

**THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE FOURTH BATTALION
(AIRBORNE) FIVE HUNDRED THIRD INFANTRY
IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM**

JOE ED ARMSTRONG

THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE FOURTH BATTALION (AIRBORNE)
FIVE HUNDRED THIRD INFANTRY IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Joe Ed Armstrong
May, 1976

ABSTRACT

I propose to trace the involvement of the Fourth Battalion (Airborne), Five Hundred Third Infantry, One Seventy Third Airborne Brigade, during the conflict in the Republic of Vietnam. The time period involved is from April, 1966 until August, 1971.

The United States Army was subjected to a new type war in Vietnam, one of combatting guerilla activity. This type combat was not new to the forces of North or South Vietnam.

When the French ruled Indo-China, they combatted the forces of Ho Chi Minh known as Viet Minh. After the French defeat in Southeast Asia, Vietnam was divided into two sections, North and South. The North was under the control of the Communist government of Ho while the Emperor of Vietnam, Bao Dai, went into exile in France.

Almost from the start of the new government, the South had to fight a defensive war to prevent a Communist takeover by force of arms. The forces they fought were basically the same fought by the French, only now called the Viet Cong (VC).

The VC were primarily local people who took up arms and fought the government troops. For the most part, they were well armed, led by competent personnel and were

devoted to their cause, the downfall of the Saigon government. These troops fought alongside and supported troops of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). The NVA were tough, well-trained, well-equipped, and well-led troops from North Vietnam.

A section of this paper deals with the organization of the Fourth Battalion on paper, the preparation at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and the deployment of the battalion to Vietnam.

The remainder of the paper deals with the involvement of the battalion in the war against the Viet Cong and the Army of North Vietnam.

The primary interest of this paper deals with the first three years of combat by the battalion in Vietnam.

I wish to do this paper to provide a written history of the 4th Battalion in the Vietnam War. The primary sources of material were made available by the Division Historian, 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, home of the 4/503d Infantry and the National Records Center, Washington, D. C.

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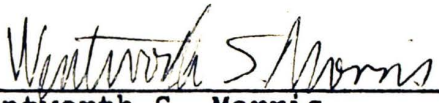
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inflicting 1269 casualties on the enemy.

In looking at "lessons learned" from Vietnam, we must ask ourselves why and how an enemy with less troops, much less overall fire power and no helicopters could neutralize an "elite" unit such as the 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry?

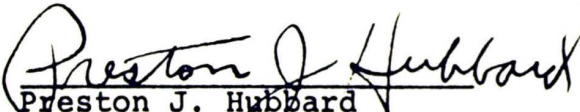
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Joe E. Armstrong, entitled, "The Involvement of the Fourth Battalion (Airborne) Five Hundred Third Infantry in the Republic of Vietnam." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

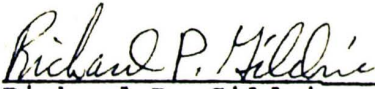


Wentworth S. Morris
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

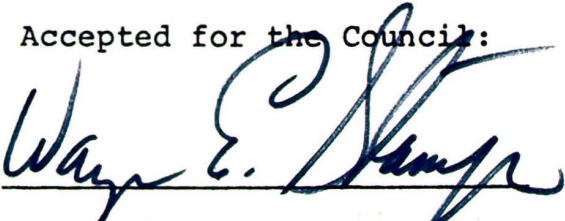


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Dean of the Graduate School

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Wentworth Morris, Dr. Richard Gildrie, and Dr. Preston Hubbard for their aid and encouragement in the completion of my thesis. I wish also to thank Mrs. Dani Beasley for her efforts in checking this work for English errors and Shirley Wilson for the typing of this thesis. The assistance given by LT Cody Phillips, historian for the 101st Airborne Division, Ft. Campbell, Kentucky, proved invaluable.

The approval of Dr. Morris is especially welcomed by the student personally because he allowed the student to work independently and expressed the belief that something creative and interesting had been accomplished.

INTRODUCTION

In 1965, the airborne forces of the United States were considered to be the elite units of the United States Army. These troops were highly trained in combat techniques similar to those used in World War II.

Because of their high degree of training and preparedness for movement, it was only natural that the airborne troops were the first army combat infantry units to be placed in the Republic of Vietnam. These units were the 1st and 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry, of the 173d Airborne Brigade. These were followed by units of the 1st Infantry Division and by the 101st Airborne Division, and then by the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile).

The airmobile concept was developed at Fort Benning, Georgia. This was probably the most significant innovation of the Vietnam War in the large scale use of helicopters in general and of airmobile combat units in particular. All units in Vietnam depended heavily on the helicopter for aerial reconnaissance, medical evacuation and resupply, as well as rapid movement into and out of otherwise inaccessible areas.

In terrain such as that in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, it was a great improvement over airborne assault techniques developed in World War II. Except for one jump by elements of the 173d Airborne, no combat para-

chute drops were made by U. S. Army units in Vietnam, whereas literally thousands of helicopter missions took place. In July, 1968 the 101st Airborne Division was officially reorganized as an airmobile unit.

The transition from airborne to airmobile, caused by conditions in Vietnam, was exemplified in microcosm by the first six months of operations by the 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry. It was under combat conditions that the battalion was forced to change its internal structure. This brought to the front the necessity of using the top military units in roles for which they had received only minimal training. This change removed them from their status as a member of the nation's ready strike force just to add more combat troops to action. The actions of the 4th Battalion during the months of July to December seem to point out the futility of the preparation the battalion made prior to deployment to Vietnam. There was much frustration over the apparently wasted type of training.

The elements in combat were not allowed to engage the enemy with maximum fire power. They were instructed to fall back and let gunships and artillery fire hit the enemy. The enemy only seldom engaged in numbers large enough to fight the type of battles in which the battalions of airborne troops were trained.

In the six years and two months the 4th Battalion



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THE COLORS OF THE 4th BATTALION (AIRBORNE)

503d INFANTRY



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY
Fort McPherson, Georgia 30330

GENERAL ORDERS

Number 111

TC 001. The following unit is ACTIVATED.

STRAF unit listed in Inclosure 1.

Effective date: 1 April 1966.

Equipment: Equipment required and not available
will be requisitioned in accordance with
normal supply procedures.

Personnel: Personnel required will be provided in
accordance with existing directives.

Files/records: Section VII, AR 345-215, applies.

Morning Report: AR 355-60 applies

Mission: Not applicable.

Authority: Paragraph 3, message, DA 757263, 26 March
1966, and message, ATUTR-TP 55770, USCONARC,
dated 29 March 1966.

Fund obligation: Obligate to the extent necessary the
appropriate allotments in accordance
with current fiscal procedures.

Special instructions: The 4th Battalion (Airborne),
503d Infantry is attached to

Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Transfer and promotion authority is delegated to the Commanding General, 101st Airborne Division and Fort Campbell, Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

1
FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:

JOHN A. BEALL

Major General, GS

Chief of Staff

(signed)

ROBERT L. MAY

Colonel, AGC

Adjutant General

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Lineage and Honors

4th BATTALION, 503d INFANTRY

(THE ROCK REGIMENT)

Constituted 14 March 1941 in the Army of the United States as Company D, 503d Parachute Infantry Battalion

Activated 22 August 1941 at Fort Benning, Georgia

Consolidated 24 February 1942 with Company D, 503d Parachute Infantry (constituted 24 February 1942) and designated Company D, 503d Parachute Infantry

Inactivated 24 December 1945 at Camp Anza, California

Redesignated 1 February 1951 as Company D, 503d Airborne Infantry concurrently allotted to the Regular Army and assigned to the 11th Airborne Division

Activated 2 March 1951 at Fort Campbell, Kentucky

Redesignated 1 March 1957 as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Airborne Battle Group, 503d Infantry; and concurrently relieved from assignment to

the 11th Airborne Division and inactivated in Germany

Redesignated 26 March 1966 as Headquarters and
Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry
(concurrently, organic elements constituted)

Battalion activated 1 April 1966 at Fort Campbell,
2
Kentucky.

4th BATTALION: 503d INFANTRY

(THE ROCK REGIMENT)

CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION CREDIT

World War II

*New Guinea

*Leyte

*Luzon (with arrowhead)

*Southern Philippines

DECORATIONS

*Distinguished Unit Citation, Streamer embroidered
CORREGIDOR

*Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, Streamer
embroidered 17 October 1944 to 4 July 1945

By order of the Secretary of the Army:

(signed)

KENNETH G. WICKHAM

Major General, USA

The Adjutant General

CHAPTER I

ORGANIZATION, 4th BATTALION (AIRBORNE)

503d INFANTRY

Normal organization for the 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry was outlined in TABLE OF ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT (TO & E) consisting of a Headquarters and Headquarters Company and three lettered rifle companies. The battalion was organized and trained under the F series TO & E.⁴ After the 4th's arrival in Vietnam a provisional company, Company D, was organized and employed as a small rifle company.⁵

Company D was employed on many occasions as a regular rifle company contributing much to the overall flexibility of the battalion.⁶ In addition it performed functions of both reconnaissance and antitank platoons. On a number of occasions it was attached to, or operated with, Troop E, 17th Cavalry, Company D, 16th Armor or another unit in the 173d Airborne Brigade.⁷

4

GENERAL ORDER NUMBER III

5

Annual Supplement to History of the Fourth Battalion (Airborne), Five Hundred Third Infantry, 1 April 1966-31 December 1966, Office of the S-3, MSS., Washington, D. C. (unpag).

6

Ibid.

7

Personnel within this provisional unit consisted of the battalion reconnaissance platoon, antitank platoon, a surveillance section, and additional personnel from each lettered company. The company was organized into three platoons and a company headquarters. Personnel were carried on their assigned unit morning reports and all supply activities were handled by the Headquarters and Headquarters Company Supply personnel.⁸

Personnel assigned to the 4th Battalion, with the exception of medical personnel, were to engage in effective coordinated defense of the unit's area and installation.⁹ Personnel were assigned to this unit by the Administration Company of the 4th Battalion's parent unit, the 173d Airborne Brigade, in accordance with TO & E 12-157.

The esprit de corps and morale of every man assigned to the 4th Battalion was highly evident when the battalion was formed at Fort Campbell. This professionalism can be attributed to the fact that most of the men had been trained together, had worked together,¹⁰ and eventually embarked overseas together.

⁸
Ibid.

⁹
Ibid.

¹⁰
Ibid.

CHAPTER II

PREPARATION AT FORT CAMPBELL, KENTUCKY

The battalion began assembling, organizing, and preparing for its mission in Vietnam in February of 1966. on 1 April 1966, it was officially activated and given its present designation of 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Airborne Infantry. This required additional re-organizing and preparation. Training was planned, scheduled, and conducted. The performance of the units and personnel of the battalion during this period was of the highest standard.

The battalion was alerted for overseas movement in April and plans were made for shipment, leaves, additional orientations, immunizations, and the relocation of families. On 1 May 1966, personnel were given leave prior to reporting back to Fort Campbell for shipment to port of embarkation on 1 June 1966.

The Move to Vietnam

At 2245 hours (10:45 p.m.) on 4 June 1966, the first elements of the battalion departed Fort Campbell on Greyhound buses en route to the Nashville Metropolitan Airport, Nashville, Tennessee.¹¹ There, commercial air-

11Ibid.

craft were boarded for flights to San Francisco International Airport. Four flights originated from Campbell Army Airfield, also for San Francisco. Upon arrival at San Francisco, the elements of the battalion once again boarded charter buses, this time for Oakland Army Terminal. Once there, they boarded the transport ship, USNS General John Pope.¹²

At 10:55 a.m., 5 June 1966, the elements of the 4th Battalion prepared to board the Pope. The boarding process was new to the Army personnel. It was slowed down considerably by the fact that all rosters that had been sent to the Port Authorities at the terminal were, as requested, in alphabetical order by rank and by unit.¹³ Upon arriving at Oakland, most personnel arrived out of boarding sequence and in manifest roster order (air manifest are in order of rank). Due to deck roster check and Navy ship roster check conducted using different rosters, personnel loading procedure became quite difficult. The last element of the battalion arrived at the dock at 1255 hours and started to load. The loading of this element was delayed slightly.

12

Ibid.

13

"Narrative of Voyage, June 1966," Commander, USNS General John Pope, MSS., Washington, D.C. (unpag).

The sailing time was delayed slightly from its 2:00 p.m. departure time. At 3:15 p.m., 6 June 1966, the Pope pulled away from her deck at the Oakland Army Terminal. At 4:17 p.m., 6 June 1966, the USNS General John Pope sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge heading west to APO 96250, the Republic of Vietnam.¹⁴

The roster was checked by an I.D. Card muster on the evening of 6 June 1966. It showed the 4th Battalion (Abn), 503d Infantry had 699 enlisted men and 26 officers on board.¹⁵

The training which was conducted aboard the ship was put under company control in order to maintain unit tactical integrity as much as possible. The training was conducted in all available space.¹⁶

The mission of the en route training program was, to the extent possible, maintain the combat readiness of the battalion.¹⁷ The objectives were three-fold:¹⁸

¹⁴
Ibid.

¹⁵
Ibid.

¹⁶
Letter of Instructions: Training and Briefing for 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 22 June 1966, Department of the Army, Headquarters 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate), APO San Francisco 96250.

¹⁷
"Training Memorandum Number 4 25 May 1966," Adjutant General, MSS., Washington, D.C. (unpag).

¹⁸
Ibid.

a. To provide review and additional training and familiarization in selected subjects and specific areas of interest to personnel of the 4th Battalion.

b. To insure maintenance of the highest possible state of physical condition, mental discipline, personal self-confidence, and unit esprit for all personnel of the battalion.

c. Continue improvement of advanced individual soldier skills with emphasis on combat in remote areas under counter-insurgency environmental conditions.

Unit commanders read and approved all lessons
19
plans prepared by the instructing officers.

All subjects were geared to combat in a counter-insurgency environment, and incorporated "lessons learned"
20
to the extent possible.

As the separate units were responsible for the training, the Company Commanders insured that the most knowledgeable, experienced, and competent instructors were selected to present the subject material for which
21
they were responsible. In every instance a responsible

19

Ibid.

20

Ibid.

21

Ibid.

officer was assigned and identified as officer-in-charge of each class.

Members of the battalion staff made periodic checks²² to evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

The training program was conducted on a coordinated basis, assigning each company specific subject areas. The companies organized individual committees to fulfill assigned tasks.

The training program was based upon an anticipated eighteen-day voyage. The program was divided into three equal training weeks consisting of five working days of six hours each.

The medical platoon conducted a screening sick call daily and personnel requiring proper attention were referred to the ship's doctor.²³ A very important point covered by the medical platoon was the issuing of malaria pills to each member of the battalion.

The 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, arrived at the Port of Vung Tau, Vietnam, on 24 June 1966 and disembarked on the morning of the 25th. From Vung Tau, all personnel were transported by United States Air Force C130 transports to the large American base camp

22

Ibid.

23

Ibid.

located 36 miles to the northeast of Saigon, at Bien
24
Hoa.

Lieutenant Colonel Michael D. Healy was in command
25
of the battalion.

24

Ibid.

25

Annual Supplement, 1 April 1966-31 December
1966.

CHAPTER III

INVOLVEMENT OF THE 4th BATTALION (AIRBORNE) 503d INFANTRY
IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

As the condition in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate, President Lyndon Johnson said that only the introduction of U.S. combat troops into the Republic of Vietnam could prevent a Communist takeover of that country. At the request of the Vietnamese government troops were placed in Vietnam in March 1965. In May 1965 the 173d
26
Airborne Brigade (Separate) arrived in Vietnam.

The 173d was the largest brigade in Vietnam, with over 10,000 men assigned to it. It was, according to the manual, a combat brigade with no dead weight. As the war developed, the rear areas were supported by their own troops, and this heavily cut down on troop-field effective
27
fighting ability.

The 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry, was assigned to Headquarters, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) as the
28
fourth battalion of the brigade.

26

Maurice Matloff, American Military History (Washington, D. C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U. S. Army, 1969), p. 623.

27

Anthony B. Herbert, Soldier (New: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), p. 125.

28

Annual Supplement, 1 April 1966-31 December 1966.

As with all combat units, the 4th Battalion had a mission and capabilities.

29

Its mission was:

To close with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver in order to destroy or capture him or repel his assault by fire, close combat, and counterattack.

At full strength the 4th Battalion was expected to have the following capabilities:

30

1. Closes with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver to destroy or capture him.

2. Repels enemy assault by fire, close combat, and counterattack.

3. Provides base of fire and maneuver elements.

4. Seizes and holds terrain.

5. Furnishes limited antitank protection.

6. Provides indirect fire support for organic and attached units.

7. Conduct long-range patrolling when appropriately equipped.

8. Participates in air-transported (airmobile) operations when provided with sufficient transportation.

29

Ibid.

30

Ibid.

9. Maneuvers in all types of terrain and climate conditions.

10. Capable of frequent airborne assault by parachute or assault aircraft with minimum marshaling and planning procedures.

On 12 July 1966, the 4th Battalion 503d Infantry entered into its first combat operation of the Vietnam War. The operation was OPERATION AURORA I/AURORA II,
31
a search and destroy operation.

The operation was divided into two sections; AURORA I, the movement of the battalion by helicopter to secure a forward operation base (FOB) and to conduct clearing patrols in the immediate vicinity; and the second part (AURORA II) was the conducting of a search and destroy, anti-Viet Cong tax-collection operation. The operation was terminated on 31 July 1966.

32

Enemy losses were:

- 1 Killed in Action (KIA)
- 2 Wounded in Action (WIA)
- 3 Viet Cong Captured (VCC)
- 5 Viet Cong Suspects (VCS)

31

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION AURORA I-AURORA II, 12 July 1966 to 31 July 1966, APO San Francisco 96250.

32

Ibid.

The battalion was also bloodied during the operation. A UH1-D helicopter crashed on 27 July 1966, killing the 4 crewmen and the 6 troopers aboard from Company C.³³ There was no evidence of hostile fire bringing down the aircraft.

This operation was not a great success in the terms of enemy killed or material captured. It did, however, serve as a beneficial shakedown under real combat conditions for the battalion.

The battalion had relatively few problems in adjusting to the Vietnamese environment. The extensive and continuous field training conducted by the unit at Fort Campbell prior to deployment proved invaluable.

OPERATION TOLEDO, also a search-and-destroy operation,³⁴ was conducted from 12 August to 7 September 1966.

Once again, the 4th Battalion showed the benefits of their continuous training, yet again failed to turn in a good enemy kill total on "body count."³⁵ Their system of searching was being toned up and their movements became more rapid. The effect of the use of helicopters could not be over-emphasized.

33

Ibid.

34

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION TOLEDO, 12 August 1966 to 7 September 1966, APO San Francisco 96250.

35

Ibid.

It was during this operation that the 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry suffered its first combat casualty. On the afternoon of 14 August, Company A received incoming mortar fire. PFC Daryl R. Corfman was killed by multiple fragmentation wounds during the attack.³⁶

Several points were developed in the "lesson learned" aspect.

OPERATION TOLEDO was scheduled to run from 12 August until 7 September. It was found that during a search and destroy operation a fixed period of time established occasional difficulty in adequately covering an assigned area of operation. TOLEDO ran for a total of 26 days. It was decided that operations should run approximately 15 days in length.³⁷ After 15 days, individual alertness, physical fitness, and general well-being began to fall off rapidly.

A second point was the need to eliminate long continuous movement through the jungle by battalion-size units unless they were absolutely necessary. Patrolling actions from battalion and company size bases proved the most desirable and profitable in results.³⁸

³⁶
Ibid.

³⁷
Ibid.

³⁸
Ibid.

At this time, the 173d Brigade was using the concept of a new Landing Zone (LZ) prepared daily by each battalion.³⁹ The construction of an LZ in jungle terrain required from three to five hours, using in many instances chain saws and explosives to remove trees. During this construction time the battalion remained static and provided security. The construction noise not only pinpointed the unit's location, but also eliminated the element of surprise. It was believed (and rightly so) that with one exception, units could sustain themselves for longer periods of time than twenty-four hours without resupply.⁴⁰ The only construction required by them would be preparing of Night Defensive Positions (NDP), which require only a minimum amount of noise. The one exception was of medical evacuation. This was overcome rapidly by the Army's development of medical evacuation units (Dust Off/MedEvac) techniques for urgent pickup and medical assistance to wounded troops.

While OPERATION TOLEDO was not a smashing success in terms of the number of enemy killed, the 4th Battalion played havoc with enemy supplies and base camps. During the 26 days of TOLEDO, the battalion located and destroyed fourteen separate base camps of over five hundred bunkers,

³⁹
Ibid.

⁴⁰
Ibid.

thirteen huts, and two hamlet complexes. Also found were 62,694 rounds of small arms ammunition, 253 mortar rounds, numerous weapons, documents, articles of clothing, two ox carts and 5 1/2 tons of rice. Perhaps the most important find to members of the battalion was the capture of its first enemy standard. A Viet Cong (VC) flag was⁴¹ captured in one of the base camps.

After a six-day standdown at their Bien Hoa base camp, the battalion was airlifted to Dan Tieng on 13 September. Their mission was to conduct a security operation in co-operation with the 3d Battalion, 8 ARVN Infantry, defend an assigned sector of Dan Tieng Airfield, and to conduct night and day patrols and ambushes in their assigned area of operation.⁴²

The 4th Battalion relieved the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry of the U.S. 25th Infantry Division during 13/14 September.⁴³

This was known as OPERATION ATLANTIC CITY.⁴⁴ It

41

Ibid.

42

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Combat After Action Report - OPERATION ATLANTIC CITY, 13 September to 22 September 1966, APO San Francisco 96250.

43

Ibid.

44

Ibid.

took place to the northwest of Saigon in the area of the vast Michelin Rubber Plantation. ATLANTIC CITY lasted until 22 September 1966, short as compared to the battalion's earlier operations. Even so, the enemy losses were greater than in the previous operations combined.⁴⁵ It was during this operation that the "Checkerboard Concept" was developed and introduced into combat by the 4th Battalion. The Checkerboard Concept of employing reinforced squad size patrols to saturate an area was used during the last 24 hours of ATLANTIC CITY.⁴⁶

The area used for the checkerboard system was a portion of the Michelin Rubber Plantation (approximately 5 km North to South and 3 km East to West). In order to simultaneously employ two rifle companies this area was divided in half and each half in turn was subdivided into areas approximately 1000 meters square. As the rubber plantation trees and roads were laid out in straight lines, they served as easily identifiable terrain features.

A reinforced squad of 14 men was employed into each 1000 meter square. Each squad was augmented with at least one M-60 machine gun and one radio (AN/PRC 25 with a range of 5 to 8 km). To each squad, when possible, a

⁴⁵
Ibid.

⁴⁶
Ibid.

starlight scope (for night vision) was assigned. Also, where possible (and possibly the most important addition) a medic was attached to each squad.⁴⁷ Prior to this medics were assigned on a platoon and company level.

It is important to note that the company command posts (CP) were constantly moved to confuse the enemy as much as possible. The CP's were used to control the squads in their operational squares.

The squads moved into their squares and alternated between carefully searching an area and lying in ambush. A squad would move, set up an ambush position with all-around security, wait and listen for approximately one hour, and then report the procedure. Night ambush positions were selected prior to darkness, but were not occupied until just prior to last light. The location of each squad was constantly monitored that no two squads would engage each other. Mortar and artillery support was given to the maximum ability at the supporting units of the battalion.

The After Action reports indicate that more than just Viet Cong operated in this area. On 20 September, Company D engaged seven VC wearing Khaki uniforms with one of them wearing a helmet.⁴⁸ This would tend to indicate North Vietnamese regulars.

47

Ibid.

48

Ibid.

The checkerboard system proved effective for
 49
 several reasons:

1. A wider and more extensive coverage of a particular area was effected.
2. A squad size force had the speed, fire-power, and reaction capability necessary to stay with and destroy small size VC units.
3. Squads became thoroughly familiar with the area of operation.
4. Mutual support was effected by having several squads operating simultaneously in areas adjacent to one another. (Example: a squad in one AO can quickly establish a blocking position after the squad in an adjacent AO has made contact and is driving a VC element in its direction.)

Squad saturation patrols became highly recommended in relatively open areas which contained no known large
 50
 size VC forces.

OPERATION ATLANTIC CITY was terminated on 22 September 1966, and the battalion returned to Bien Hoa.

The next operation took the 4th Battalion North to Da Nang. This operation, code name WINCHESTER, placed

the battalion under the operational command of the 3d
 51
 Marine Division.

WINCHESTER was to be conducted in four phases. Phase one consisted of movement by air from Bien Hoa to Da Nang aboard Air Force C130 aircraft. Phase two consisted of the battalion moving into place, relieving the 2d Battalion, 26th Marine, and conducting position defense by denying the enemy access to vital areas throughout the assigned sectors. All companies conducted aggressive patrolling to locate and destroy the enemy's offensive
 52
 capabilities by coordinated and combined operations.

This operation was new in that it occurred in the I Corps section (Vietnam was divided into four tactical sections. I Corps was the most northernly along the DMZ and IV was in the South in the delta region), and secondly, because parts of this operation were along the Song Cu De
 53
 River. This was the battalion's first experience with enemy river activity, an activity that would be a major part of the battalion's next operation.

51
 United States Department of the Army, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION WINCHESTER, 8 October 1966 to 4 December 1966, APO San Francisco 96250

52
Ibid.

53
Ibid.

Also, for the first time, the 4th was involved in action along major roads and with heavy civilian activity in the area.⁵⁴

This area, to the North and West of Da Nang, was heavy with booby traps and VC ambushes. It seems that most of the booby traps were of the anti-personnel mine type.⁵⁵ The ambushes were often near the local villages, and the suspects were believed to be from those local villages.

Phase three was the relieving of the 4th by the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines. Phase four was the movement of the 4th back to Bien Hoa by aircraft of the United States Air Force.⁵⁶

OPERATION WINCHESTER was in force from 8 October to 4 December 1966.⁵⁷ During it, the need for a fourth TO & E company seriously hampered the ability of the battalion in covering an extremely large area of operation. From this came the forming of D Company to a full rifle company.⁵⁸

⁵⁴
Ibid.

⁵⁵
Ibid.

⁵⁶
Ibid.

⁵⁷
Ibid.

⁵⁸
Ibid.

This was the largest task force the battalion had operated within to date. LTC Haley was stricken with malaria during OPERATION ATLANTIC CITY. Major Raymond Spinks, the battalion XO, became the acting commander for OPERATION WINCHESTER until LTC Healy returned and resumed command on 12 October 1966.

Not only was an engineer demolition team assigned to each company, but the Task Force Control (HQ 4th BN 503d Inf) had assigned to it much of the brigade support units. Assigned were:

B Battery 3d 319 arty

1st Plat E Troop 17th Cav

4.2 Mortar Platoon

335th Aviation Detachment

505th Forward Air Control (USAF)

173d Engineer Platoon

173d Military Intelligence Detachment

173d Military Police Squad

173d Support Battalion Detachment

173d Scout Dog Detachment

B Company 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division

B Company 1st Anti Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division

59

Ibid.

60

Ibid.

This was the largest single operation the 4th conducted during the war in Vietnam on the battalion level.

On 6 December, after a two-day standdown, the battalion was put into operational status in OPERATION CANARY/DUCK. This operation took place at Fire Support Base (FSB) Bear Cat in Long Thanh District, Bien Hoa Province.⁶¹

The idea of CANARY/DUCK was the providing of security for Bear Cat Base Camp by conducting aggressive patrolling tank-infantry team operations and other appropriate actions in their assigned zone. As an offshoot to base camp security, the 4th Battalion was to engage in aggressive search and destroy operations including operations with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR).⁶²

During the CAV operations the 4th found three base camps, five tunnel systems (including one with four levels),⁶³ 36 bunkers, and 5,000 pounds of rice.

61

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION CANARY/DUCK, 6 December 1966 to 6 January 1967, APO San Francisco 96250.

62

Ibid.

63

Ibid.

The battalion utilized motorized inflated rafts to conduct river training in anticipation of night river patrols. These patrols never were used due to the inability to reinforce rapidly the patrols in case of heavy contact. The battalion spent Christmas 1966 at Bien Hoa and returned to the war the next morning on convoy patrol⁶⁴ with elements of the 11 ACR.

OPERATION CANARY/DUCK ended on 6 January 1967 and the battalion returned to Bien Hoa.

The first operation of 1967 found the entire brigade involved in OPERATION CEDAR FALLS. This was a search and⁶⁵ destroy operation in the area of the "Iron Triangle," a long-time enemy strongpoint near Tay Ninh City, 25 miles Northwest of Saigon.

The name "Iron Triangle" was appropriate for the area. The French had never been able to penetrate the area during the Indo-China War and neither had the forces of the Republic of Vietnam. It was a rest area, training area, storage area, and staging area for attacks on the Saigon area. Consisting of rubber plantation and jungle, the Triangle allowed rapid movement, yet good concealment

⁶⁴

Ibid.

⁶⁵

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION CEDAR FALLS, 8 January to 25 January 1967, APO San Francisco 96250.

at the same time. Consisting of about 60 square miles, it was bordered by two rivers, the Song Thi-Tinh on the East and the Song Saigon on the West. Therefore, resupply and movement by river was quick and efficient. A major road ran through the area, Highway 14, which ran South to Phu Loi.

For this operation, D Troop, 16th Armor was assigned to the battalion task force for the purpose of conducting combined attacks on the enemy locations in coordination with air assault landings. The battalion was to conduct aggressive search and destroy and clearing operations. The battalion was assigned eight engineer dozers.

The effects of this operation (which ran from 8 Jan to 25 Jan 1967) can best be described by the results of the search and destroy operations. The battalion located 12 base camps, 21 tunnel complexes, one weapons factory, a mine factory, 318,000 pounds of rice, three tons of salt, 80 vials of medicine, uniforms and 625 documents. Even more important was the loss of weapons and ammunition by the enemy: one hundred twelve separate weapons (including German, Chinese, Russian, American, and French rifles), 10,367 rounds of small arms ammunition, 73 mortar rounds, and 117 hand grenades. Also taken were 13 bicycles.⁶⁶ These were used by the enemy for transport

of supplies. This is an indicator of how freely the enemy moved in this area.

Once again, the battalion had been put on a timetable.⁶⁷ It is apparent now that this type of operation cannot be placed on such a schedule. Contact with the enemy, the calling of air and artillery strikes, requires time and often offsets any planned schedule and sequence of events. Thorough mapping and the exploration of tunnels and bunker complexes and their eventual destruction is time-consuming, yet necessary to deny the area and matériel to the enemy.

In all, the price of CEDAR FALLS was 7 U.S. personnel killed in action and 58 wounded. The enemy suffered 17 dead (BC) and four wounded. No prisoners were taken.⁶⁸

The battalion returned to Bien Hoa for refitting and maintenance of equipment.

OPERATION BIG SRPINGS,⁶⁹ from 1 February to 16 February 1967, put the battalion into action in the area of operation known as War Zone D.

67

Ibid.

68

Ibid.

69

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry Combat After Action Report - OPERATION BIG SPRINGS, 1 February to 16 February 1967, APO San Francisco 96250.

War Zone D lay to the East of War Zone C along the area of the Song Be River. It consisted of plantations, jungle, and cultivated areas. During the first part of 1967 villages existed there. It was during this time period that relocation of the inhabitants of War Zones C and D took place.⁷⁰ The people were simply moved to relocation centers in "secure" government areas, and their huts and buildings were burned or destroyed by bulldozers.⁷² This was done to deny the enemy shelter, supplies, and a ready source of manpower for their guerrilla operations.⁷³

BIG SPRINGS went under three sections.⁷⁴ First was the air assault into the area designated as FSB Ford, then a clearing of the area and securing it as a fire support base. The second aspect of the operation was to prepare for the Tet holidays.

Tet, or the Lunar New Year, occurs between the end of January and the end of February each year. The Viet-

⁷⁰ Robert Sherrod, "Notes on a Monstrous War," Life, Vol. 62, No. 4 27 January 1967, p. 23.

⁷¹ Frances Fitzgerald, Fire in the Lake (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 572.

⁷² Newsweek, 24 July 1967, p. 44.

⁷³ Wilfred G. Burchett, Inside Story of the Guerrilla War (New York: International Publishers, 1965), p. 54.

⁷⁴ OPERATION BIG SPRINGS.

nameese people feel that if things go right during Tet, they will go right for the remainder of the year. The same holds true for things going bad. In preparation for enemy attacks on the Saigon area during Tet, it was common to set up blocking positions such as set up by the 4th Battalion against enemy infiltration from Cambodia.

The third section of operation was the search-and-destroy operations to take place in War Zone D.

On 2 February 1967, LTC Michael D. Healy relinquished command of the 4th Battalion to LTC L. W. Jackley. ⁷⁵

On 3 February, D Company located a 2 1/2 ton truck of commercial classification. One half hour later and approximately 1000 meters to the north, D Company found a second 2 1/2 ton truck. ⁷⁶ The trucks were abandoned.

D Company returned to the areas where the trucks were found, and on 8 February destroyed them ⁷⁷ while en route to a VC base camp. The base camp contained 100 ⁷⁸ bunkers and various parts for automotive repair.

The area assigned to the battalion inside War Zone D was fairly small in size. For the 16 days of the operation, the battalion was basically static. There was

⁷⁵
Ibid.

⁷⁶
Ibid.

⁷⁷
Ibid.

⁷⁸
Ibid.

little or no section of the AO that was not repeatedly searched and ambushed. The battalion commander's analysis of the operation was that after a period of days, boredom and a lowering of the alertness standard occurred in the troops. He felt the initiative, aggressiveness, and incentive of his troops began to dull when there was little or no opportunity to "exploit their desire to close with the enemy."⁷⁹

According to the after action report, at least 142 enemy troops were observed by the battalion. Not all of these were engaged by small arms fire or even artillery fire. The battalion established 68 separate ambushes and made contact on three of them. On three occasions unknown size groups of enemy were heard and fired on by artillery, with unknown results. Enemy losses were five KIA (BC)⁸⁰ and seven KIA (Poss). It appears that the opportunities to exploit the desire to close with the enemy were there, and the failure of the units more than just to engage the enemy with small arms fire was the choice of the unit commander and not an item set by the area of operation.

The next operation returned the battalion to War Zone C as part of OPERATION JUNCTION CITY ALTERNATE in a

79

Ibid.

80

Ibid.

81

search-and-destroy operation. This operation was conducted along with OPERATION JUNCTION CITY. JUNCTION CITY was made up of the remainder of the 173d Airborne Brigade, the parent unit of the 4th Battalion. This took place inside the Iron Triangle. The 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry made the only combat parachute jump by United States troops in the Vietnam War.

In ten minutes the 800 men of the LTC Bob Sigholtz, 2nd Battalion were on the ground after jumping from Air Force C130 aircraft.

82

The 2nd jumped into the Triangle itself. 1st Battalion took up a blocking position five miles in from the Cambodian border. The United States 1st Infantry Division attacked from the South and the United States 25th Infantry Division blocked and attacked from the East.

Intelligence gave the Viet Cong Order of Battle, Capabilities, Expected Courses of Action to be:

83

1. Units within the battalion area of operations and area of interest:

81
United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION JUNCTION CITY ALTERNATE, 19 February 1967 to 15 March 1967, APO San Francisco 96250.

82
Don Moser, "Battle Jump in Vietnam," Life, Vol. 62, No. 10, 10 March 1967, p. 77.

83
OPERATION JUNCTION CITY ALTERNATE.

a. COSVN (Central Office South Vietnam) Headquarters.

b. COSVN Military Affairs Committee.

c. 69th Artillery Regiment.

d. 70th Guard Regiment (COSVN Security Force.).

e. 9th VC Division Headquarters.

f. 101st NVA Regiment.

2. Enemy capabilities were:

a. To conduct harassing mortar, recoilless rifle, and small arms fire against friendly (RVN, US allied) forces.

b. To defend base areas and facilities in force.

c. To reinforce his attack with NVA/VC elements located outside area of interest.

d. To withdraw from or avoid contact at his own choosing.

3. Expected enemy courses of action prior to the operation:

a. To initiate small unit harassing actions and attacks on isolated units when he has the advantage of favorable terrain, superior numbers, and tactical surprise.

b. To conduct harassing mortar fire, mining, and sniping actions.

c. To conduct limited defensive actions to allow withdrawal of larger units and evacuation of base-supply areas.

The operation began on 19 February 1967 with the movement of the 4th Battalion from Bien Hoa to the American base at Quan Loi by Air Force planes. At Quan Loi the battalion was to establish a base in preparation for D-Day. (To understand the importance the US high command placed on the JUNCTION CITY OPERATIONS, the date for beginning the operations was given the designation D-Day.)

On 22 February, the battalion was airlifted into War Zone C at 2:15 p.m. and by nightfall, a patrol from C Company established contact with units of the 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry. The 4th Battalion reported no contact during the air assault or during the remaining afternoon. 84

One of the assigned roles of the battalion was to set up blocking actions on Highway 4, and the battalion moved into this position on the morning of the 23d. Armor units from the 11th ACR was used in support roles by the 173d Airborne. On the 25th, the unit started locating base camps that had been deserted by the enemy, but left full of equipment and documents. From this point on, until the end of the operation on 15 March 1967, numerous camps and positions were found, almost all of them abandoned.

The majority of the battalion's contact with the enemy was with fire team (two to five men) and squad size forces. The largest contact was made with an estimated platoon size force. During this contact, rifle grenades (RPG's and B-40 rockets) and various automatic weapons were employed against B Company. The automatic weapons fire included .30 caliber machine guns. The enemy had excellent control of their fire. Fighting from chest-deep trenches, they directed their fire on a wide fan pattern with a grazing fire six to eight inches above the ground. To supplement this fire, they placed several men⁸⁵ in trees with automatic weapons.

This action occurred on 9 March 1967. At 1:02 p.m., B Company engaged the enemy in a bunker complex. B Company fell back and called for artillery and air strikes. While withdrawing, they were engaged by another group of enemy troops. Two more air strikes were called in, then the company moved forward again to the position of first contact. It was at this point that B Company was pinned down by the heavy enemy fire. They were able to break contact with the enemy at 5:15 p.m. The US losses were two KIA, seven WIA, and 1 MIA. The missing man was later⁸⁶ found dead. The enemy suffered "unknown" losses.

85
Ibid.

86
Ibid.

On 1 March, A Company made the biggest find of the battalion during OPERATION JUNCTION CITY ALTERNATE. A propaganda center was uncovered containing different movie and still cameras, five movie projectors, two speaker systems, films, and documents. The enemy made no attempt to defend this base or to remove the material. Brigade S-2 (Intelligence) identified the position as a photography and propaganda school. Three hundred fifty pounds of photographs and 15,000 feet of movie film were removed⁸⁷ from the school.

While attached to the 2nd Battalion, 34 Armor (OPCON to 2/34), D Company engaged an estimated two squads of enemy troops, believed to be Viet Cong. This was the first deep thrust by armor into the Triangle in this section of War Zone C, and the enemy failed to utilize all firepower at their disposal to halt the tanks. The VC⁸⁸ only used small arms fire and grenades to stop them.

The majority of contact was with members of the⁸⁹ 70th Guard Regiment.

Enemy losses were:

KIA (BC) - 17

KIA (Poss) - 7

87

Ibid.

88

Ibid.

89

Ibid.

VCC - 2

4th Bn. 503d Inf. losses were:

KIA - 6

WIA - 33

The United States put 25,000 troops into War Zone C to locate and kill or capture the estimated 10,000⁹⁰ enemy troops there. By the end of the operation, less than 600 enemy had been killed.

JUNCTION CITY was a well-executed operation. The enemy, however, pulled a near perfect counter-sweep⁹¹ and managed to avoid most contact with American forces.

While they did not lose many men, the enemy suffered great material loss. The 4th Battalion alone⁹² captured:

1,100 rounds ammunition

500 uniforms

60,000 pounds rice

10,000 pounds dried fish

⁹⁰
Francois Sully, "I Can Smell Charlie All Around,"
Newsweek, 6 March 1967, p. 23.

⁹¹
Francois Sully, "Sweep and Counter-Sweep,"
Newsweek, 13 March 1967, p. 50.

⁹²
OPERATION JUNCTION CITY ALTERNATE

- 20,000 pounds peanuts
- 100 vials assorted medicine
- 5 platoon size base camps
- 1 regimental size base camp
- 1 photography and propaganda school
- 14 bicycles
- 550 pounds of photographs
- 400 pairs of sandals
- 1 gas-powered generator
- 5 movie cameras (8 mm & 16 mm)
- 5 movie projectors
- 12 still cameras (35 mm)

Overall, JUNCTION CITY ALTERNATE was a success for the 4th Battalion. All units operated with the skill of professionals and utilized the experiences they had encountered in earlier operations.

This operation was the beginning of denying the area known as War Zone C, North of Tay Ninh City, to the enemy as a major headquarters and staging area.

The 4th Battalion returned by Air Force C130s to the Bien Hoa via the forward base at Quan Loi, on 15 March 1967.

The Military Assistance Command in Saigon decided to follow OPERATION JUNCTION CITY ALTERNATE with OPERATION JUNCTION CITY 2. This operation was also to be in War Zone C. This time it was to be centered in the area Southeast

of Tay Tinh City around the Minh Thanh Rubber Plantation.

The operation was set to begin on 20 March 1967.

The 4th Battalion was part of the overall operation conducted by the 173d Brigade.

This section of War Zone C was believed to be the working grounds of the 19th VC Division. The mission of the 4th Battalion was to be in position to maneuver in support of either the 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry or the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry in event either of them came into heavy contact, and to be prepared to continue search-and-destroy operations in the battalion's AO. The area was well prepared for air assault by the 4th Battalion by a

94

series of B-52 strikes.

On 28 March, C Company located a bunker, sized 20 feet by 30 feet, with overhead cover. This bunker contained many tools, air compressors, drills and bits, all brand new, all still boxed. ⁹⁵ Shortly thereafter, C Company came in contact with a group of VC estimated at 40 men.

93

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION JUNCTION CITY 2, 20 March 1967 to 13 April 1967, APO San Francisco 96250.

94

Ibid.

95

Ibid.

Artillery, air strikes, and small arms fire were put
in on the enemy with unknown results.⁹⁶

As in the preceding operation, much equipment was taken and many living and work areas were deprived the enemy. The cost was high, 11 US KIA and 68 WIA. The enemy suffered also with 25 KIA (BC) and 6 KIA (Poss).

The VC fought on a limited defensive action in base camp areas. They fought from fortified bunkers, trees, and foxholes. Upon entering these base areas, the battalion found them to be very boobytrapped. Also, stream crossings were heavily boobytrapped.⁹⁷

The battalion found and destroyed seven base camps, 80 bunkers, two classrooms, and 75 hooches. The majority of material found in these hooches were parts and equipment for repair and building purposes. Captured documents revealed the presence of Worksite 9 of the 9th VC Division Headquarters.⁹⁸

OPERATION JUNCTION CITY 2 ended on 13 April 1967.

The battalion returned to War Zone D on 26 April with OPERATION NEWARK.

96

Ibid.

97

Ibid.

98

Ibid.

Two separate air mobile assaults were made into two different areas of operation.⁹⁹ One element secured an FSB with local patrolling, and the other element conducted extensive search-and-destroy missions.

The 4th Battalion executed the operation in three phases:

1. Movement of 4th Battalion to area of operation.
2. Conducting of search-and-destroy operations by elements of the 4th Battalion.
3. The 4th Battalion conducted heliborne extraction on 30 April 1967.

The battalion made no contact with the enemy nor did it locate any bunker or supply complexes. The primary benefit of OPERATION NEWARK was the phasing in of the initial group of replacements. The operation's short duration allowed the new personnel a chance for a gradual adaptation to the abrupt climate change. New unit commanders on the platoon and squad level were given training to familiarize them with the problems in land navigating encountered in jungle terrain.¹⁰⁰ The battalion

⁹⁹ United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION NEWARK, 26 April to 30 April 1967, APO San Francisco 96250

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

was returned to Bien Hoa to prepare to initiate OPERATION UNIONTOWN. This was changed on 5 May 1967.¹⁰¹

OPERATION DAYTON began on 5 May. The 4th Battalion moved by motor convoy to the 11th ACR base camp (Blackhorse) near Long Giao. On arrival the 4th Battalion became the Brigade Reaction Force for the 173d Brigade. It stayed in this status until 11 May when it conducted an air assault on LZ 19 in order to set up blocking positions.¹⁰²

With one exception the contact made by the battalion with the enemy consisted of squad size and smaller size elements. Even then, it appeared that the enemy was trying to leave the AO instead of engaging the battalion.

The only significant contact occurred on 14 May when A Company located an enemy base camp. The enemy, estimated at platoon size, was taken completely off guard. The enemy suffered 13 KIA (BC). The US suffered one slightly wounded.¹⁰³

101

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION DAYTON, 5 May to 17 May 1967, APO San Francisco 96250.

102

Ibid.

103

Ibid.

Various other sightings of enemy troops were made, and uniform description of those killed by A Company indicated the dead were NVA regulars, possibly members of the 3d Battalion, 275th NVA Regiment.¹⁰⁴

All elements of the battalion were returned to Bien Hoa on 17 May 1967 at the end of the operation. During OPERATION DAYTON, the 4th Battalion suffered six troopers killed in action and three wounded.¹⁰⁵ While en route to Bien Hoa on the 17th, LTC Jackley received verbal orders for OPERATION CINCINNATI from the Commanding General, 173d Airborne.¹⁰⁶ The mission of the 4th during CINCINNATI was to establish a mortar fire base and secure it while conducting search-and-destroy movements in War Zone D.

After action reports list thirteen occasions in which contact was made with the enemy. All of these were chance encounters. All of the troops were Viet Cong of local force variety. It appeared that these troops were porters, for only one out of three were armed.¹⁰⁷

104

Ibid.

105

Ibid.

106

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION CINCINNATI, 18 May to 23 May 1967, APO San Francisco 96250

107

Ibid.

One particularly significant event of this operation was on 20 May when B Company captured one Russian-made 122.5 mm rocket. This was the first such rocket captured by the western world.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁹ The enemy lost six men KIA (BC) and two possibilities.

CINCINNATI served a dual purpose for the 4th Battalion. As is OPERATION NEWARK, the small amount of contact provided an excellent period to train the replacements the battalion was receiving. The second factor was the continuous effort to develop the checkerboard concept.

During this operation, a ceasefire truce was in effect. War truces are good, yet they can have seriously adverse effects on the morale of troops. On 23 May one company of the 4th found a VC base camp with every sign of recent activity. Because the United States policy was to respect the truce, the destruction of the base camp could not be accomplished.¹¹⁰ This concept was difficult for the troops to understand after spending days looking for such camps.

108

Ibid.

109

Ibid.

110

Ibid.

The battalion lost two dead and nine wounded. ¹¹¹

Not everyone observed the truce.

The operation ended on 23 May 1967.

OPERATION FRANCIS MARION took the 4th Battalion North again, this time to Pleiku Province, North of Pleiku City. ¹¹² This search-and-destroy operation occurred from 2 June until 19 June 1967. As the operation began, the 4th Battalion was at Base Camp Catecka as Brigade Reaction Force. The 4th also assumed responsibility for the relief and reinforcement of the United States Special Forces Camp at Duc Lap. The last mission of this operation was for the 4th to be prepared to relieve the 1st or 2nd Battalions in their AO to conduct search-and-destroy operations.

During the period from late April until 15 June, the 4th Battalion made almost a complete turnover in personnel. FRANCIS MARION gave the new personnel a chance to work together and to obtain an idea of the difficulties they would later encounter. ¹¹³

111

Ibid.

112

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report, OPERATION FRANCIS MARION, 2 June to 19 June 1967, APO San Francisco 96250

113

Ibid.

On 18-19 June the battalion returned to the base camp at FSB Catecka in order to prepare for OPERATION STILLWELL. The 4th Infantry Division was the command headquarters for the operation. The operation ran from 20 June to 22 June 1967, near Pleiku City.¹¹⁴ 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry was OPCON to the 4th Infantry Division.¹¹⁵ The 4th was to be airlifted in two separate, two-company operations to conduct two days of search-and-destroy operations. Eight different enemy units were in the area of operations.

The terrain was of steep high mountains to the East and gentle rolling plains to the West. The hills were wooded with many ridges and gullies. These prohibited rapid maneuver and good fields of fire. Due to this, the enemy was in position to attack in up to multi-battalion force and anything smaller. The enemy planned on his opponents's units sending reaction forces into this terrain, then planned on attacking these reactionary forces by employment of ambushes.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION STILLWELL, 20 June to 22 June 1967, APO San Francisco 96250.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

The battalion's activity was minor as far as contact occurring. One enemy was killed and one was captured.¹¹⁷

On 22 June 1967, the 4th Battalion returned to the control of the 173d Brigade, and immediately began taking part in OPERATION GREELEY.¹¹⁸

Enemy units believed to be in the battalion AO were:¹¹⁹

1. 24th NVA Regiment
2. 304th VCMF Battalion
3. 200th VC Artillery Battalion
4. H-15 LF Battalion
5. U/I NVA Engineer Battalion

The NVA were expected to be better trained and equipped, and to attack with much more vigor than the Viet Cong in the III Corps Tactical Zone. He was capable of establishing a strong defense. Due to the relative closeness of the Cambodian and Laotian borders, the enemy chose not to defend the area with great strength, but to delay and withdraw his main forces across the nearby bor-

117

Ibid.

118

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION GREELEY, 20 June to 17 September 1967, APO San Francisco 96250

119

Ibid.

120
der. He kept up a constant harassment of isolated out posts during the entire operation.

On 10 July 1967 the 4th Battalion suffered 22
121
KIA and 48 WIA.

For this operation, Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) (local villagers) troops operated with some American units. Since most CIDG troops were from the area of operations, they could move quickly through the terrain and hit the enemy soon and with surprise. 122

The weather was a factor as periods of limited visibility restricted the conduct of heliborne operations during the morning hours. Tactical air support also was frequently restricted by weather. 123 The monsoon period was in effect during this operation.

It was impressed upon each element of the battalion that, unless absolutely unavoidable, units were to attempt to break contact immediately with any well-dug-in enemy force of sufficient size, so that all available sources of supporting fires could adequately prepare the objective area. These supporting fires came from artillery,

120

Ibid.

121

Ibid.

122

Ibid.

123

Ibid.

mortar, TAC Air, and gunships. Where it was not possible to break contact, the units were to be prepared to accept casualties from friendly fire in order to bring close fire in on the enemy.¹²⁴

As this operation occurred, it was found out that companies could not be assigned march objectives. GREELEY took place in the II Corps Tactical Zone in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. In this type terrain, movements by troops with packs did not usually exceed 200-300 meters per hour.

OPERATION GREELEY cost the enemy 26 known killed and one man captured. They lost temporary use of 249 assorted types of fighting positions for the duration of the operation. The battalion lost 24 killed and 88 wounded in action.¹²⁵

On 4 August, LTC James H. Johnson assumed command of the 4th Battalion. LTC Jackley moved to the position of Executive Officer for the 173d Brigade.¹²⁶

GREELEY terminated on 17 September 1967.

The following day the 4th Battalion commenced OPERATION BOLLING I in Tuy Hoa District, Phu Yen Province,

¹²⁴
Ibid.

¹²⁵
Ibid.

¹²⁶
Ibid.

RVN. This area was known as the Rice Bowl. As in previous operations, the 4th Battalion was a part of a task force composed of elements of the 173d Airborne Brigade.

This area was the location of several units of enemy troops, the known units and their estimated strengths were:

128

1. Headquarters, 5th NVA Division - 3060
2. 95th NVA Regiment - 1200
3. 30th MV Battalion (NVA) - UKN
4. 85th LF Battalion (VC) - 285
5. K-65 Sapper Company - UKN
6. K-76 Sapper Company - UKN
7. 91st NVA Regiment - UKN
8. 313th NVA Battalion - UKN

This is the first time the battalion faced primarily NVA troops (on 10 July, the battalion suffered severe losses at the hands of an estimated two NVA companies in an area heavily concentrated with VC).

127

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION BOLLING I, 17 September to 31 October 1967, APO San Francisco 96250.

128

Ibid.

The enemy had built up his forces through infiltration, recruiting, and conscription.¹²⁹ They were capable of striking in Phu Yen Province with up to one marginal combat effective regiment. They used harassment, terrorism, and unconventional warfare tactics in their efforts to dominate and control the area.

The terrain was closely compartmented into ridges and valleys. The highest point of elevation was about 1350 feet. Average elevation was 450 feet.¹³⁰ The highland areas were basically rock and timber while the lowlands were elephant grass and small trees.¹³¹ The enemy used the local relief to the best advantage in conducting raids and ambushes.

The enemy operated in small units, thereby making numerous helicopter assaults necessary.

This operation gave strength to the argument that was first presented during OPERATION TOLEDO, that of the need to be able to go several days without resupply. It showed that the resupply helicopters gave away the element's position, which negated the possibility of finding the enemy.

¹²⁹

Ibid.

¹³⁰

US Army Corps of Engineers Map Sheet #L7014

¹³¹

OPERATION BOLLING I.

The lowland areas concealed heavily tunneled areas for the battalion to contend with. CS Gas was used in clearing these tunnels, along with their being searched by "tunnel rats."¹³²

Along with conducting search-and-destroy operations in the assigned AO, the battalion conducted operations to prevent the enemy from taking the rice harvest.¹³³

This area was truly heavily occupied by the enemy. They lost 37 killed in action and had 3 captured. 36 Viet Cong suspects were captured and another 269 persons were detained.¹³⁴ The US suffered four dead and 17 wounded.

On 1 November, the 4th Battalion was airlifted out of the AO assigned during OPERATION BOLLING I and flown to Dak To. There it became under the operational control of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division. It remained OPCON to the 4th Division until 8 November when it went back under the control of the 173d, which had moved into the area. This was named OPERATION MACARTHUR.¹³⁵

¹³²
Ibid.

¹³³
Ibid.

¹³⁴
Ibid.

¹³⁵ United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION MACARTHUR, 1 November to 16 December 1967, APO San Francisco 96250.

The enemy was expected to be in the process of preparing to attack and overrun Dak To with two or three regiments. He was also expected to defend in place and in positions of his own choosing to inflict maximum casualties on US forces conducting search-and-destroy missions.

The units within the 4th's AO and their estimated strengths were:

1. 24th NVA Regiment (Infantry) - 1620
2. 32nd NVA Regiment (Infantry) - 1337
3. 66th NVA Regiment (Infantry) - 1335
4. 174th NVA Regiment (Infantry) - 2000
5. 40th NVA Regiment (Artillery) - UKN
6. 200 MLF Battalion (Artillery) - 400
7. 304 LF Battalion (Infantry) - 400

All of these troops were expected to withdraw to bases inside of or near the Cambodian and Laotian border and to avoid contact with US forces under circumstances unfavorable to them.

MACARTHUR was an operation of large proportions. 1st Battalion, 69th Armor; A, C, D Companies of 1st Battalion, 12 Infantry; A, B, C Companies of 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry; units of 173d Engineers; B & C Batteries,

3d of the 319th Artillery were, at one time or the other, OPCON to the 4th Battalion.¹³⁷

The enemy was dealt a smarting blow as a result of this operation. The 4th killed 174 NVA troops and captured three. Eighty-three weapons were captured along with 200 grenades, 14 antitank mines, numerous mortar rounds of different sizes, one 60 mm mortar and much other equipment, 12 base camps, 600 or more bunkers with overhead cover, and 290 fighting positions were denied the enemy during this operation.¹³⁸ The enemy was constantly active in the area. They constructed bunker complexes, engaged in platoon size elements and constantly sniped at US troops with small arms fire.

From the outset of the operation heavy contact occurred. From hilltops, from dug-in bunker complexes, the battalion was engaged with well-trained, well-equipped, regular North Vietnamese troops. The area was mined with antipersonnel and antitank mines.¹³⁹

On 24 November, 4th Battalion was airlifted back to Dak To and again became OPCON to the 1st Brigade, 4th Division, and was assigned the duty of airbase security.

¹³⁷
Ibid.

¹³⁸
Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid.

During this period, enemy contact by the battalion dropped sharply. The 4th stayed at Dak To until 17 December when it returned to Tuy Hoa for resumption of OPERATION BOLLING.¹⁴⁰ The 4th suffered also. It lost 46 killed and 219 wounded in action.¹⁴¹

OPERATION BOLLING I was terminated on 31 October 1967 when the 4th Battalion (and the remainder of the 173d Brigade) was airlifted to assist the 4th Division during OPERATION MACARTHUR. MACARTHUR continued until 16 December and BOLLING was again started in 17 December and ran until 16 July 1968 when it was again interrupted, to resume on 27 July. OPERATION BOLLING ended on 24 August 1968. The period from 17 December 1967 to 24 August 1968 was called OPERATION BOLLING II for administrative purposes.

The 4th's area of operation was mostly mountainous and hilly. The area ranged from mostly dense forest with thick underbrush to open hilltops. There were, however, rice paddies and flatlands (usually filled with elephant grass) with many populated areas (this area had yet to go through the resettlement routine).

During BOLLING II, the 4th's mission was three-fold: first, to conduct search-and-destroy operations in the assigned area to find, fix, and destroy the 95th

140

Ibid.

141

Ibid.

NVA Regiment; second, to relieve and/or reinforce the United States Special Forces Camps at Dong Tre and Cung Son; and third, to be the reserve element of the First Field Force, Vietnam.¹⁴²

Several major changes in command occurred in the battalion on 2 February 1968. LTC David L. Buckner took command from LTC Johnson. He, in turn, was succeeded by LTC Alexander M. Weyand on 18 July 1968.

The organizational structure of the 4th Battalion also underwent change as of 1 May 1968. The normal organization for the battalion prior to this date was TO & E 7-35F, consisting of a headquarters and headquarters company and three lettered rifle companies with an additional provisional company (Company D). The new structure was set up under MTO & E 7-175T as further modified by USARPAC 60 122, dated 15 February 1968. This authorized four rifle companies, one combat support company, and a headquarters and headquarters company.¹⁴³ The capabilities remained the same.

For OPERATION BOLLING II, intelligence gave a further breakdown on the enemy situation during this oper-

¹⁴²
Ibid.

¹⁴³
Quarterly Supplement to the History of the Fourth Battalion (Airborne), Five Hundred Third Infantry, 1 April 1968 to 30 June 1968, Office of the S-3, MSS. Washington, D. C. (unpag).

ation. For OPERATION BOLLING I, enemy strength was believed to be in excess of 4,545 troops.¹⁴⁴ For BOLLING II, the total was revised to be in excess of 8,339 troops. Four new NVA regiments, the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 18th, and two engineer (sapper) companies.¹⁴⁵

For the remainder of 1967 the battalion conducted search-and-destroy operations in its assigned AO. At 6 p.m. (Saigon time) on the night of 31 December 1967, a 36 hours New Years truce went into effect. The battalion conducted no offensive operations during this period. Defensive patrols were maintained and one NVA soldier was captured at 10:03 a.m. (Saigon time) by Company D.¹⁴⁶

The beginning of 1968 saw more of the same type operation occurring. As Tet approached, more and more contact was made with the enemy. On 30 January the battalion was moved to Tuy How North Airfield and became heavily engaged with the enemy. Patrols were out around the airfield.

Two companies of enemy troops were spotted moving into a village West of the airfield. Company D moved to

¹⁴⁴
OPERATION BOLLING I.

¹⁴⁵
United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION BOLLING II, 16 January to 1 March 1968, APO San Francisco 96250.

¹⁴⁶
Ibid.

check these reports, made by gunships assigned in support roles to the 4th. By 9:30 a.m., both platoons of D Company were in contact and pinned down by heavy small arms fire. By 9:45 a.m., C Company was alerted to reinforce Company D. At 10:45 a.m., the 4th Battalion was officially notified that the Tet Truce was cancelled, effective 147 9:45 a.m. By noon, D Company was breaking contact and pulling back to allow air strikes on the village. C Company was being lifted in to reinforce D Company. At 3:30 p.m., the jets hit the village. An hour later D and C Companies attacked the village and C Company was immediately in heavy contact. At 4:45 p.m. ARVN forces (the 4th Regiment) began to attack the village from the West. At 5:21 p.m. the battalion commander ordered all companies to pull back from the village and placed artillery and air strikes in the village all night. 148

Enemy troops captured during the fight reported that the 5th Battalion, 95th NVA Regiment was in the village. The 5th Battalion command post was destroyed during 149 the first air strikes.

147

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION BOLLING II, 16 January to 31 March 1968, APO San Francisco 96250.

148

Ibid.

149

Ibid.

The mission of the 5th Battalion (as reported¹⁵⁰ by POWs) was to destroy Tuy Hoa North Airfield.

On the morning of the 31st, B Company was moved in to assist C and D Company. E Troop, 17th Cav, and D Troop, 16 Armor, moved in to add armor support. B Company policed the battlefield during the morning and D Company was moved to Phu Hiep to standdown and to prepare for its reorganization. D Company suffered 13 killed¹⁵¹ and 40 wounded on the 30th. In one fight D Company lost 51% of its assigned strength.

Events slowed down after this major battle. For February and most of March only sporadic contact occurred with the enemy.

On 27 March, Brigade S-2 (Intelligence) confirmed the 95th NVA Regiment was still in the area and was preparing to begin aggressive assaults again. Intelligence also reported that Tuy Hoa was to be hit by a concentrated enemy attack 31 March.¹⁵² The attack failed to materialize.

At this time the Search and Destroy concept was changed to Reconnaissance in Force (RIF). The procedure was basically the same.

150
Ibid.

151
Ibid.

152
Ibid.

April was a period of locating bunker complexes and base camps. Several enemy were captured during this period. May also was spent on RIF missions. Night ambushes were common place events, but with primarily negative results. June saw more enemy activity.

On 19 June, Company C, OPCON to the American advisor to the 23d ARVN Division, was reported in heavy contact throughout the day. The company suffered 5 KIA¹⁵³ and 19 WIA. The remainder of June remained reasonably calm.

July also was a quiet month for the battalion. Little contact occurred, and only three troopers suffered wounds due to hostile action.¹⁵⁴ On 9 July the battalion suffered an unusual injury. Company A reported one individual who was bitten by a tiger. The victim was evacuated by dust-off aircraft.¹⁵⁵

On 23 July B Company captured a Vietnamese woman and a large supply of medical supplies. The woman proved

153

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION BOLLING II, 1 July to 16 July 1968, APO San Francisco 96250

154

Ibid.

155

Ibid.

to be a nurse for the NVA.¹⁵⁶ She was one of seven captured during this operation by the 4th Battalion.

During 8-9 August, 4th Battalion located a bunker complex and captured 61 letters from North Vietnam dated 2 August.¹⁵⁷

Beginning 24 August 1968, the battalion ended OPERATION BOLLING II and began OPERATION MACARTHUR (Phase II).

The enemy suffered heavy losses of men and equipment during BOLLING II. The NVA units did not actively control the AO due to the presence of friendly troops in the area.

OPERATION MACARTHUR II again put the 4th OPCON to the 2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division with a primary mission of RIF to prevent a reported threat of a build-up of enemy troops and to be in position to relieve and/or reinforce the United States Special Forces Camp at Duc Lap.¹⁵⁸

OPERATION MACARTHUR II continued until 15 October 1968. BOLLING II went back into effect on 15 October and lasted until 29 October. OPERATION WALKER went into effect

156
Ibid.

157
Ibid.

158
Ibid.

on 1 December and lasted until 10 December. 11 December until 23 December saw the 4th involved in OPERATION COCHISE.

These three operations consisted of numerous helicopter assaults, extensive small unit patrolling, night ambushes, and company size reconnaissance-in-force operations.

OPERATION MACARTHUR II was under the operational control of the 2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division. The 4th Battalion returned to control of command of the 173d Airborne for the remainder of 1968 on 15 October. ¹⁵⁹

The enemy order of battle remained basically the same. The presence of friendly troops in the AO did not allow active control by the enemy.

Intelligence reports kept reaffirming the fact that the 95th NVA Regiment (located west of Tuy Hoa City) was in a weakened state and was giving continuing emphasis on the rehabilitation of its weakened battalions. ¹⁶⁰

The entire area was crisscrossed with a complicated trail system. This provided the enemy with easy movement at night with elements up to battalion size.

159

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION MACARTHUR II, 1 October to 15 October 1968, APO San Francisco 96250

160

Ibid.

COCHISE moved the battalion to the area East of Pleiku, centrally located in II Corps in the area of the Song Ba River. OPERATION WALKER was also in the same general area.

161

This series of operations was conducted to prevent the massing of enemy forces in the An Khe area. On vocal order of the Commanding General, 173d Airborne, the 4th Battalion moved by air to conduct the limited operations.

162

There was not a large number of enemy troops in the 4th Battalion's area of operation. After thorough search-and-destroy type missions in the area concerned, few significant incidents were reported, but the finding of supplies and positions was fairly large. A large number of caves were discovered, and an extremely large medical cache was discovered during the middle of December.

OPERATION SKYHAMMER ran from 26 December 1968 until 19 January 1969. On 21 January, the 4th Battalion began the first of four operations known as OPERATION DARBY PUNCH I, II, III, and IV. This series ran until

161

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION WALKER, 1 December to 25 December 1968, APO San Francisco 96250.

162

Ibid.

31 March 1969. These operations all occurred in II Corps in An Tuc, Tuy Hoa, and Tuy Phouc Districts. ¹⁶³

The remainder of 1969 saw more of the same type activity. The latter half of 1969 was devoted to the process of pacification in the northern part of the country along the coast. The battalion was to intensify surveillance of its specific area of operations to determine and verify the avenues of approach into area used by the enemy. ¹⁶⁴ The secondary mission of the battalion was the rapid engagement of the detected targets and continuing security of the area. ¹⁶⁵

To do this surveillance, the 4th utilized radar located on FSBs, "Snoopy" electronic devices for eavesdropping on the enemy, as well as using Ranger teams for visual observation as well as company size patrols. ¹⁶⁶

163

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION SKYHAMMER, 26 December 1968 to 19 January 1969, APO San Francisco 96250.

164

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION WASHINGTON GREEN, 1 July 1969 to 30 September 1969, APO San Francisco 96250.

165

United States Department of the Army, Headquarters, 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, Combat After Action Report - OPERATION OLYMPIA, 8 November to 4 December 1969, APO San Francisco 96250

166

Ibid.

When these spottings were made, the subject was engaged by artillery, helicopter gunships (Cobras), mortars, and small arms fire.

1970 saw continued combat security operations in northern Tam Quan District. Large amounts of enemy supplies were captured as well as numerous fighting positions and bunker/cave/tunnel complexes. A large number of suspects were detained and turned over to the control of local RVN military personnel for processing and clearance. This area was heavily populated with hamlets ¹⁶⁷ giving rise to the suspects.

The 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry's involvement in the Vietnam War was closed out in August, 1971. The first of 1971 saw a period of light activity by elements of the battalion as far as contact was concerned. Casualties were still high but were mostly inflicted by boobytraps and random shelling by enemy forces. The battalion remained on alert and conducted security patrols.

On 28 July 1971 Letter of Instructions for preparation for redeployment brought standdown for the 4th that began on 6 August with actual departure from Phu Cat Air Base on 24 August. ¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷
Map Sheet Series L7014 - South Vietnam Sheet
Edition 1-AMS, US Army Corps of Engineers.

¹⁶⁸
Letter of Instructions, 28 July 1971, Commanding General, 173d Airborne Brigade MSS., APO San Francisco 96250.

Along with the 4th, E Troop, 17th Cav, the 173d Support Battalion, N Company, 75th Infantry (Rangers), and other units deployed for reassignment at Fort Campbell. This move was the third and final increment of the relocation of the 173d Brigade.¹⁶⁹

The 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry was deactivated at Fort Campbell, Kentucky on 26 August 1971 after a period of six years and two months in the Republic of Vietnam.

During this period the battalion killed 999 enemy personnel, had 88 possible kills, and captured 182 enemy soldiers. The price was high: 287 Americans lost their lives and 1,689 wounded in action.

GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

ACFT.....	Aircraft
ACR.....	Armor Cavalry Regiment
AO.....	Area of Operation
AR.....	Automatic Rifle
ARVN.....	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
Bushmaster.....	Ambush
CAC.....	Combined Action Company
CIDG.....	Civilian Irregular Defense Group
CP.....	Command Post
DET.....	Detachment
FAC.....	Forward Air Controller
FOB.....	Forward Operational Base
FSB.....	Fire Support Base
FW.....	Frag Wound
GSW.....	Gun Shot Wound
KIA.....	Killed in Action
I CTZ.....	First Corps Tactical Zone
II CTZ.....	Second Corps Tactical Zone
III CTZ.....	Third Corps Tactical Zone
IV CTZ.....	Fourth Corps Tactical Zone
MACV.....	Military Assistance Command Vietnam
MAF.....	Marine Amphibious Force
MAR.....	Marine
NDP.....	Night Defensive Position
NVA.....	North Vietnamese Army

OPCON.....Under Operational Control of
PF.....Popular Force
RIF.....Reconnaissance in Force
RVN.....Republic of Vietnam
SA.....Small Arms
SEP.....Separate
S & D.....Search and Destroy
TACP.....Tactical Air Control Party
TO & E.....Table of Organization and Equipment
VC (BC).....Viet Cong Body Count
VCC.....Viet Cong Captured
VCS.....Viet Cong Suspect
WIA.....Wounded in Action

TABLE OF ORGANIZATION & EQUIPMENT

AUTHORIZED STRENGTH

TO & E 7-35F

Unit	Officer	Warrant Officer	Enlisted Men	Total
HHC*	18	2	232	252
A Co	6	-	174	180
B Co	6	-	174	180
C Co	6	-	174	180

*Company D (Provisional)

Officer	Warrant Officer	Enlisted Men	Total
4	-	104	108

AUTHORIZED STRENGTH

TO & E 7-175T

Unit	Officer	Warrant Officer	Enlisted Men	Total
HHC	15	2	147	164
A Co	6	-	158	164
B Co	6	-	158	164
C Co	6	-	158	164
D Co	6	-	158	164
E Co	4	-	96	100

MAPS

VIETNAM CORPS TACTICAL ZONES



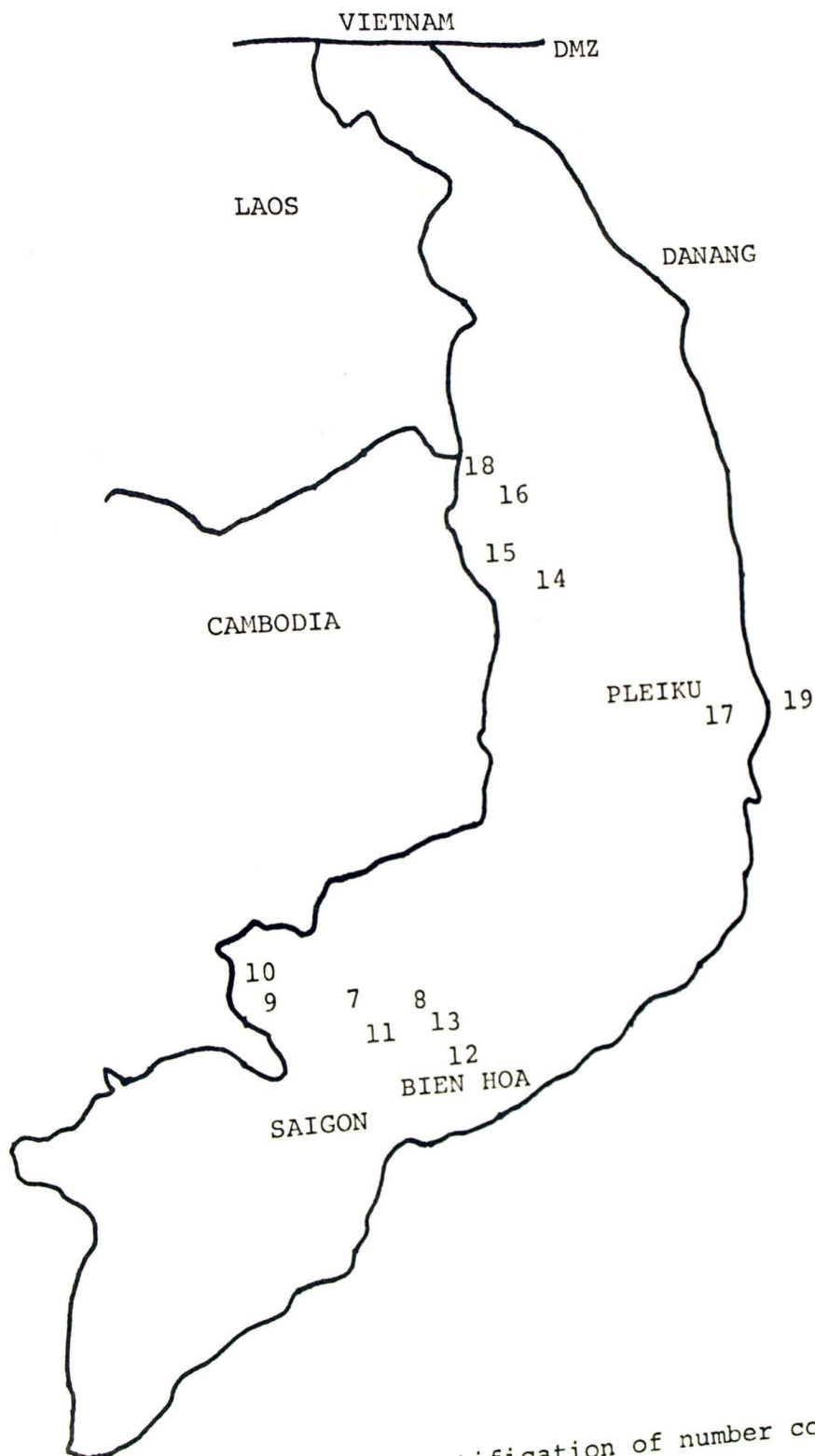
1966

- 1 OPERATION AURORA I
- 2 OPERATION AURORA II
- 3 OPERATION TOLEDO
- 4 OPERATION ATLANTIC CITY
- 5 OPERATION WINCHESTER
- 6 OPERATION CANARY/DUCK

1966

- 1 OPERATION AURORA I
- 2 OPERATION AURORA II
- 3 OPERATION TOLEDO
- 4 OPERATION ATLANTIC CITY
- 5 OPERATION WINCHESTER
- 6 OPERATION CANARY/DUCK

AREAS OF COMBAT OPERATIONS



See next page for identification of number codes.

1967

- 7 OPERATION CEDAR FALLS
- 8 OPERATION BIG SPRINGS
- 9 OPERATION JUNCTION CITY ALTERNATE
- 10 OPERATION JUNCTION CITY II
- 11 OPERATION NEWARK
- 12 OPERATION DAYTON
- 13 OPERATION CINCINNATI
- 14 OPERATION FRANCIS MARION
- 15 OPERATION STILLWELL
- 16 OPERATION GREELEY
- 17 OPERATION BOLLING I
- 18 OPERATION MACARTHUR
- 19 OPERATION BOLLING II

TRAINING MEMORANDUM #4

INCLOSURE # 1 (TRAINING PROGRAM OUTLINE) to TRAINING
 MEMORANDUM #4 (Ship Training Program) Dated 25
 May 1966, Headquarters 4th Bn (Abn.), 503d In-
 fantry, Fort Campbell, Kentucky

TRAINING PROGRAM OUTLINE

Following are the subjects to be given, and the unit responsible for instructors, lesson plans, and conduct of the class.

<u>SUBJECTS</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>UNIT/INSTR</u>	<u>TOTAL/HRS</u>
P. T. Army Daily Dozen	2 hrs per day	All Units	30 Hours
Map Reading	2 hrs per wk	A Co	6 Hours
First Aid	1 hr per wk	HCC-Med Plat	3 Hours
Escape & Evasion	1 hr 1st wk	B Co	1 Hour
Field Sanitation	1 hr 1st and 2d wk	C Co	2 Hours
Code of Conduct	1 hr 1st wk	B Co	1 Hour
M16 Training	1 hr per wk	C Co	3 Hours
M79 Training	1 hr per wk	B Co	3 Hours
.45 Cal Pistol	1 hr 1st & 2d wk	A Co	2 Hours
Adj of Arty and Mortar Fire	1 hr per wk	HHC-Mortar Plat	3 Hours
VD Control	1 hr 3d wk	HHC-Med Plat	1 Hour
Ambush & Counter Ambush	1 hr 1st & 2d week	B Co	2 Hours
Defense	1 hr 1st & 2d wk	C Co	1 Hour

Field Fortification	1 hr 3d wk	A Co	1 Hour
Patrolling	3 hrs 3d wk	HHC Recon Plat	3 Hours
Radio Telephone Procedures	1 hr 3d wk	HHC-Comm Plat	1 Hour
Personal Hygiene	1 hr 3d wk	C Co	1 Hour

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS



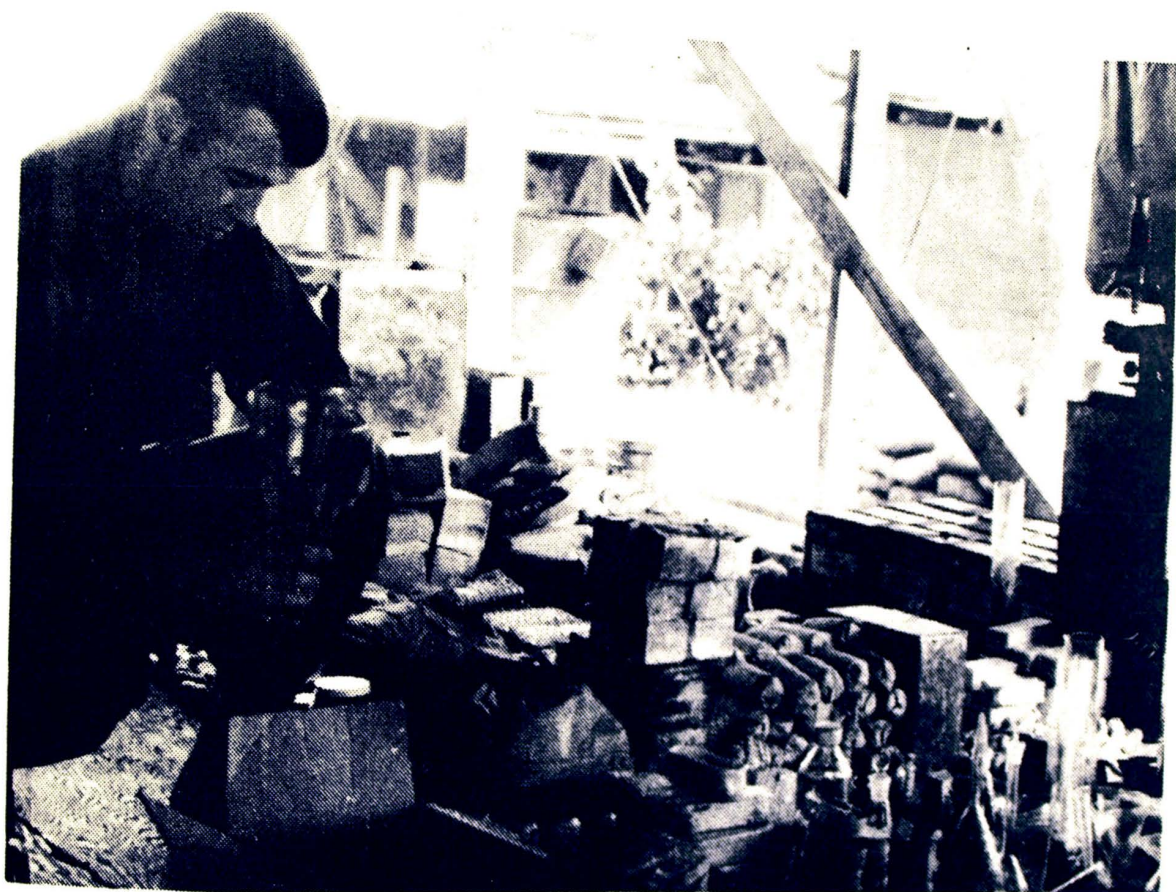
Paratroopers of the 4/503d Infantry debark from landing craft that carried them from the USNS Pope to shore at Vung Tau.



General William C. Westmoreland, Commanding General of US Forces, Vietnam, greeted the 4/503d shortly after their arrival at Bien Hoa. Here he is extending his best wishes to LTC Michael D. Healy, Battalion Commander.



On 14 August 1966, PFC Daryl R. Corfman of A Company was killed by an enemy mortar round. His body lies wrapped in a poncho as his squad leader, SGT Ritcher of HHC maintains watch for the dust-off ship while the smoke clears.



SP4 Larry Tackett of the 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry examines one of the items contained in a VC medical cache confiscated near An Khe by Alpha Company.

ROSTER OF KEY PERSONNEL

ROSTER OF KEY PERSONNEL
COMMANDERS AND STAFF, 1 APRIL 1966

Battalion Commander

LTC Michael D. Healy	1 April 66 - 3 February 67
LTC Lawrence W. Jackley	4 February 67 - 3 August 67
LTC James H. Johnson	4 August 67 - 1 February 68
LTC David L. Buckner	22 February 68 - 17 July 68
LTC Alexander M. Weyand	18 July 68 - 31 December 68

Executive Officer

MAJ Raymond F. Spinks	1 April 66 - 1 December 66
MAJ Robert C. Allen	1 December 66 - 18 December 66
MAJ Billy W. Wilson	19 December 66 - 6 February 67
MAJ Ronald E. Button	7 February 67 - 17 August 67
MAJ Robert T. Cooper	14 August 67 - 3 November 67
MAJ Richard M. Scott	4 November 67 - 24 January 68
MAJ Don H. Schwab	25 January 68 - 19 June 68
MAJ Herbert T. Matsuo	20 January 68 - 31 December 68

S1

CPT Wolfgang Hertwerk	1 April 66 - 25 June 66
CPT Dennis K. Taillie	25 June 66 - 20 October 66
1 LT Robert D. Stowell	21 October 66 - 24 January 67
CPT Gerald E. Hunsicker	25 January 67 - 28 July 67
CPT Peter T. Kozak	29 July 67 - 24 August 67

CPT Jimmy J. Jackson	25 August 67 - 19 November 67
CPT George T. Baldridge	20 November 67 - 19 June 68
CPT Leonard C. Thomas	20 June 68 - 17 September 68
CPT William G. Hospodar	18 September 68 - 31 December 68

S2

CPT Don H. Hampton	1 April 66 - 7 August 66
CPT Robert D. Bailey	8 August 66 - 29 December 66
CPT John R. Wolfgang	30 December 66 - 5 June 67
CPT James J. Muldoon	6 January 67 - 13 July 67
CPT Ronald R. Leonard	14 July 67 - 5 November 67
	6 July 67 - 9 December 67
CPT Joseph S. Johnston	10 December 67 - 22 March 68
1 LT Larry R. Moore	23 March 68 - 30 January 68
CPT Albert B. Mark	1 July 68 - 30 July 68
CPT Robert V. Pack	31 July 68 - 18 October 68
1 LT Roland C. Ficker	19 October 68 - 31 December 68

S3

MAJ Jack G. Kelliber	1 April 66 - 24 July 66
MAJ Robert C. Allen	25 July 66 - 30 November 66
MAJ William I VanDinter	1 December 66 - 5 April 67
MAJ Walter D. Williams	6 April 67 - 10 July 67
MAJ Robert T. Cooper	11 July 67 - 13 August 67
MAJ Richard M. Scott	14 August 67 - 3 November 67

MAJ James B. Oerding	4 November 67 - 26 March 68
MAJ Duane E. Zimbrick	27 March 68 - 10 July 68
MAJ Maced R. Dumas, Jr.	11 July 68 - 20 August 68
CPT Lewis Highinbotham	21 August 68 - 10 September 68
MAJ Kenneth E. Wright	20 September 68 - 31 December 68

S4

CPT Ted K. Yamashita	1 April 66 - 29 June 66
CPT Walter F. Rosco	30 June 66 - 24 February 67
CPT Benjamin F. Parsley	25 February 67 - 24 June 67
CPT Joseph S. Johnson	25 June 67 - 18 September 67
CPT Johnnie R. Gilbert	19 September 67 - 9 December 67
1 LT George W. Roberts	10 December 67 - 31 December 67
CPT Grant G. Vernon	1 January 68 - 19 June 68
CPT Victor E. Holsalle	20 June 68 - 3 December 68
CPT Edgar C. Johnson, Jr.	4 December 68 - 31 December 68

COMPANY COMMANDERS

Headquarters & Headquarters Company

CPT Walter F. Rosso	1 April 66 - 29 June 66
CPT Ted K. Yamashita	30 June 66 - 25 August 66
CPT Gerald E. Hunsicker	26 August 66 - 24 January 67
CPT Wolfgang Hertweck	25 January 67 - 4 June 67
CPT Richard M. Wrena	10 June 67 - 30 September 67

A Company

CPT Robert N. Bailey	1 April 66 - 8 August 66
CPT Don H. Hampton	9 August 66 - 9 February 67
CPT Dennie M. Tallie	9 February 67 - 5 June 67
CPT Alan B. Phillips	6 June 67 - 25 August 67
CPT Peter T. Kozak	26 August 67 - 23 September 67
CPT James J. Muldoon	24 September 67 - 21 February 68
CPT Ronald R. Leonard	22 February 68 - 31 March 68
CPT Guy B. Palumbo	1 April 68 - 30 June 68
1 LT Robert V. Pack	1 July 68 - 30 July 68
CPT David C. Brown	31 July 68 - 7 September 68
CPT Bruce M. Wilson	7 September 68 - 31 December 68

B Company

CPT Paul C. Clark	1 April 66 - 2 November 66
CPT John J. Yakshe	2 November 66 - 28 February 67
CPT Richard G. Stilwell	1 March 67 - 9 June 67
CPT Daniel J. Stevenson	10 June 67 - 8 July 67
CPT George T. Baldridge	11 July 67 - 8 November 67
CPT Ronald R. Leonard	9 November 67 - 19 January 68
CPT Arthur B. Mark	20 January 68 - 30 June 68
CPT Bruce L. Sesco Jr.	1 July 68 - 7 October 68
CPT Carleton P. Vencill	8 October 68 - 31 December 68

C Company

CPT Woodrow W. Barbee	1 April 66 - 13 April 66
CPT Jack K. Tarr	14 April 66 - 20 October 66
CPT Robert J. Lasala	20 October 66 - 11 December 66
CPT Lorenzo Sanchez	11 December 66 - 4 June 67
CPT William J. Connolly	5 June 67 - 9 December 67
CPT Johnny R. Gilbert	10 December 67 - 30 January 68
CPT Charles R. Briscoe	31 January 68 - 17 June 68
1 LT William C. Brewster	18 June 68 - 18 October 68
CPT Robert V. Pack	19 October 68 - 31 December 68

D Company

CPT Robert J. Lasala 1 July 66 - 19 October 66
 1 LT Richard G. Stilwell 20 October 66 - 28 February 67
 1 LT Daniel J. Stevenson 1 March 67 - 9 June 67
 1 LT John H. Baird 9 October 67 - 6 November 67
 CPT Michael H. Crabtree 7 November 67 - 19 November 67
 CPT Jimmy J. Jackson 20 November 67 - 8 May 68
 CPT Maurice W. Healey 9 May 68 - 30 June 68
 CPT William D. Hospodar 1 July 68 - 18 August 68
 CPT George T. Baldridge 17 August 68 - 8 October 68
 CPT Lewis Higinbetham 9 October 68 - 24 December 68
 CPT Victor E. Holsapple 25 December 68 - 31 December 68

E Company

1 LT Guy D. Colade 21 May 68 - 21 June 68
 CPT Grant G. Vernon 22 June 68 - 24 November 68
 1 LT Martin J. Cook Jr. 25 November 68 - 3 December 68
 CPT Victor E. Holsapple 4 December 68 - 24 December 68
 1 LT Martin J. Cook Jr. 25 December 68 - 31 December 68

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

FOR VALOR AND OUTSTANDING SERVICE IN VIETNAM

These medals were awarded to members of the 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry:

Medal of Honor - 2

Distinguished Service Cross - 7

Silver Star - 68

Legion of Merit - 1

Bronze Star for Valor - 461

Bronze Star for Achievement - 2159

Army Commendation Medal for Valor - 340

Army Commendation Medal for Achievement - 1658

Purple Heart - 1976

USNS GENERAL JOHN POPE

USNS GENERAL JOHN POPE

AP127 (USNS Pope)

Displacement - 12650 tons

Dimensions - 573 (wl) 609 (oa) x 75 1/2 x 29 feet

Machinery - two-shaft turbo-electric, SHP 17,000 = 20.6 knots

Armament - 4-5 inch, 8-40 mm AA guns

Complement - 618

Type - P2-S 2-R2

Built by Federal shipyard to carry 5,600 troops.

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