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AUTHORITY

AGO ltr 29 Apr 1980; AGO ltr 29 Apr 1980

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310



IN REPLY REFER TO  
AGAM-P (M) (12 Jun 67) FOR OT

16 June 1967

AD388136

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - Operation WACO conducted by  
Headquarters 173D Airborne Brigade (Separate) 25 Nov - 21 Dec 1966

TO: SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Forwarded as inclosure is a Combat After Action Report for Operation WACO. Operation WACO was conducted by the Headquarters 173D Airborne Brigade (Separate) during the period 25 Nov - 21 Dec 1966. Information contained in this report is provided to insure appropriate benefits in the future from lessons learned during current operations, and may be adapted for use in developing training material.

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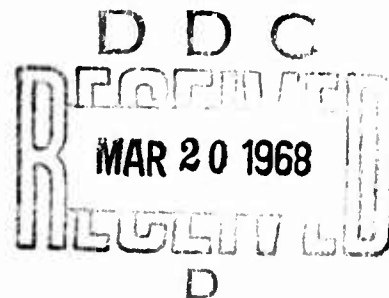
*Kenneth G. Wickham*

KENNETH G. WICKHAM  
Major General, USA  
The Adjutant General

Incl  
as

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

AVBE-SC

2 January 1967

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report (Operation WACO)

THRU: Commanding General  
II FFORCEV.  
ATTN: G-3 D&T  
APO 96227

*RBm  
24 May 67*

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

The following report is submitted in accordance with MACV Directive number 335-8. (RCS Exempt)

FOR THE COMMANDER:

1 Incl  
as

*E. B. ROBERSON*

E. B. ROBERSON  
CPT, AGC  
Asst AG

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

## COMBAT OPERATIONS AFTER ACTION REPORT OPERATION WACO

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1. General: The area east of and adjacent to the 173d Airborne Brigade's (Separate) tactical area of responsibility (TAOR), is characterized by gently, uniformly sloped hills, the highest of which has an elevation of 82 meters. The area was believed to contain the Viet Cong OI Headquarters, the OI Security Force Company and an undetermined number of unidentified company and/or battalion size elements in the area of operation. The Brigade Commander selected the 1/503d Inf to conduct search and destroy operations in the area. The operation was code named Operation WACO. The 1/503d Inf in coordination with the 33d Ranger Battalion with supporting artillery and other supporting elements were organically employed in the area of operation (AO).

2. Name of Operation: Operation WACO

3. Type of Operation: Search and Destroy

4. References: Maps: Vietnam; 1:50,000, Series L 7014, Sheets 6330 I, 6331 II, 6430 IV, 6431 III

5. Inclusive Dates of Operation: 250700H November 1966 to 021500H December 1966 / OPORD 20-66

6. Location: Northern portion of Bien Hoa Province: east of and adjacent to the Brigade TAOR.

7. Command Headquarters: 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry

8. Reporting Officer: LTC Robert W. Brownlee

9. Task Organization: There were no changes in the task organization during the operation.

### A/1/503d Inf

4.2" Mortar FO Party  
Arty FO Party  
Engr Demo Team  
Interpreter, RVN

### B/1/503d Inf

4.2" Mortar FO Party  
Arty FO Party  
Engr Demo Team  
Interpreter, RVN

### C/1/503d Inf

4.2" Mortar FO Party  
Arty FO Party  
Engr Demo Team  
Two Scout Dog Teams  
Interpreter, RVN

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TF Control

3/319th Arty  
Recon Platoon  
Mortar Platoon  
Comp Platoon  
ALO Party  
One MP Squad

TF SUTTON - MAJ SUTTON, Commanding

E/17th Cav  
D/16th Armor

10. Supporting Forces:

a. C/3/319th Arty:

(1) Size of Force: One (1) six (6) gun 105mm M102 Howitzer Battery.

(2) How and When Employed:

66.

(a) On call missions to ground and air observers 25 Nov - 2 Dec

(b) Harassing and Interdiction (H&I) fires.

(c) Preparation of Landing Zones:

1. LZ WHITE 10 minutes 250857H November 1966.

2. LZ BLACK 10 minutes 250939H November 1966.

(d) Total missions fired and the number of rounds expended during

the operation:

1. Type of Mission:

a. H & I . . . . . 168

b. Observed . . . . . 61

c. Unobserved . . . . . 7

d. Total Missions . . 236

2. Type Ammunition Expended:

a. WP . . . . . 79

b. SMK (Red) . . . . . 3

c. HE . . . . . 1,524

d. Total Expended . 1,606

(3) Results and Effectiveness: Preparation fires on LZ WHITE and BLACK were effective and timely. Because of light resistance during the Operation, very few on call missions were fired. The missions fired on VC base camps and links were not observed, therefore effectiveness is unknown

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b. United States Air Force:

(1) Size of Force:

- (a) 3d TFW (Tactical Fighter Wing) (7th Air Force)
- (b) 19th Tactical Air Support Squadron of the 504th Tactical

Control Group

(2) How and When Employed:

(a) TAC Sorties:

3d TFW . . . . . 3

(b) FAC Sorties:

19th TASS . . . . . 3

(c) VNAF Sorties . . . . . 4

(d) Tons of Ordnance . . . . . 9.3

(e) Visual Reconnaissance . . . . . 20

(f) Escort . . . . . 2

(3) Results/Effectiveness/Timliness: All sorties provided were effectively used for the requested mission. All sorties provided arrived within a useable time period.

The one request for immediate air was handled by the S3 channels due to the nature and clearance requirements of the target. No other use was made of the Direct Air Request Net.

(4) FAC (Forward Air Control) Pilots:

- (a) LTC Thomas E. Spencer
- (b) MAJ John J. Keller
- (c) CPT James T. Callaghan
- (d) CPT Eric E. Miller
- (e) CPT Robert S. Maxwell

- c. 33d Ranger Battalion (ARVN)
- d. 335th Air Mobile Company Light (AMCL)
- e. 11th Combat Aviation Battalion
- f. D/16th Armor, 4.2" Mortar Platoon
- g. 6/27th Arty (Reinforcement)

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h. Units firing in direct support of the 1/503d Inf were: C/3/319th Arty, 1/503d Inf Mortar Platoon, D/16th Armor 4.2" Mortar Platoon and 335th helicopter gun ships.

i. Units firing in general support of the 1/503d Inf were: 6/27th Arty (BEAR CAT) and TAC air support provided by the 7th USAF.

j. Indirect fire support for the operation consisted of a well coordinated employment of artillery and mortars. Supporting weapons ranged from the 8" howitzer to the 60mm mortar.

k. TAC air support was on call throughout the operation.

### 11. Intelligence:

a. Enemy Situation Before Operation: Prior to the commencement of Operation WACO in an area which lies immediately east of, and adjacent to, the 173d Abn Bde's (Sep) TAOR, the UI Security Force Company, and an undetermined number of unidentified company and battalion size elements were believed to be located in the AO. In an attempt to confirm or refute the belief that the enemy was using the major infiltration/supply route running generally from War Zone "D" north of the DONG NAI River SE to the MAO TAO Secret Area, several six man long range reconnaissance patrols were introduced into the AO, both by helicopter and as stay-behind elements of ground maneuver units. Sporadic contact between these elements and from one to five VC indicated that the area was being used by the enemy. The D800 Main Force Battalion (the security force for Military Region 1) and the 303d Local Force Battalion (believed to be providing outer perimeter security for the western and SW approaches to War Zone "D") were believed to be located northwest of the AO, north of the DONG NAI River. There were no known Main Force units located in the AO. The enemy were believed to have been capable of reinforcing with units which infiltrated from time to time through the area. The enemy was attributed with the capability of:

(1) Attacking with up to two LF Bn's and an undetermined number of unidentified company size units and of reinforcing with local units, using them for their intimate knowledge of the terrain to gain tactical surprise.

(2) Withdrawing and avoiding contact with friendly forces at any time of his crossing.

(3) Conducting sniping, mining and ambush operations against friendly forces. In general, the enemy was expected to initiate harassing small unit actions and to probe and attack any isolated US or ARVN unit whenever he had use of favorable terrain, numerical superiority, and whenever he felt that he could, employing the principle of surprise, achieve defeat in detail. Harassing mortar fire and sniper fire were expected at any time.

b. Enemy Situation During Operation: During Operation WACO, elements of the Brigade failed to make contact with enemy forces larger than squad size. Several company and platoon size base camps were found, none of which indicated that large size enemy units had, in fact, been using the area recently. Along the eastern edge of the AO are located numerous garden plots currently being cultivated by friendly Vietnamese. Because of the close proximity of the friendly residences to the major north/south trail system running south from the DONG NAI River in the eastern sector of the AO, it proved to be difficult to locate and differentiate enemy personnel who may, from time to time, use the route. One captured 17 year old VC male related that he was a member of a squad size reconnaissance/intelligence unit charged with the responsibility of performing surveillance of the area north of the DONG NAI River in the general vicinity of YT 0820. Throughout the operation, nothing was detected which would indicate that the Viet Cong was using the area as a

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major resupply/infiltration route. It is believed, however, that when US and ARVN tactical units are not present in referenced area that the enemy will continue to use the major trails to infiltrate troops and to transport food through the area from time to time. Utilising visual recon missions flown by armed helicopters (light fire teams) and helicopter-dropped illumination flares at night, this unit will continue to attempt to harass the enemy and to deny him free access across the DONG NAI River in the vicinity of the AO.

c. Viet Cong Order of Battle, Capabilities and Expected Courses of Action Prior to the Operation:

(1) Order of Battle:

- (a) 800 Bn - Strength 400 - Location on 22 October YT 96280.
- (b) D303 Bn - Strength 350 - Location on 21 October YT 010250.
- (c) UI Hqs - Strength 35 - Location YT 2125.
- (d) Security Company - Strength 100 - Location YT 2224.

(2) Viet Cong Capabilities:

- (a) Attack with up to two LF Battalions.
- (b) Defend UI Headquarters.
- (c) Withdraw and avoid contacts.
- (d) Conduct harassing, mining and ambush operations.

(3) Expected Course of Action Prior to Operation:

- (a) The VC will probable conduct harassing type operations and small ambushes.
- (b) Harassing mortar, automatic and sniper fire can be expected at anytime.

d. Area of Operations:

(1) Weather and Climate: The NE monsoon influenced the local weather during Operation WACO. The cooling effect of the monsoon resulted in a mean temperature of approximately 82 degrees. Precipitation during the operation was moderate and was normal for the season. Morning fog was particularly bad, often limiting heliborne operations until after 0730 hours. The weather did not appear to aid the enemy in any specific manner.

(2) Terrain: The AO lies in the northern portion of BIEN HOA Province, where the terrain is characterized by gently, uniformly sloped hills, the highest of which has an elevation of 82 meters (YT 157232). Dense forest with heavy underbrush, much deadfall, and bamboo thickets dominate the vegetative pattern throughout the area. The DONG NAI River, which borders the AO on the north, is the primary drainage feature in the AO; flows east to west; and, except in these areas in the NW section of the AO where rapids afford foot passage, serves as a major obstacle to troop movement north and south.

12. Mission: TF Brownlee conducts helicopter assaults on multiple LZ's and subsequent search and destroy operations in AO bounded by the DONG NAI River, Route 20 and Route 1 commencing 25 November 1966.

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13. Concept of Operation: To best accomplish this mission, it was performed in five Phases:

- a. Phase I: Motor movement of TF (-) from Battalion base to Psn DALLAS commencing 250700H November 1966.
- b. Phase II: Helicopter assault Co's B and C, one reinforced platoon and the recon platoon on LZ's RED, WHITE, BLACK and BLUE respectively commencing 250840H November 1966.
- c. Phase III: Search and Destroy operations in AO 1 by reinforced rifle squad elements.
- d. Phase IV: Air movement of TF (-) from Psn DALLAS to Psn HOUSTON and Psn SWEETWATER o/a D + 3, road movement of TF SUTTON to Psn AUSTON and CORPUS CHRISTI.
- e. Phase V: Search and destroy operations in AO's 2 and 3.

### 14. Execution:

D - 1 (24 November 1966)

Operational Summary: E/17th Cav and C/3/319th Arty moved by road convoy to Psn DALLAS (YT 108211) to establish a fire support base (FSB) in preparation for the 1/503d Inf's initiation of Operation WACO.

D - Day (25 November 1966)

Operational Summary: The 1/503d Inf initiated Operation WACO at 0710 hours. The Bn HQ, mortar platoon and Co A moved by road to Psn DALLAS closing at 0815 hours. At 0930 hours, Co's B and C and the recon platoon conducted heliborne assaults into AO 1. Co B assaulted LZ BLUE (YT 163183), Co C assaulted LZ's WHITE (YT 185235) and LZ BLUE (YT 163183) while the recon platoon assaulted LZ BLACK (YT 135225). There was no contact during the assaults.

TF SUTTON (consisting of E/17th Cav and D/16th Armor (-) were positioned at the FSB at Psn DALLAS. The days activities were without significant contact.

D + 1 (26 November 1966)

Operational Summary: TF 1/503d Inf continued search and destroy operations in the AO. At 0400 hours, one ambush site from E/17th Cav observed a sampan at YT 101204 and sank it with M-16 and M-79 fire. A secondary explosion was seen and heard at the time. Additionally, three persons were observed with the craft and the patrol identified one VC as KIA and the other two possible KIA. A further search of the area was made at daylight with negative results. At 0945 hours, a patrol from Co A detained a VC at YT 119204, he was evacuated to the Brigade. At 1720 hours, the recon platoon engaged five VC at YT 202215. Fire was exchanged resulting in no casualties on either side. The VC withdrew to the NNW after firing ten shots.

D + 2 (27 November 1966)

Operational Summary: Operation WACO continued with all units all units continuing search and destroy operations in their assigned areas. At 1330 hours, Co B located a trail at YT 168204 with fresh footprints, while searching for a sampan docking area reported previously by elements from the LRRP. At 1450 hours, a patrol from the recon platoon located a small base camp containing 5 huts, dug into the ground approximately two feet at YT 201203. The camp was destroyed. At

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1500 hours, the recon platoon received three rounds of small arms fire at YT 202207, fire was returned; there were no casualties.

At 1245 hours, E/17th Cav moved from Pan DALLAS to BIEN HOA base camp to assume operational control (OPCON) of D/16th Armor. The troop and D/16th Armor immediately departed BIEN HOA, traveling east along Hwy 1 and north along Hwy 20 to Pan AUSTON without incident or contact, closing at 1515 hours.

D + 3 (28 November 1966)

Operational Summary: Frag Order 1 to OPORD 20-66 became effective this date. E/17th Cav established a mortar firing position at Pan CORPUS CHRISTI to support an air assault on LZ HOUSTON. Co A conducted a helicopter assault on LZ HOUSTON and subsequent search and destroy operations in assigned AO. Co's B and C moved from present locations to AO 2 and continued search and destroy operations. TF 1/503d Inf (-) conducted air movement from Pan DALLAS to Pan SWEETWATER (YT 289186) in conjunction with C/3/319th Arty. The 33d Ranger Bn attached to TF 1/503d Inf and secured Pan SWEETWATER for introduction of the TF 1/503d Inf (-). At YT 199217, the recon platoon sighted two VC, one carrying an automatic weapon. The VC were moving east and no fire was exchanged. The recon platoon also observed an unknown number of VC at 0930 hours and firing was exchanged with unknown results. A unit of E/17th Cav captured a VC suspect at YT 383270. An element from the 33d Ranger Bn captured a VC suspect at YT 281192.

D + 4 (29 November 1966)

Operational Summary: At 0500 hours, an ambush element from Co A engaged four VC at YT 276254. Two VC were killed and the others fled south, one US casualty resulted. Search and destroy operations during the hours of daylight produced the following. At 0910 hours, Co A located a VC base camp at YT 273254. The camp was capable of accommodating 300 persons, 400 pounds of rice were found and destroyed. An element from E/17th Cav located and destroyed one dock and sampan at YT 321300. Co C located and destroyed a squad size base camp containing two huts, a stove and pots and pans. At YT 326312, an element from E/17th Cav fired on two VC, no casualties resulted. Co B discovered a VC base camp at YT 213178 consisting of six buildings which were destroyed along with a boat dock located one month ago by the LRRP. An element from E/17th Cav was hit by a command detonated claymore mine at YT 366272 resulting in two US casualties. At YT 271247, Co A located a hut containing seven 50 pound sacks of rice, all of which were destroyed. An element from E/17th Cav fired on two sampans at YT 269272 and YT 243275, the craft were not destroyed.

D + 5 (30 November 1966)

Operational Summary: At 0820 hours, an element from E/17th Cav located a company size base camp at YT 373284 which contained six black uniforms, 1 US fatigue trousers, 1 plastic gas mask, thirty one (31) ponchos, twenty five (25) pounds of rice, six bowls of cooked rice, assorted small arms ammunition and grenades. All items were evacuated. At 1150 hours, Co A sighted and fired upon three VC at YT 305220. One VC was wounded, a blood trail leading north was followed for 700 meters and revealed two pistol belts, two ponchos and some sandals. The search was discontinued. At YT 274257 the unit also found six cows and two huts. Additionally, at YT 305232, Co A located a hut containing 18 slabs of meat, empty rice bags, corn cobs and one foot locker containing rags. All items except the cows were destroyed. At 1045 hours, an element from E/17th Cav killed one VC at YT 364279, a M-1 was confiscated. A command detonated mine was activated by the VC at the same location but no casualties resulted. At 1730 hours, Co B killed one VC at YT 273162. The VC was wearing a black raincoat and carrying a US carbine. Co B also sighted 2 VC at YT 278162, the VC fled when fired upon resulting in no casualties.

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D + 6 (1 December 1966)

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Operational Summary: At 0933 hours, Co B sighted and fired upon an unknown number of VC at YT 266148, results were not determined. At 0855 hours, an element from E/17th Cav detained five suspects at YT 342256, two of whom were ARVN deserters and the other were VC suspects. The VC were evacuated to the Brigade. At 1410 hours, Co A sighted and fired upon three VC at YT 296226, fire was not returned and the VC fled. Also at 1445 hours, the unit fired upon 3 - 6 VC in the same general area with negative results. At 1720 hours and at 1740 hours, the recon platoon and Co B respectively, terminated their search and destroy operations and closed the Bn CP.

D + 7 (2 December 1966)

Operational Summary: At 0902 hours, the 33d Ranger Bn began moving by helicopter from Pan SWEETWATER to BIEN HOA marking the start of the termination of Operation WACO. 133 sorties of UH-1D and 19 sorties of CH-47 helicopters were required to relocate the TF. At 1310 hours the last aircraft touched down at the BSOC helipad. TF SUTTON closed at 1455 hours.

15. Results of Operation WACO:

a. US Losses:

Personnel

KIA . . . . .	0
WIA . . . . .	3
MIA . . . . .	0
Non Battle Dead . . . . .	0
Non Battle Injured . . . . .	2

b. VC Losses:

Personnel

KIA (BC) . . . . .	5
KIA (Poss) . . . . .	3
VCC . . . . .	2
Ralliers . . . . .	0
Refugees . . . . .	0

Weapons

Individual . . . . .	4
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Ammunition

Small Arms Rounds . . . . .	500
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Explosives

M-26 Grenades . . . . .	4
Blasting Cap . . . . .	1
Rifle Grenades . . . . .	3
VC Grenades . . . . .	10

Clothing

Black and Brown Uniforms . . . . .	20
Ponchos . . . . .	20
Hammocks . . . . .	20
Footlocker of Rags . . . . .	1
Pistol Belts . . . . .	5
Canteens . . . . .	20

Food

Rice (pounds) . . . . .	1,075
Wine (bottles) . . . . .	6
Chickens . . . . .	16
Cows . . . . .	6
Salt (pounds) . . . . .	465
Dried Meat (pounds) . . . . .	35

Medical: Approximately 15 serum bottles and other miscellaneous medical supplies.

Installations (destroyed or damaged)

Huts . . . . .	12
Company/Squad Size Base Camps . . . . .	4
Docks . . . . .	2
Bunkers . . . . .	4
Way Station (7 shelters) . . . . .	1

Miscellaneous

Sampan . . . . .	5
Documents . . . . .	75

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16. Civic Action/Psychological Operations:

a. Civic Action: During Operation WACO, the Bn S5 distributed rice, soap, clothing, cooking oil, cigarettes, soft drink mix and soup base to the farmers in the vic of Psn SWEETWATER. In conjunction with this distribution, many leaflets and posters were also given out. In addition, the 173d Spt Bn and HHC, 173d Abn Bde (Sep) MEDCAP teams and the Brigade and Battalion S5 Civic Action Teams, conducted a joint county fair type party for the people of BAO HAM Hamlets 1 and 2 of DAU GIAY Village, LUONG QUAN District, LONG KHANH Province vic YT 295139. Soft drinks were mixed and served, foodstuffs and clothing were distributed, the children were given mechanical mule rides and three MEDCAP stations were operative. Five cows which were captured by Co A in the vicinity of Psn HOUSTON were helilifted by UH-1D to the county fair and donated to the people of the two hamlets. A good time was had by all.

b. Psychological Operations: Operations consisted only of distribution of leaflets and posters at Position SWEETWATER and at the county fair.

17. Combat Services, Logistic and Administrative:

LOGISTIC:

a. General: The Battalion LOC (trains) operated from BIEN HOA.

b. Supply: The LOC drew supplies from BSO and sent them to the forward areas by helicopter or truck.

c. Transportation:

(1) Vehicular: Seven (7) 2½ ton trucks were used to transport one company (+) to the operations area. None were used coming back.

(2) Helicopter Resupply: 27 helicopter corties were flown.

d. Services:

Water: 340 5-gallon cans and 3 400-gallon trailers of water were re-supplied to the forward area.

e. Communications: All communications equipment needing maintenance was sent to BIEN HOA for repair.

f. Friendly Losses:

(1) Weapons Lost: NONE

(2) Equipment Lost: A/1/503d Inf lost one anti-entrusion device FSN 6350-759-9845

ADMINISTRATIVE:

a. Strength:

(1) Officers - 31

(2) EM - 546

(3) TOTAL - 577

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**CONFIDENTIAL****b. Personnel Services:****(1) Religious:**

- (a) 26 November 1966: 1 Catholic service
- (b) 27 November 1966: 2 Catholic services and 1 Protestant service
- (c) 29 November 1966: 1 Catholic service

**(2) Awards and Decorations:**

- (a) SP4 Sellers: Army Commendation Medal with "V"
- (b) PFC Henry: Bronze Star with "V"
- (c) PVT Eggie: Army Commendation Medal with "V"
- (d) SP4 Juan: Army Commendation Medal with "V"

**18. Special Equipment and Techniques:**

a. Scout Dog Teams: On Operation WACO, the scout dogs were effective for periods of up to 6 hours of patrolling in clear or sparsely vegetated areas. Following 6 hours of patrolling, the scout dogs were found to be ineffective for patrolling as well as for sentinal security. When operating in swamps and densely vegetated jungle terrain, the time of useful effectiveness ranged from 3 to 5 hours.

b. M-16 Rifles: Problems with the M-16 rifle reoccured on Operation WACO. The primary problem experienced was the frequency that the M-16 would jam. This is attributed to the chamber not being properly cleaned. The chambers cannot be properly cleaned without chamber brushes. At the present time, chamber brushes were not available in sufficient quantities.

c. Communications: The Bn experienced considerable difficulties in maintaining adequate communications. The dense, wet and high jungle canopy coupled with high content of iron ore contained in the soil, were contributing factors. The utilization of an airborne relay proved its usefulness on Operation WACO.

d. CH-47 Helicopters: During Operation WACO, heavy equipment was helilifted on two occasions. Both helilifts were coordinated with the 11th Aviation Bn. The three CH-47's requested for the first helilift were late. This in turn delayed the deployment of the Task Force. Also, the loads for the first and second lifts were approved by the 11th Aviation Bn, but the pilots refused to transport several of the loads. This caused additional delay and required additional lifts.

**19. Commander's Analysis and Lessons Learned:**

a. Commander's Analysis: Although no major contact was made with enemy forces, it is believed that the Viet Cong are using trails throughout the AO to infiltrate small numbers of personnel and to transport food north and south between the MAO TAO Secret Zone and War Zone "D" immediately north of BIEN HOA. It is recommended that long range reconnaissance patrols and/or platoon-size combat patrols be introduced throughout the AO from time to time to harass the VC and to preclude the enemy's massing troops in the area as a base from which to attack BIEN HOA Air Base or to execute large scale ambushes on Hwy 1 south of the AO.

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The mission of the Bn was to conduct search and destroy operations in the assigned AO. With the exception of LRRP's from the Brigade, this area is rarely subject to friendly operations, the last being in June of 1966 by an ARVN Task Force which spent little time in the area. Much of the area is out of the Brigade's TAOR and consequently is never searched, and is out of the range of artillery positioned in the Brigade base camp. This mission should probably be conducted more often in conjunction with the UNIONTOWN mission.

There are no major VC units in the WACO operational area, although the trails and rivers in AO 2 are well traveled routes used by the VC in movement between War Zone "D" and Hwy 1. The size of the way stations indicated that they could shelter battalion sized units moving through the area.

Trails in the central and eastern part of AO 1 were apparently not used, and the area was swampy and overgrown with bamboo thickets, reducing movement to about 200 meters per hour. Chest-deep swamp was the major obstacle in the south eastern part of AO 2, causing many problems with equipment and hygiene.

This operation included the employment and coordination of road convoys, air assault and air lifts for the artillery; fire support coordination of non-organic, organic and ARVN indirect fires; control of ARVN forces; and planning for employment of aero-scout elements, the Cav troop and Armor company.

The greatest single benefit in Operation WACO was the high value training received by the new members of the staff and the battalion command. This was an operation that enabled units and sections to smooth out SOP's develop sound and timely plans, and evaluate mistakes and correct them on the spot.

### b. Lessons Learned:

#### (1) Item: Utilisation of LRRP personnel as guides

Discussion: On Operation WACO, TF Brownlee was charged with the mission of locating and destroying a VC sampan dock and base camp which had been reported by an LRRP at an earlier date. The element from TF Brownlee, operating in this vic was unable to locate the dock and base camp. Their knowledge as to the location was furnished from a LRRP debriefing. TF Brownlee requested that a member of the LRRP's who discovered the dock and base camp be made available to the operating unit as a guide. This request was honored and the guide was attached. He was unable to locate the dock and was unsure of its exact location. At this time we conducted an air reconnaissance with this guide and he spotted the introduction and extraction landing zones used by the LRRP. The base camp and dock were located and destroyed shortly thereafter.

Recommendations: LRRP guides should be made available to operating units when their mission involves intelligence information provided by the LRRP. This guide should conduct an air reconnaissance of the specific area during the initial stage of the operation. The pilots supporting the LRRP should be debriefed.

#### (2) Item: Utilisation of Air Radio Relay

Discussion: Communication difficulties were encountered during Operation WACO. Two significant factors which were instrumental in causing the communication difficulties were the dense wet forest which was dominant in the AO and the distance between operating units.

Recommendations: An aircraft should be made available to Task Force or Battalion size units for use as radio relay.

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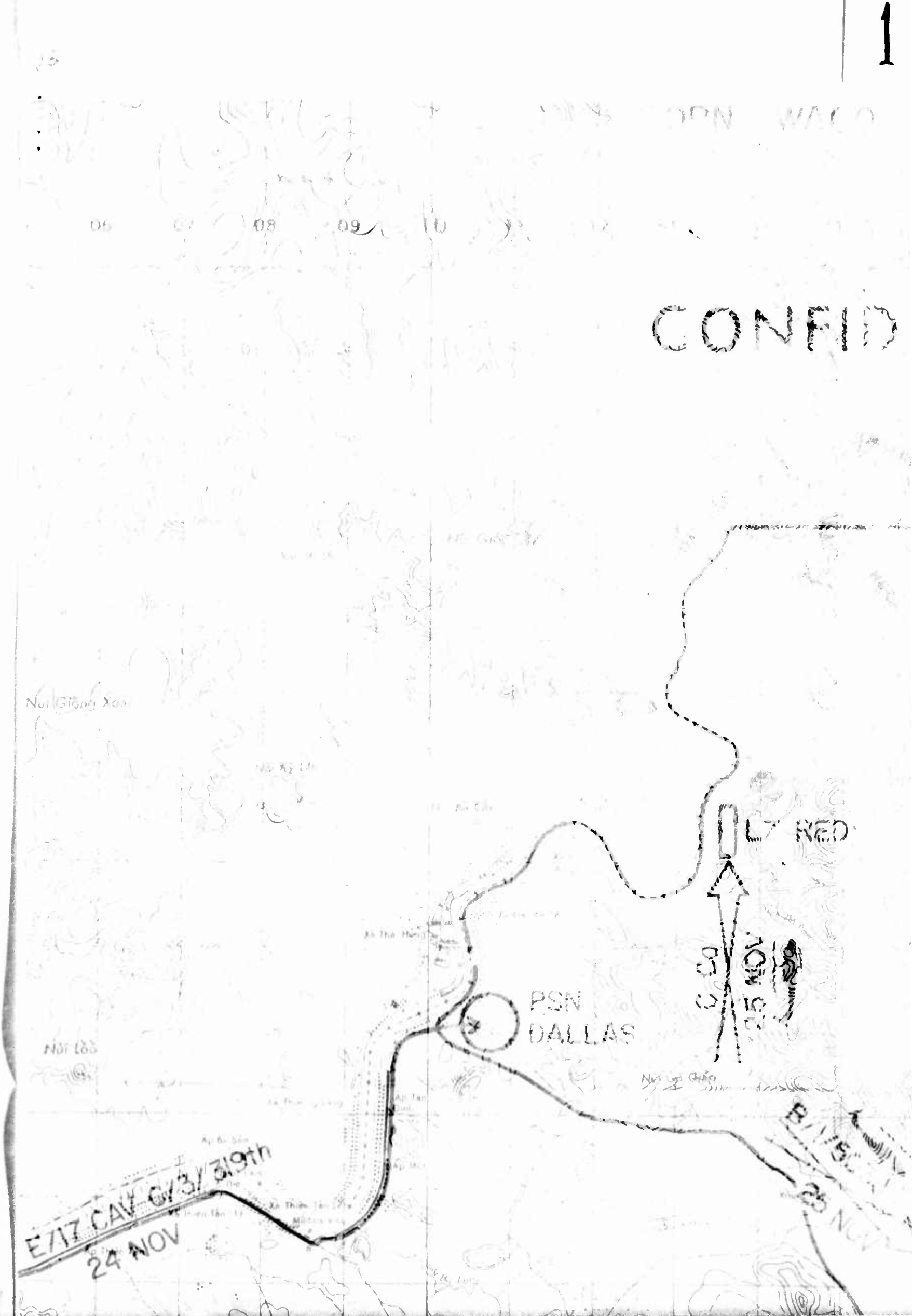
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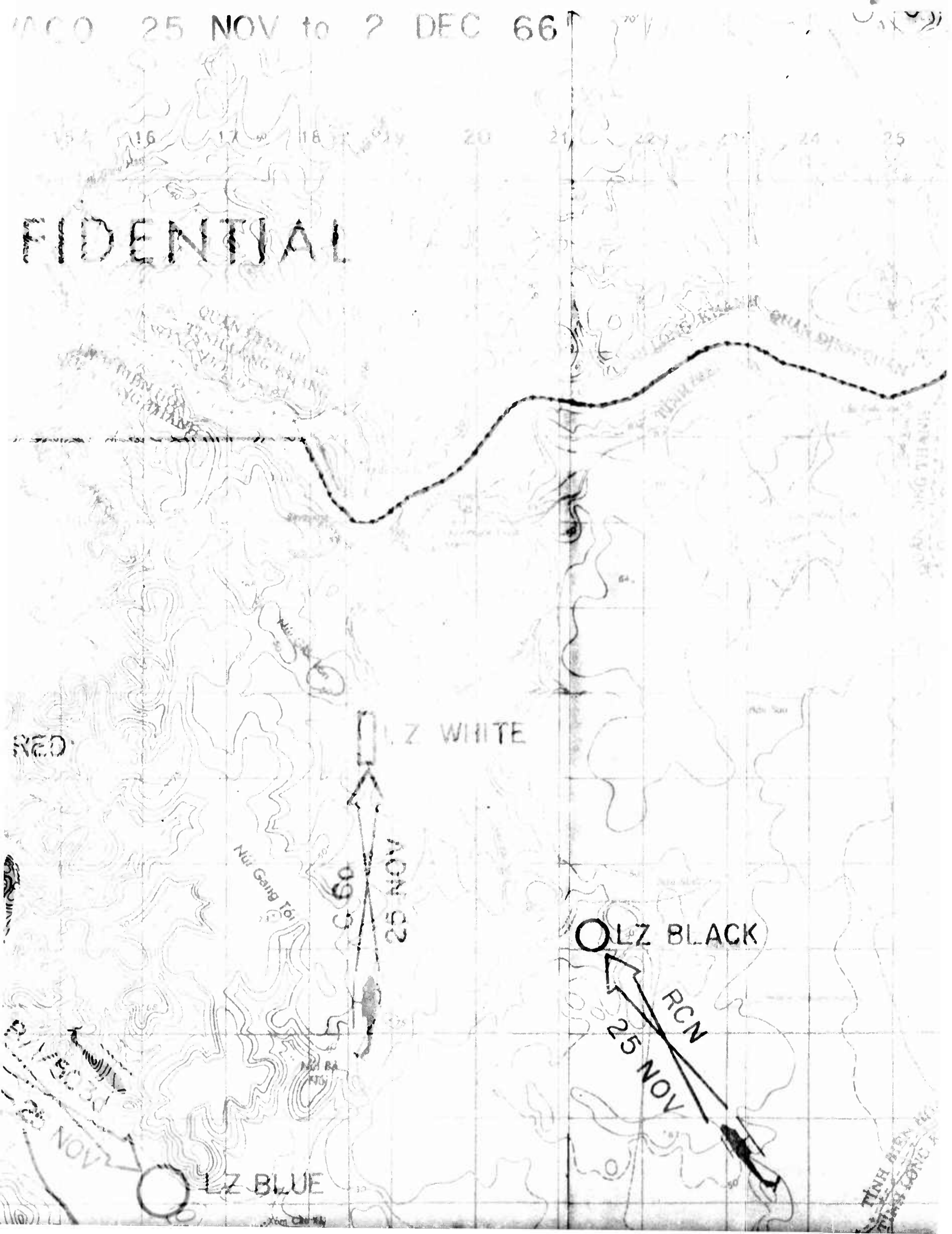
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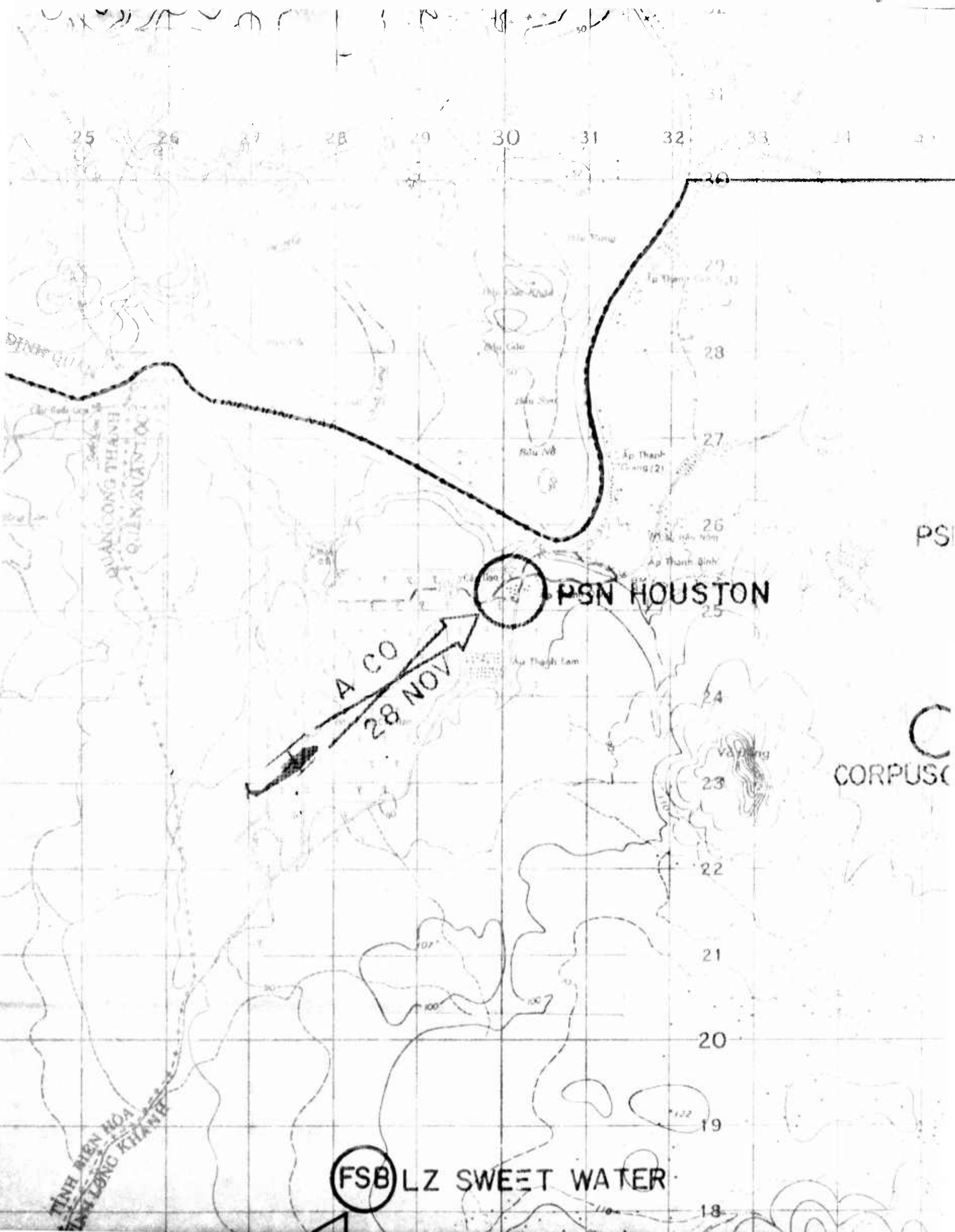
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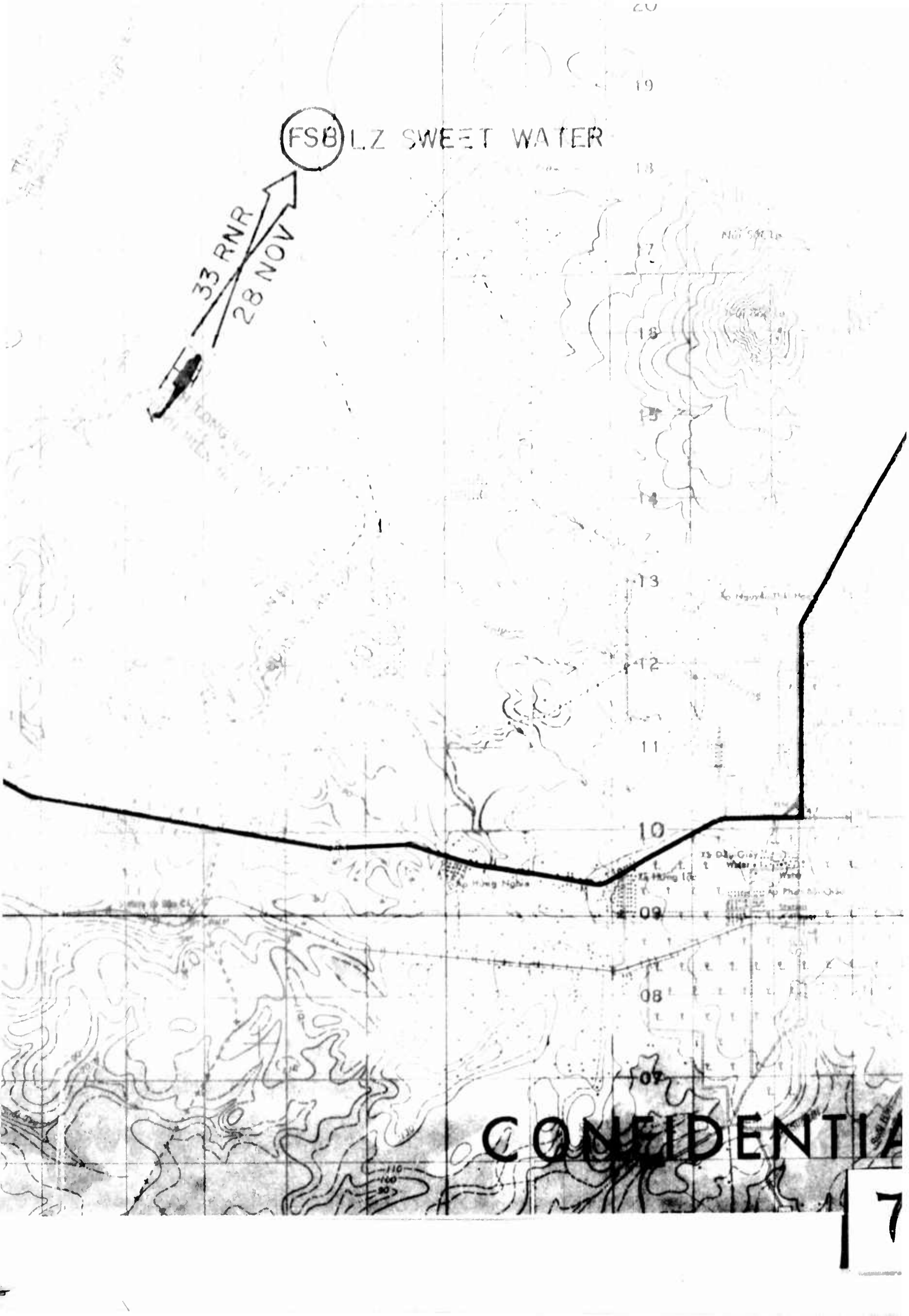
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