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**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96375**

17 MAY 1970

AVHGC-DST

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report - MG Elvy B. Roberts

Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development
Department of the Army
Washington, D.C. 20310

1. Attached are three copies of the Senior Officer Debriefing Report prepared by MG Elvy B. Roberts. The report covers the period 23 April 1969 through 5 May 1970, during which time MG Roberts served as Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile).
2. MG Roberts is recommended as a candidate guest speaker at appropriate service schools and joint colleges.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

1 Incl
as (trip)
2 cy wd HQ, DA


L. D. MURRAY
CPT, AGC
Assistant Adjutant General

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Senior Officer Debriefing Report (RCS-CSFOR-74)

Country: South Vietnam

Debriefing report by: MG Elvy B. Roberts

Duty assignment: CG, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile)

Inclusive dates: 23 April 1969 to 5 May 1970

Date of report: 18 April 1970

1. GENERAL: This report is submitted in compliance with USARV Regulation 1-3; in accordance with that regulation I have tailored the report to reflect the operational environment of this division and my own personal experiences. I believe it appropriate to add that my earlier assignments in Vietnam, which no doubt also affect my views of the past year, include six months in command of a brigade of this division (Sep 65 - May 66), five months as ADC-A of the 9th Division (Jun 68 - Oct 68) and seven months as Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans and Operations, USARV (Oct 68 - May 69). As an overall introductory comment, the story of the division's operations for the past year has been characterized by an expansion of our screening role into an operation which has driven the enemy main forces steadily back against the Cambodian border.

Without attempting to rehash information that is well known concerning the many aspects of the war in Vietnam, in III Corps, or in the area of operation of this division, I will first discuss a few aspects of the enemy which had a direct organization bearing on our activities. These include primarily facts that cast some light on the relationship between the enemy main force units, the local enemy forces, and the unique logistical system which had been set up to support them.

2. STRENGTH COMPARISON: For most of the period under discussion the division was operating across the northern tier of III CTZ, with one brigade in upper Tay Ninh Province

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(War Zone "C"), one brigade and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment OPCON in Binh Long Province, and one brigade in Phuoc Long Province. Each of the brigades was opposed by an NVA division. The total number of enemy main force troops in the area was 22,000, or slightly more than our divisional strength. In addition, there were three enemy local force battalions and an additional 14 separate local force companies, comprising another 1500 men. Enemy attrition during the period dropped the strengths of most regiments below the six hundred mark by January 1970, when the lowest ebb was reached. At this time, the new infiltration groups began to arrive, and now regimental strengths again are approaching 1,000.

On the allied side we had 36 RF company equivalents, 105 PF Platoons, and 32 PSDF Platoons permanently in our area, plus help at various times from ARVN Ranger Battalions, Mobile Strike Force Battalions, the ARVN Airborne Division, and the 5th ARVN Division. In very rough terms the ratio of friendly to enemy strength over the period was probably about one to one.

3. ENEMY ORGANIZATION AND TACTICS: During the past year the enemy decided on a very significant organizational change, converting one company of each infantry battalion to a sapper company. This conversion is not complete, but some battalions are known to have sapper companies now. At the same time, enemy artillery units seem to have decentralized much more than before, breaking down to the section level and scattering widely through the area. I believe that the creation of the new sappers and the spreading of artillery units indicates a greater emphasis on conducting multiple attacks by small forces utilizing fire support. This is an attempt to cause damage without taking the heavy losses they have sustained in the past, and also provides the psychological benefits of a coordinated attack or high point, even if the individual attacks in themselves are not significant. The new organization and tactics indicate also that the old enemy method of large-scale ground attacks against allied positions may have proved too much of a drain on the VC/NVA manpower and training base. Knowing something of the difficulty of making an organizational change in our own Army, I think this enemy reorganization must have been forced on the enemy by sheer necessity -- and that is a good sign for us.

4. THE EFFECT OF CONSTANT ALLIED PRESSURE: Our operations, supported by forward firebases, have cut movement down to a dribble on the major routes from the Cambodian border down

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to the populated areas. The enemy, accustomed to fairly long spells of relative quiet in War Zone "C" and Phuoc Long, has been forced to maintain his combat units in action for progressively longer periods.

The 95C Regiment of the 9th Division is a good example. Up until about August 1969, this unit alternated with 18B or other regiments in the "forward area", slipping north to safe havens after a few weeks of contact. Back in these safe areas, usually near the border, the unit would retrain, assimilate replacements, and plan new operations -- and, of course, rest its men. Since its last standdown in October, however, the 95C has had no rest. In early November it began to move, but the ARVN Airborne Division stayed on top of it through December in the Carolyn area in west central War Zone "C". It then shifted southeast around Ike but we targeted a package of Arc Lights and hit the 2d Battalion very hard in early January. When it started to withdraw northward toward Cambodia we moved behind it in the Bo Tuc area and kept in contact through early February. Our continuing operations near the border forced the regiment to keep expending men and materiel into March. Contact broke around the middle of the month and 95C moved to Base Area 354, west of Tay Ninh, probably looking for a much-needed rest. By the end of the month, however, our operations in that area forced him once again to commit a battalion in defense of his base and in one attack he lost 74 KIA. By early April we were in contact with 95C again, denying him badly needed time to rest and recuperate. To a great extent this continued pressure has been the case with the other regiments of the 5th, 7th, and 9th Division.

As a result, the NVA units suffered heavy attrition in manpower and logistics, and they were unable to maintain their forward bases in the traditional areas along the periphery of the population centers. By February the enemy found himself standing right on the border, with very little choice of operational area. The influx of replacements in February must have been most welcome and helpful, but these men had to be committed without time for familiarization and training. We have captured PW's who have said they were force-marched straight off the infiltration trail and into combat. This continuous fighting has been very difficult for the NVA units, wearing them down especially in their officer and NCO cadres, and strongly affecting the morale of the soldiers.

5. DESTRUCTION OF ENEMY LOGISTICAL SYSTEMS: Even more important, our ability to stay in the area regardless of the season has

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permitted us to destroy his logistical trail system and to keep him from re-opening it again to any significant amount. Our move to target on the logistical system as well as on the enemy maneuver units has been the most important decision that was made and carried through in the past year. The story of the Serges Jungle Road operation is one good example, although there are several others. We put in a strong force -- sometimes as much as eight battalions -- on the wide complex of trails running south along the Song Be from Cambodia to Binh Duong and Long Khanh Provinces, and concentrated on the destruction of the rear service groups, commo - liaison stations, production units, and security forces in the area. We also rooted out scores of caches, containing large tonnages of rice and other foodstuffs as well as huge quantities of ammunition including 760 large caliber rounds, and significant numbers of his logistical carriers - bicycles. After the initial operation we kept infantry and air cavalry units on the trail system in small numbers, reinforcing whenever we noticed a new enemy attempt to reopen this line of supply. We devised a number of ways to monitor trails which we had put out of action; in some cases, for example, we felled trees across the trail and periodically checked to see if the trees were removed or if detours had been made. The enemy tried to shift to new trail systems, and spent an inordinate amount of time in building and camouflaging new trails. The construction effort, of course, is easier to spot than the finished product and we were able to follow and frustrate his new moves without too much trouble.

This destruction of the trail system and our presence along the lines of communication has been a major factor in keeping the NVA units quite far to the north in the area of operations through the period before, during, and after Tet 1970 --- a time when the enemy had given every indication of a strong determination to move in against the populated areas. As long as the logistical routes are in a state of disrepair, enemy main force units tend to move ponderously, telegraphing their punches.

I am convinced, in fact, that much of the enemy's reputation for "lightning moves" and much of his former legendary capability for surprise in this area of Vietnam can be attributed to his perfection of the logistical system encompassing War Zone "C", Phuoc Long Province, and War Zone "D". With the discovery and destruction of the major cache sites at Rang Rang, Bu Gia Map, and northwest War Zone "C",

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and with the wrecking of the six major trail systems ("X" Cache System, Mustang Trail, Saigon Corridor, Serges Jungle Highway, Adams Trail, and Jolley Road), the enemy's ability to move large forces quietly and quickly has indeed diminished. I hasten to add that we must continue to target on these logistical systems in strength or he will be able to rehabilitate them and carry on as in former days.

THE JOLLEY ROAD: The importance of this facet of the past year's operations, that is, the interdiction of these sophisticated trail networks, is so vital to final allied success in the long term battle for this part of Vietnam that I believe a detailed example is essential to any reader who is really interested in the enemy's logistical system and commo - liaison system. The most recent of the several important trails which we discovered and destroyed was a complicated, well-hidden route system extending for at least 110 kilometers down the boundary between II CTZ and III CTZ from the Cambodian border through our area into War Zone "D" and on to southern MR-6 and MR-7.

After the enemy was forced off the Serges Jungle Highway (along the Song Be) in November 1969, he shifted his logistical activities progressively to the East, finally enlarging an old trail system along the corps boundary. North Vietnamese Army regular engineer battalions, working at a feverish pace, put the trails in shape for heavy traffic by the reinforced cargo bicycles of several rear service battalions that had by this time congregated in eastern Phuoc Long. The trail system in itself was a minor engineering marvel. Three feet wide and hard packed, it traversed streams and swamps on log bridges up to 300 feet long. Bamboo canopies laid over the top of the trail and covered with camouflage served to conceal the logistical activity from air observation, and bamboo side walls were used in several areas to further block out evidence of movement. Where the system turned up or down hill, steps were cut alongside the trail to make it easier for men pushing the bicycles with their loads, each carrying 400 to 500 pounds of rice or of ammunition. Documents and interrogation of prisoners later showed that each transportation battalion was able to move fifteen tons of supplies per day over a distance of about thirty kilometers, with companies each responsible for ten kilometers of trail.

The administration of the Jolley Road (the complex was named for Major Charles Jolley, commander of B Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, who discovered it) was in the hands

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of the 90th Rear Service Group, which operated a series of stations stretching from the border past Bu Gia Map and across National Route 14 near the Phuoc Long - Quang Duc boundary, and on to the Dong Nai River. The 90th also held responsibility for moving replacements along the route. North of Highway 14 the 86th Rear Service Group carried supplies down to a transfer point near the highway, where the 81st and 84th Groups picked them up and continued southward, the 81st through Rang Rang to MR-7 and the 84th into MR-6. The heavy traffic on the trail was the result of closing off the other routes in central and western Phuoc Long.

Just after the first of the year we intensified our reconnaissance of this trail system, using Ranger Teams and air cavalry. As it became more and more obvious that this was a logistical route of major importance, we established a string of light fire bases for our artillery in the area and set several rifle companies to work along the trail.

We had several light contacts initially -- mostly with surprised enemy couriers and administrative personnel. When we recognized the transfer point near Highway 14 and moved into that area, the contacts became heavy, and this continued as we pushed northward along the system.

By early February there were growing signs that supplies were becoming bottled up on the northern sections of the trail around Bu Gia Map. Moving rapidly from one light fire base to another, we jumped to the North and got into the major caches, working two of our battalions in coordination with three from the ARVN Airborne Division. I will discuss the details of the Bu Gia Map operation later on, as an illustration of the use of firepower and mobility. Suffice it to say that the 5th Division's 174th Regiment, along with the rear service groups, worked frantically to evacuate their caches across the border; and I'm sure some supplies were pulled out -- but the larger part of the cache was in our hands. When this food and ammunition is totaled with the extremely large caches found at this time further down the trail to the South of our area at Rang Rang, and also the other caches which we took out of the Serges Trail System and out of northwestern War Zone "C", it is clear that the enemy has suffered a truly devastating blow. I personally believe that this loss was a critical factor in the enemy's strategic decision not to push a strong "high point" during Tet. The present Cambodian situation, which may stop rice movements

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over the border and into VC/NVA hands, has come about at a very propitious time.

6. **TARGETING THE VC INFRASTRUCTURE:** Although this has not been our primary job, we have had some modest successes in eliminating Vietcong cadre types from the populated areas within our boundaries. In the middle of December 1969, for example, we made a concerted effort to uncover and neutralize Viet Cong Local Force units and VC infrastructure in Binh Long and Phuoc Long Provinces. To accomplish this task, we vectored two battalions against specific Viet Cong organizations. The 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry was targeted against VC forces in Loc Ninh District, to include the C-31 Local Force Company and the D-368 LF Battalion. The 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry was targeted against the D-168 LF Battalion and the Phuoc Long Province Committee. Before launching operations against these VC units we established close liaison with the District and Province intelligence/Phoenix advisors and drafted charts depicting the organization, personalities, and known strengths of the targeted units. We then developed information identifying operational areas and combat characteristics of these VC organizations.

Commencing in late December, units began deploying into areas of Binh Long and Phuoc Long Provinces that district and battalion intelligence had jointly developed, and the joint effort began to pay off almost at once. From 21 December to 31 January a total of 45 VC were killed and another 10 VCI captured. In addition several base areas were uncovered as well as over 40 lbs of documents, 24 individual weapons, four crew-served weapons, and six Chicom radios. Documents captured by the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry in Phuoc Long Province contained a complete list of all personnel of the D-168 Battalion as well as the Phuoc Long Province VCI organization. Documents captured in Loc Ninh District identified an important VC intelligence net and led to the eventual arrest of eight members of the infrastructure. Among those captured were surprising finds, including the commander of the People's Self-Defense Force for Loc Ninh District. We also identified as a hard core VC one of the local PF Platoon leaders, and a member of the Loc Ninh CIDG unit, as well as a VC tax collector. By quickly evaluating captured documents for immediate tactical value and then releasing them to DIOCC personnel, our units were able to assist the Vietnamese in identifying VC unit areas of operations, new members of the Viet Cong infrastructure, and future intentions of enemy units. Immediate reaction to this new intelligence enabled our forces and the GVN elements to push ahead with several follow-up operations. Our PSYOP teams coordinated quite

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closely with the district and battalion S-2's to exploit enemy weaknesses by directing their missions against specific individuals in Viet Cong infrastructure.

The operations as a whole were greatly encouraging and indicated the potential for good results from future coordinated efforts. I must add, however, that we have a long way to go in this area. The RF-PF-PSDF units are fairly strong in the Tay Ninh area and around Phuoc Binh and Phuoc Long. In Binh Long the picture is not nearly as bright. There we have broken down some of our companies into platoon and squad size units to work with outlying RF and PF platoons, but the training process has been slow in comparison to our combined operations around Phuoc Binh. The difference, in my opinion, lies in the quality of leadership at all levels, from the province chief (and his US advisor) down to the Vietnamese platoon and squad leaders.

7. SMALL UNIT TACTICS: We have made several shifts in our own small unit tactics in the past year, and in general the most important has been an emphasis on the use of infantry companies, operating alone, as light scouting forces whose mission is to search out the enemy, locate him accurately, and bring all possible heavy firepower down on him. Since the enemy tactic has been an attempt to entice our infantry men to attack in their heavily defended bunker complexes, our counter-tactic roots them out of their holes with air strikes and medium artillery. The infantry, after controlling and directing the massed firepower, then carefully sweeps through the area to finish off the remaining enemy with organic weapons. If a new bunker complex is encountered the process of calling in heavy firepower begins again. In this manner the enemy is unable to put to good use his advantages of cover and concealment. There are dozens of variations of method, of course: employing CS gas, gunships, LAW's, recoilless rifles, napalm, tanks, and other weapons. The end result is the destruction of the enemy at the least possible cost to our side. Leaders must stress aggressive search for the enemy, but foxy caution in the eyeball to eyeball approach.

8. THE LIGHT FIRE BASE: In order to provide artillery support to all companies in the field, and yet at the same time stay as airmobile as possible, we have gone to the light, temporary fire support base rather than the heavy base. We find that the heavy base requires a great deal of time, engineer effort, and equipment to build, and the units tend to become

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tied to such a base and reluctant to move. Also, the effort and helicopter lift necessary to move these large bases is costly. The temporary fire support base is moved often, averaging five days or so in any given location. These moves keep the enemy off balance and lessen -- they do not eliminate -- the chance of a coordinated enemy attack.

LONC RANGE PATROLS: Our ranger company (H/75) normally kept about ten to twelve patrols operational at any given time and this gave us a good capability for long range patrolling. There were usually two patrols in each brigade area and two operating under control of the DIVARTY commander in the base area around the division forward base camp. The five-man teams operated often beyond tube artillery range (though protected by on-call aerial rocket artillery) and, using the mountain radio relays at Nui Ba Ra and Nui Ba Den, they were able to cover almost every square kilometer of this vast area.

These Rangers in my estimation have done a harder job and a more significant job than any of their predecessors all the way back to Rogers himself. In the past year the company has completed 440 long range patrols, in which the Rangers made 124 contacts, killing 131 enemy. Their own losses were two killed.

Additionally, there have been several examples, including the abortive enemy attack on Fire Support Bases Ellen and Buttons on 4 November 1969, where early discovery in the early evening and the subsequent action of a Ranger Team contributed to a victory of a much larger scale.

9. OPENING NEW JUNGLE LANDING ZONES: During the past year the FIRST TEAM has used the 500 or 750 pound bomb with fuze extender, "Daisy Cutter", extensively throughout the area of operations. This device enabled us to operate in areas normally inaccessible to airmobile forces by clearing numerous small landing zones suitable for exploitation by one or more ships, depending upon the density of vegetation. We selectively placed these small LZ's throughout the area of operations and used them for log sites and medevac pads. They also enable us to insert Ranger Teams and other recon elements into the enemy's base areas. Generally, we found that the Daisy Cutters are more effective against trees during the dry season. However, the possibility of fires had to be considered when planning immediate exploitation.

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The last three months saw twenty-seven per cent of our daily pre-planned air strikes designated for Daisy Cutters. This gave us the ability to run a continuous program to open up selected areas and kept the VC/NVA off balance as to our intentions. In doing so, however, we had to keep in mind that pre-planned Daisy Cutters could not be diverted to immediate missions in support of troops in contact because of the large minimum safe distance involved in this type of ordnance. Careful planning was the key word here.

Like the Daisy Cutter, the Commando Vault (the M121 10,000 pound bomb) enhanced our flexibility by enabling us to move more freely. In particular this system provided us with a number of LZ's suitable for use during the wet season, when our choice of appropriate areas was rather restricted. With this weapon we could open up a one or two-ship LZ for enlargement by engineers. The alter version of the Commando Vault, using the BLV-82 15,000 pound bomb, completely shattered trees, leaving few stumps to interfere with lift ships. Residual stumps became a problem with the earlier type using the smaller bomb.

The major limitation of this weapons system was the long lead time necessary to obtain a strike. Three to four days were needed for processing of the request. Of course, we were competing for a scarce commodity...this made thorough planning an absolute necessity.

10. OPERATIONS IN THE DOG'S HEAD: In early March the 9th Division started its move toward its old area of operations west and south of Tay Ninh. We moved into the Dog's Head and made contact with major elements of the division during the move. The first heavy fighting occurred on 26 March and was followed by battalion size contacts on 29 March at Fire Support Base Jay, on 1 April at Illingworth, and on 16 April at Atkinson. Interspersed between these fights were a number of other smaller contacts. The enemy lost over 700 men in these actions and we had 83 killed and 234 wounded. We learned several important lessons in these engagements, a few of which I will discuss below.

First, the enemy has a great capability for massing indirect fire in this area, because of the short distance to his cache sites in Cambodia. Also, since this was one of his last strongholds in this part of the country, he is extremely anxious to defend it. The light fire base, which moves often to new locations, is a partial solution to the problem of

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protecting the supporting artillery and the battalion headquarters elements, but the tactical risk, however calculated, is still present. Fully hardened fire bases are not the answer, since the enemy's 120mm mortar, 107 and 122mm rockets, and the oversize B-20 rocket can tear up even a very hard site. The best thing is to emphasize mobility and avoid allowing the enemy the time to make careful reconnaissances and plans.

Second, all artillery ammunition and all demolitions stored on the fire base must be dug in and provided with as much cover as practicable. Exploding ammunition is an unwelcome event when a fire support base is fighting off an attack.

Third, it should be assumed that communications antenna arrays will be blown away early in a fire base fight. Appropriate steps to regain communications should be taken in advance.

11. THE AUTOMATIC AMBUSH: We also, along with some other units in Vietnam, turned an old enemy weapon against him; we began in earnest to trap him on the jungle trails with trip-wire claymore ambushes. Evolving from the combination of a US command detonated claymore mine ambush and an enemy trip-wire booby trap, the "automatic ambush" is essentially an unmanned ambush which is triggered by the enemy himself. It consists of a string of claymore mines rigged for simultaneous detonation when a trigger device is activated.

The original intent of the automatic ambush was to provide an economy of force measure to maximize area coverage, thereby increasing our interdiction capabilities along the enemy's infiltration and logistics routes. However, it soon became apparent that there were other advantages inherent in its design. The absence of friendly personnel in the immediate area eliminates any possible compromise of the ambush due to breach of light or noise discipline; also the effects of any enemy counter-ambush fires are negated since, again, our troops are not located in the ambush position. By its automatic nature we are assured of instant response when the enemy is in the killing zone. When employed in conjunction with a standard ambush, the automatic ambush, if positioned properly, may catch any enemy attempting to escape from the effects of the manned ambush. In addition to supplementing manned ambushes, we have found that automatic ambushes are very effective when employed as a stay-behind measure to eliminate enemy elements trailing our units, and as an additional early warning/protective measure for a night defensive position of fire support bases.

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The effectiveness of our automatic ambushes can be illustrated by the results obtained. During the three-month period January through March 1970, we killed 191 enemy, captured 11, and recovered 113 enemy weapons in these ambushes. One interesting point to note is that during this period not one of our own troops became a casualty as a result of enemy counter-ambush actions. I consider automatic ambushes such an effective combat power that I have included it in replacement training at the FIRST TEAM Academy. I have also established a training team that travels from unit to unit conducting refresher training on these ambushes.

In short, the employment of the automatic ambush in conjunction with the manned ambush enabled us to take the jungle trails away from the enemy. After we developed the skill necessary to operate on the trail systems we found the enemy was more restricted to the trails and at a greater disadvantage than we. He had to have the trails to conduct his business. We didn't. By employing Daisy Cutters, Commando Vaults, or sometimes just saws we could insert people by helicopter any place we wanted to and after moving out an acceptable distance could choke off the system from a static location for as long as we wanted, sustaining the operation on the blade while he had to move on the trails. The resultant continuous bleeding of his system of comms - liaison personnel, the rice and ammunition movers, the local guides and the continuous stream of traffic that pedaled up and down these well established trail systems will most certainly be sorely felt for a long time in Phuoc Long Province and in War Zone "C".

12. ROME PLOW OPERATIONS: We took advantage of the dry season in War Zone "C" to make 199 kilometers of Rome Plow cuts, opening up many heavily timbered areas that had served to conceal enemy base camps and inhibit our movement through the area. Instead of merely cutting along the axes of existing roads, we made "tactical cuts" deep into the jungle base camps of the enemy. In fact, during these operations we destroyed 1628 bunkers and fighting positions as a side effect to the plowing. We also anticipated the wet season by cutting out several good fire support base sites on the highest ground in the War Zone -- only a few meters above the surrounding terrain in most cases, but enough to get adequate drainage. Last year, operating there in the wet season, we found that the open areas were almost all lowlands, often knee deep in water. This year our newly-opened sites will give us much more flexibility. The enemy reaction to

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to Rome Plows in War Zone "C" was one of consternation. Only three plows were lost to enemy action during 98 company days of plowing.

I think one of the great assets we have had working for us in the heavy jungle has been the Rome Plow. It is my guess when the score sheets are all in the plow will stand high on the list of really significant contributors to the war in Vietnam. Base Area 355 in southeastern War Zone "C" and sandwiched between Tay Ninh and the Michelin was absolutely vital to the enemy to sustain his efforts toward the populated areas south of the Michelin. All the main logistic and commo - liaison routes from Cambodia through the well prepared bunkers of War Zone "C" came into the funnel of the Crescent and Base Area 355. From the store houses and hospitals in this area, all the operations to the South could be sustained into the Trapezoid, the Iron Triangle, and into the densely populated areas to the North of Saigon and Bien Hoa. When we plowed the enemy out of the Crescent, cut up Base Area 355, and eventually plowed out his bases to the North along the Cambodian border, this was the crux of breaking the enemy's capability to project his influence from War Zone "C". The concurrent plowing of the Trapezoid and other areas throughout the northern tier of War Zone "C" made a significant contribution to defeating the enemy in the northern tier of III Corps.

13. ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE: The integration of STANO (Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Night Operations) devices and techniques into the intelligence collecting effort of the division has had excellent results and indicates a very productive future for oncoming studies and experiments in this area. During the year we have gone from 20 sensors emplaced in the area of operations to 520 at present, and we are anxious to get more. Our "home-made" tests of the SLAR readings in the area show that even in this environment we can get fair SLAR results. Sniffer readings are proving very accurate, and Red Haze (Infrared), while varying with the influences of the wet and dry seasons, is good for searching out enemy cooking fires. Together these areas serve to harden other data or to give us indications of where we ought to be looking. We have concentrated on placing sensors in enemy base camps and then waiting until these sensors indicate that the enemy tenants have arrived.

The Nighthawk system has proved extremely valuable in pinpointing enemy movement at night in this area. With ten

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sets available to the division we keep one aircraft flying in each brigade area every night, plus one for DIVARTY. In addition to the standard system we carried out the Infant (Iroquois Night Fighter and Night Tracker) tests which have just been completed. In the 29 day test period beginning 26 Nov 69, three of these aircraft, with their integrated night mission and fire control system, killed 61 enemy and destroyed a truck, a bulldozer, and 2x .51 caliber machine-guns. Because of this impressive result we requested that we be allowed to retain the test systems, and we were given the systems for another 97 days. This is a highly valuable weapons system, but I believe that the relative difference in cost between Infant and Nighthawk, and the need for numbers of these devices, indicate that we should put our limited funds available for this purpose on the Nighthawk.

The air cavalry squadron and the infantry troops on the ground continue to provide the basic intelligence data, of course, but the refinement of our ability to see the overall picture has been in great measure the result of good employment of STANO. Special Intelligence support has given us a cross-reference that has provided the division with another source of immeasurable value. I would like to go into the tremendous help that the SSO has provided us, but unfortunately the classification of this report will not permit it. It is covered, however, in my supplementary report.

14. FIRE SUPPORT: It is almost impossible to overestimate the value of the B-52 operations against the enemy main forces in this area, and I cite a few graphic examples. In the first few days of the month of June, 1969 our reconnaissance told us that the 95C Regiment had moved into southern Base Area 355. Probing at first, we put in two B-52 strikes and followed them up with infantry. When these units had contact, we felt that the enemy regiment's location was pretty well defined. All ground units were pulled out, and we then put in four adjoining Arc Lights and air assaulted six rifle companies into positions around the target area before the dust from the last bomb had settled. A tank company from the 11th ACR swept in from the East, and in the ten days of fighting that followed over 400 members of the 800 man enemy regiment were killed. The remnants of 95C then withdrew into Cambodia not to reappear again in strength for several months.

This was followed very closely by a similar operation against another regiment of the 1st NVA Division, the 18B.

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As 95C withdrew, the 18B began moving south to replace it and our reconnaissance picked it up in the V13 area about 15 kilometers north of the action against its sister regiment. This time, the 2/5th Cav, reinforced by other elements of the 1st Brigade, air assaulted six companies into the target area after massive firepower (including a total of 15 B-52 strikes and over 100 air strikes) had softened up the enemy force. The 1st and 3d Battalions of 18B were trapped and lost a total of 298 men during the next four days. Only the 2d Battalion escaped, and it was forced to hit the 2/5th base at LZ Ike on the 18th and 20th of June in an attempt to cover the withdrawal of what was left of the other two battalions. These attacks cost the enemy regiment the lives of another 92 men. 18B then left War Zone "C" entirely, only to resurface three months later in the Delta.

When the 141st Regiment of the 7th NVA Division moved down the Song Be in November and December 1969, we targeted 15 Arc Lights into the base areas they were occupying. They kept shifting around, but we had a good handle on them and we continued to pound them with strikes until they finally gave up and moved back across the border into Cambodia. We had put troops on the ground to assess the strikes, but the findings were not spectacular -- a total of 1329 structures were destroyed and 189 enemy killed. A few months later, however, we captured the casualty list for the 141st Regiment for the year 1969, in which 313 were carried as KIA and 548 as MIA.

Another item worthy of mention in connection with Arc Light strikes is the chain reaction which sometimes can be set off. In September 1969 we targeted 38 Arc Light strikes against the 275th Regiment of the 5th Division in central Phuoc Long Province. The regiment, after losing about 200 men in these strikes, moved into the hamlets of Duc Bon Village, which at the time were VC havens. Serious problems developed between the locals and the NVA regulars. All the problems stemmed from food shortages. We had policed up large caches of rice which the 5th VC Division expected to find as it withdrew North under the serious food shortages that had developed in Long Khanh Province as a result of the 3d Brigade's operations in June and July. We took out of his storehouses along the Dong Nai over 90 tons of rice, 50 tons of flour, over 60 tons of salt plus large tonnages of dried fish, peanuts, etc., in addition to large tonnages of ammunition of all types. When the

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95A, 275th, and 174th Regiments withdrew from central Phuoc Long Province on to the North, a great number of the locals rallied to GVN, in many cases with their weapons. With this the villagers began to break away from VC control and rally to the GVN also. About 550 turned themselves in during this period, all citing the poor treatment they had received at the hands of the NVA regulars. The long range result of this operation seriously hurt the NVA forces because it deprived them of the people they needed to maintain their logistical trails, provide security, and produce food in the area of their major lines of communication.

15. ARA: The aerial rocket artillery battalion of the Division Artillery (three batteries of 12 Cobras each) continues to provide us with air increased flexibility and rapid response, plus the all-important coverage in areas beyond the range of tube artillery. The Cobras have been especially effective when used in sections against ground-to-air fire, and they fill a vital service in providing overwatch for ranger team insertions and extractions. Their major support effort, however, has been to provide rapid and accurate response to troops in contact in the field, where its value lies partly in its ability to deliver ordnance very close to the troops. The best evidence I can think of as an indicator of effectiveness is the universal respect that the Cobras enjoy among the ground forces.

16. GROUND TO AIR FIRE: We also used the Cobras in "massed" strikes against enemy positions which were placing ground-to-air fire on our aircraft. This tactic, combined with air strikes, artillery TOT's, and every type of fire that we could muster, was aimed at educating the enemy to the fact that he should not fire at aircraft.

Since July 1969 we have averaged 226 firings at aircraft per month, with November's total of 308 being the highest. We reacted with return fire to an average of 212 firings per month -- the others were cases in which the source of the fire could not be located. In these reactions we killed a total of 1707 enemy. We lost aircraft on the average of seven per month during the period. Considering the average of 30 - 40 thousand hours of blade time per month we lost one helicopter for every five thousand hours of combat flying.

17. AIRMOBILITY AND ARMOR: During nearly three-quarters of my tenure as commander of the Cav, I have had the 11th

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Armored Cavalry Regiment under my operational control. There have been some lessons in this experience which may be of interest to those who may be wondering about the application of armor and airmobility on the kind of battlefield found in Vietnam.

Our task organizations were strongly influenced by our attempts to maximize the terrain capabilities of airmobile infantry and of armor. With the techniques developed by this division throughout the war, our infantry is capable of operating flexibly in the densest vegetation, while armor is suited to more open terrain. The best tank country we have is the 300 square kilometers of rubber plantation in Binh Long Province, and it was here that the airmobile - armor team worked together to the best effect. The infantry would operate in the dense jungle outside the rubber, providing early warning to the tanks which could then mass quickly on the enemy when he entered the cleared area and bring their firepower and snock action to bear. In the absence of this teamwork, the infantry would have had decreased security and the enemy could have by-passed the armor once inside the rubber where movement is unrestricted and tanks are easily detected. Reversing this procedure, the counter-attack plan executed in the August offensive had the armor sweeping through the rubber while airmobile infantry was inserted into blocking positions beyond the reach of the tanks.

Vulnerable as Binh Long is to attack, with major enemy base areas just 15 kilometers from its population centers across the Cambodian border to the North and West, the temptation was strong to keep forces tied down in the area on a permanent basis. However, our combined reconnaissance and reaction capabilities were such that I felt quite confident leaving the defense of the area at times in the hands of six armored cavalry troops, allowing us greater operational scope elsewhere.

When the massive threat to Binh Long Province materialized in the early days of August, we were able to obtain sufficient early warning and reinforce quickly enough to meet the coordinated assault that came from elements of three enemy divisions. The attack was one of the fiercest we had seen. Within a two-hour time span the enemy launched assaults at seven different points along the entire length of the province, but our seven-battalion task force was sufficient to meet the challenge. 460 enemy soldiers lost their lives

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in one 12-hour period during which the NVA first launched their attacks, and then we counterattacked according to a carefully rehearsed plan. After this threat subsided, we then trimmed our forces in the area to meet challenges in other areas as they arose.

In many respects, the key to our ability to economize our forces has been the ability to mass armor and airmobile infantry very quickly and operate well together. On two separate occasions when Bu Dop was threatened we air-launched air cav troops in C-130's on the Bu Dop airstrip, getting there just in the nick of time to bring their weight against an enemy attack on the district town. We also regularly employed the combined arms team in all types of terrain to include dense jungle. With proper planning, thorough coordination, and forceful employment, the combined arms team of armored cavalry and airmobile infantry, supported by air cavalry recon assets, continues to be one of the most effective fighting teams available to the ground commander. The armored cavalry provides massive firepower, mobility, and shock action, plus the ability to break through jungle undergrowth. When coupled with the airmobile infantryman's ability to conduct detailed coverage of an area and provide close-in protection from enemy anti-tank weapons, and the organic aerial fire support available in the airmobile division, the commander is afforded the ability to field a truly effective fighting force, even in jungle terrain.

18. FIREPOWER AND MOBILITY: Our operation into the Bu Gia Map area, which I mentioned earlier, also serves as a good illustration of the use of firepower and air mobility in gaining control of territory where friendly forces have not maintained a presence for years. We initiated this operation with air cavalry and other reconnaissance on an increasing scale, picking out the general line of enemy base camps and routes. Battalion operations concentrated on the well known major trails, blocking them and piling up enemy supplies further to the north. We followed this with an extensive program of B-52 strikes, air strikes, and artillery TOT's; then we began to move our units northward by bounds. To frustrate enemy attempts to counterattack us, we again in this case used light fire support bases and moved them often. These light bases were put in and taken out in a day's time, allowing the battalions great flexibility.

The move toward Bu Gia Map was executed by three ARVN Airborne battalions and two US airmobile battalions. Within

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two weeks we had enveloped the old airstrip complex and we were into the main logistical system of the 5th Division and the rear service groups supplying Military Region 7 to the South. The search for caches proved immensely profitable, netting 151 tons of rice, 180 individual and crew-served weapons, and 86 cases of high explosives, along with 2,650 heavy caliber rounds and 433,421 small caliber rounds. During the operation the 174th Regiment, opposing us, was never able to get set for a major attack. We had contact every day, usually with recon elements of platoon-size forces. We often came on the enemy while he was attempting to withdraw his supplies. These contacts resulted in 492 enemy killed, at a loss to ourselves of 34 KIA and to the ARVN Airborne of 23 KIA.

The heavy use of air and artillery support was one of the keys to success in this operation. The air strikes opened up the triple canopy jungle so that we could see the trail and bunker systems and get a handle on the enemy. We moved 175mm and 8-inch guns far forward, cutting trails for the self-propelled weapons, and were able to mass artillery for some very powerful TOT's, employing up to 36 guns on several targets. This firepower plus our rapid movements served to confuse and demoralize the enemy. I believe that he was well prepared to counterattack into the immediate area of the Bu Gia Map airstrip, expecting a raid-type operation into that area, but we fooled him by not going for the strip until we had been in the area for 25 days and had run through and destroyed the outlying base camps on all sides.

19. DONG TIEN (PROGRESS TOGETHER): Close cooperation with all ARVN elements in accordance with the Dong Tien or Forward Together plan is an absolute requirement and one that has shown a lot of success in the past and the promise of more in the future. The best example in the past has been the relationship developed between the 1st Cav and ARVN Airborne Division under the command of Major General Dong. Beginning in November 1969, General Dong established his CP alongside ours at Phuoc Vinh and collocated two of his brigades with our 1st and 2d Brigades at Tay Ninh and FSB Buttons.

From the very first days, the paratroopers demonstrated a keen interest in learning every aspect of airmobile tactics. They translated our tactical notes, rehearsed their companies in helicopter assaults, and in an extremely short period were ready to operate along the same lines as our cavalry battalions. By late December the paratroopers had occupied

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firebases in War Zone C and Phuoc Long Province and were operating with single companies in the field, in the same manner as our own units. We provided helicopter troop lift, aerial rocket artillery, Medevac, and resupply to the Airborne, as well as moving their artillery by air. With this support they have been extremely effective. Operating in company-size units in this part of Vietnam is difficult and dangerous, with a strong enemy ready to take advantage of any misstep. At first the ratio of enemy killed to friendly casualties in the ARVN Airborne encounters was quite low, but the enemy count has risen steadily to a quite respectable average of 12.7:1 during March 1970.

As we went along and as the Airborne improved and refined their tactics, we moved gradually toward the goal of providing a separate area of operations (probably in War Zone "C") for the Airborne Division as a whole. On 19 March the 3d Airborne Brigade took over a sector of War Zone "C", with our 1st brigade and the 11th ACR on the right. On April 12th the 2d Airborne Brigade put its three battalions into the Serges Jungle Trail area to begin operations, flanked by the 9th ARVN Regiment on the left and 2d Brigade of the Cav on the right. The paratroopers are delighted with this arrangement and are looking forward to operating as a division in the near future.

At this time the ARVN Airborne Division has strong points that should be exploited and weak points that must be taken into account. Down to and including the small unit level the paratroopers know how to use airmobile assets, they know how to fight in bunkered enemy base camps and in deep jungle, and they are active and aggressive. On the other side of the docket they are weak in logistical aspects and they operate with a very austere staff at all levels. Since they have rarely been employed except as individual battalions, staff experience is not extensive even though many of the officers have been members of the division for years. The unit also is somewhat accustomed to alternating back to Saigon on a regular basis, and a long spell with several battalions in the field is a new approach. Overall, however, the ARVN Airborne Division is an outstanding fighting organization and it was a pleasure to serve alongside them.

The 5th ARVN Division under Major General Hieu also worked very closely with us, especially as the US 1st Division was drawn down and the 5th ARVN began to take its place in

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many areas. We ended this period with a far-reaching deployment of the 5th, which in the past had been accustomed to working close in around the north side of Saigon. General Hieu has placed one regiment in Binh Long Province and a battalion along the border at Bo Duc in Phuoc Long. The 5th ARVN has improved slowly over the past year and seems quite capable of getting out away from the populated areas and taking on the NVA in the jungle. It has proved this capability several times recently in company-size operations, and there are signs that the number of strong leaders in the unit is increasing. Like the ARVN Airborne, the 5th is hampered by a lightweight staff at division level, with staff experience developed in a static condition.

20. HELICOPTER "BLADE TIME" CONSIDERATIONS: With the increased flying requirements resulting from our support of ARVN Airborne operations and from the widening of the area of operations to 11,000 square kilometers, we have flown a far greater number of hours than we ever expected to fly. On 25 March, for example, we set a new 3-way record by flying 42,680 hours while achieving an 88% operational ready rate with an inventory of 440 aircraft. This represents the highest flying hours, the highest operational ready rate, and the largest inventory in the history of the division.

The flying hour rate has climbed steadily all year, from 30,749 in May 69 to the present high. With all of our fire bases deep in the jungle and off the roads, we have been supplying them almost entirely by air, using organic Chinook support. This has been costly in terms of helicopter blade time, but it has been necessary if we are to put the fire support where it can do the most good. Most good fire bases are not located near good roads. To bring the picture more into balance, however, any comparison should include the cost of building, securing, and maintaining the roads and bridges necessary to do the same job on the ground. Using the battalion fire base as a forward logistical base, Huey log aircraft from the lift battalion carry the supplies out to the companies operating in the jungle. When landing zones are not available, C-rations and water in disposable containers and other needed items can be kicked out from tree-top level. With this capability the companies can remain in the field for long periods of time, with no ground lines of communication. It is this system of air resupply that has allowed us to operate successfully in company and platoon-size forces throughout our area -- and in a significant sense it has

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changed the war: It is now the Allied force that ambushes enemy maneuver units and supply columns and poses a constant threat of surprise attack -- we do far more of this nowadays than he does.

In sum, then, by a combination of flying more hours than any previous standards visualized and with top aircraft maintenance performance, we were able to provide lift and gunship support to meet all the additional requirements imposed by the situation, without degrading the Cav's operations. On an average day somewhere between 10 to 20% -- generally about 15% -- of the total flying hour commitment of the division was taken up by bidders for lift other than the 1st Cav. The hours invested, however, were well redeemed in the progress made toward developing the full potential of the ARVN. The significant point here is this: If either the ARVN Airborne or ARVN Infantry is to operate and control the jungles of the northern tier of III Corps they too, as we, have to be sustained on the blades of helicopters and will require something like 150 to 200 hours per day to sustain the effort. In this connection, the first day we began operations with the ARVN Airborne we found we had to provide them with some equipment they did not have in order for them to operate over the distances involved. I understand the patchwork has been cranked into TO&E changes for them and I believe should be approved if they are to exercise the full capability to operate across the northern tier.

21. ROLE OF THE COMPANY COMMANDER IN THE CAV AO: I doubt if there has ever been a time when greater responsibility was placed upon that captain rifle company commander than in 1st Cav operations in the heavily jungled, heavily bunkered areas across the northern tier of III Corps. With few exceptions, I was fortunate for the most part to have good captains for rifle company commanders -- the best I have ever seen. We could not have fought and ground down the enemy the way we did unless they had been good. We operated in this vast AO entirely by separate company operations, each company working under battalion control, although widely separated from each other. All however were within the artillery fan from some fire base. The general pattern would be for the companies to operate out in the jungle from the fire base for twenty to twenty-five days at a time. The company would be logged by helicopter with ammunition, rations, and water about every four to five days in whatever jungle spot could be found (often a one-ship LZ had to be

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blown or cut). At the completion of this period the company would rotate through a few days of fire base defense, during which, while defending the fire base, they were glued back together, fed hot chow, given showers and a chance for some refresher training, and then out again, ready for another 25-day stint. During the time in the jungle, except for broad, general guidance from the battalion commander, with visits more often on "logging day", the company commander was pretty much on his own (landing in the company area was scorned by the company as it gave away their location and more often than not there was no landing zone immediately available anyway). His decisions and actions comprised the fulcrum on which success or disaster was balanced. To be able to do this as successfully as my company commanders did in the difficult environment they fought in indeed speaks highly of their prior training and professionalism. Of perhaps greater significance is the experience gained by these young captains. I am certain that this experience will provide a solid base from which to draw our battalion, brigade, and division commanders of the future.

22. ROLE OF THE INFANTRY IN THE CAV AO: At the risk of raising the eyebrows of my colleagues in the infantry, I must say in all truth that the role of the infantry in combat operations throughout the Cav AO has changed. The infantry to a great extent is employed as a reconnaissance force or a target acquisition force or whatever you want to call it. The classic role of the infantry of closing with and slugging it out with enemy had to give way to a role of finding and fixing the enemy. In the heavily bunkered areas of the deep jungle over which the 1st Cav always fought, to get locked in on slugging it out with the enemy in the bunkers was certain disaster. The infantry was used to find the enemy in their bunkers (he always fought from bunkers -- seldom were we fortunate enough to get him trapped away from the bunkers), then back off and beat the area up with Tac Air, gunships, and artillery. After this softening process, then the infantry elements could go in and uncover the "goodies." So the real killers became the heavy firepower assets and the real expertise is found in the ability of the lead infantry squad to recognize early enough the presence of enemy-occupied bunkers. Despite the fact that men who walk point tell me they learn to recognize the signs and some say they can even smell or feel the enemy presence, nevertheless unless the lead is really alert, the first discovery can be when the point or second man drops from enemy fire -- then it is too late.

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Too much of the element has already advanced unsuspectingly too far into the bunkers. So much here depends once again on the skill, control, and judgment of the platoon leader or company commander.

23. TRAINING IN COMBAT: In this war more than any other a company's skill in performance in combat -- most particularly in the difficult environment of the jungle -- would progressively erode to near zero without a constant retraining program. I required primary emphasis on retraining in the fundamentals each time the company was on a fire base or was in a basically defensive posture. This training in a few selected subjects such as combat firing, ambush techniques, low level contact drills, use of supporting fires, marking position, care of the body, etc., kept the companies' performance skill up and I am convinced contributed greatly to the good performance in a forbidding environment. I also found that the unit's memory bank is so short that all the good things learned must be reduced to writing and published as training notes lest the experience be lost in the ebb.

24. COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY: We have equipment in the system now that enables the battalion commander to conduct operations and communicate with his company commander over secure voice. The same is true, of course, from battalion and higher. Its use, however, must be forced because the equipment yet has some flaws that sometimes delay communications. It is absolutely essential that secure voice be used. The enemy "take" in intelligence from clear voice transmissions is shocking, and phoney rigged codes just don't work. Neither will frequent changes of SOI help much. Until a few months ago the Cav had not changed its call signs and SOI very often in Vietnam. The fear has always been that airmobile operations would get so tied up it would not be worth the sacrifice one would have to make in effectiveness of airmobile operations. I shunned this as long as I could, being unwilling to pay the reported price in degraded performance until I read excerpts of what the enemy was getting from monitoring our nets. After that we crossed over and have now changed SOI and call signs three times and this has been accomplished without degrading our operations at all. I found the fear of it to be like many other fears -- more imagined than real. In sum, as the use of secure voice increases (and I would bring continuing strong command action to insure that it does increase) one may find that these traumatic changes of SOI and call signs can be less frequent. Nevertheless, innate

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fears to the contrary, an airmobile division can change call signs without degrading operational performance.

25. **TURNOVER OF SENIOR PERSONNEL:** During the one year I have been in command, over 125 lieutenant colonels have either rotated out or changed jobs; similarly there have been 18 colonels. As I recall only three of the lieutenant colonels and none of the colonels were relieved from their duties for cause. Translated down to battalion commander level, all of my infantry battalions have had at least three changes of command -- most have had four and in one case there have been six changes of command during the year. The only reason we were able to survive this amount of turbulence in battalion commanders and principal division staff was because of the superb quality of the lieutenant colonel input. We have developed in this war some of the best lieutenant colonels I think the Army has ever had. Like the captains and majors which have been developed under the hard stresses of combat in this war, these will pay rich harvest as the senior commanders for the future. There has never been a better cauldron for the molding of future leaders than this.

26. **THE AIR CAVALRY SQUADRON:** It is difficult to single out one unit from all the others from which one gets the biggest pay-off in combat. I think, however, more than any other single unit, the air cavalry squadron has stepped out into the limelight in our operations across the northern tier of III Corps. It has advanced much beyond the classic reconnaissance role of the cavalry. In addition to reconnaissance which it does so well with the LOH operating in the trees covered by the gunship operating high, this combination for the last several months has been my "biggest killer." When combined with the quick response of the aerial rifle platoon to fix on the ground target, one has the ideal combination of packaged power for quick reaction. I used the cavalry squadron with one air cavalry troop, in direct support of each brigade. Although when indicated I did not hesitate and could with quick response use the entire squadron on a general support mission. It's a tremendous organization with tremendous power.

27. **THE SOLDIER AND HIS SUPPORT:** I could not complete my report of my tour of division command without paying tribute to the tremendous soldier that we have in this war, the superb training plant which put him in the field so well endowed with the requisite skills of his trade, and the magnificent structure which provides him in the field with

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what he needs. With respect to the last, from stem to stern the logistic support of this division has been of the highest quality and the dedicated professionals in the business of logistics all the way back up the chain are the unsung heroes who have made the difference. Regarding training, I believe the self-confidence built up and the military skill which has been instilled in our men at the training plants from which they came has provided us here with the best trained soldier for his job any commander has ever had. Finally, with regard to the soldier himself, the indomitable will, the raw courage, the dedication to purpose, and the motivation just to be a good soldier and to do his duty while here I suspect may be unequalled in the journals of soldiering. He is a great guy and our country can rightfully be thankful for him.



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