were unknown. The following day, a night ambush was set, with negative results, but a patrol sighted 4 VC in open ground, and the enemy was placed under mortar and small arms fire; results were unknown. Patrols continued on the 29th and 30th, as did night ambushes, but no contacts were made; however on 31 July, at about 1000 hours, a PRU platoon found the terrain on hill 424 very rough, and even though a VC was sighted atop the hill, contact couldn't be made.

(c) On 1 August, a freshly booby-trapped area was encountered (there is a map reference location, but no map accompanied the report), and a supplementary force was summoned to disarm the booby traps and secure the area; during the clearing process, three casualties were suffered, but these were promptly medevaced, the helicopter, however, drawing fire. Once the medevac was executed, night perimeters were established. At 2100 hours, an unstated number of 60mm rounds were received, and numerous lights were observed moving along the south side of the mountain. Artillery was placed upon the lights, but results were unknown. On the 2nd of August, after an airstrike, the assault against an objective of the previous day resumed, but a booby trap was set off, killing 2 MSF and wounding 15 including 1 USAF. The MSF were now reluctant to move any further forward, but the American advisors prodded them on; the VNSF counterparts, however concealed themselves in the area, and were nowhere to be found. At this juncture, CPT McKENZIE, Mr DREW DICKS (US NAVY) and ten MSF pushed forward and seized the objective; the rest of the company then followed. As the MSF company commander attempted to regroup his unit and have them push beyond the objective, sniper fire erupted, wounding one MSF, and the MSF platoon leader immediately halted, refusing to move, even though SGT NICKOS and CPT McKENZIE pushed forward. CPT McKENZIE then returned to the objective and discovered that the whole Moc Hoa element had pulled back, leaving only SGT NICKOS, SFC BLACK, the Seal team, a PRU and a handful of MSF soldiers on the objective. After an estimate of the situation, the friendly element withdrew and rejoined the MSF. On the way back, two Seals encountered booby traps, and one subsequently died of wounds. When the position of the MSF was reached, the PRU and the Seals stated that they would leave the mountain, going via a route known to them; they had a security element awaiting them at the foot of the mountain. CPT McKENZIE also decided to withdraw with the PRU and Seals, as air support had been poor and MSF morale was very low. By 1730 hours, the village at (VS954490) was reached, and a forced march was executed to Tri Ton, arriving there at 2000 hours. At Tri Ton night perimeters were established and the units went into RON.

(c) On 3 August, CPT McKENZIE received a message from the mountain-top, at 1130 hours, ordering Don Phuc's units off Nui Coto unless immediate reinforcements or relieving units arrived. A helicopter was procured and CPT McKENZIE and a party of Americans went atop the mountain to attempt reasoning with the indigenous executive officer. After threatening to hurl a grenade at 3 Americans and extensive calming efforts by CPT McKENZIE, the executive officer tried to strike a bargain for keeping his troops on the mountain. His price was 10 packets of cigarettes per soldier. CPT McKENZIE continued to reason with the officer and finally convinced him that all efforts were being exerted to reinforce or extract
the troops. At 1500 hours a helicopter arrived with 60 troops from Can Tho to reinforce the MSF.

(C) On 4 August, a VC element initiated contact with the Cobra element, using 82mm mortars, B-40 rockets, automatic and small arms fire, from the area of (V999478 and W800545). At 1720 hours, the VC broke contact and withdrew northeast. One MSF was slightly wounded in the contact, but enemy casualties were unknown. Again on 5 August, a VC element initiated contact with sniper fire, at C700, from (W5007487), and the Cobra element countered with 81mm mortars. After a 10 minute firefight, the VC broke contact and withdrew northeast. The MSF element suffered one seriously wounded who subsequently died on 9 August; enemy losses were unknown. At 1400 hours, Uniform element was extracted, after replacements arrived, by VNAF H-34. The helicopter received fire from (V996481 and W8003475), and friendly gunships placed automatic and rocket fire on the suspected enemy positions. The Cobra element was extracted at 1700 hours, and arrived at Don Phuc at 1800 hours, terminating A-401's participation in the operation. A commander's evaluation down not follow the after action report.

(C) A B-40 summary of operations on Nui Coto is the next document we will consider. It reveals that 1968 operations on Nui Coto were divided into several phases. Nui Coto I started on 12 July and Nui Coto II on 19 July; both of these were described in the preceding pages. During August 1970, B-40 elements, starting on 5 August, conducted Nui Coto III and also initiated Nui Coto IV. Nui Coto III was a three company operation, whose mission was to harass the enemy and interdict his supply and communications lines with saturation patrols and night ambushes. From 5-25 August, friendly casualties were 3 MSF KIA, 16 WIA, 1 VNSF WIA and 3 USASF WIA; enemy losses were 10 KIA, 1 WIA, and 1 CIA, numerous caches of weapons, ammunition, demolitions ordnance and assorted supplies captured. No individual after action reports survived from this operation. Nui Coto IV was initiated on 25 August with three new companies from B-40 inserted; the mission was unchanged from that of Nui Coto III. Once again, in September a rotation of companies occurred. Resupply missions were a problem because of the paucity of aircraft allotted to Co D.

(C) A discussion revealed that the Nui Coto missions erred in maintaining 3 companies atop the mountain from 12 July with no indication of relief. The MSF was designed as a mobile unit, and its mission atop Nui Coto was essentially static, thus mobility was impaired. Further, as the reports revealed, the whole operation had a limited effect upon the enemy, because friendly units were incapable of keeping the VC/WIA off the lower half of Nui Coto, either by constricting their supply routes, or by clearing out their base. Intelligence revealed that the enemy's chief caches and base areas were on the lower half of the mountain. The operation was hindered by the nearly impassable terrain, seeded extensively with booby traps, so that small enemy sniper units were able to seal off large areas of territory, and inflict demoralizing losses upon the friendly troops.

(C) Dated 27 August 1968, we have the MOPSUN excerpts from A-402's operations on Nui Coto, which CPT Reynold A. GARCIA commanded. A-402 devoted one company from 1-4 August, two companies from 4-25 August, and one company from 25 August to 11 September. There is no day by day summary, but a commander's evaluation and
lessons learned and summary do exist. These cast some light on the nature of the operations.

(C) During August, all the FOB's had helicopter landing zones nearby, and thus, the problem of resupply was solved, and units could remain continually on Nui Coto. Sniper teams, harassing and interdicting fires were also extensively employed, and served to confuse the VC and inflict heavy casualties. Ambushes on the lower slopes were not conducted, but it was found that they would be safely executed, if a covering force was at the level of the 300 meter contour line. Surveillance from higher ground was excellent, and could be used to direct the placement of such ambushes. Intelligence revealed that at least a platoon, armed with automatic weapons and wearing tiger fatigues was the opposing force.

(C) Concerning mountain operations such as Nui Coto, it was found that massive air strikes, carefully placed were most effective when followed by helicopter lifts, using more than one landing zone. Sniper teams, saturation patrols, surveillance and stay-behind teams were found to be most valuable.

(C) During September, A-402 again committed a total of four companies onto Nui Coto. Saturation patrols uncovered a cache with rice, other foods, tools and medicines, and they also cut heavily into enemy capabilities. From 500 meters down, all routes and trails were found heavily booby trapped, as also were areas in proximity to cave caches. The enemy were found to be using the latest type 60mm mortar rounds.

(C) During September, A-403 conducted four missions in conjunction with Nui Coto; two convoy missions were provided by the 51st MSF company, one on 20 September, when 30 troops provided security for a convoy, and again on 23 September, for a convoy to Chau Doc city. On the 27th, the 51st company was committed to Nui Coto to relieve the 45th company, which had been on the mountain line 1 September, at 1145 hours, SGT Joseph SMITH was wounded by a booby trapped M-26 grenade. A dust-off was requested, but even though the weather was clearing, the helicopter didn't arrive until 1345 hours, and SGT SMITH died from wounds the next day.

(C) During October, the 45th and 51st companies again alternated on Nui Coto, the 51st being on the mountain 27 September to 25 October, and the 45th furnishing replacements on the 25th.

(C) A-402 placed the 47th company on Nui Coto from 20 September to 13 October, and the 46th company relieved the 47th on the 13th, remaining on the mountain until 10 November. On 29 September, a small cache was located at WSO03472; its contents included a 4 kilo cratering charge, 166 CBU's, 7 x 60mm mortar rounds and assorted other equipment. There were two contacts with enemy troops, but neither was described in detail. On the 10th, the 47th company was compelled to withdraw due to heavy losses. Friendly troops were advancing east in three parallel files, when intense fire from a company size enemy unit pinned down the left element. After a 40 minute firefight, friendly troops were forced to withdraw due to a lack of air support. Casualties were 1 USASF and 1 MSF killed, and 26 MSF wounded. Two airstrike which were to have been placed on suspected enemy positions prior to the troop insertion could not
be conducted because FAC failed to arrive. Gunships had been on station, but they departed prior to the contact, and required 40 minutes to arrive once again.

(C) The VC sent out sniper patrols, and also booby trapped trails near friendly basis to harass the MSF. The southern, lower mountain slopes were the enemy's foremost base -- with numerous caves, streams for fresh water, food in nearby villages and plentiful animals for trapping, so that the enemy was well and independently supplied. Isolating the villages at the base of the mountain from the VC bases areas, would be the best remedy to strangle the enemy.

(C) During October, saturation patrols atop Nui Coto continued. Three companies were committed for reconnaissance in force, night ambushes and local security; one platoon daily was detailed to search for water sources and FOB sites on the mountain's Southern slopes, in order to establish sites for future operations.

(C) Resupply for the units on Nui Coto continued to be a problem. The excessive coordination required to obtain transportation for supplies created long delays.

(C) A-402's report was submitted by Lt. John M. REGAN: two significant operations were conducted 13 October to 10 November, and 16 November to 2 December. Saturation patrols forced the VC to operate only on the lower slopes of the mountain. Water resupply for the friendly units was somewhat of a problem, and was expected to worsen as the dry season continued. On 22 October, USASF and VNSF personnel set up a joint battalion command post on the mountain; this procedure eased coordination problems greatly. Almost daily contacts occurred with snipers, but the VC broke contact each time after a brief skirmish. On 27 October, an H-34 helicopter crashed, killing 3 MSF from A-405 and also the VN helicopter crew chief.

(C) The commander felt that the key to evicting the VC from the mountain lay in the control of the villages at the base, particularly Olem village, which served the VC as a resupply center.

(C) A-402 reported two companies on Nui Coto during December, and one company devoted to Operation Mail First. A new technique was tested by A-401; airboats mounting 50 cal., machine guns and 106mm recoilless rifles, were used to give fire support to troop units operating on the mountain.

(C) Detachment A-401 also committed three companies to the Nui Coto operation during December; Their mission was to conduct saturation patrolling, search and destroy, reconnaissance in force and night ambushes. This phase of Operation Nui Coto terminated on 13 November.

(C) On the 17th, Operation Decisive Victory was initiated; four MSF companies were air-lifted onto Nui Coto, and they proceeded to establish base camps. Two of these companies remained atop the mountain and conducted missions from the base camp. Snipers were encountered, but contact was not made with any major VC units; numerous CBU and M-26 grenade booby traps were found, and 1 USASF and 4 MSF suffered wounds when several of the devices detonated. A problem developed when the water source at VS79473 dried up.

(C) On 19 November, the two other companies departed the base camp, and as-
assaulted Chau Kim Mountain at V596644, seizing it, and setting up a temporary camp on the summit. The USASF units linked up with an element of the 32nd Ranger Battalion, and the joint force conducted a search and clear operation on the southwest slopes of Chau Kim, starting on 21 November. The next day, 1st Company, 3rd MSF Battalion uncovered a large cave, believed to have housed 500 troops, a hospital and an ammunition factory. As the friendly forces assaulted the cave at 1700 hours, the VC opened fire from secondary caves and crevices, killing 1 USASF, 5 MSF and wounding 3 USASF and 4 MSF. A medevac evacuated the wounded at 1300 hours on the 23rd; a sweep of the area could not be completed because of fierce enemy fire and difficult terrain. On 26 November, a night withdrawal was executed, and a base and command post were established at V597443.

(C) Airboats were used as screening and blocking forces from 17 – 25 November, but low water forced a cessation of the operations; the boats were under the operational control of detachment A-401.

(C) A pacification program was initiated in the area; agents were recruited and a base camp was constructed near Olam village, to provide security for the pacification teams. Targets were the VCI and enemy supply installations. Counterpart relations were benefited by the joint operations, and parallel messages flowed smoothly, eliminating all possible conflicts in orders issued to subordinate units. From operating together, the VNSF and USASF gained a greater knowledge of each other's capabilities.

(C) On 4 January 1969, D-40 reported five companies on Nui Coto with instructions to seal infiltration routes and secure the high terrain; the operation lasted until 26 December. On the following day, 27 December, Operation MAZAH II was initiated, and six MSF companies were assigned to seize Chau Kim Knoll, located at V596544, a part of Nui Coto Mountain. One company was ordered to seize the knoll, while the three remaining ones held Nui Coto's high ground, in order to provide artillery support for the assaulting units. On the 28th, the single company took Chau Kim successfully, but heavy fire pinned down the other three companies, which were assaulting the base of the mountain. Finally, after two days of bitter struggle, these elements gained the summit of Chau Kim Knoll, and joined the unit already there. The combined elements then sent out platoon sized searches to clear the mountain of snipers and automatic weapons positions. A seventh MSF company was assigned to join and reinforce the six companies already on Chau Kim.

(C) On 26 January 1969, the base of the knoll had to be re-alarmed, and the same plan of assault as was used in MAZAH II Operation was utilized. However, when the assault on the base of the peak started, one company was instantly pinned down, and when the elements stop the knoll tried to maneuver onto the slope and assault the beleaguered company, they likewise encountered fierce fire, and were compelled to withdraw to the peak of the knoll. The element at the base also withdrew, after suffering severe casualties; the operation was a failure; 8 MSF were killed, 81 were wounded, as also were 3 US troops; 5 of the enemy were confirmed KIA.

(C) Detachment A-403 reported various problems resulting from these operations; 1st and 2nd companies of the 3rd battalion were rendered combat ineffective owing to losses, MSF's and desertions. GPF PHOPPOPOLOG, sustaining of-

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ficer of A-403 felt that a two month stand-down was necessary for the troops to recover, refit and retrain, and he also requested additional USASF personnel. The training program at A-403 was in abeyance since November 1966, and troops were going onto Nui Goto short of canteens, harnesses, and M-19 cleaning equipment. ANL's were so high, that the 1st and 2nd companies had to be combined into a single unit of company size.

(C) During January 1969, A-402 committed three companies to Nui Goto, but no unusual difficulties were encountered, and, on 22 February, the companies returned to camp for refitting. Two other companies conducted operations on the mountain during February.

(C) Counterpart relations suffered a setback on 23 January, when the commander of the 1st company, 2nd battalion refused to move out to an FOB at A-402's order. After extensive argument, the whole company quit, turned in their gear and were flown back to Can Tho.

(C) During February, the MSF continued to operate on Nui Goto, but no major assaults were conducted. The operations concentrated upon scaling off the base of the mountain, through the conduct of night ambushes and 24 patrols. 40 contacts of diverse scale were made under this mode of operation, and intelligence at the end of the month indicated that enemy strength was being sapped. The newly established intelligence nets around Nui Goto were instrumental in securing much tactical intelligence, and also in identifying members of the VC. POLMAR operations were also continued, but problems were encountered in broadcast aircraft flying at too high an altitude to be heard, and leaflet disseminators not making allowances for wind drift.

(C) During March 1969, three new phases of operation Nui Goto were initiated. These are described in a later portion of this history.

(C) Our next document also comes from B-42's files, and is the after action report to the turnover of B-42 to MACV which occurred on 15 August 1968. Detachment B-42's mission was to support its subordinate "A" camps; with conversion completed, A-149 reverted to VNSF control; A-421 and A-442 became separate detachments directly under Co D's jurisdiction. To initiate the conversion, the G-4 and G-1 of IV CTZ visited Chau Doc, in order to coordinate the transfer of equipment and the assignment of personnel needed as advisors for MACV team 64, which was to assume control of the camp. It was found necessary to leave USASF communications personnel after conversion because MACV's communications personnel were insufficiently experienced. Also remaining behind as a liaison team were four USASF and four VNSF. They helped advise and assist MACV team 64, and also coordinated activities between A-421, A-149, and Co D. On the 20th of September 1968, the last B-42 USASF personnel departed the camp.

(C) It was the conclusion of USASF personnel that MACV needed to pay closer attention to its personnel assignments to converted camps, to insure that all MOS slots were properly filled. USASF should also strictly limit any equipment that MACV has received in the past without any recompense. Other problems were minor and easily rectified.

(C) Supply conversion occurred in three phases:

a) June - July - The order to convert was issued and the MACV property book officer arrived at B-42.

b) August - All non-mission essential equipment was backloaded.

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(C) September. Certain items of equipment were laterally transferred to A-421 (Ba Xoai) and Co D.

(C) On 10 July 1968, a conversion meeting was held at COGEO headquarters; the topic of discussion was B-42's closeout and the phaseout of USASF involvement in Kien Thang and Kien Phong Provinces. A problem was noted at B-41 and B-43, namely that the camps had difficulty assuming SF functions, owing to MACV personnel residing in the compounds.

(C) Next follows the GRLL report for Co D for August, September and October 1968. Company D consisted of C-B, three "B" teams and sixteen "A" teams. During the reporting period, B-42 converted to MACV, and its "A" camps reverted to Co D's control, with A-1A9 passing under VNSF command, but still supplied via USASF channels.

(C) The mission of Co D was to provide advisory support to VNSF (LLLB) and ARVN civil and military agencies in the conduct of counterinsurgency operations in MR 4. Included was command and control of the subordinate "B" and "A" detachments, the coordination of logistical and administrative support for these detachments, performance of the provincial and district advisory role as required, and coordination of logistical and administrative support for the provincial and district advisory role as required, affecting coordination with U.S. and V.N. Army, Navy and Air Force units as required in the conduct of military operations in the AOR, and the coordination of all USASF intelligence collection efforts within the operational area. Company D also maintained a forward operations center (FOC), within the 44th STZ at Gac Lam, the mission of which was to act as liaison between Co D and the subordinate units and the 44th STZ. The deputy for operations, who commanded the FOC, received all requests for assistance from "B" and "A" detachments, and then coordinated them through the 44th STZ. Further, coordination for special operations conducted by 44th STZ, but utilizing USASF assets, was conducted through the FOC. The Senior Advisor, IV Corps, had authority to commit USASF assets, but he had to go through the commander of Co D. On 13 September, 1968, LTC Herbert PAPER assumed command of Co D, with LTC Carl J. NAGLE acting as Deputy Commander.

(C) The enemy situation during the reporting period reflected increased emphasis upon infiltration of arms and supplies to replace pre-war lost due to the heavy and extensive actions of the last six months. (11/11, A-41, received heavy B-43 and mortar attacks during October.

(C) Nhan Dao's construction was completed, and the camp became fully operational. The Mobile Strike Forces were engaged in Operation VU Gato throughout the reporting period. Saturation patrols, utilizing aircraft and sampans conventional with the coming of the peak of the rainy season. The combination of Delta Duckhawk, CSF troops and airboats proved extremely effective for cutting into the VC's operational efforts.

(C) Intelligence reported that agent recruitment continued at a high rate, reflecting a 100% increase in the number of agents operating. Counter intelligence and collection augmentation personnel conducted numerous field trips to
the subordinate teams, to train, supervise, and assist intelligence personnel. B-40 and B-43 were given additional personnel during October to assist the intelligence effort. Liaison established with the newly established IF 672 Joint Intelligence Center helped in the collection of Order of Battle files and in the area of estimating enemy intentions and capabilities. Counterpart relations remained excellent, with greater emphasis now placed upon training and integration of counterparts in all phases of intelligence operations.

(C) Operations (S-3) reported 71 significant operations of which some of the more important ones are outlined below:

a. Nui Coto Operations On 2 August, NSF on Nui Coto encountered small arms fire throughout the day. Results were 2 NSF KIA, 8 NSF, 1 USAF, 1 VNNSF and 2 Navy Seals WIA. Enemy losses were unknown.

b. 4 August 0110 hours, unknown number of VC mortared B-43 and the Gao Lanh Airboat site. 30 rounds 60mm and 82mm mortar and recoilless rifle fire were received, destroying ten feet of the north compound wall, three airboats, one 1 ton truck and two structures. The enemy also hurled satchel charges into the compound. Casualties were 2 CSF, 1 NSF, 10 civilian dependents, 6 ARVN and 2 USAF WIA. The supply room was destroyed causing the loss of numerous weapon supplies.

c. On 6 August, 0115, one platoon CSF from A-421 was inserted by Delta Blackhawk, vicinity VN7R3. A VC base area was uncovered including a weapons factory, with large stacks of explosives and considerable machinery, including forges, lathes and diamond tip drill bits.

d. On 11 August, a company size element from A-433 was inserted at VN888640 by Blackhawk. Contact was initiated with a VC element, which withdrew after a 30 minute firefight. 2 USAF and 6 CSF were WIA. A vast amount of enemy supplies was captured, the VC evidently serving as guards. Ten buildings, three ammunition plants, one melting shop and one blacksmith shop were destroyed. 2,500 grenades, explosive chemicals, 2,000 potato masher grenades, one forge, two anvils, 400 grenade molds, and diverse other supplies were discovered and captured.

(C) Continuing the Nui Coto operation, NSF discovered a cache near complex. Large quantities of ordinance were discovered, including 29 x 60mm mortar rounds, 38 x grenades and 500 rounds of AK-47 ammunition. On 07 September a CRP from A-421 was inserted by Delta Blackhawk into a suspected enemy position; two VC units initiated fire with automatic weapons and small arms. After a ten minute fight, the VC withdrew, leaving 5 KIA and one VC CIA. Eight bunkers were destroyed.

e. On 10 September, 1230 hours one VC platoon ambushed a section of airboats with small arms and automatic weapons fire. After a ten minute fight, the friendly element withdrew. 1 NSF and 1 USAF were WIA; two airboats were damaged and left behind. At 2030 hours, A-433 sent a company size reaction force and recovered the airboats, also confirming 1 VC KIA. A booby trap was tripped killing one CSF and wounding another.

f. On 11 September, 1420 hours, A-433 sent out a company size operation which estimated an estimated company of VC; a ninety minute firefight ensued, after which friendly elements withdrew South. 1 USAF was killed, I LT Stephen
h. Continuing the Nui Coto operation, on 16 September at 2130 hours, a CRP from Vinh Gia (A-149) initiated contact with an unknown number of VC; after a fifteen minute firefight, the VC withdrew north, leaving 5 dead. Two weapons were captured along with 300 rounds of AK-47 ammunition. Two were friendly casualties. On 20 September, another CRP from A-149, attacked by VNSF, contacted 2 VC squads. After a fifteen minute flight, the enemy withdrew north, leaving 3 VC KIA and assorted weapons and ammunition. 3 CSF were WIA, and 1 CSF WIA. On 6 October, 1200, 1 CSF platoon from A-421 initiated contact with an estimated VC platoon at VS973533; a ten minute firefight ensued, resulting in two VC WIA. On 8 October, 2115, the MSF CSS on Nui Coto received 10 rounds of 60mm mortar fire; no casualties resulted. 10 October, 1200, MSF on Nui Coto made contact with an unknown number of VC; vicinity VS974473, and a six hour firefight ensued. 35 MSF were WIA, 4 MSF and USAF were reported KIA. On the 11th at 0325, the base camp on top of Nui Coto came under attack with small arms, 60mm mortars, and B-40 rockets. At about 0550 hours, the VC broke contact.

i. 16 October, 1900 hours, an unknown number of VC fired about 40 rounds 105mm and 21mm artillery into Cai Cai (A-431) base camp. The fire came from Cambodia at about 2,000 meters range. 3 CSF were WIA. On the 17th October, 20 more 81mm rounds were taken by A-431, from the same location as the previous night. Friendly fire produced one secondary explosion. Again on the 17th, 0200 hours, 105mm and 81mm artillery was fired into Cai Cai; 30 rounds within 60 minutes were received. Two Airboats, one dependent and one civilian structure were damaged. Again on the 16th, Cai Cai received 82mm and 57mm recoilless fire. No casualties resulted.

j. On 22200 October, CSF companies from A-413 contacted 15 VC in open. An ambush was activated at distance of 17 meters. The firefight lasted for ten minutes then the VC withdrew south. 2 CSF were KIA; 9 VC KIA, and large quantities of gear and ammunition captured. Including 207 grenades, 79 x 82mm rounds, 2 x 720 x AK-47, 179 x 54mm rounds and 137 x B-40 rockets. Equiment of 7.62 Soviet sniper rifles was also captured. Five support with were destroyed.

k) Personal Training - The To Chau training center conducted refresher basic and cross-trained weapons training during August - October 1963. CSF companies were observed through the course, monitor personnel (USASF, WISF) undergoing the training with the CSF. Co D also recommended that USAF and USASF NCOs should attend MAGW Records School together to increase team spirit. On 31st August, cross-training of USASF is an on-going process; new personnel spending a period of time with each experienced member of the "A" detachment. In combat, the combined operation of airmobile, LOH (light observation helicopter) and Blackhawk has proved highly successful. LOH's sight the enemy, airmobile pursue them, and the Blackhawk inserts CSF personnel to destroy the enemy, with the air assets providing air cover.

l) Aviations: Since Skirt hesitators on supply parachutes were discontinued, the malfunction rate dropped from 20% to 6%. The skirt hesitator was not required on cargo parachutes, and a considerable saving was reflected.
(G) Logistics: A total of 27,037 personnel were supported during the reporting period. The Hui Goto Operation was supported twice weekly by airdrop, and also by an MSS at Ba Koa. Another MSS was established at Tam Sin for the airboat operations of three detachments, A-401, A-431 and A-432. This method of operation gave the airboats greater range. Group Headquarters changed the policy on local purchase, allowing $2,000 US per month, and Co. D 5-S was able to purchase spark plugs for 35 outboard motors, thus removing them from deadline status. Maintenance problems were chiefly caused by aging equipment. Two problem areas were failing clutches on 2½ ton trucks, due to poor design and poor driving practices, and also generator failures caused by improper wiring at the camps. Generator loads and phase loads, unbalanced, also caused a failure of electrical motors due to voltage drops.

(G) In air movements, the Air Force cut C-7-A sorties to Co. D from seven to five per day, due to maintenance problems and a lack of trained crews. A CH-54 was requested, but refused by IAFW because priority was not sufficiently high. However the CH-54 would have been ideal for moving vehicles, whereas a CH-47 would have to be stripped to do the same task. A work helicopter was badly needed to replace one shot down several months earlier. Co. D handled nearly 15 million pounds of supplies during the three month period.

(G) There was a shortage of Vietnamese and ESCI personnel in the maintenance facilities; a training program was considered for implementation. The area across from the maintenance yard was converted into a motor pool, thus separating the two facilities and allowing for greater efficiency of operation.

(G) The Engineers completed four projects; new camp construction at B-40, Can Tho, CEF billets and a dispensary at B-41, Cao Laun, camp construction at A-402, Moc Hoa and bridge repair at A-415, Tuyen Khan. Nineteen other projects were underway at the various detachments of Co. D. My Dic III, A-416, was in need of a well due to salt intrusion during the dry season. Five other camps were in need of wells to a lesser extent. A deep well rig was requested from the Group Engineers with the intent of initiating drilling as soon as the rig arrived. Engineer reported a shortage of 2½ inch tapers and tin roofing, problems which hindered new construction throughout M-4.

(G) Political Warfare Emphasis was on motivation and indoctrination programs. Can Tho radio broadcasts were used as a source for disseminating information on cultural matters. On 1 September, Maj. THU, Deputy Chief of Staff for POW/2, visited Co. D and three of its A detachments, and on 20 September, Co. D sponsored a two-day POW/2 conference; one of the results of the meeting was the distribution of POW/2 equipment to each detachment.

(G) Special emphasis was placed upon the construction of dependent housing for the VC/CC families. Projects were underway at B-40, Co. D, A-411, A-412, A-416 and A-432; new projects were planned for A-401, Don Phuc. The only problem was the shortage of lumber reported by the Engineers; whatever material was available was cut out. In conjunction with the improved housing, health and sanitation projects were underway, to help raise the general standard of living.

(G) 5-4's POW/2 team was actively engaged in the motivation and indoctrination program. On 5 August 1969, at A-433, My Da, there was a program
of entertainment, as well as classes on political and cultural topics; among the titles presented were: "The plot the VC use to gain support", and "The Good Fighting Cause of our Troops and People". The classes aimed at bolstering CIDG morale and esprit de corps, and also at building up the prestige and image of the GVN.

(C) In the realm of Civic Action, on 20 August 68, a MEDCAP was held at An Hung Hamlet, Thuan Duc village, in Chau Thanh district. Dental and medical care was provided by USAF medics accompanying the Medcap team. Various health commodities, including health kits, shower shoes and soap, were distributed; school kits were also given to the children to encourage the educational effort.

(C) CARE IV Corps and Saigon sent representatives who attended rice distribution programs for refugee villagers at A-hill, My Phuoc Tay, 15 August 1968. Also on the 15th the CORDS agricultural representative went to A-hill My Dien II, on a three day visit, to take soil samples. The canal system surrounding the camp was surveyed for possible drinking water sources. Seeds were also distributed to Cambodian CIDG; the Cambodians were experienced farmers, and the idea was to have them instruct the other CIDG. Hospital visits to Can Tho for sick and wounded CIDG were conducted on a regular basis. Gifts were distributed and VNSF Officers gave valor awards to some of the troops who were hospitalized due to wounds. The program is aimed at boosting CIDG morale, cheering the patient, and also undermining the relationship between LDD and CIDG, by emphasizing the farmer's care for the CIDG; approximately 200 patients were visited under this program.

(G) Personnel: Co D's strength for the three month period Aug - Oct 1968 was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>EM</th>
<th>Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Replacements were few, but no critical MOS shortages developed. Morale and discipline remained high owing to great command emphasis placed upon personal services. Mail went out four to five times weekly, to even the remotest camp, and by any aircraft available. R&R allocations were also increased to allow personnel to take full advantage of the program. Recreation facilities were also available at Can Tho; MACV's swimming pool was opened up for use by USAF, and the USO facilities were available. Co D ran its own film program on a nightly basis, and each detachment had available ten-fifteen new films each month.

(G) Late receipt of DEROS orders has been a recurring problem. This snag in the personnel system also hinders the planning for replacement personnel.

(C) Civilian Personnel: Civilian personnel matters were controlled by the Funds officer. TD allowances during the past quarter allowed the hiring of 19 additional personnel; skilled individuals were foremost among the new employees, but interpreters, especially those with Cambodian and Chinese linguistic skills, were still in demand. Co D's dealings with sizeable ethnic minorities in IV MR made this a vital area of concern.

(C) With S-4's new guidelines on local purchase, Funds co-operated more closely with S-4, aiming at cost reduction and higher values received for dollars spent.

(C) Medical Care: "A" and "B" detachment personnel were sent to Co D on first available aircraft for medical and dental care. Wounded personnel were evacuated to the 29th
Evacuation Hospital in Can Tho and the 3rd Surgical hospital in Dong Xo. Co D’s medical officer held daily sick call. Dental care was provided by the 13th aviation battalion dispensary, and denture cases were referred to the Dental Laboratory in Saigon.

(C) During the third Quarter of 1968, the Medical Staff treated 871 CIDG patients and 2,372 dependents. Under the MEDCAP program, "A" and "B" detachments provided medical care to 32,035 CIDG patients and 29,060 dependents and civilians. The preventive medicine system programmed 4,524 personnel for inoculations. Furthermore continuous efforts were exerted towards obtaining vaccines against cholera, plague, smallpox and tetanus, with the intent of instituting a vaccination program for the CIDG. MID provided vaccine, needles, and syringes, as well as shot record formats for the CIDG.

(C) MSF troops were evacuated to the 29th Evacuation Hospital, while CIDG troops went to ARVN hospitals at Can Tho and Long Xuyen. Anderson Clinic served as a convalescence center for MSF and CIDG. It also provided out-patient services, and determined the ultimate disposition of CIDG and MSF released from the hospitals.

(C) In the area of Veterinary medicine, two serious outbreaks of hemolytic septicemia occurred. In Kien Tuong province, Binh Hiep area, 1,000 water buffaloes perished before the epidemic was halted. CPT Gilpin, Veterinarian from 44th Medical BGD, on TOE to the 13th Aviation battalion, was requested to help USASF cope with the outbreak of disease. He treated 150 sick animals and obtained from CORDS 4,000 doses of anti-pasteurella vaccine; canals and shutes were constructed to provide animal control, and 2,000 animals were immunized, with the extra 2,000 doses of vaccine set aside for future use. This extra vaccine prevented a similar outbreak of the disease at Binh Thanh-Than a few weeks later. As CPT Gilpin wasn’t available when the Binh Thanh Thon cases occurred, C-44 contacted Mr. Jadwin and Mr. Herron at CORDS, who in turn alerted the VN animal husbandry chief. With the aid of USASF personnel, the inoculations were given. CPT Gilpin made a recommendation that, since the disease was seasonal, striking just prior to the wet season, inoculations should occur annually.

(C) In medical supply, Co D lacks a medical supply officer and medical specialists authorized by TOE, and so, pre-planning of proper stock levels for medical supply points hasn’t been adequate.

(C) OJT for CIDG was provided by "A" and "B" detachment personnel. The company Med Ops section conducted a laboratory procedure course, with selected medical personnel attending the two week course. The Dental officer at 13th Aviation Battalion also provided dental training for CIDG medics. Dental anesthetics and tooth extraction were procedures taught, with the course geared to each individual student’s ability and experience.

(C) Medcaps: Medcaps are provided on a continuous basis by "A" and "B" detachments. Co D conducted one MEDCAP in the Can Tho environs; Medical and Psyops sections cooperated in the effort, and the 13th Aviation Battalion dental officer also assisted; 375 medical and 60 dental cases were treated.

(C) C-44’s Medical Officer discussed the venereal disease problem in the Can Tho area with Col Conger, CORDS IV CTZ representative. A meeting was held with all U.S. medical officers, the province medical officer, national police and the U.S. Provost Marshal in attendance. It was decided to fill out a contact form for each case treated, turn it over to the Provost Marshal, who would then pick up the infected individuals and deliver them to province hospitals for treatment. The procedure was tested, but excessive co-ordination requirements caused delays; furthermore VC carriers rarely present themselves voluntarily for treatment.
Our next document is the ORU dated 13 February 1969, and it summarizes activities in November and December 1968, and January 1969.

The mission of Co D remained the same as in the last report, and the only change in company structure was the loss of one "A" detachment (A-144), which passed under VNSF control, as A-144 had at an earlier date. A-44, the To Chau training center, was a separate "A" camp under C-4's control. Command personnel changes included, on 3 January 1969, the departure of LT COL ROBERT L. REID, who had been the C-4 executive officer, and also the departure of LT COL. CARL J. NAGLE, Deputy Commander, who departed C-4 on 27 January 1969. Major Robert G. TOPP assumed the XO's position, and Lt Col D.J. CONNELLY became the new Deputy Commander. The Engineer officer, Cpt Michael B. ROWE departed 18 January 1969 and was replaced by Cpt Jack HANEMAN. Finally, on 1 February, the Funds Officer, Major Boyd HARRIS departed, and was replaced by Cpt Nathaniel JACKSON Jr.

The command relationships and position of the FOC at 44th STZ remained unchanged.

During the final quarter of 1968, the enemy's chief efforts were directed towards refitting, training, and resupply activity, with elements moving back and forth between Cambodia and Vietnam for this purpose. During the latter part of December, and in January, the enemy returned to his traditional areas of operation, into attack positions near major targets, notably My Tho and Can Tho. The second and third weeks of January saw indirect fire and sapper attacks directed at airfields, and by the close of January, enemy maneuver battalions were positioned in pre-attack positions near Can Tho and My Tho.

On 15 November 1969 Kinh Quan II (A-144) was turned over to VNSF control; since this date, the camp has functioned efficiently. Continuing the trend noted for late October 1968, Cai Cai (A-431) was subjected to numerous mortar and B-40 barrages, and also harassing small arms attacks. In January, enemy efforts against Cai Cai slackened off either due to heavy losses or else because the VC were gathering troops for more vital targets, anticipating a successful Tet offensive. The NSF continued operation Nui Coto, which was to continue for an indefinite period. Airboat operations, supporting operation Nui Coto and border interdiction operations, continued until low water levels forced curtailment. In December and January Co D put emphasis on training, maintenance, and refitting to prepare for the rainy season of 1969.

B-40 received a new commander, Lt Col DUBOVICK, reassigned from I Corps; Lt Col QUIST, B-40's former commander was medically evacuated to Japan, having sustained a shrapnel wound of the right forearm.

Intelligence: Increasing counterintelligence and intelligence collection efforts were stressed in the final quarter of 1968, with the chief goals of identifying and neutralizing VC and VCI and improving reporting and dissemination procedures. Coded agents increased from 35 to 175 and the number of agents pending coding action went from 35 to 79. The number and quality of intelligence reports also increased, but cost per report was down 25%.

Counterpart relations remained good and bilateral operations were stressed.
interchange of ideas and experience proved most valuable to junior intelligence personnel new to the combat environment.

(C) An Order of Battle: Section was created with the assignment of augmentation personnel. Efforts were also made to improve relations with other intelligence collecting agencies in MR IV.

(C) A problem remained unsolved in the chronic shortage of intelligence personnel at "A" and "B" team levels. A stop-gap solution was adopted - the cross-training of personnel with other MOS qualifications in the 1LP MOS.

(C) Operations: During the final quarter of 1968, 500 company size, 339 patrol size, and 159 HCF operations were conducted, resulting in 353 VC KIA, 24 WIA, 77 CIA and 159 KBA. Friendly losses were 3 USASF KIA, 19 WIA; 13 NSF KIA, 152 WIA, GSF, 50KIA, 191 WIA, 4 MIA. In late 1968, airboats supporting operation Nui Coto with screening and direct support were faced with limited range of fire problems beyond the range of their .30 calibre LMG and 57mm recoilless rifles. A solution with admirable results was found by replacing the 57mm recoilless rifle with a 106mm recoilless rifle, and the .30 calibre LMG with a .50 calibre HMG. Recoil and vibration effects were less than anticipated, and were far outweighed by increased effective fire range. On 25 November 1968, the first refitted airboat was employed. At 1400 hours, the crew sighted a VC at 1500 meters and took them under fire with the 106mm recoilless rifle, firing one beehive round; results were 3 VC KIA, 1 WIA; a very satisfactory outcome. By 27 November, however, low water levels forced a cessation of airboat operations. A total of 79 significant operations were listed for the quarter; of these, selected ones are described below, including all relevant to Operation Nui Coto.

a) On 2 November 1968, 1245 hours an "Apache" inserted operation (P-11-4) including 3 USASF, and operation P-11-5 with 3 USASF, were sent to investigate an ammunition cache and munitions factory located at VT 725K85. A firefight with VC (evidently a cache guard) resulted in 8 enemy KIA, 1 KIA, 1 USASF WIA (minor), 28 weapons CIA, a bag of documents (in Chinese), a bag of medical supplies, one hand-cranked generator, three structures, including a weapons factory, considerable quantities of tools and four 55 gallon drums of explosives. Further caches were discovered by airboats from A-149 at VS 726K85 on 4 November and by an A-412 Blackhawk operation at VS 725K65 on the same date. The second cache included a motor cycle, a jeep engine (Italian) and a Johnson 40 HP outboard motor.

b) On 6 November, at 0945 hours, operation C-11-8 (A-412) was inserted by Blackhawk against a VC squad at VS 722K728. A fifteen minute firefight ensued, with the V breaking contact. Results were 6 VC KIA, 3 kilos of medical supplies, 1 kilo of documents, 15 sampans, 10 structures including the Pham Huynh medical school, destroyed.

(c) During November 1968, a series of Silver Patrols occurred, and documents survive for numbers 20 through 24. From internal evidence of the documents, it can be ascertained that the Silver Patrol base camp was atop Nui Coto; the purpose of the patrols was search, destroy and reconnaissance, and each operation averaged about 60-70 personnel.

(c) Operation #20 occurred on 18 November 1968; the element consisted of Cpt SALMON and SFC RODRIGUEZ, both USASF, SGT QUIY, VNSF, an interpreter and 60 MSF troops. The unit departed the base camp at 1000 hours, and in the vicinity of VS 989K68, they found a newly excavated fresh water hole, but no evidence of enemy usage was present. The area was searched and revealed numerous bomb craters, but no traces of the enemy were found.

(c) Patrol #21 departed on the 19th, at 0930 hours, with Cpt SALMON and SSG LOTT (USASF), 1 VNSF, an interpreter and 58 MSF troops; it moved to an outpost at VS 992 K77 to meet another portion of the element. In the area of VS 986 K77 and VS 988 K75, a series
of caves was discovered, but none had been occupied recently; the patrol returned to camp at 1430 hours, with negative contact having been made.

(C) On 20 November, patrol #22, with 1LT DOM and SSG LOTT (USASF), 1 VNSF, an interpreter and 58 NSF discovered a cave complex at VS 997 474. The whole network was large enough to house two battalions, and a tunnel at VS 989 476 was the main approach to the complex. C4 and hand grenades were then used to seal off the whole network, and an area reconnaissance was conducted, after which, the patrol returned to camp for the night.

(C) On 21 November, patrol #23 moved out at 1000 hours; it consisted of 55 NSF, 1 VNSF, an interpreter and Capt. SALMON and PHOTOPoulos both USASF. At VS 991 472, a bombed out cave complex was uncovered; several caves had been collapsed by the bombings, but the complex was still usable. The most current signs of habitation were three months old. Friendly troops then sealed off the complex completely by blasting, and the patrol came to an end.

(C) The final recorded Silver Patrol in this series, number 211, occurred on 22 November, and departed the base camp at 1030 hours. The element, consisting of Capt. SALMON, SSG LOTT, both USASF, Sgt. QTY, VNSF, an interpreter and 31 SF, moved down the mountain until they arrived at a pagoda constructed of concrete at VS 997 477. 60 lbs. of C4 explosive were placed along the base of the walls, and the resulting blast levelled the building. Another pagoda, apparently also of concrete construction, was located at VS 999 479. When it too had been destroyed by blasting, 50% of the structure having been levelled, it was found to actually have been constructed of reinforced concrete, as the steel rods were protruding from the ruins. A search of the area further revealed the presence of three hothouses made of grass. These too were destroyed, after which the Silver Patrol returned to camp. No further records concerning the Silver Patrols exist.

(C) Operation Nui Coto: At 1045 hours, 19 November, an estimated VC squad placed heavy automatic weapons fire and assorted small arms fire against the lead element of the 5th NSF, vicinity of VS 01 1644. Gunships placed fire on the VC position, and after 30 minutes the enemy ceased hostilities. Friendly casualties were 1 NSF KIA, while the VC lost 1 VC KIA, 1 KBA. On 21 November, 1146 hours, an airboat section received automatic, small arms and HMG fire from the western slope of a suspected VC position. Sporadic firing continued throughout the afternoon. 1 USASF was WIA (SFC Edward C. Trent) shot in the jaw, but not seriously hurt; he was medevaced to Can Tho. Enemy losses were unknown. On 22 November, one company from A-129, on a Blackhawk insertion discovered, at (TS 616 472), what appeared to be the Ha Tien VC radio station and printing plant. There was no contact made. Captured were 10 tubes of printer's ink, 4 reams of newspaper, 30 kilos of Communist school books, 1 large hand operated printing press, 7 Cambodian Communist stencils, 7 woodcut stamps (newspaper heading), 13 kilos of documents, 60 x 1.5 volt batteries, 1 radio construction maintenance manual, 1 commercial microphone (loudspeaker type), 100 feet of electrical wire, 4 x 1200 foot recording tapes, 25 ponchos and 60,000 VN. Also destroyed were 50 kilo rice, 400 batteries, 12 platforms, 500 kilos of mines and assorted small arms and ammunition. The radio utilized a doublet antenna, 20 feet long, made of WD-1 wire, along an azimuth of 330°-150°; its power source consisted of 60 batteries in five containers of 12 each, wired in series. Operation Nui Coto: out of E-10, on 1230 hours, 22 November 1968, the 1st Company, 3rd Battalion attempted to assault a cave complex at VS 964 463. The VC initiated fire from a series of smaller caves and crevices guarding the approach to the main cave. The 2nd Company 3rd Battalion had to put fire into the VC complex so that the 1st Company could break contact and pull back. The VC were armed with machine guns, automatic and small arms. Results were 1 USASF KIA, SSG Gary E. Guvney, and 2 USASF WIA. At 2250 a dustoff was attempted, but was driven off by heavy fire from a VC element; the MEDI-EVAC had been attempted from atop of a rock pile. At 0315 November 23, with "spooky" on
site, and two gunships support a dustoff and slick with a special rig hoist attempted another medevac; this maneuver also failed owing to heavy VC fire. "Spooky" received fire at QH10, at which time, airstrikes and gunships tried to halt the heavy ground fire. Litters were dropped in, in order to enable the WIA to be removed, on the ground, to a secure area. At 1200 hours 23 November, the WIA arrived at DZ 2, at VS 275 479, and at 1230 the Medevac was accomplished.

d) 1400 hours 25 November, Operation C-11-21, out of A-415, consisting of 1 Company CSF initiated contact with a patrol of VC. After a fifteen minute firefight, the VC broke contact and withdrew; enemy losses were 1 VC KIA, 6 CIA. One light fire team from the 9th Infantry Division supported the CSF element. Pursuit and search were conducted, but with negative results.

e) Operation Nui Coto, Airboats, (continued): At 1400, 25 November 68, an airboat sighted 4 VC and took them under fire with newly mounted 106mm recoilless rifle; results, 3 VC KIA, 1 WIA. On 2 December, 1900 hours, in response to operation P-12-1 intelligence, operation C-12-1, with one company CSF departed A-411 and contacted an estimated 18 man VC patrol moving East towards Nui Ta Bec, vicinity VS 940 680. After contact with the patrol was made, an estimated company of VC on the slopes of Nui Ta Bec, began firing upon the friendly element. The VC were using 3 HMG and ASA. The VC patrol, meanwhile, broke contact and fled West, with the friendly element in pursuit. Ba Xoai provided 4.2 inch mortar support and Chi Lang contributed 105mm artillery. Results showed 5 VC KIA and no friendly casualties. On 5 December, at VS 978 491, one NSF platoon initiated contact with 35 VC armed with LMG and small arms. After a two and one half hour firefight, the VC broke contact and withdrew to the Southwest. Friendly support fired 109 rounds of 60mm mortar and placed an airstrike on the enemy position. A search revealed 6 VC KIA, and blood trails leading to the woodland indicated several wounded.

f) On 8 December, 1200 hours, three NSF companies (3/1st Bn, 3/2nd Bn, 1/3rd Bn) and an 80 man PRU augmentation, plus a command and control element from Co D, conducted operation Brightlight (Sagebrush II), vicinity VC 940 796. The purpose of the operation was to locate and liberate 100 GVN prisoners and destroy a VC complex. The lead element was inserted at 1200 and reached the objective at 1205. The camp was found deserted and had been unused for at least 24 hours. A sweep conducted in the area revealed two additional complexes. Results of the operation were 4 VC KIA, 2 VC CIA, 50 detainees, (women, children and 3 elderly males) were turned over to the district chief. 7 prisoners were liberated and sizeable amounts of diverse equipment were captured, including 21 GVN ID cards. At 1700, the operation terminated and airstrikes destroyed the complexes.

g) Operation Nui Coto continued at 2200 hours, 10 December, when one platoon, 1/2nd Bn, on ambush, initiated contact with 10 VC, at a range of 15-20 meters. After a 4 minute firefight the VC broke contact and fled North. There was no pursuit, as an additional VC element was firing from the Million Dollar Knol. A search revealed 5 VC KIA, 4 WIA.

h) B-40 conducted operation Mail First on 20 December 1968, vicinity VQ 931 609, with a squad of 3/2nd Bn conducting an ambush. At 2120 hours, 6 VC in 3 sampans were ambushed, resulting in a 2 minute firefight. Results were 1 VC KIA, 5 CIA (turned over to the Navy), and 3 motorized sampans destroyed.

i) At 1115 hours 28 December 1968, an estimated 2 platoons of VC contacted 1 squad CSF on patrol at WT 550 101. The VC struck with B-40 rockets, 2 LMG and assorted small arms. Contact was made at a range of 40 meters; after four hours, the VC broke contact and withdrew into Cambodia. Results were 1 USASF KIA, SGT Clyde A. REITER, Radio Operator and 2 CSF WIA. Enemy casualties were unknown.

j) On 29 December, at 2000 hours, a VC element ambushed 2 U.S. Navy PBR's vicinity XS 33h 787 with B-40 rockets and small arms. The firefight lasted for 1 minute. 40 CSF were subsequently inserted, and the VC broke contact and withdrew Southeast. Pursuit and

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search were conducted, but with no results. Only Navy were WIA and 2 PHR's damaged; 5 VC were KIA and one structure and sipan were destroyed.

5) Operation Nui Coto AB-10: At 1500, 3 January 1969, two platoons, 1/2nd Battalion 46P were attacked by VC using assorted small arms and automatic weapons fire at distance VS 965 160. It VC element was estimated at 15 men. After a 20 minute firefight, friendly forces broke contact and withdrew, because the enemy held superior positions. Results were 1 WIA 46P KIA, 30 T. Robert K. STUC assigned to A-102. Enemy losses were unknown. At 1950, QH, January, a friendly element at VS 965 160 came under a VC 82mm mortar attack, which continued for 60 minutes. The fire element called in artillery and "spooky", and the enemy broke off the attack. Results were 6 46P KIA, 3 46P WIA; enemy casualties were unknown.

1) Combined operation, by A-111 and A-112: At 1600, 1 January, 2 companies and 2 CRF, inserted at X5 QP 67, made contact with an estimated reinforced enemy company armed with rockets and assorted small arms. Contact was made 30 - 100 meters South and West of friendly elements, and continued for 32 hours. Results were 2 CRF KIA, 71 CRF WIA, 1 US WIA, 1 LON damaged and 1 CRF shot down; 1 other CRF crashed, probably due to mechanical failure. Enemy casualties were 17 CRF KIA, 79 KIA, and 12 CIA. A large assortment of weapons and ammunition was captured including 2 x 75mm recoilless rifles, 3 radios, 78 mines, 120 x 81mm rockets and 2 kilometers of 14 sampans and 5 small structures were destroyed.

m) Operation Nui Coto: At 2010, 30 January, at VS 965 169, six VC initiated sniper fire against one HSF company the VC used automatic weapons. The firefight lasted five minutes, after which time the VC broke contact and withdrew in an unknown direction; artillery was fired in support of friendly troops; results were 2 VC KIA, but without any friendly casualties. A pursuit was not initiated because terrain was difficult and the VC held the advantage.

(c) Plans and Organization. Headquarters IV CTZ, SEALORDS and Blackhawk held extensive coordination meetings and seminars on border surveillance and denial of bare areas to the enemy. The purpose of the meeting was to investigate the feasibility of creating an integrated border Surveillance Agency to coordinate all efforts directed at interdicting enemy infiltration. Part of the proposals put forth included creation of a border strip to be isolated in order to control population movement and to allow stricter control of resources passing across the border. The plan was to be augmented by the use of sensing devices, surveillance radar systems, increased artillery coverage, SAR (Side-looking airborne radar) aircraft and project Sonja, together with Naval Mining Functions, all of which were expected to increase the program's effectiveness. Pilot projects were targeted at the Song Trang area (Campan Alley) and the Western part of A-119 (Vinh Gian) FRR.

(c) At this point, Project Sonja will be discussed, as it is one of the key features in the discussions about the creation of the Border Surveillance Agency. Project Sonja was the code name adopted for the project designed to thwart enemy infiltration and movement through the use of mines and explosives, using self-destruct potential. It was suggested that "A" and "C" detachments would submit proposed locations and duration of particular operations. (The plan was never adopted by USARV but the U.S. Navy has used it in SEALORDS operations.)

(c) The materials to be used included:

1) M-16 A1 Anti-Personnel Mines, to which might be attached anti disturbance device with chemical time delay timer. Below is a sketch of the M-16A1. (See following page)
2) Astrolite Mines - Astrolite is an explosive activated by mixing liquids and powders (which are individually inert). Its advantage over C-4 is that, kept with its elements separated, astrolite can be easily and safely transported, and once poured, is good up to four days.

3) The firing devices:
   a) Time pencil: It is a chemical time delay device with an M64 firing mechanism, and can be detonated over a 3 -7 week time span. What determines the time delay factor on the explosive is the type of acid working on the time pencil.
   b) 308/68 Anti - Disturbance Device. This device is manufactured for the US Navy, and is a battery powered, electrically initiated mechanism used to give standard mines and explosives anti-disturbance capability. Ground vibrations, movement, and conventional functioning will detonate the device. It has a one-minute safety factor once armed.

(c) Techniques for Employment of the devices: It is vital, when an area is targeted for Project Sonjia, to notify all other friendly units operating in the same area. An effective pattern of emplacement is to set the explosive devices 4 to 6 feet apart at 200 - 400 meter intervals. Another technique is to place a single mine in the center of a stream or trail junction, suspended from a tree or placed in the stream. It is normal procedure to set mines for detonation within 30 days. A typical placement/timing pattern is the following: 15 mines, 5 set to detonate after one week, 5 more after two more weeks, and the final 5 after three weeks. A minimum of 7 days must be allowed prior to activating the mines as a safety factor, to insure that the area will be clear of friendly personnel when the devices are activated.

(c) Emplacing the Mines: First, the site is selected, next, a hole is prepared, then, trip wires are emplaced, and mine attack wires are emplaced. The next step is to select one man to arm all the mines. Finally the time pencil is activated and the safety wires are extracted.

(c) Interdicting Lines of Communication: For use near populated areas where the trail is heavily used by local people, astrolite is recommended. The best method is to peer it along the axes of the trail, enabling it to follow curves, thereby extending the "kill zone", instead of limiting it to line of sight. Astrolite once poured, soaks into the ground or rock surface, and a non-electrical blasting cap is placed at either end of the poured ribbon. A standard military firing device is attached to the blasting cap. If a unit will activate the ambush, an electric blasting cap from a blasting mechanism or the magnetic switch from a Claymore mine is usable. Astrolite's extended active life (4 days) allows the ambush to be inactivated and later activated as desired.

(c) Base areas: Anti-disturbance armed mines or astrolite are best devices to use. If bunkers or spider holes are encountered, one device should be planted per 1-2 positions. The mine should be embedded at the entrance or steps of the position. Another acceptable method is to collapse one or two positions and then place the explosive in the debris. Trails into the base area should also be mined. Astrolite is ideal thanks to its soaking ability, which gives an upheaval explosion.