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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE)
APO San Francisco 96250

AVBE-SC

15 September 1966

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report

THRU: Commanding General
II FFORCEV
ATN: G-3 D & T *July*
APO 96227

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff
For Force Development
Department of the Army
Washington D.C. 20310

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In accordance with MACV Directive Number 335-8, the following report submitted.

1. Name of Operation: "AURORA II".
2. Type of Operation: Search and destroy, spoiling attack, Road-runner, Bushmaster and Anti-VC Tax Collection operations.
3. Date of Operation: 17 July - 3 August 1966.
4. Location: Phuon-Lam Province (Vicinity of II and III ARVN boundary on Route 20).
5. Command Headquarters: 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE)
6. Reporting Officer: Brigadier General PAUL F. SMITH.

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7. The Task Forces Organization:

TF 1/503d Inf, LTC GOAD, Commanding

1/503d Inf (-)
Sec D/16th Armor (APC's)
Jump CP
RRU
Btry B/319th Arty
Sec D/16th Armor (4.2)
M.P. Escort
National Police
Plt E/17th Cav
Sec D/16th Armor (SPATS)
Engr Sqd

TF 2/503d Inf, LTC WALSH, Commanding

2/503d Inf (-)
Sec D/16th Armor (APC's)
Btry 3/319th Arty
Sec D/16th Armor (4.2)
Plt E/17th Cav
Sec D/16th Armor (SPATS)
Engr Sqd
RRU
National Police

TF 3/319th Arty, LTC NORDIN, Commanding

3/319th Arty (-)
HHC/173d Abn Bde
Sec D/16th Armor (APC's)
One (1) Company 4/503d Inf
M.P. Escort

TF 4/503d Inf, LTC HEALY, Commanding

4/503d Inf (-)
E/17th Cav (-)
D/16th Arm (-)
Engr Co (-)
RRU
Engr Sqd
National Police

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8. Intelligence:

a. Enemy Situation Before Operation: The VC 186th Local Force Battalion was known to have operated in the area north of the LA Nga River in the Binh Tuy and Lam Dong Provinces. D/82d Local Force Bn was located in northern Long Khanh Province. There had been many unconfirmed reports of large VC and NVA forces within the operational area, but there was little evidence to support these reports. The VC were known to operate Tax Collection Points along National Route 20; therefore, it was possible that Roadrunner operations conducted in conjunction with "AURORA II" might expect to encounter small VC forces. It was believed that the enemy had the capability of reinforcing their local force elements with the 840th Local Force Bn, which operated in Quang Duc and Lam Dong Provinces, and with the VC 274th and 275th Main Force Regiments.

b. Enemy Situation During Operation: The primary intelligence of value established during the operation was that of negation: ground reconnaissance of agent reports that large VC and NVA forces were located within the AO resulted in the subsequent reduction of the agent report and information evaluations to the proper perspective. Twenty-seven contacts were made with VC forces during the operation, eighteen of which were VC initiated. All contacts were with small VC elements of squad size or less. Most VC initiated contacts were minor incidents of sniping, harassment and attempts at reconnaissance of Brigade perimeters during the hours of darkness. Interrogation of detained VC suspects, questioning of Vietnamese commercial vehicle operators, and information of volunteer nature.

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revealed several locations and other pertinent data concerning VC Taxation Points in the area. Aircraft received ground fire from the area of operation on eleven separate occasions, three sustaining hits.

c. Area of Operations (AO):

(1) Weather Conditions: The climate in the AO was typical of tropical zones affected by the monsoons. Winds were gentle to moderate, occurring during the late afternoon and early evening hours. Visibility was generally fair, with ceilings of approximately 10,000 feet lowering to approximately 1,000 feet during showers.

(2) Terrain: The area is generally covered with steep jungle and brush-covered and deep-cleft stream-filled ravines. A variation is noted in the extreme southern portion of the AO, which is an alluvial valley formed by the La Nga River, the portion of a highly productive area referred to as the 'Rice Bowl'. The dominating terrain features are the steep hills in the area. The main road in the AO is National Route 20. It has a macadam base and a bituminous surface 14 to 18 feet wide and with good alignment and grade. The terrain and vegetation bordering National Route 20 would afford the enemy several excellent ambushes if he should choose to adopt that course of action.

9. Concept of Operation(s):

The 173d Abn Bde (Sep) initiated Operation "AURORA II" in three phases, utilizing air and ground movement. The AO was astride the II and III Corps boundary. An Infantry TF operated in each Corps area. Concurrently, Roadrunner and Anti-VC Tax Collection operations were run along

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Route 20, the only highway between Saigon and Dalat. Specific search and destroy operations were assigned the Bde elements during the operation.

Liaison was established with the 10th ARVN (III Corps) and with the II Corps elements in the AO.

The operation was conducted in Three (3) Phases as follows:

Phase I - BSCO (Bde Supply Operations Center) was transported to Position CRAB, vicinity Vo Dat (YT 702325), by CH-47's and C-130's, 17 July 1966.

Phase II - Bde elements were transported into AO by air and road, 18-19 July 1966.

Phase III - Redeployment of Bde to Bien Hoa by air and road 30 July - 3 August 1966.

10. Execution:

D - Day (17 July 1966)

a. The 173d Abn Bde (Sep) terminated Operation "AURORA I" and commenced Operation "AURORA II". The BSCO commenced movement of supplies from Position PLUTO to Vo Dat by CH-47's, completing at 1800 hrs. There were 64 sorties flown. The wheeled vehicles returned to Bien Hoa and were airlifted out by C-130's on 18 July. The Bde (-) remained at Position VENUS in preparation for deployment. E/17th Cav introduced 3 Long Range Patrols into AO AURORA II in the following locations: YT's; 906508, 827486, and 823516.

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D + 1 (18 July 1966)

b. 1/503d Inf departed Position VENUS for Position RAM (YT 734493) at 0800 hrs by air and closed at 1000 hrs. 1/503d Inf assumed the Fire Support Base security, Bde CP and Rapid Reaction Force missions. There was negative contact on the move. TF 2/503d commenced move from Position VENUS to Position BULL (YT 768590) by air and road at 0930 hrs, closing at 1330 hrs. At 1240 hrs during the move, elements of TF 2/503d made contact with an estimated two VC squads at YT 758562, resulting in 5 US WIA. VC casualties unknown (TAC Air and Artillery supported). TF 4/503 remained at Position VENUS and secured Bde (-) elements. Bde CP became operational at Position RAM at 1516 hrs. E/17th Cav's three patrols remained in IT's as follows: 826475, 808536 and 909508.

D + 2 (19 July 1966)

c. TF 4/503d moved by air and road to Position RAM from Position VENUS commencing at 0949 hrs and closing at 1330 hrs. 3/319th Arty (-) moved by road from Position VENUS to Position RAM closing at 1039 hrs. 2/503d Inf conducted search and destroy operations, vicinity Position BULL, with negative contact. 1/503d Inf conducted local security, vicinity Position RAM. E/17th Cav conducted Roadrunner operations NE along Route 20, with negative contact. E/17th Cav's three patrols observed 3 VC with weapons, moving north, vicinity YT 912504; also, a second group of VC carrying ruck sacks moving south. No weapons were observed.

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D + 3 (20 July 1966)

d. The 2/503d Inf continued to conduct search and destroy operations, vicinity position BULL. At 1205 hrs, A/2/503d Inf made contact with estimated VC squad, vicinity YT 752576, resulting in 2 US WIA and 1 VC KIA (est). In the same area a large cache was found containing 4,000 meters of poncho material and 1,000 gallons of kerosine oil. 4/503d Inf commenced a search and destroy operation in AO 7, east of Position RAM. CP locations as follow: Co A - YT 752491, Co C - YT 770482 and Co D - YT 772508. E/17th Cav conducted a Roadrunner operation northeast along Route 20 to vicinity of YT 892622. At 1230 hrs, vicinity YT 893622, they found 1 ton of coffee beans which was extracted. E/17th Cav patrols were extracted. E/17th Cav patrol located at YT 918503 ambushed and killed 1 VC prior to extraction.

D + 4 (21 July 1966)

e. 2/503d Inf continued to operate north and SW of position BULL with negative contact. 4/503d Inf continued search and destroy operations east of position RAM. A/4/503d Inf was lifted to a LZ, vicinity YT 828454. They located 1500 lbs of paddy rice and assorted small arms ammunition, they also captured 2 VC. Co C remains at YT 795480 and Co D at YT 768510. E/17th Cav conducted Roadrunner operations south of position VENUS with negative results. 1/503d Inf continued to secure position RAM.

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D + 5 (22 July 1966)

f. The 2/503d Inf continued to operate, vicinity position BULL, with two(2) companies out and one (1) remaining at position BULL, with negative results. 4/503d Inf continued to conduct search and destroy operations east of position RAM. Co A conducted an air assault into LZ NANCY (YT 826453) and set up TAC CP while Co C lifted into LZ GARY (YT 858450). During the Co C lift, one of the helicopters crashed resulting in: No US casualties, although the aircraft suffered extensive damage. Co D was lifted into LZ DICK (YT 829480) with negative contact. E/17th Cav conducted Roadrunner operations NE along Route 20 with negative results. E/17th Cav introduced a patrol into vicinity YT 826453, which moved SE to the river in an attempt to locate a reported VC force, that vicinity, with negative results.

D + 6 (23 July 1966)

g. The 2/503d Inf continued to conduct search and destroy operations NE and SW of position BULL with negative contact. 1/503d Inf continued to secure position RAM. 4/503d Inf continued search and destroy operations in AO 7, east of position RAM. At 1130 hrs, A/4/503d Inf located and destroyed 800 lbs of polished rice and 2 bunkers, vicinity YT 825465. At 1819 hrs, AO observed an estimated 25 VC sampans on river, YT 729429. All sampans were taken under fire by gunships, TAC Air and artillery. Results: 25 sampans sunk and 1 VC KIA (BC). D/16th Armor search and destroy operations NE of position RAM with negative results. Co A

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remains vicinity YT 823460, Co C is located YT 859450, and Co D remains vicinity YT 879491.

D + 7 (24 July 1966)

h. The 2/503d Inf continued to operate NE and SW of position BULL with negative contact. 1/503d Inf continued to secure position RAM. 4/503d Inf remained in AO 7, east of position RAM, with Co A finding and destroying 200 lbs of paddy rice and 3 huts, vicinity YT 843447. Co C remains in vicinity LZ GARY (YT 859450). A/82d Avn resupply ship, going into LZ GARY (YT 859450) received small arms fire resulting in 1 US WIA.

D + 8 (25 July 1966)

i. The 2/503d Inf continued operations, vicinity position BULL, with negative contact. 4/503d Inf was extracted from AO 7 and returned to position RAM, closing at 1145 hrs. At 1600 hrs, they (4/503d Inf) assumed security mission of RAM from 1/503d Inf. E/17th Cav conducted Roadrunner operation NE along Route 20 to vicinity YT 780580 with negative results.

D + 9 (26 July 1966)

j. The 2/503d Inf continued to operate in vicinity of position BULL with negative results. 4/503d Inf continued to secure position RAM. 1/503d Inf commenced an air assault into AO 9, LZ ARCHER (YT 914543), securing the LZ by 1052 hrs. Co B secured the LZ while Co's A and C conducted search and destroy operations, vicinity LZ ARCHER. C/3/319th Arty was

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airlifted into LZ ARCHER to support 1/503d Inf. E/17th Cav conducted a Roadrunner operation NE along Route 20 to vicinity YT 905624 and supported 1/503d Inf with 4.2 and 81mm mortars. The air assault of 1/503d Inf followed a B-52 strike in the area at 0900 hrs.

D + 10 (27 July 1966)

k. The 2/503d Inf continued to operate in vicinity of position BULL. 4/503d Inf continued to secure position RAM. 1/503d Inf continued to conduct search and destroy operations, vicinity of LZ ARCHER. C/4/503d Inf was attached to 1/503d Inf at 1020 hrs to give them a 3 company search and destroy operation capability. During the lift a "slick" from A/82d Avn crashed due to mechanical difficulties. Results: 10 US KNRHA and total loss of aircraft. E/17th Cav conducted Roadrunner operation south along Route 20 with negative results. E/17th Cav introduced three (3) Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols into AO's 4 and 5 north of Route 20. Patrols locations were: Lark - YT 859661, Robin - YT 815647, and Penguin - YT 932601.

D + 11 (28 July 1966)

1. The 2/503d Inf continued to operate position BULL. 4/503d Inf secured position RAM. 1/503d Inf continued to conduct search and destroy operations vicinity LZ ARCHER. At 1255 hrs, C/1/503d Inf engaged and killed 1 VC (w/carbine) vicinity YT 941567. At 1310 hrs, C/1/503d Inf located and destroyed a local force platoon sized base camp, vicinity YT 950574. At 1320 hrs, A/1/503d Inf suffered 1 US WIA from a VC booby trap

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vicinity YT 894576. The three LRRP's (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol) remain in position with negative contact.

D + 12 (29 July 1966)

m. The 2/503d Inf continued to operate in vicinity, position BULL, with negative contact. 4/503d Inf continued to secure position RAM. 1/503d Inf elements moved towards LZ ARCHER in preparation for extraction on following day. E/17th Cav's three Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols: Lark, Robin and Penguin were extracted with negative VC contact.

D + 13 (30 July 1966)

n. The 1/503d Inf commenced extraction from LZ ARCHER and closed position RAM at 1735 hrs. 2/503d Inf commenced road movement from position FULL to position PLUTO, beginning at 1156 hrs and closing at 1500 hrs. No VC contact was made. 4/503d Inf continued to secure position RAM. E/17th Cav conducted Roadrunner operation NE along Route 20 with negative results. They supported extraction of 1/503d Inf with 4.2 mortar and 81mm mortar in vicinity YT 895622.

D + 14 (31 July 1966)

o. TF 1/503d Inf commenced movement by air from position RAM to Bien Hoa and closed base camp at 1630 hrs. TF 2/503d remained at position PLUTO and secured TAC CP. TF 4/503d, TF 3/319th and TF HHC (-) departed position RAM at 1000 hrs and closed in Bien Hoa at 1610 hrs. E/17th Cav

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conducted Roadrunner south along Route 20 to junction of Route 20 and Highway 1 at 1055 hrs. At position YT 380268, they observed 3 VC and took them under fire. The results were: 1 VC KIA (est) and 1 VCC (w/two (2) PRC-10 radio's).

D + 15 (1 August 1966)

p. TF 2/503d moved from position PLUTO to Bien Hoa base camp closing at 1056 hrs. BSOC and B/4/503d Inf remained at Vo Dat. They moved twenty-eight (28) C-130 sorties prior to closing the air strip due to weather conditions.

D + 16 (2 August 1966)

q. BSOC and B/4/503d Inf remained at Vo Dat utilizing CH-47 sorties. They moved 9 lifts prior to weather closing in.

D + 17 (3 August 1966)

r. BSOC and B/4/503d Inf remained Vo Dat. The BSOC was completely moved at 1700 hrs. and B/4/503d Inf closed base camp at 1900 hrs. Operation was terminated at this time.

11. Supporting Forces:

a. During the operation, Army air support was furnished by five (5) different units. TAC Air support was provided by the 7th USAF.

b. The Commanding Officer, Task Force Rear, continued to assume responsibility for the Bde-TAOR. One company from the 1st Inf Div conducted security operations in Bde-TAOR throughout this operation.

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c. Aviation Units Supporting 173d Abn Bde (Sep):

Co A/82d Avn Bn

173d Avn Plt

145th Avn Bn

11th Avn Bn

74th Avn Co (fixed wing)

d. Sorties flown:

Combat Assault	766
Armed Helicopter	410
Resupply	1,280
Command and Liaison	683
Command and Control	108
Medical Evacuation	14
Aerial Reconnaissance	140
Aerial Observer	13
Psychological Warfare	36
TOTAL SORTIES	3,450

Highlights of Aviation Activities:

Company A/82d Avn Bn flew 1,222 hours in support of the Bde, averaging 101 hrs transporting 3,835 passengers and moving 212.2 tons of cargo.

UH-1D helicopter #571, while participating in a helilift of C/4/503d Inf to LZ ARCHER, crashed and burned. The crew of 4 and 6 passengers were killed in the crash.

UH-1D helicopter #735, crashed on take-off from LZ GARY. Aircraft was completely wrecked but no personnel were injured.

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Resupply of forward Fire Support Base was accomplished entirely by Air Line Communication.

e. Air Force: A total of 20 TAC Air sorties were flown expending 15.3 tons of ordnance and 37 FAC sorties were flown during the operation.

The Air Force pre-planned fire on call and quick reaction missions. Throughout the operation, airborne FAC was available. The airborne FAC used during the operation was effective in timely and accurate support by TAC.

f. Artillery: How and when employed: On all missions, 17 July - 3 August 1966.

The 3/319th Arty was in general support of the Bde. For specific operations, batteries were placed in direct support of the particular unit concerned.

Harassing and interdiction fires were fired for period: 17 July - 3 August 1966.

Statistical Breakdown:

Total artillery and 4.2 mortar rounds fired: 3,290.

Total missions fired in support of the operation: 549.

12. Civic Actions/Psychological Operations:

Activities for "AURORA II" cover the period: 17 July - 3 August 1966. A MEDCAP team operated daily, while 2 leaflet missions were flown. Operations centered around: TAM, BUNG, PHUONG LAM, DON DIEA, TRAI LAM CAY, PHU LAM and THO LAM.

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MEDCAP 897 patients
Wheat 1,700 lbs
Corn Meal 100 lbs
Cooking Oil 40 cases (6 gals per case)
Milk, dry 1 case
Soup 49 cases
Soap 200 bars
Clothing 1,100 lbs
Rice 3,000 lbs
Kerosene 1,100 gals
Coffee Beans 1,200 lbs
Leaflets 40,000
Magazines 600
Salt 100 lbs

Miscellaneous: Captain Phillip H Anderson, performed minor surgery in the town of Phuong Lam (YT 753526). A young girl, 11, had a growth removed from her ear in a 45 minute operation.

13. Results of Operation "ARUORA II" are as follows:

US Losses	VC Losses	
KIA <u>0</u>	KIA <u>3</u> (BC)	
WIA <u>9</u>	KIA <u>1</u> (est)	
MIA <u>0</u>	VCC <u>2</u>	Ralliers <u>0</u>
	VCS <u>1</u>	Refugees <u>0</u>

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Enemy Equipment Losses:

Weapons:

One (1) US carbine (w/3 magazines)

Ammunition:

130 rounds of small arms ammunition

Transportation:

29 Sampans

Food:

Rice.	8 $\frac{1}{4}$ tons	Flour.	300 lbs
Coffee	1 ton	Cooking Oil . .	200 gals
Wheat	200 lbs	Cooking Sause .	60 gals

14. Commanders Analysis/Conclusions:

No Main Forces or NVA elements were found to be in the area at the time of the Operation. Contacts were minor and with local force elements of squad size and less.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

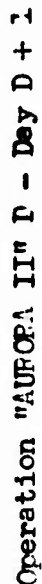
E. B. ROBERSON

E. B. ROBERSON
1LT, AGC
Asst AG

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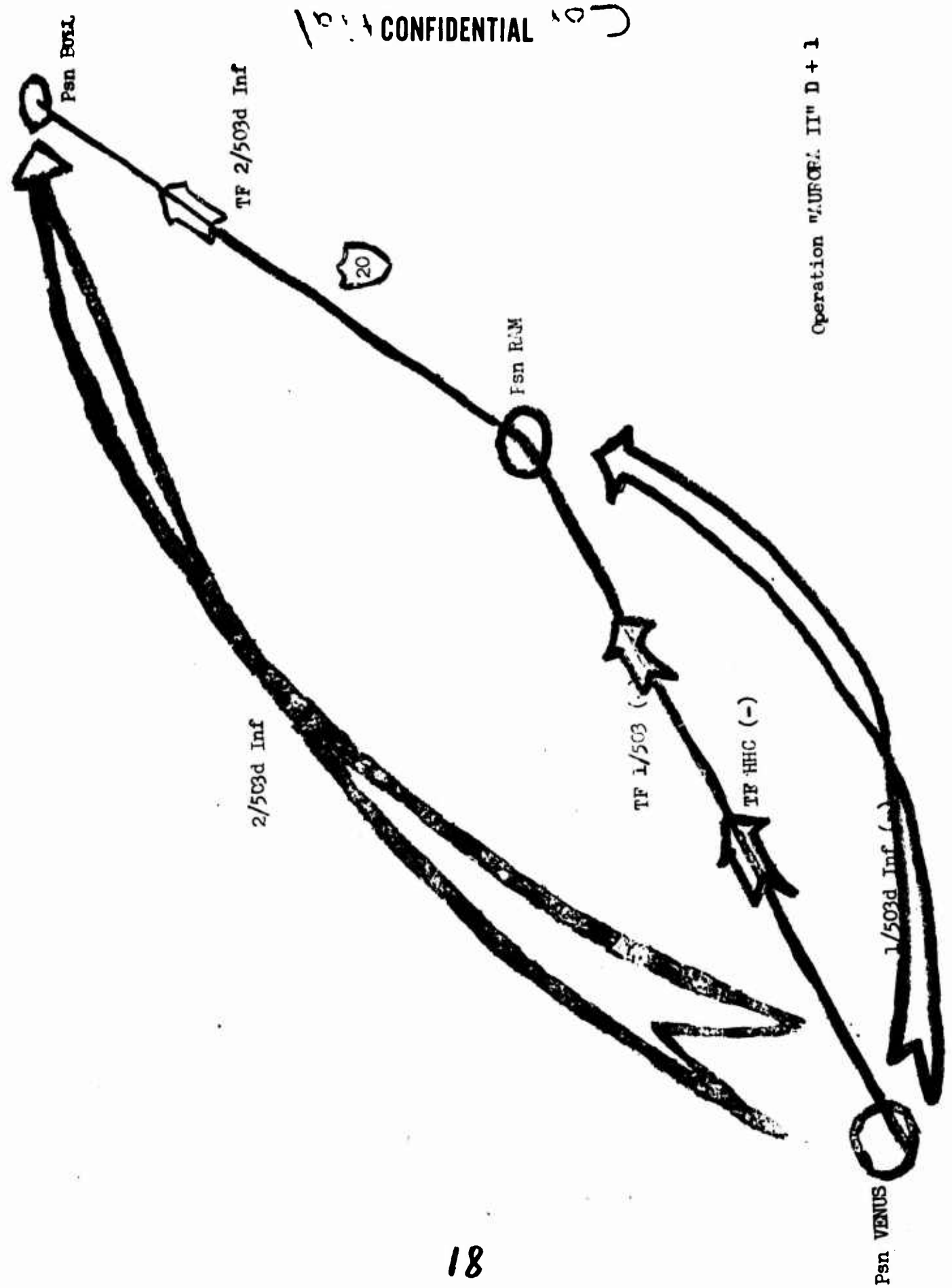
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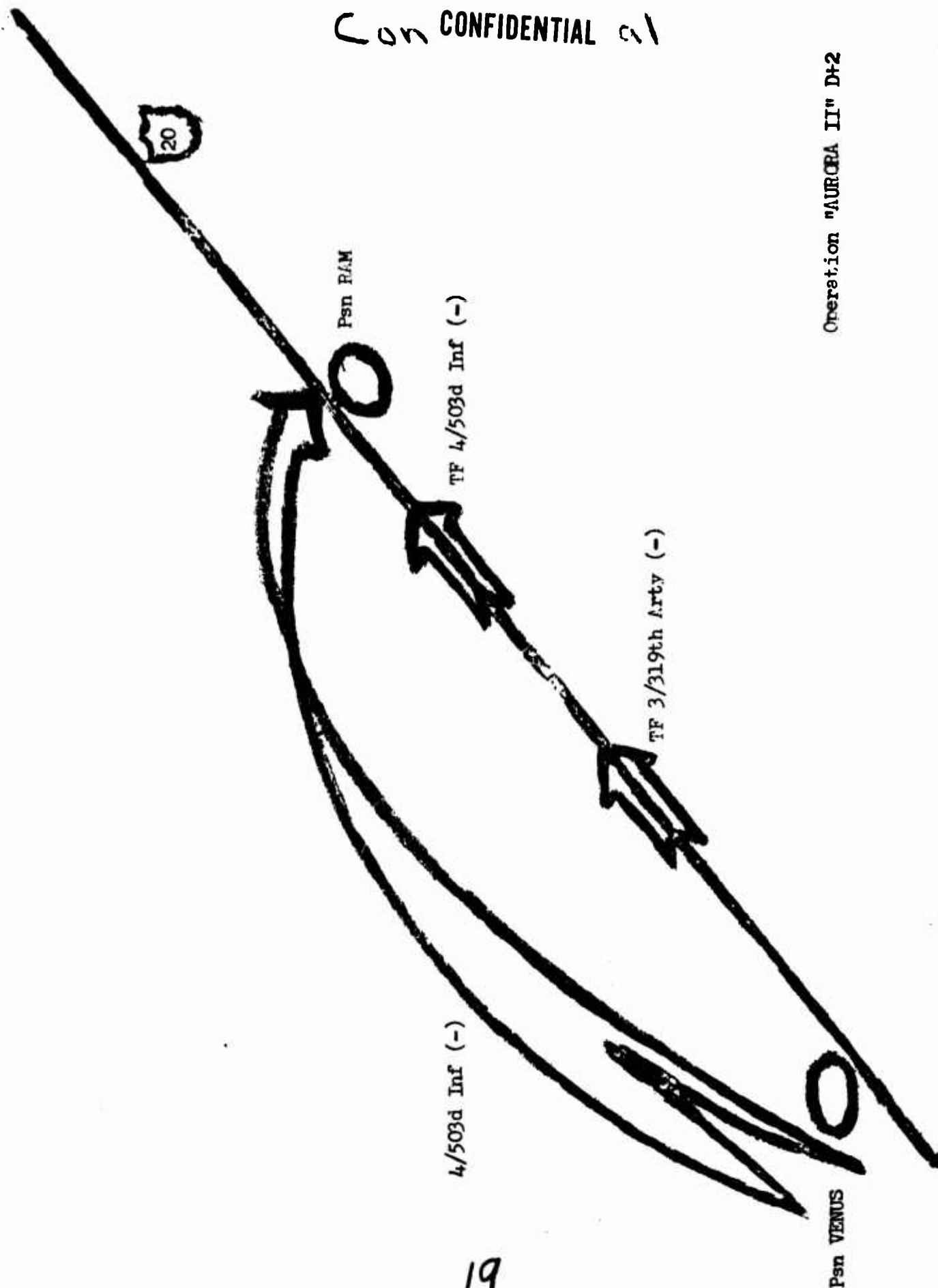
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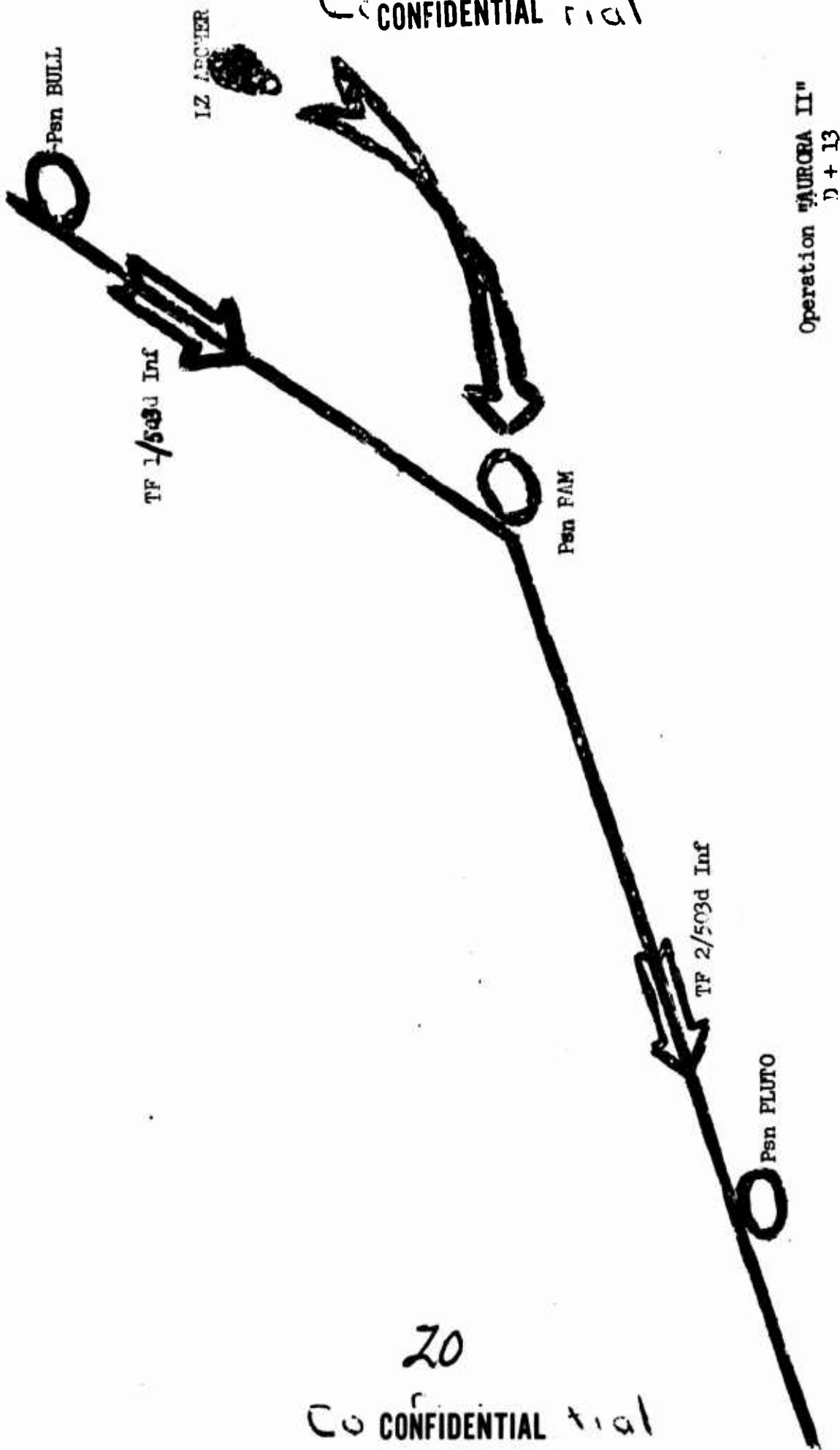
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Operation "AURORA II" D+2



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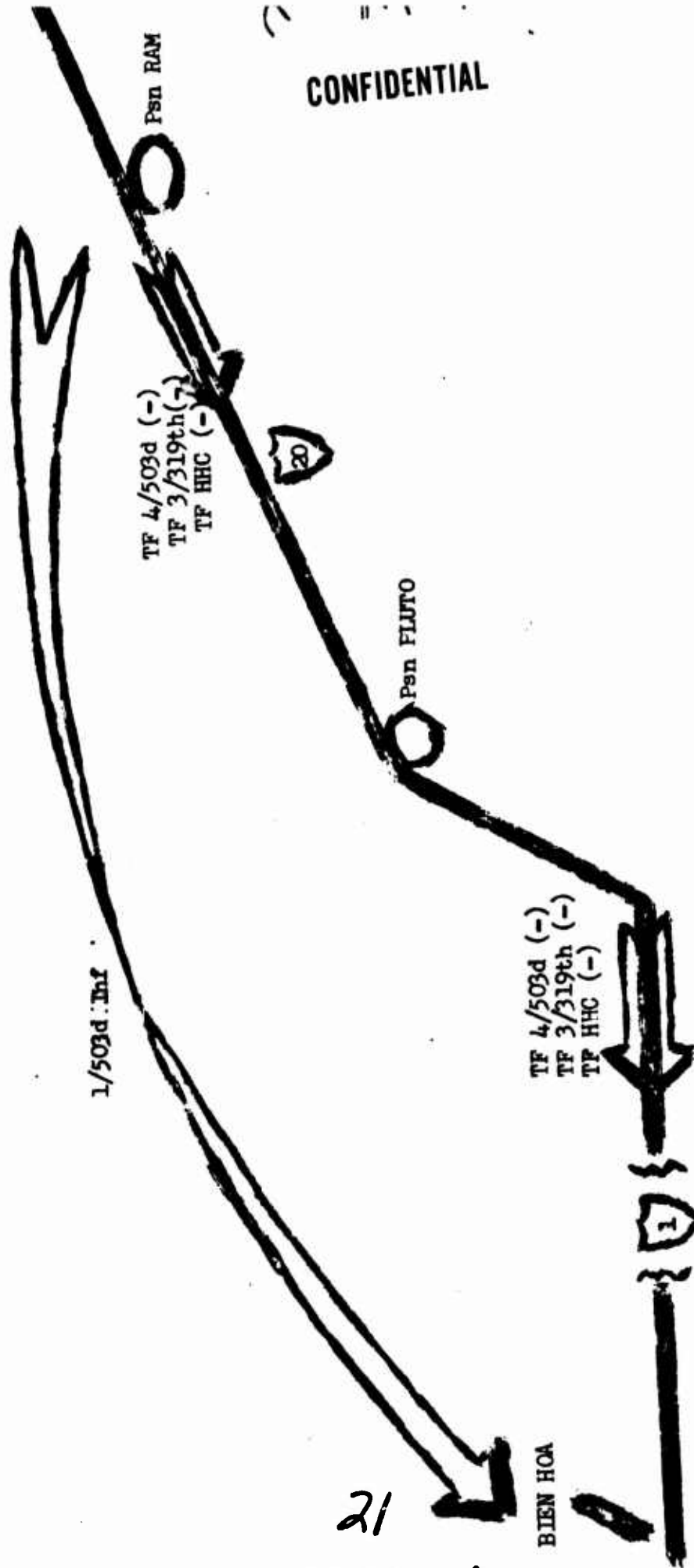
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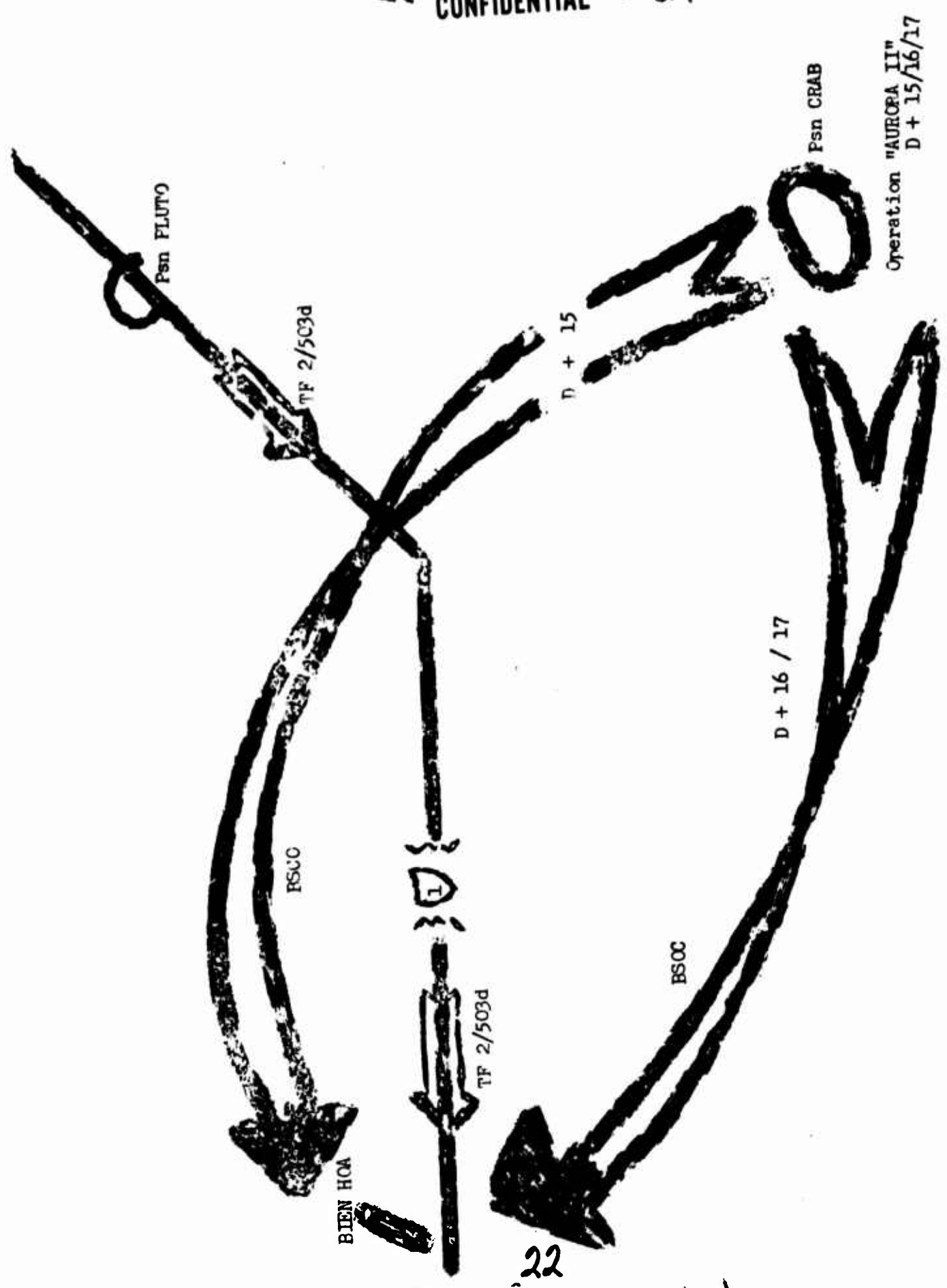
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