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**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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IN REPLY REFER TO

AGDA (M) (13 Aug 69) FOR OT UT 69X017

27 August 1969

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - B Troop, 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry,
Task Force South, Period July 1969 (U)

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2. 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
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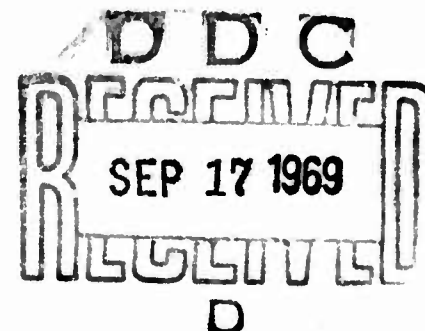
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19 July 1969

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report (U) B Troop 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry, /A Battery, 5th Battalion, 27th Artillery.

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1. (U) REFERENCES:

a. MACV Directive 335-8, Combat Operations After Action Reports (MACJ3-32-32 (R2), dated 31 January 1969.

b. Msg CG, USARV, AVHGC-DST, Subj: Quick Reaction Lessons Learned, 090832Z Jul 69.

2. (U) NAME AND TYPE OF OPERATION: Unnamed attack against B Troop, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry, Task Force South.

3. (U) DATE OF OPERATION: 070100 Jul 69.

4. (U) LOCATION: II CTZ, Binh Thuan Province BN 125385.

5. (U) COMMAND AND CONTROL HEADQUARTERS: 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry OPCON to Task Force South.

6. (U) U.S. UNIT COMMANDERS ENGAGED IN OPERATION:

- a. LTC John M. Fairey, CO, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry
- b. CPT James Barnes, CO, B Troop, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry
- c. CPT Charles A. Baker, Senior Advisor, MAT 93
- d. CPT Julio L. Enrique, CO, A Battery, 5th Battalion, 27th Artillery

7. (C) TASK ORGANIZATION:

- a. 2nd Sqdn, 1st Cav
Headquarters and Headquarters Troop
A Troop
B Troop
C Troop
D Troop (Air Cav)

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A Btry, 5th Bn, 27th Arty (-) (DS)
Plt, C Btry, 5th Bn, 27th Arty (DS)
D Co, 3d Bn, 503d (Abn) (OPCON)

- b. B Trp, 2nd Sqdn, 1st Cav
Troop Headquarters
1st Platoon
2nd Platoon
3rd Platoon
Normal combat support augmentation from HHT (6 EM).

8.(C) SUPPORTING FORCES: (In support of B Trp, 2nd Sqdn, 1st Cav)

a. 2nd Sqdn, 1st Cav (-): Provided no combat support other than normal command and control. Combat reinforcement was not possible due to distances involved and the short duration of the contact. Squadron Headquarters was located at Song Mao (BN 265455).

b. A Btry, 5th Bn, 27th Arty (-): Provided preplanned illumination of B Trp, 2nd Sqdn, 1st Cav perimeter, self illumination of its own perimeter and pre-planned HE targets in support of B Troop, 2/1st Cav. Battery response to initial request for fire support was in excess of 10 minutes. Total rounds fired 160 illumination, 222 rounds HE. The 10 minute delay could not be explained.

c. 17th SOS USAF: Provided "SHADOW" support. Requested by HQ, 2/1st Cav thru TF South at 0145 hrs, arrived on station at 0200 hrs and at 0240 hrs expended 6 flares and 6500 rounds 7.62mm. Results, one known enemy WIA, captured 7 Jul 69 by ground forces.

d. 254th Med Det -RA-: Provided DUST OFF medevac, was requested by HQ 2/1st Cav via DUST OFF Frequency at 0140 hrs. Evacuated 6 KIA, 21 WIA at 0215 and 0350 hrs 7 Jul 69.

9. (C) INTELLIGENCE:

a. The province of Binh Thuan is located in the southern portion of II CTZ bordering on III CTZ. The principle artery of transportation is National Route QL 1 which traverses the province from southwest to northeast. The local economy is basically agrarian.

b. As of 6 Jul 69 intelligence sources at HQ, I FFORCEV estimated the 186th Main Force Battalion to be operating in the vicinity of BN 0936 and the 840th Main Force Battalion to be operating in the vicinity of BN 3848. Both of these units were believed to have the mission of interdicting traffic on QL 1, both are equipped with 82mm & 60mm mortars and

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have organic sapper companies.

c. As of 6 July 1969, the S2 HQ, 2/1st Cav estimated that the 240th NVA battalion, consisting of only the battalion headquarters and 1 company were operating in the vicinity of BN 1550, and that one company of the battalion was operating in the vicinity of BN 1946. The battalion was reportedly equipped with 81 and 82mm mortars, AK47's and had no sapper capability. The squadron S2's sources of intelligence were the DIOC, the district chief and agents.

10. (C) MISSION: The 2/1st Cav was placed OPCON to TF South on 6 Jun 69 and was assigned the mission of opening and securing Hwy QL 1 from II/III CTZ border to Phan Rang daily. The mission of B Trp, 2/1st Cav was to open and secure Hwy QL 1 from BN 045392 to BN 211408. To escort designated convoys and participate in ARVN/US operations as directed.

11. (C) CONCEPT: Trp B 2/1st Cav operates with 3 organic platoons, sweeps Hwy QL 1 daily within its AO, and conducts limited operations within 1500-2000 meters of Hwy QL 1. During hours of darkness the troop headquarters and 1 platoon secure the perimeter of Luong Son MACV compound (BN 125385). The two remaining platoons provide perimeter defense for A Btry, 5/27th Arty (BN 121368) on Hill 100.

12. (C) EXECUTION:

a. On 6 Jul 69 B Trp 2/1st Cav, commanded by CPT James Barnes, completed its daily road clearing operations on Hwy QL 1 at approximately 1700 hrs and returned to its fire base location at Luong Son (BN 125385) Compound. At Luong Son the troop was split, the 2nd and 3rd platoons provided perimeter security for A Btry, 5/27th Arty (vic coord BN 121368) and the 1st Plt and Troop Headquarters entered the perimeter of the Luong Son Compound. Also sharing the perimeter of Luong Son Compound were the 700th RF Co (-) and the 232d RF Co Group Headquarters. (See sketch Incl 1). The perimeter of the compound had been divided so that US Forces secured the western half and RF secured the eastern half. During the evening of 6 Jul 69 the troop placed maximum emphasis on vehicle maintenance in order to have sufficient vehicles with which to participate in a US/ARVN operation (vic coord BN 1946) on 7 Jul 69. In the NW corner of the perimeter an M88 (Medium Recovery Vehicle) was being used to replace a final drive on an M48A3 tank and an M113 ACAV was being used to provide the necessary light for this maintenance operation.

b. The SOP within the troop for defense of the perimeter against any attack was for the vehicular mounted automatic weapons on the perimeter to open fire into the perimeter wire. All other personnel were to take immediate cover. In the event of a sapper attack, a red star cluster would

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be fired. The normal alert status within the troop was one man per track vehicle awake and positioned at the 50 cal. MG at all times during hours of darkness. Approximately 25% of the available RF were also to be on alert during darkness.

c. At 2330 hrs 6 Jul, CPT Barnes checked his unit's portion of the perimeter. It was raining lightly and the maintenance section was still working on the M48A3 final drive. The engine of the M88 recovery vehicle was not operating properly and as a result, the engine had to be run at maximum RPM in order to function. At 0030 hrs 7 Jul 69, B Trp rendered a negative sitrep to squadron headquarters.

d. At 0100 hrs the 1st Plt reported hearing movement in the perimeter barriers and requested illumination. The request was approved by the troop commander and the 1st Plt fired 81mm illumination with its organic mortar. No enemy were observed on the perimeter.

e. At 0130 hrs the U.S. Forces portion of the perimeter came under heavy mortar attack. During the initial mortar attack an unknown number of sappers entered the perimeter via the northern, western and eastern sides. By 0140 hrs it was confirmed that sappers had destroyed the 1st Plt Ldr's ACAV (B-10), and an M548 Ammo Carrier by use of B40 rockets and satchel charges. Due to the 1st Plt Ldr's vehicle being knocked out CPT Barnes was unable to make radio contact with the perimeter from the CP Bunker. He later contacted the 1st Plt on the Plt frequency. At 0140 hrs, SP5 Adams entered the CP and announced that ACAV B-10 had been destroyed and that at least two men were burning inside. At 0145 hrs the supply sergeant, SGT Knopp, entered the CP and stated that sappers were inside the perimeter. During the initial moments of the mortar attack the maintenance personnel that had been working on the M48A3 tank took cover under the M88 recovery vehicle. The lights on the ACAV were left on because the M548 Ammo Carrier next to it had been hit by a B40 rocket and the ammo in it was exploding profusely.

f. At 0145 hrs, B Trp reported to the Sqdn TOC that one ACAV (B-10) had been destroyed and requested DUST OFF assistance. At this time the Sqdn S-3 requested "SPOOKY" and DUST OFF assistance.

g. At the onset of the mortar attack the US MAT #93 was awakened in the Team House. The SA, CPT Baker, attempted to establish radio contact with MACV headquarters in Song Mao, but found that his radio antenna had been knocked out by the mortars. He then proceeded across the perimeter to the B Trp, 2/1st Cav CP and established communications with B Trp, 2/1st Cav radios. The Assistant Senior Advisor, 1LT McCarthy proceeded directly to the RF portion of the compound. LT McCarthy found all

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RF positions on the perimeter manned, the 81mm, 4.2" and 60mm mortar firing. The RF had tied in with US Forces at the north corner of the perimeter. The RF manpower was severely reduced as two platoons of the 700th RF Co were out on patrol, leaving approximately 70 RF in the compound. RF fire power on the perimeter was not intense as RF riflemen were hesitant to fire. Approximately 6 enemy breached the perimeter on the RF portion using wire cutters and bangalore charges. Neither enemy ground or mortar fire was being received in the RF portion of the perimeter.

h. Realizing that sappers were within the confines of the perimeter CPT Barnes directed his 3d Plt (1LT Ray) to move from the artillery battery perimeter (BN 121368) on Hill 100 and enter the perimeter through the main gate. The 3rd Plt moved immediately, entered the main gate and circled the perimeter, counter-clock-wise. With the 3rd Plt inside the perimeter CPT Barnes directed all automatic weapons to open fire and spray the entire US portion of the compound. He also cautioned his personnel against firing into the RF portion of the compound. This occurred at 0155 hrs, and at this time the enemy sappers withdrew from the perimeter and headed north, thus breaking contact.

i. At 0155 hrs the 2nd Plt (LT Pietsch) was directed to send one recon team consisting of 1 tank and 2 ACAV's to the Luong Son Airstrip (BN 125382) and secure the airstrip for DUST OFF operations. The remainder of the 2nd Plt remained on Hill 100 (BN 121368). During the initial moments of the mortar attack the 2nd & 3rd Plts began firing 81mm illumination, and 90mm HE in the direction of the enemy mortar fire. CPT Barnes had earlier directed LT Pietsch (2nd Plt) to coordinate DUST OFF Aircraft upon their arrival, artillery fires, gunships and SHADOW from his position on Hill 100. At approximately 0140 hrs, LT Pietsch requested the artillery to fire preplanned illumination. The 105mm illumination was fired 10 minutes later. A Btry, 5/27th Arty continued to fire illumination of the compound perimeter, self illumination and defensive targets. The slow reaction was not explained.

j. At 0200 hrs SHADOW and U.S. Army gunships reported on station. The gunships were fired upon from the NE portion of the perimeter, they expended all ordnance at that location and departed for home station to reload and remain on call. SHADOW fired at 0240 hrs at NVA forces heading North from the compound and remained on station until 0530 hrs. Two DUST OFF missions were accomplished, one at 0215 hrs and one at 0350 hrs. DUST OFF evacuated 6 KIA and 21 WIA.

k. At 0700 hrs the 3rd Plt was directed to sweep the perimeter and the enemy's route of withdrawal across the river to the North of the compound. During this sweep one wounded NVA soldier was captured and three NVA KIA were discovered. In addition to the large amount of enemy

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equipment that was also discovered there were many bloodstains and drag-marks indicating that dead or wounded NVA had been dragged away. On 7 Jul 69 agents reported NVA troops moving to the north of Luong Son carrying 23 bodies.

13. (C) RESULTS:

a. Friendly Losses

- 6 US KIA (5 killed in ACAV explosions, one killed in bunker)
- 21 US WIA
- 1 RF WIA
- 1 M113A1 ACAV destroyed by B40 rocket and satchel charge.
- 2 M113A1 ACAV damaged by satchel charges.
- 1 M125A1 mortar carrier destroyed by satchel charge
- 1 M548 ammo carrier destroyed by satchel charge
- 1 M48A3 tank damaged by shrapnel

b. Enemy Losses:

- 3 KIA (BC)
- 1 CIA
- 1 AK47 Rifle
- 4 B40 launchers
- 16 B40 Rds
- 50 AK47 magazines
- 15 satchel charges
- 20 chicom grenades
- 1 PRC 10 radio
- 1 cal. 45 pistol

c. Areas where airstrikes were conducted by SHADOW and gunships were searched on 7 Jul 69. One wounded NVA captured in the area indicated that he was wounded by SHADOW. The majority of enemy items of equipment listed above were found in the immediate vicinity of the perimeter. The 3 enemy KIA indicated above were found in the perimeter wire.

14. (C) ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: During discussions with the CO, 2/1st Cav, and other members of the unit the interviewing officer determined several basic factors that were instrumental in allowing this sapper attack conducted by NVA forces to be effective.

a. B Troop 2/1st Cav moved into the Luong Son Compound on 6 Jun 69. The compound was originally constructed under the supervision of U.S. Special forces for CIDG use prior to 1967. The compound perimeter barrier consisted of concertina wire, barbed cattle wire, tangle foot, anti-personnel mines and numerous booby-traps; all were installed during the original construction of the compound. The dirt berm was specifically designed to accomodate a large number of CIDG troops but no firing positions

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for armored vehicles were incorporated. Prior to the attack on 7 July the troop commander had made no improvements to the defensive barriers or the berm. He was concerned about his personnel entering the protective minefield and about the old booby-traps in the wire. The outer barrier of wire had been cut or damaged earlier and had never been repaired. There was a considerable amount of brush, small trees and bushes growing within the wire. Fields of fire had not been adequately cleared prior to the attack. Defoliation of the area was disapproved by the Province Chief for fear of damaging crops.

b. The troop commander could not produce a perimeter defense plan that would have been in effect the night of 6 July 1969. A review of the composition of the perimeter during the attack revealed the following:

(1) All of the personnel on alert status were positioned atop tracked vehicles. The bunkers were not occupied and there were no ground mounted automatic weapons that could provide grazing fire through the wire.

(2) Fields of fire for automatic weapons were not interlocking, nor were there established final protective fires or range cards for automatic weapons.

(3) In several locations the berm was deteriorated to such a degree that enemy forces could crawl through holes in the berm rather than climb over it.

(4) Trip flares were not employed within the perimeter barrier, claymore mines were positioned between the berm and the inner strands of wire, but only one claymore was fired.

(5) LP's or OP's were not used. There was a 25' tower located directly in the center of the perimeter that afforded excellent observation. It was not manned on the night of the attack.

(6) Enlisted personnel were not adequately briefed on the defense of the perimeter. NCO's did not know where their men were sleeping. There was no provision for a reaction force to counter a threat against the perimeter.

c. There was an apparent lack of sand bags throughout the US portion of the compound. Although there was a large quantity of sandbags on hand they were unfilled and not used. As an example, the perimeter side of the unit ammo bunker had far less sandbag protection than the side that faced the inside of the compound. The concrete bunker used as sleeping quarters for the maintenance section had no sandbag protection.

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d. The troop commander's only communication with the perimeter was through the 1st Plt, and only by radio. There was no land line communication to any point on the perimeter. The only land line in use was between the CP, the 1ST SGT's bunker and the MAT Team house. Radio communication to the remaining two platoons on Hill 100, higher headquarters and supporting artillery was effective.

e. The M88 recovery vehicle, running at maximum RPM, on the perimeter definitely muffled any noise made by the enemy in approaching and breaching the wire. The lights used in performing night maintenance operations also affected the night vision of security personnel, in other positions.

f. The ramp doors on the M113A1 and M125A1 vehicles were left down during the hours of darkness. This apparently aided the sappers in placing satchel charges in these vehicles.

15. (C) COMMANDER'S ANALYSIS: The actions described in this report effectively point out the disastrous effects of a combined mortar and sapper attack against a poorly defended position. The deficiencies noted above were instrumental in aiding the NVA sappers towards the accomplishment of their mission. Lessons Learned from this experience should include the following:

a. The use of a perimeter defense plan to adequately insure the defense of a position such as a fire base, compound, etc.

b. Maintenance operations during the hours of darkness should not be performed on the perimeter if at all possible.

c. Ramp doors on the M113 family of vehicles should be raised at night. The use of the combat door and combat lock should be emphasized.

d. The use and design of a defensive position must suit the needs and capability of the unit that occupies the position. The use of old or outdated positions should be avoided.

e. Old minefields and deteriorated barriers should not be taken for granted as effective. In many instances mines and booby traps deteriorate to the point of being unreliable.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

2 Incl

1. Sketch of Luong Son Compound
2. Persons interviewed

Daniel L. Ledda
DANIEL L. LEDDA
Colonel, AGC
Adjutant General

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19 July 1969

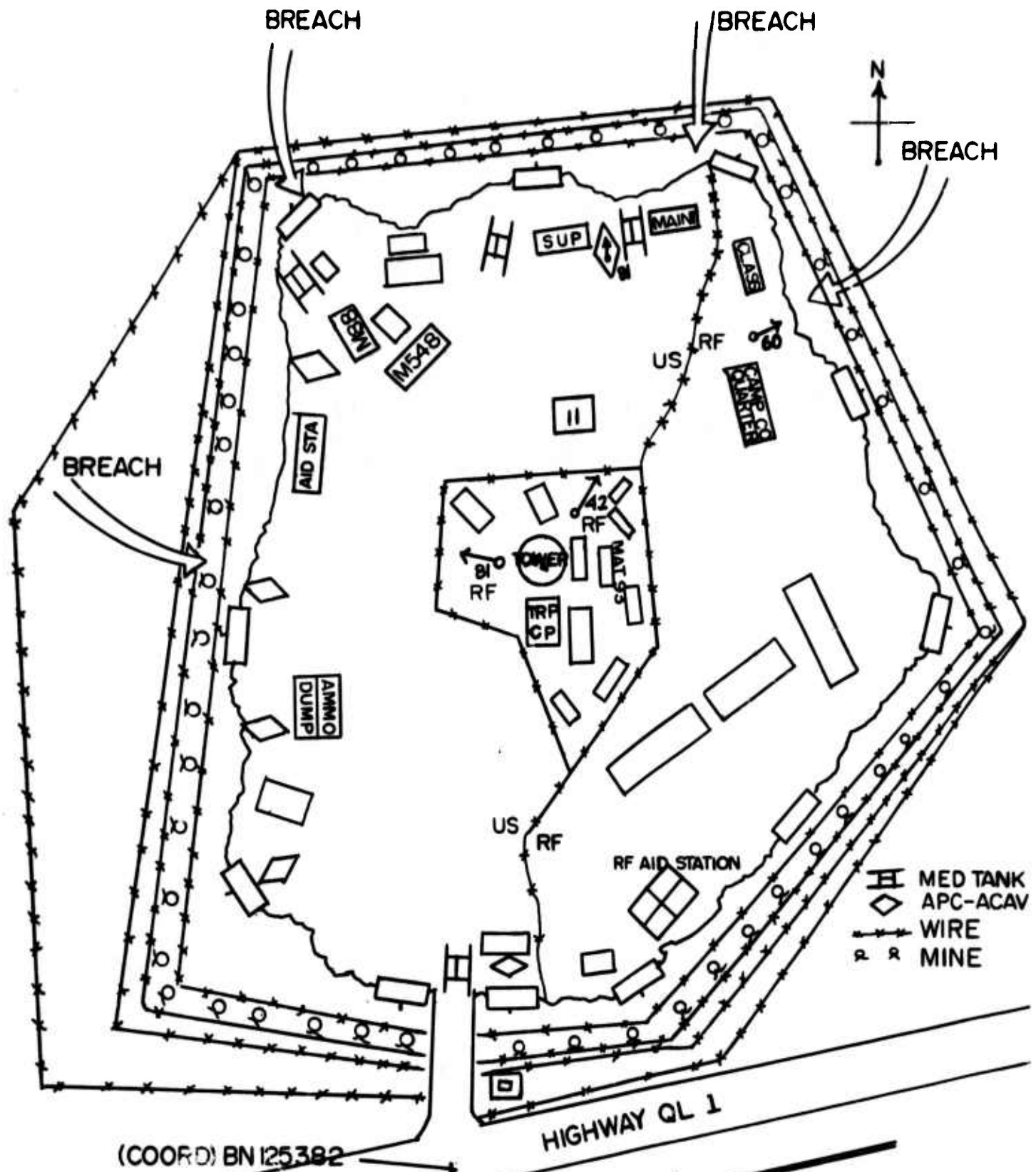
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PERSONS INTERVIEWED

LTC John M. Fairey, CO, 2/1st Cav
MAJ Gordon Rogers, XO, 2/1st Cav
MAJ Chadwick Thompson, S3, 2/1st Cav
CPT James Barnes, CO, B Trp, 2/1st Cav
1LT Steven A. Nance, XO, B Trp, 2/1st Cav
1LT David T. Pietsch Jr., 2d Plt Ldr, B Trp, 2/1st Cav
1SG William L. Shattick, 1SG, B Trp, 2/1st Cav
SFC Herbert H. Shadden, Motor Sgt, B Trp, 2/1st Cav
SP4 Michael A. Legato, RTO, B Trp 2/1st Cav
CPT Charles A. Baker, SA, MAT 93
1LT Donald J. McCarthy, Asst SA, MAT 93
SFC Deryl Ring, Heavy Weapons Specialist, MAT 93
CPT Julio T. Enrique, CO, A Btry, 5/27th Arty
1LT Steven L. Mitchel, XO, A Btry, 5/27th Arty
2LT William Rudewick, FDO, A Btry, 5/27th Arty
SP4 Delbert W. Wells, Chief FDC, NCO, A Btry, 5/27th Arty

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