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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 53D SIGNAL BATTALION (CORPS)
APO San Francisco 96266

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538I

14 August 1966

SUBJECT: Operational Report for Quarterly Period Ending 31 July 1966, Reports Control Symbol CSFOR-65

THRU: Commanding General
II Field Force Vietnam
APO San Francisco 96266

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TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Forces Development
Department of the Army
Washington, D.C. 20310

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1. Section I, Significant Activities

a. The warning order for movement of the 53d Signal Battalion A (Corps) was received on 6 January 1966, and announced that evening to key personnel of the battalion. The battalion was, at that time, organized under TOE 11-15D with three companies, (Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC); Command Operations Company, Company A (Co A); and Field Operations Company, Company B (Co B). The total authorized strength of the battalion was 667 enlisted men, 10 warrant officers, and 30 officers. The battalion was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, assigned to III Corps. The battalion was engaged in training activities and in support of various STRICOM contingency plans.

b. The significant activities of the battalion from the date of the alert to the end of the current reporting period are considered in three phases: (1) preparation for overseas movement, (2) movement to and establishment at Long Binh, Republic of Vietnam, and (3) operations in support of Headquarters, II Field Force, Vietnam. These three periods are discussed below:

c. Preparation for overseas movement (6 January - 15 May 1966).

(1) Personnel:

(a) During the POM phase the battalion had a personnel turn-over of 1,327 enlisted men. Eight hundred forty seven were transferred in and four hundred eighty were transferred out. Much of the personnel turbulence was caused by personnel being received excess by LOS, arrival with flagging actions, illegal promotions prior to arrival, and

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not being MOS qualified. Future planning was made much more difficult by the lack of information concerning personnel fill action by higher headquarters.

(b) Because of the late arrival of communications center and HF radio personnel just before deployment, many individuals fresh out of service schools, did not have the opportunity to receive practical experience.

(2) Training:

(a) Many of the replacement personnel were not POR qualified, necessitating constant efforts during the POM phase to get all persons fully qualified. Some individuals were received as late as the day prior to movement. This turbulence also interfered with early and efficient closure and packing of unit personnel records.

(b) In addition to mandatory POR training requirements, the battalion conducted unit training during the period 6 January - 15 April 1966 with emphasis on technical proficiency of teams and sections. A daily, limited field communication exercise was used as the vehicle for accomplishing this training. Individual operator proficiency was improved by conducting classes, giving examinations and then evaluating team and section performance during the field training exercises. Special emphasis was given to those persons displaying serious proficiency weaknesses.

(c) Training efforts were hampered by the lack of AN/MRC-73's and AN/GRC-26/D's during the major portion of the training period. This and the personnel turbulence described above resulted in an approximate 70% level of effectiveness upon deployment.

(3) Logistics:

(a) The major effort of the battalion beginning on 15 April 1966 was oriented towards preparation of equipment for shipment overseas in accordance with AR 220-10. A 100% technical inspection of all T/O equipment was conducted by installation maintenance personnel and the necessary corrective action taken on deficiencies. All major items of T/O equipment were ultimately received although some items, specifically AN/GRC-26/D's and AN/MRC-73's, were received so shortly prior to deployment they could only be given hurried technical inspections. The AN/GRC-26/D's required modification for the KW-7. Approximately 60 hours per radio set were required to complete the modification. This time phasing did not allow for operational checks of the equipment by assigned team members.

(b) Immediately prior to deployment the aviation augmentation was deleted. The aircraft on hand were turned in.

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d. Movement overseas and establishment at Long Binh, Republic of Vietnam (2 May - 1 July 1966)

(1) On 2 and 3 May 1966 the battalion's T/O equipment was rail-headed at Fort Hood, Texas and on 4 May 1966 departed for Oakland Army Terminal, California. One officer and 10 enlisted men accompanied the equipment to the port. Personnel were placed on all ships but one, which carried the battalion's equipment.

(2) Obtaining needed shipment information proved to be quite difficult. Considerable effort was necessary to get the names of the vessels prior to their departure from CONUS. On arrival in the Republic of Vietnam it was even more difficult to secure accurate information on the time and port of arrival.

(3) On 14 May 1966 the battalion's main body departed Fort Hood, Texas for Oakland, California via rail transportation. One train carrying A Co departed at 1730 hours and another carrying HHC and B Co departed at 1400 hours. Both trains arrived at Oakland, California on 16 May 1966. The troops immediately boarded the USNS Gordon and departed CONUS.

(4) A 50-man advance detachment under the control of the battalion commander remained at Fort Hood to complete the close out of the battalion. The detachment then flew to Bien Hoa, Republic of Vietnam, arriving on 27 May 1966.

(5) The advance party was composed of key persons, i.e.; Battalion Commander, S3, S4, Comcenter Officer, Radio Platoon Leader, etc, plus necessary personnel to establish a minimum headquarters staff with the intent of conducting liaison to the extent necessary to allow the battalion to commence operations immediately upon arrival of the main body. Very little constructive liaison was accomplished as the party became immediately immersed in base camp preparation for the main body. Even this effort was hampered by an almost complete lack of transportation. The composition of the Advance Party proved to be inadequate in personnel to perform manual labor tasks required to establish a minimum adequate base for the arrival of the main body. Considerable additional tentage, mess facilities, and pioneer type tools should have been brought.

(6) The battalion main body arrived in the Republic of Vietnam on 4 June 1966, landing at Vung Tau. The battalion was then air transported to Bien Hoa.

(7) The battalion's equipment did not arrive until approximately three weeks after the main body. The major portion of the RMD TAT was the last shipment to arrive. This hampered the preparation and processing of the battalion to commence operations as such necessary items as mess and refrigeration facilities were limited, tentage for housing and storage was not available. The tankers, water trailers and the wrecker,

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all vital to a new unit in-country, were the last vehicles unloaded.

(8) De-processing of the battalion's equipment and preparation for operations consumed an additional two weeks because of the inverse order in which equipment and vehicles were received. RED TAT for all intents and purposes was handled as "general cargo".

(9) After arrival in-country key persons commenced planning for the battalion's employment in support of Headquarters II Field Force, Vietnam and determining the requirements for outlying communications teams. A target date of 1 July was established for employment of the battalion's communication elements. Terrain studies of potential relay sites and liaison visits to major units to be supported were accomplished.

(10) Driver orientation and in-country briefings were conducted for all personnel. The base camp defense plan was developed, perimeter security established and all persons were briefed on the local tactical situation.

e. Operations in support of Headquarters II Field Force Vietnam:

(1) The battalion commenced deployment of its communications elements on 1 July 1966. Detachments were dispatched during the period 1-3 July 1966 to the headquarters of the 1st Inf Div, 25th Inf Div, 1st Inf Div Arty/23d Arty Gp, 1 ATF, and the 173d Abn Bde.

(2) During the first two weeks of July, operational procedures were defined, working relationships with supported units were developed and a continuing evaluation of communication needs was made.

(3) The evaluation of the Headquarters II Field Force switchboard service showed that the daily busy hour calls were rapidly approaching the 600 mark and total daily calls were exceeding 6,000 per day. The switchboard was a three position AN/TTC-7 with an additional three positions programmed for future expansion. Immediate expansion was a necessity. Therefore, a three position AN/TTC-1 was dismounted and placed in three panel multiple with the existing switchboard. Service was immediately improved with a sharp decrease in handling times, although both the daily busy hour call rate and total call rate continued to increase.

(4) Initially difficulties were encountered with communications center operations but as the operating personnel gained experience and refined their procedures, the operations greatly improved.

(5) The 173d Abn Bde commenced a field operation on 2 July 1966 in the Xuan Loc area. A radio relay site had to be located to support the operation and the first of what has proved to be continuing resupply difficulties were encountered. This first radio relay site, on Hill 265, just

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west of Xuan Loc, on route 20, has since been in continuous operation.

(6) A requirement for an air transportable radio relay terminal was determined. An ambulance was obtained and an AN/MRC-73 was installed in it. This vehicle was field tested at Ve Dat on 15 July 1966 with excellent results.

(7) On 15 July, additional support was deployed to the 173d Abn Bde with another relay site established on Hill 258, 20 Km north of Xuan Loc on Route 20. The total commitment for support of the 173d Abn Bde was 1 officer, 37 enlisted men, five AN/MRC-73's, one each; AN/MRC-54, AN/MCC-6, AN/MGC-17, and AN/GRC-26/D. This commitment was double the commitment to any other supported major headquarters.

(8) By the close of the reporting period, the battalion had nine communications systems to outlying locations, firmly established.

f. The battalion was engaged in the following activities for the number of days shown, during the reporting period:

- (1) Training - 117 days
- (2) Troop Movement - 20 days
- (3) Operations - 31 days

2. Section 2, Commander's Observations and Recommendations.

a. Part I, Observations (Lessons Learned):


See Incl I

b. Part II, Recommendations:

(1) That the aviation augmentation be retained to units such as a Corps Signal Battalion upon deployment to the Republic of Vietnam. Experience is proving the vital necessity for organic aviation support to provide resupply to remote communication installations.

(2) That consideration be given to reorganization of the Corps Signal Battalion under "E" series TOE. Units organized under "D" series are at a serious disadvantage, particularly in regards to maintenance personnel.

1 Incl
Equipment Maintenance


THOMAS C KEARNS
Lt Col, SigC
Commanding

ACCESSION for	
CFSTI	WHITE SECTION <input type="checkbox"/>
DBC	BUFF SECTION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
UNANNOUNCED	<input type="checkbox"/>
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DATE SECTION/AVAILABILITY	
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Equipment Maintenance

Item: Deterioration of Heat Sensitive Equipment Components

Discussion: Communications equipment is particularly effected by climatic conditions in Vietnam. Repair and replacement experience in CONUS is not valid for determining PLL requirements when preparing for deployment to Vietnam. Many parts not normally carried in PLL deteriorate rapidly.

Observation: Direct contact by units deploying to Vietnam should be made with similar type units already in country to obtain a recommended listing of PLL items.

Item: Air conditioning of communications equipment

Discussion: Air conditioning of heat sensitive communication equipment is vital to continued operations of KW-7, AN/TRC-24, and AN/TCC-7 equipment. The majority of the equipment failures encountered have been caused by excessive heat.

Observation: Communications vans should be modified for air conditioning prior to arrival in Vietnam. When this has not been done, any type overhead protection will materially aid in reducing heat problems. The most effective overhead cover has proven to be one that provides an eighteen inch air gap between the top of the van and the cover. Coupled with oscillating fans, this cover will somewhat reduce equipment heat problems.

Item: AN/TRC-24 Tuning Heads

Discussion: The DA directive on tuning heads for AN/TRC-24 radio equipment specifies "A" band for deployment to SEA. The directive is outdated because of the crowded frequency spectrum.

Observation: A need exists for new guidance for units preparing for deployment to SEA and consideration should be given to supplying F and J Band tuning heads and antenna groups since the issue of AN/TRC-24 equipment to ARV will further crowd the lower frequency bands.

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SUBJECT: Operational Report for Quarterly Period Ending 31 July
1966 (RCS CSFOR-65)

DA, Hq II Field Force Vietnam APO San Francisco 96266 1 SEP 1966

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Dept of the
Army, Washington, D. C. 20310

1. (U) The Operational Report for Period Ending 31 July 1966
submitted by Headquarters, 53d Signal Battalion (Corps) is an
excellent report. The observations contain valuable information
applicable to units deploying by sealift to Vietnam.

2. (U) This headquarters concurs with the recommendations
contained in paragraph 2b(1) and 2b(2).

FOR THE COMMANDER:

Robert L. Alderman
ROBERT L. ALDERMAN
Major, AGC
Asst AG

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