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IN REPLY REFER TO

DAAG-PAP-A (M) (21 Nov 72) DAFD-OTT

4 December 1972

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report: ~~SS~~ James F. Hamlet, Commander,
3d Brigade (Separate), 1st Cavalry Division, 13 Dec 71 - 20 Jun 72 (U)

SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Reference: AR 525-14, Senior Officer Debriefing Program (U) 2 July 1971.
2. Transmitted herewith is the report of BG James F. Hamlet, subject as above.
3. This report is provided to insure appropriate benefits are realized from the experiences of the author. The report should be reviewed in accordance with paragraphs 3 and 5, AR 525-14; however, it should not be interpreted as the official view of the Department of the Army, or of any agency of the Department of the Army.
4. Information of actions initiated under provisions of AR 525-14, as a result of subject report should be provided to the Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, ATTN: DAFD-OTT within 90 days of receipt of covering letter.

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Verne L. Bowers
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The Adjutant General

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1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)
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25 June 1972

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report of B.G. James F. Hamlet
RCS CSPCF-74

THRU: Commanding General
United States Army, Vietnam
ATTN: AVHDO-DO
APO San Francisco 96375

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development
Department of the Army
ATTN: For OT UT
Washington, D.C. 20310

Country: Republic of Vietnam
Debriefing Report by: Brigadier General James F. Hamlet

Duty Assignment: Commanding General of 3d Brigade (Separate),
1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile)

Inclusive Dates: 13 December 1971 to 20 June 1972

Date of Report: 25 June 1972*

1. (U) Introduction: This report covers observations and reports lessons learned during the employment of a separate airmobile brigade in a combat environment. During the period of this report, operations ranged from small unit actions to conventional, mid-intensity combat.

2. (C) Mission: The Brigade missions were:

a. To conduct dynamic defense of the Saigon - Long Binh complex in coordination with RVNAF.

b. To assist in the training of Territorial Forces.

c. To be prepared to move battalions to other MR's for security missions.

* At the present time the Brigade is undergoing a major re-organization in accordance with Increment XII drawdowns. This will be fully documented and forwarded under separate cover.

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d. To be prepared to execute assigned contingency missions. Emphasis was placed on combined operations. Although these missions were essentially unchanged, the area of operations was altered significantly during the period December 1971 through March 1972.

3. (C) Operational Environment:

a. Area of Operations: The area of operations (AO) underwent three basic changes in configuration and location. These adjustments were primarily a result of the phasedown and withdrawal of allied forces. In mid-December 1971, the AO covered approximately 3500 square miles in parts of Binh Tuy, Long Khanh, and Phuoc Tuy provinces (Inclosure 1). The area south of QL-1 in Binh Tuy Province is primarily a coastal plain covered with undergrowth or single canopy jungle, and is generally flat except for three key mountains: Nui Be, Nui May Tau, and Nui Nhon. North of QL-1 and astride the Long Khanh-Binh Tuy Province boundary lies an area of heavy vegetation, the Dong Nai River Basin, centrally located with respect to the other key terrain features of the AO. The northwestern portion of Binh Tuy Province is heavily populated and contains the largest rice-producing area in MR III. The northeastern portion of the province is very rugged and mountainous and is relatively uninhabited. The portion of Long Khanh north and west of QL-20, known as War Zone D, consists of double and triple canopy jungle. Steep ridges and valleys dominate the central and eastern portion of War Zone D. The severity of the terrain not only impeded ground movement but also significantly limited radio communications. As the AO's were shifted to the west towards Bien Hoa, the terrain became predominantly flat to rolling with relatively sparse vegetation and few mountainous areas. QL-15 which connects Bien Hoa with the Vung Tau Peninsula is the only other major highway in this area. The dominant rivers of the area are the Dong Nai which encircles Bien Hoa from the west and north, and the Song Be which joins the Dong Nai approximately 20 kilometers northeast of Bien Hoa. In mid-December 1971 the closure of the Thai and Australian AO's south of Bien Hoa created a void. To provide continuity of defense, the Brigade area of responsibility was adjusted and troops were deployed so as to dominate the Bien Hoa/Long Binh/Saigon rocket belt. By mid-January 1972 the second AO configuration included large portions of Bien Hoa Province and adjacent portions of Long Khanh.

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One battalion sized AO was retained in the area north and south of Nui Chua Chan to the east of Xuan Loc against the 33d NVA Regiment. By March 1972 the Brigade was installed in an AO where relatively close-in protection could be afforded to the Bien Hoa/Long Binh complex (Inclosure 3). In its final configuration the Brigade AO had been reduced to approximately 1092 square kilometers.

b. Nature of the Enemy: The enemy threat in the Brigade area of operations consisted of main force and local force elements under the control of Thu Bien sub-region operating in southwestern War Zone D and Base Area 359, southern Bien Hoa (P), eastern Bien Duong (P), and southern Phuoc Long (P) and Ba Ria sub-region operating in Base Area 300, Base Area 303, Long Khanh (P), Binh Tuy (P), and southern Bien Hoa (P) (See Inclosure 4). Logistical support was provided by the 814 Rear Service Group composed of the Ba Ria Rear Service Group (formerly 84 Rear Service Group) and the Thu Bien Rear Service Group (formerly 81 Rear Service Group). The Brigade's principal antagonists were the 33d NVA Regiment, the 274th VC Main Force Regiment, and the 74th Artillery Regiment.

(1) In December and January enemy activity remained light, the enemy concentrating on resupply, training, and rice collection from the Binh Tuy "rice bowl" in preparing for his 1972 TET offensive. Local force units used mines, booby traps, attacks by fire and terrorism to harass friendly forces within the Brigade's area of operations. Significant contact during this period occurred west of Vo Dat when Brigade units engaged a battalion of the 33d NVA Division, resulting in the destruction of a large bunker complex and the disruption of the enemy's rice harvest.

(2) In February, enemy activity increased but the TET offensive did not materialize to the degree expected. From mid-February to early March, contacts with the 33d NVA Regiment, the 274th VC Regiment, and with district headquarters for the VC Vinh Cu district of Bien Hoa Province and Xuan Loc district of Long Khanh Province hampered the enemy capability for a significant TET or post-TET offensive in the Thu Bien and Ba Ria sub-regions.

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(3) On 1 April the character of the war in Military Region III changed drastically when the enemy began his Nguyen Hue Campaign as part of his new offensive throughout Vietnam. Three enemy divisions supported by conventional tube and rocket artillery, an anti-aircraft regiment, and a tank regiment were committed against An Loc in Binh Long (P) north of the Brigade area of operations. Both the 33d NVA and the 274th VC Main Force Regiments and a battalion of the 74th Artillery Regiment were committed in Phuoc Tuy (P) to the southeast in an enemy attempt to fill the vacuum left by the withdrawal of the Royal Australian Task Force. Within the Brigade area of operations, enemy activity continued at a relatively low level. B-52 air strikes exploited by 1/12 Cavalry and 1/7 Cavalry are believed to have severely disrupted enemy plans for concurrent operations in northern Bien Hoa (P).

4. (C) Experiences in Command:

a. Concept of Operations: The size of the AO in mid-December 1971 (and the deployment of Brigade forces) was inconsistent with the mission of dynamic defense of the Long Binh/Bien Hoa/Saigon complex. This situation dictated the shift of combat power closer to Bien Hoa to protect the northern approaches and to occupy the area vacated by the Royal Thai Army Volunteer Force. Two factors inhibited the speed with which the reorientation of forces could be accomplished. First, the Brigade was dependent upon a heavy Forward Operating Base (FOB) Mace, at the base of Nui Chua Chan Mountain. This sub-installation had to be dismantled and demilitarized. Concurrently, the Forward Supply Element and Army Aviation Support facilities had to be relocated. Secondly, a large engineer effort was required to close out the old fire bases occupied by the maneuver battalions and to construct three new main bases and three mini-bases in the new AO. These requirements exceeded the Brigade Engineer Company's capabilities within the time constant. The shortfall between requirements and capabilities was offset by the use of non-brigade engineer assets, under the direction of MG James P. Hollingsworth, CG, Third Regional Assistance Command. A KEY LESSON LEARNED IS THAT AIRMOBILE BRIGADE ENGINEERS MUST BE AUGMENTED AS THE BRIGADE MISSION DICTATES A STRONG DEFENSE POSTURE OVER AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME.

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b. Organization: During this period the Brigade was organized with four maneuver battalions (2/5, 1/7, 2/8, and 1/12 Cav). In addition the Brigade was given OPCON of the 2d Squadron, 11th ACR on 21 December 1972. On 12 January 1972 the 1/12 Cav moved north to Tuy Hoa Air Base and was placed under the operational control of CG, Second Regional Assistance Group (SRAG). This battalion secured Tuy Hoa Air Base during the closeout of that installation. A detached company provided local security to the US installation in Pleiku. The 1/7 Cav conducted combat operations against the 33d NVA Regiment north and south of Nui Chua Chan. During February the 1/12 Cav (minus Company D in Pleiku) returned to the Brigade AO. During March 1972 the 2d Squadron, 11th ACR, and the 2/5 Cav were alerted to standdown in Increment XI of the withdrawal program. These units were relieved in-place by the 1/7 and 1/12 respectively. In an offensive operational environment the Brigade would have pursued enemy units relentlessly and would have deployed to any part of RVN to do so. In an economy of force role, the defense of headquarters and logistical bases directed a change in tactics. It is significant that no augmentation (except engineer support) was required to implement the change. As other units stood down the Brigade was levied for increased aviation support to US and RVN units in MR III. The absence of other forces generated an increased requirement for physical security of key installations. This, in turn, reduced the strength of infantry elements in the field. As a lesson learned, it is significant that a high percentage of TOE fill is still inadequate when security requirements exceed the normal tasks of an airmobile brigade. To a degree this shortcoming was offset by the responsiveness of intelligence units and supporting artillery.

c. Techniques of Employment:

(1) Force Employment Within the Brigade AO: The enemy attempted to avoid contact with Brigade units in the AO. This required aggressive patrolling by the infantry units. The rifle companies ranged throughout the battalion AO's under the protection of artillery and aviation. Two mutually supporting fire support bases were located in each AO. These bases were austere in design and of hard construction. Main bases contained three 105mm howitzers and two 155mm howitzers.

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Minibases had three 105mm howitzers. This decentralization of artillery increased the area of influence of each battalion. As intelligence was developed, or contact with the enemy occurred, the infantry would fix the enemy while superior firepower was brought to bear. Rarely was contact made with enemy elements larger than ten men. The combined capabilities of Air Cavalry, Infantry, ground based Artillery, and Aerial Field Artillery proved the validity of the combined arms concept. The fact that there were no major contacts and only occasional sporadic attacks by fire demonstrated that the enemy was kept off balance. It was commonplace to receive intelligence of the enemy dispositions just beyond artillery range. During the height of the enemy's Spring offensive there were four enemy attacks by fire on the military base at Bien Hoa. A total of seven rockets and fourteen 82mm mortar rounds were fired during these attacks. The perimeter of the US Army installation was not penetrated by sappers.

(2) Force Employment in Support of Higher Headquarters and Adjacent GVN Forces: During the enemy Spring offensive this Brigade had the only air cavalry troops (two) and AFA battery (one) available in MR III. At the height of the action from 5 to 19 April 1972 both air cavalry troops and two heavy sections (6 Cobras) of the AFA battery were tasked to support the ARVN forces engaged at Loc Ninh - An Loc. More detailed discussion of engagements is furnished in paragraph 6, Aviation Support. These necessary commitments severely cut into reconnaissance and aviation combat support within the Brigade AO. As the intensity of the enemy offensive subsided, the above commitments were reduced. Aviation assets employed outside the Brigade AO continued to be employed for bomb damage assessment (BDA), area reconnaissance, medical evacuation, cover escort, and small scale snatch missions. The frequency with which Cav pilots completed air missions in a high density anti-aircraft environment attests to the survivability of helicopters in mid-intensity warfare.

(3) The Acquisition of 155mm Howitzers: The Increment XI drawdown effected our artillery support significantly. With the standdown of the 2/5 Cav, one artillery battery also stood down, leaving us with only 3 105mm Howitzer batteries.

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This in itself was not significant, but at the same time all remaining medium and heavy U.S. artillery units in MRIII also completed standdown activities. This left the 3d Brigade without any bunker-defeating capability. This was unsatisfactory, so the Brigade's three remaining artillery batteries were augmented with a 155mm M114A-1 howitzer platoon for a total of six medium artillery pieces.

5. Intelligence Operations: The Brigade was fortunate to have two air cavalry troops, a Ranger Company, a chemical detachment with "Sniffer" (airborne personnel detector), a Left Bank radio research detachment, a radio research field station, infra-red and SLAR airbase surveillance systems, and agents of the 525th Military Intelligence Group available. Varying assets were used to complement one another to either confirm or rule out an earlier report or sensing. Very accurate patterns of enemy movement were obtained. The ultimate pay off came when maneuver units were put on the ground and either found the enemy or convincing evidence that he had been there.

a. A typical sequence of events might begin with a Special Intelligence Report or an agent report indicating enemy activity in a general area. Often this information correlated with results obtained from SLAR or infra-red. Sniffer and pink teams would be assigned to the area. All indications would be correlated to produce a picture of what was happening in the area. Frequently, a long range patrol from the Ranger Company would be inserted to further develop the area. When a target area had been established, offensive action, consisting of infantry assault, artillery fire, air strikes, or a combination of all three followed.

b. This correlation of intelligence information was necessary due to the large area of operations and the fluid enemy situation. The enemy situation changed so rapidly and constantly that normal patrolling would have been far too time consuming to stay abreast of the enemy's movements.

c. The Brigade relied not only upon its own intelligence capability but also upon the intelligence produced by other agencies within MRIII. Information provided by the Provisional Security Coordinating Group (PSCG) was particularly valuable.

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In February information furnished on the location of an enemy base area on the Long Khanh/Bien Hoa province border led to operations which destroyed the base area, killed the VC Vung Cu district chief, and wounded his executive officer. In May information was provided on the location of elements of Headquarters, Thu Bien Sub-Region which correlated with intelligence being produced by the Brigade. Five B-52 strikes were made. Subsequent aerial reconnaissance and ground operations found several bunker complexes destroyed or damaged. Several other bunker complexes were destroyed by the infantry. An agent reported to the PSCG that 82 enemy had been killed and 200 wounded by one of the air strikes, this was never corroborated by factual evidence.

d. Following TET the Brigade assumed operational control of a third air cavalry troop (F-4 Cav). Support was also given to TRAC for aerial reconnaissance missions throughout MR III and on limited missions across the border into Cambodia. This support became even more important after the enemy's Spring offensive began on 1 April. One or more air cavalry troops were committed daily on visual reconnaissance and bomb damage assessment. The air cavalry troops proved valuable during reconnaissance operations in the vicinity of Dog's Head, during the enemy thrust south along QL-13 and during the subsequent battle of An Loc. Their ability to move from one staging area to another and to locate the enemy for attack by gunship or tactical air strikes spelled the difference between holding the enemy at An Loc and defeat of the ARVN forces.

e. One short-coming in the information gathering area was the lack of SLAR and infra-red airborne surveillance systems after the 73d Surveillance Aircraft Company stood down on 1 April 1972. SLAR would have been invaluable in locating the enemy's armor moving under the cover of darkness. For the first time in several years, enemy armor and vehicular columns were on the move in Cambodia and in Binh Duong Province. SLAR, however, was enroute back to the United States.

f. There is no substitute for the Left Bank radio research system. It was invaluable in providing timely, accurate locations of enemy elements. Its one short-coming was also present in fixed wing radio research aircraft. Neither was capable of

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performing its mission when the ground was not visible and a positive terrain location could not be established. These aircraft should be equipped with some of the airborne position indicator systems which have been available for several years. At present the Army does not have an all weather, 24 hour a day airborne radio research capability.

6. Aviation Support:

a. Aviation support for the Brigade AO came from the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion and the Medical Evacuation Platoon of the 215th Combat Support Battalion. These assets were utilized for combat assaults, visual reconnaissance, logistical support, medical evacuation, armed escort and close fire support. Aviation support for ARVN and VNAF operations was intensified during the 1972 NVA spring offensive. During the first four days of the enemy offensive, Brigade helicopters supplied both attack and lift support. USAF and Navy attack aircraft were in short supply due to priority targets in MRI and North Vietnam. Those that were available were restricted by low ceiling and poor visibility in the target areas. The initial delay at Loc Ninh provided three days to prepare the defenses at An Loc and inflicted heavy casualties on the NVA forces attacking Loc Ninh. The NVA established a classic Soviet type air defense in the rubber plantation surrounding the airfield at Loc Ninh. The utilization of 51 Cal, 23mm, and 37mm was extensive and posed a mid-intensity ground-to-air threat to the attack helicopters. The date of 8 April was documented as the day that the 3d Brigade: rescued three US Advisors that were surrounded by an NVA force 8 miles south of Loc Ninh; performed a massive relocation of ARVN artillery and 3500 ARVN troops and civilians under hostile fire from Bu Dop to Song Be; and provided gunship, lift and medevac support for US and ARVN troops on Nui Ba Den mountain outpost near Tay Ninh to prevent the NVA from establishing a vital command and control site. Two regiments led by a force of 30 tanks attempted to overrun the Provincial Capital of An Loc on 13 April. Enemy tanks occupied key terrain in the city of An Loc. A section of AH-1G's from F Battery (AFA) 79 Artillery was cleared to attack the targets in the city that had been placed off limits to TAC Air. The Cobras destroyed one T-54 Soviet-built tank and damaged two additional T-54 tanks, blunting the initial

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offensive and forcing the remaining tanks to withdraw from the city. The ARVN soldiers, observing the destruction of the tank with rockets, were convinced that the tank was not invincible and proceeded to attack the withdrawing tanks with LAW's. A significant lesson learned was the ability of the Cobra to attack a pinpoint target that was off-limits to TAC Air, and the proof in combat that the AH-1G could attack and destroy a Soviet-made tank. The main NVA attack at An Loc took place on 15 April and was repulsed by the effective employment of army helicopters, TAC Air, VNAF, and ARVN Infantry. F Battery (AFA), 79th Artillery was credited with destroying five T-54 tanks in the city of An Loc on this day. The main NVA thrust in May occurred on 11 May. Critical to repulsing the attack was the destruction of four PT-76 tanks in the western portion of the city by the AFA. The anti-aircraft fire throughout the April-May time frame was the most intensive ever experienced in South Vietnam and included 51 Cal, 23mm, 37mm, 57mm, and SA-7's. The AFA was utilized to attack point targets in the city and perform critical medevac escort. The Cav Troops were alternated to recon the areas surrounding An Loc. BDA was difficult but the 3d Brigade has been credited with the destruction of tanks, trucks, crew served weapons, structures, and numerous NVA personnel. The Army gun ships complimented TAC Air by being employed on targets that required the utmost in accuracy and a selection of ordinance possible only with the AH-1G. The Cobra was frequently employed when cloud coverage restricted the use of fast moving aircraft. The requirement for both attack helicopter support and close air tactical fighter support were clearly documented during the siege of An Loc.

b. Air Traffic Control: The 365th Aviation Detachment (Divisional) was assigned to the 3d Brigade on 4 March 1972. The detachment operated the airfield at Long Thanh North and provided the Brigade with the flexibility of mobile air traffic control, radar equipment and navigational aids. This capability was a major factor in several contingency plans. The detachment has provided the daily air traffic control support required and a similar organization should be a consideration for any future separate airmobile brigade.

c. Aircraft Availability: The Brigade has maintained a very acceptable aircraft availability rate during the past six months. This has been primarily due to:

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(1) Keeping the flying hour program at or near the USARV standards.

(2) An extremely low not operationally ready for supply (NORS) rate.

(3) Organic back-up DS support, to include Norman Hartwell Associates (NHA) personnel.

(a) The operations personnel were tasked to insure that maximum utilization was made of all aircraft. Unusable blade time was kept at a minimum. Listed below for each aircraft are the USARV standard flying hours program, and the average OPREP availability rates for each month during the period December 1971 through May 1972:

	<u>OH-6A</u>	<u>AH-1G</u>	<u>UH-1H</u>	<u>CH-47</u>
USARV Flying Hour Program	60	55	70	47
Average Flying Hours: DEC	58.1	58.8	72.2	47.4
JAN.	56.6	53.3	58.7	50.3
FEB	64.9	65.4	70.2	55.8
MAR	51.8	55.8	65.3	47.1
APR	51.3	74.5	67.3	43.3
MAY	46.0	63.9	56.2	23.3
USARV or Standard	75%	75%	78%	70%
OR Availability (%): DEC	84.4	85.7	82.2	77.4
JAN	87.5	82.8	82.9	79.0
FEB	81.9	85.1	86.2	76.0
MAR	71.7	81.6	84.1	79.6
APR	82.2	85.5	85.5	75.1
MAY	81.1	81.2	83.9	65.5

(b) This Brigade has enjoyed the lowest NORS rate in Vietnam. The average NORS rate during the past six months has been 1.79% overall. This low NORS rate was partially the result of having a Direct Support Supply Agency (DSSA) organic to the brigade. The DSSA dealt directly with Aircraft Maintenance Management Center (AMMC) and afforded aviation units a more direct link to the source of aircraft repair parts. Daily

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reconciliations of all requisitions could easily be accomplished. The end result was a faster flow of parts and a low NORS rate.

(c) Until the drawdown imposed by Increment XI, the Brigade contained an organic back up direct support aircraft maintenance company. This maintenance unit was extremely useful, especially during periods of heavy flying. They were able to augment a particular company or type of aircraft with the necessary extra maintenance personnel and equipment to insure that the aircraft were returned to a flyable condition as quickly as possible. This unit also contained more sophisticated maintenance equipment than was authorized the aviation units. In effect, the Trans Company, Aircraft Maintenance, made the 3/1 self-sufficient in aircraft maintenance.

(d) The beneficial presence of NHA personnel can not be over emphasized. These personnel provided continuity to all the aviation units. The NHA personnel were highly qualified in their aviation maintenance specialties and required no additional training. They significantly contributed to the exceptional mission-ready availability rate established by the Brigade.

(e) During March the Brigade began to experience serious shortages of 67 and 68 series MOS personnel. By May the Brigade was at 77% fill in these critical areas. The 67Y, AH-1G crew chief, was at 50% fill and the 68G, air frame repairman, was at 32% fill. The personnel shortage required the freeze of all 67, 68 and 35 series MOS's in April. The shortage is attributed to two factors: one, the failure of the personnel accounting system to be properly updated; and two, the dynamic tactical situation which required that programmed standdown units remain in RVN---and compete for limited resources.

1. Movement of Brigade Aviation Units to Long Thanh North AAF: In late February 1972 all Brigade aviation units made plans and preparations for movement to Long Thanh North AAF. Priority for movement was given to the 362d Aviation Company, then located at Phu Loi and F Battery 79th Aerial Field Artillery, located at Plantation, Long Binh. Movement of these units was caused by the scheduled closure of Phu Loi and Plantation. Brigade aviation units were time phased into Long Thanh North as the tenant units cleared the installation.

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The 362d Aviation became operational at Long Thanh North on 4 March followed by F Battery 79th AFA on 4 April. The US Army Installation, Long Thanh North and the 365th Aviation Detachment, which operated the airfield, were reassigned to the Brigade on 4 March. This, in effect, made Long Thanh North a "First Team" airfield even though there were still a number of non-Cav units. B and A Companies, 229th Aviation Battalion were scheduled for movement to Long Thanh on 1 and 10 May, respectively, followed by F Troop 9th Cavalry on 20 May. The remaining elements of the battalion were scheduled to move in June as units of the 224th RRU displaced. The movement would have consolidated all Brigade aviation elements in one location, improving the command, control, logistics and defense situation. It also created problems in engineer and transportation support during a period when these assets were severely limited. The movement of all other 3d Brigade aviation units to Long Thanh North was terminated when the relocation of the 3d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division to Long Binh was cancelled. The move of the two company size units demonstrated the ability of the units to relocate without impact on daily missions.

7. Firebase Construction: The 3d Brigade had traditionally operated over an extremely large area, using the airmobile capability to respond to changing tactical requirements at separated points. The keystone of these operations was a series of artillery bases providing fire support to the First Team's maneuver elements. The Cavalry fire base was rapidly constructed, served for a short duration and was quickly disassembled and relocated. As the brigade area of operations contracted, fire support could be provided over the entire tactical operations zone from a series of permanent firebases, each capable of mutual artillery support. The hasty fire base was inadequate as a static position. A more permanent, better protected firebase was required. Since these bases would be occupied for long periods of time, extensive barrier and fortification construction would be possible. The new firebase was triangular in shape and protected by a 7-8 foot berm. Two 155mm howitzers and three 105mm howitzers were placed on raised gunpads to provide a direct fire capability. Maximum protection to personnel and equipment was provided by placing almost all facilities below ground. Backfilling and waterproofing of these structures required extensive engineer and troop effort, but the result was an all weather facility capable of withstanding a direct hit by a 122mm rocket.

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Because construction materials were in short supply, the basic modular unit of living and fighting bunkers was the conex container. Readily available in the salvage yard, the conex provided a structurally strong, waterproof and fireproof shelter for firebase living. A cluster of eight conexes connected by a common passageway was the standard living accommodation. Conex containers with firing ports cut in the front and sides were ideal fighting bunkers, when hardened with sandbags, earth, and PSP. Underground tactical operations centers were constructed from heavy timbers and steel beams. A twenty foot by ninety-six foot structure provided adequate space for an operations area, briefing area and office space for key staff personnel. Ammunition storage was provided with underground ASP's complete with overhead cover, waterproofing and covered entranceways large enough to accommodate a mule. The food preparation areas were bunkered and at some bases placed underground. Here food was stored, prepared, and served. Dining facilities were decentralized about the fire base to avoid troop congestion during meal hours. Along the berm, primary and supplementary fighting positions allowed interlocking fires along each leg of the triangle. At each corner, guard covers provide observation during daylight hours. The berm was topped with triple concentina wire and Husch flares were spaced to illuminate the perimeter if tactical air support were required at night. Jungle vegetation was cleared to 500 meters when possible and irregularities in the ground landscaped to allow grazing fire. In the cleared area, concentric bands of triple concentina wire and double apron fence were constructed. The area between the bands was covered with tanglefoot wire over crushed concentina wire to discourage sappers. Claymore mines and fougasse were used along suspected avenues of approach. The 1st Cavalry firebase was designed to provide maximum troop protection while insuring that maximum firepower could be brought upon an attacking force. From these secure operating bases, the Brigade could continue to operate as a potent air-mobile strike force.

8. Chemical Operations: Extensive use has been made of available chemical combat support. Flame field expedients used in support of base defense included fougasse, flame mines, berm markers and Husch flares. Aerial flame drops have been used to destroy bunker complexes and booby traps and to burn off heavily vegetated areas affording the enemy good concealment.

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Riot Control agent CS has been used to flush the enemy from covered positions and expose him to HE artillery. CS has also been used to contaminate bunkers and restrict their use. Extensive use has been made of the airborne personnel detector. (Sniffer) throughout the Brigade's AO as a means of cross checking intelligence information and detailing enemy forces. Maximum readouts were engaged with artillery fire.

9. Communications: Providing communications to a highly mobile separate brigade over extended distances proved to be a challenge.

a. Efficient communications for the brigade required that signal support be designed for rapid deployment of FM relay teams. The most efficient equipment for this purpose was a stackable retransmission unit. This provided flexibility and ease of operation. The distances that these relay sites operated from the Brigade Headquarters was often greater than the planning range of the FM radio equipment used. Also the CP at which the radios were located was often in a location where a normal FM shot was masked by rubber trees or jungle. The AB-577 proved to be an adequate solution to overcome these problems. The additional height obtained over the RC-292 in many cases made the difference between communicating and not communicating.

b. The extremely large number of FM radios used in the Brigade created a serious frequency problem. Units were continuously being interfered with by other units. Although this problem could not be completely eliminated without reducing the number of FM radios used, a significant reduction of interference was achieved through an extensive education program. This program of operator training included antenna location, antenna construction, proper radio procedures, and the reduction of power whenever possible. This training also resulted in the reduction of excessive "chatter" which had been a problem. An additional measure which was taken to reduce the FM frequency interference problems was in the method used to issue frequencies. Frequencies had previously been issued in a random manner with no consideration given to mutual interference of frequencies. A systematic method of frequency assignment was devised and the problem was

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greatly reduced. To further reduce traffic on the FM nets, teletype (TT) was used for recurring reports and routine traffic which required no immediate answer.

c. While operating with the Fire Support Base concept, where the battalion headquarters was relatively stationary, the Brigade came to rely greatly on VHF communications for the conduct of day to day activities. The AN/GRC 163 was issued to provide four channels of VHF communications for this purpose; however a number of problems were encountered with the 163. The radio was highly subject to interference. Since it operated in the same frequency range as the tactical FM radios, frequency interference became a major problem. There was also a maintenance problem with the equipment. To overcome these problems the Brigade switched to TRC-117 radios for UHF communications. Maintenance still left much to be desired, but it was much better than the VHF system. The frequency problem was eliminated when UHF was employed. The only other problem of note experienced with the UHF was that, like the VHF, it was limited to line of sight communications. The solution applied to this problem was to erect AB-216 antenna towers at the Fire Support Bases and at the Brigade Headquarters. The Battalions also made good use of the additional eight channels offered by the TRC-117. These channels were used for "hot lines" and special purpose communications. This system was run with a minimum of outage time due to the fact that counting the 163s there was 300% back-up for the VHF system.

10. Training:

a. Combat Training Center (CTC): CTC continued to be an integral part of brigade, providing all newly assigned personnel with initial indoctrination into the Cav's methods of operations. The professionalism displayed at CTC had a lasting impression on the new replacements. The replacement training cycles at CTC reached a peak in the months of January and February when as many as 500 replacements a week were trained and shipped to field units. This large influx of personnel was caused by the standdown of 101st Airborne Division as many of their personnel were transferred to the 3d Brigade (Separate). Even though many of these soldiers had considerable "bush" experience, it was felt that the best method to prepare them for operations in the Brigade AO was to let them go through

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the CTC cycle. The large classes of replacements have now ceased. With the drawdown of U.S. units and a lack of CONUS replacements, the average class at CTC now averages less than 50.

b. Mines and Boobytrap Training: Combat experience reaffirmed the enemy's capabilities and intentions to use mines and boobytraps for harassment and casualty production. A two-hour course of refresher training was established at CTC to cope with this problem. Emphasis was placed on specific fundamentals and techniques needed to successfully negotiate mined and boobytrapped areas. The course of instruction was composed of approximately one-half lecture/demonstration and one-half practical exercise where the unit personnel actually negotiated a mined and boobytrapped lane. All rifle companies, reconnaissance platoons, and blues platoons were required to complete this training once every two months.

c. Pathfinder, Rigger, Scout Dog, and Forward Observer Training: In order to be able to use all of the Brigade's assets in the proper manner, several additional courses of instruction were initiated. Pathfinder classes were given on the selection and improvement of landing zones. Rigger training was conducted to qualify and familiarize unit personnel in the techniques of rigging equipment for airmobile moves. A practical exercise/demonstration was also given to the infantry units in the employment of scout dogs-these dogs have endeared themselves to the grunts and many units wouldn't think of going on an operation now without their dog. Just recently a six-hour refresher training course on the call for and adjustment of artillery fire was initiated; it is designed so that all personnel will have a working knowledge of artillery procedures and be able to call for fire should the need ever arise. It is through courses such as these and others that undoubtedly will be taught in the future, that the infantryman comes to possess his basic knowledge of all facets of the Cav, hence allowing him to accomplish his mission in the most proficient manner.

11. Redeployment of 3d Brigade Forces: The word redeployment is used in the broadest sense, to include massive changes in personnel assignments as well as tactical and base area adjustments. Numerous administrative factors introduced by the withdrawal program had a significant impact on the selection of Brigade bases and security missions. Key areas that stand out are personnel turbulence due to USARV-wide curtailment criteria and redistribution of personnel and the standdown of battalions within the brigade while the residual force, Task Force Garry Owen, was being formed.

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a. Personnel Turbulences: The Brigade was affected by Increments X, XI, and XII. Increment X introduced an enormous turnover in personnel due to the USARV-wide 40,000 man space reduction in December 1971 and January 1972. This reduction was complicated by the requirements to return as many troops as possible to CONUS for the holiday period. The Brigade experienced a 50% turnover in personnel and received most of its replacements from in-country transfers. Personnel management was critical and every effort was made to provide personal touches to the in-processing of replacements. Unfortunately, there were undesirable aspects of the replacement situation which demanded aggressive action at all levels of command. As the major units drawing down reported their excess personnel for reassignment in-country they relieved themselves of borderline disciplinary problems. Immediate measures were taken by the Brigade to identify these personnel and administrative eliminations, bars to reenlistment, etc. were pursued to root out the trouble makers who were developing as repeated offenders.

b. Standdown of Forces:

(1) Planning for the redeployment of 3d Brigade forces during Increment XI began in January '72. The Redeployment Control Center was established in the office of the S-3 to plan, coordinate, and monitor the execution of troop reduction requirements. Detailed planning resulted in the publication of the "3d Brigade Redeployment Planning Guide". It provided guidance regarding the execution of personnel, administrative, and logistical requirements engendered by redeployment. The Increment XI troop reduction resulted in the standdown of the 2/5 Cavalry, 2/327 Infantry and 2/11 ACR (OPCON), and the drawdown to zero strength and equipment of B/1/21 Arty and the Aviation Maintenance and Supply Company. Additional space reductions were effected through the selective drawdown of other units. The Brigade's authorized strength was reduced from 7270 to 5294, a reduction of 1977 spaces. The standdown/drawdown of all units was completed prior to the Increment XI suspense of 30 April 1972.

(2) The Brigade originally was structured for an increase in strength to 5927 during the initial phases of Increment XII. Considerable planning had been effected towards that end by 5 June 1972. Thus, when the requirement on that date to reduce to 2859 spaces by 27 June 1972 was received, the

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staff was immediately set into vigorous motion in another direction. Actually the reduction in strength had been anticipated for the July or beyond time frame. While the structure of the residual force, Task Force Garry Owen, was being determined, equipment turn-in was beginning. Personnel outprocessing was a major problem; assignment instructions, DEROS criteria and a myriad of other personnel factors had to be resolved. To a significant degree reassignments within the Brigade were delayed by negotiations about the residual structure since MOS requirements could not be determined until the organizational package was approved. Finally, the mere transfer of people would not solve all problems. Personnel had to be outprocessed so that units could begin turning in equipment. By 23 June the emphasis shifted to the reassignment and shipment of personnel within units so that buildings could be cleared and unit records and property books could be turned in. With more than 3000 people to transfer the Brigade was presented with a sizeable challenge to meet its suspense date. The experience which had built up over the months concerning standdown/drawdown activities did much to enable the Brigade to accomplish its mission.

12. Morale Building Programs: Two programs that improved morale were the FSB PX imprest funds and the "King for a Day" programs. Initially a "Flying PX" was established to provide PX services to the infantryman in the field. This system had its limitations as to the volume and quality of services it could provide. A program to establish a permanent mini-PX at each fire support base was initiated. The mini-PX's were controlled by the individual units and financed through an imprest fund. This system gave responsive service to the Skytroopers in the forward areas. Supplementing this, was the policy of selecting each week, one company or battery commander or aviation platoon leader to visit the brigade headquarters for recognition of his performance of duty. His selection not only permitted him to gain insight into the brigade operations, but afforded staff members the opportunity to uncover problems in their areas. The selected commander was given VIP treatment. During his reign, the "King for a Day" attended the briefings, met the Brigade Staff, toured the area of operations with the Commanding General, and received an appropriate 1st Cavalry Division memento.

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a. Human Relations: The Brigade has had a low incident rate of human relations problems. Human relation councils were formed at all echelons within the Brigade. All Skytroopers were given the opportunity to present their problems through many different channels. Problems were considered on a personal basis and attempts were made to establish satisfactory answers to all queries. The Brigade Human Relations Council was revitalized through the adoption of a new charter requiring the presence of Battalion Commanders or Executive Officers as the unit representative. The success the Brigade has experienced was the result of the total and vigorous reassertion of leadership and command responsibilities. Councils can easily become facades, paying lip service to goals. The requirement that commanders or executive officers be members of the Brigade Council was a compromise between the old and the new. Viable communication channels are also a necessity, both horizontal and vertical. The second mission of any leader is the welfare of his men. This is an old, yet clear statement of human relations.

b. Drug Abuse Prevention: The Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Program for the 3d Brigade has been oriented toward the accomplishment of three goals: (1) prevention of drug abuse through education of both enlisted and officer personnel, (2) control of drug abuse through regular urinalysis testing, and (3) rehabilitation of the known drug users so as to reintegrate the soldier back into the Army community. The primary agencies established within the Brigade to establish these goals were the Brigade Drug Control Center and the Drug Rehabilitation Center. The Drug Control Center was responsible for the educational and control aspects of the drug program. The center scheduled classes for all units of the 3d Brigade in coordination with USARV and MACV education teams. Those units within the Brigade that had a higher incidence of drug abuse were scheduled for refresher classes given by an officer, enlisted man, and ex-addict. Likewise, the Drug Control Center scheduled periodic unit testing for all units in the Brigade. This permitted the command to identify the drug user and to take appropriate action with this individual. Once identified the known drug user was required to submit to urinalysis testing twice a month for the remainder of his tour. This follow-up testing was accomplished at the Brigade's Medical Company dispensary. The Drug Control Center also scheduled appointments for admission to the Drug Treatment Center, Long Binh and the Drug Abuse Holding Center. It also provided policy guidance to all units within

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the Brigade. The Drug Rehabilitation Center was established to help stop drug abuse among those soldiers who voluntarily admitted to their misuse of drugs. The center operated a fourteen day program during which time the patients were engaged in group therapy sessions, individual counselling sessions and physical activity program. The Rehabilitation Center also assumed responsibility for the training of all unit counselors in the Brigade. The experience of the Brigade was that the drug program must be characterized by a strong policy or philosophy. Simply, there is no place for a recidivist drug abuser in the Brigade or anywhere in the Army. Elimination must be fair, but expeditious and final. Undesirable discharge should be the goal in most cases. Of course a compassionate alternative must exist for those few individuals deserving and capable of rehabilitation. The Drug Rehabilitation Center provided such an alternative. Again, the key as always was command awareness and subsequently, competent command action.

c. USARV Curtailment Program: After obtaining a very healthy strength posture through a large input of CONUS and in-country replacements during the month of December, the Brigade was tasked to support the USARV-wide curtailment program. This program was initiated in order to meet the strength goals established by the President. Under this program, USARV announced a USARV-wide DEROS cutoff date for curtailment and adjustment of DEROS. Basically, all personnel with a normal DEROS prior to the cut-off date had their tour curtailed and their DEROS adjusted. This system was easy to implement, considered fair by the troops, and effected a speedy drawdown. However, the USARV-wide curtailment had certain disadvantages. Mainly, there was no selectivity among units or military occupational specialities. This situation caused a serious MOS imbalance and severely threatened the accomplishment of combat, combat support, and combat service support missions. The program continued through March with enlisted personnel being curtailed up to 90 days and additional plans to curtail up to 120 days. Needless to say, this amount of curtailment, without regard to MOS and grade structure, would have stripped units of much needed knowledge and expertise. Although some specialities are easily substituted for, the hard-skill MOS's such as the aircraft maintenance (MOS 67) and aircraft component repair (MOS 68) series are not. In most cases, the replacement flow failed to restore those critical specialties.

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On 18 March 1972 in recognition of this problem, USARV modified the program and established a command quota system. In essence, this system established or assigned a levy of personnel losses to each subordinate command for the following month. This system was designed to give each commander greater flexibility and selectivity in the management of his assets and yet still provide sufficient losses to meet withdrawal goals. Under these conditions, commanders declared selected individuals as "mission essential". They were retained until normal DEROS or other adjusted DEROS as the commander determined. This program created additional work for the unit and additional time was needed to plan and implement the local "mission essential" designations. Of course, "time in-country" equity for curtailment purposes was lost under this system as selected personnel were retained and others with equal or less time in-country curtailed. As a result, the challenge to leadership was increased as commanders implemented the new procedure and sought to explain the rationale in support of the quota system and selective retention. In general, the new quota system was flexible and was much more effective in response to both mission accomplishment and achievement of the USARV withdrawal goals. Of course, a severe MOS imbalance had already developed due to USARV-wide curtailments and delay in establishment of a flexible quota/levy-type system. However, the Brigade retention continued to perform effectively despite the handicap of critical MOS imbalances. This could not have been accomplished if the USARV-wide curtailment program had continued as previously planned.

d. AG Section Organic to Brigade: Throughout the period of operations of the 3d Brigade (Separate), the option of replacing the Adjutant General Section with a Personnel Services Company was considered. The option was rejected since the proven AG Section was consistently more flexible and more responsive. The personnel turbulence caused by redeployment and USARV curtailment was significant. The impact was acceptable due to the tailored, and single unit-oriented administrative support rendered by the Brigade's AG section. The geographical orientation of the personnel service company support concept was cited as a key advantage. This proved to be a myth when this Brigade became the parent unit of the 2d Battalion, 327th Infantry located at Cam Ranh Bay. The value of personalized service was quite evident. Members of the Brigade's AG section visited Cam Ranh Bay to assist 2/327 Infantry in standdown.

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Efficiency reports, awards and decorations were transported to Bien Hoa for processing and subsequently returned to Cam Ranh Bay. Space saving is cited as a second advantage; however the personnel service company is not capable of providing full administrative support. An enlarged S-1 section would have been required since such activities as awards and decorations, postal requirements and congressional replies must be accomplished by the supported unit. The organic AG section also supported dispersed units in Pleiku, Kontum, and Tuy Hoa. In short, the activities and services provided by an AG section have direct impact on the efficiency and morale of the parent unit. In the period of seven months the Brigade shipped and received in excess of 20,000 personnel while continuing to meet tactical requirements. Personnel services should not be isolated from the unit that is supported. Moreover, personnel managers are more efficient when they are rated by the commander that they support!

e. Staff Judge Advocate: During the period 15 December until present there was an increase in number of cases and Article 15's processed. A majority of the cases processed during this period were drug related, resulting primarily from a large influx of in-country transfers during December and January. The rising trend of drug offenses within the Brigade peaked during early November. There were some field refusals during late December and early January. Most of those offenders were personnel new to the Brigade. The net increase in military justice actions is a direct reflection of command emphasis on the need for discipline. The subsequent decrease is a reflection of troop response and individual pride in this unit.

f. Malaria Prevention: The Brigade Surgeon's Office supervised the Malaria Prevention Program. All men were required to take one C-P tablet weekly and one Dapzone tablet daily. An officer or NCO administered the pill and watched each trooper swallow. Since 1 January 1972 a program was instituted whereby all men processing on R&R or DEROS received a malaria debriefing. This fact was recorded on a malaria debriefing form which is included in the individual's DA 201 File. In extension of the malaria prevention program, a concerted effort was made to screen all living bunkers and night-working bunkers (e.g. PTO shack and aid stations). Weekly aerial insecticide spray missions were conducted on all fire support bases, the Vung Tau R&R Center and Bien Hoa Army Base. The net effect was a reduced malaria incidence rate despite the onset of the rainy season.

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g. Preventive Dentistry: The Preventive Dentistry Program was successful. The Dental Officer visited two fire bases per week on a rotating basis. Personnel were screened. Treatment was accomplished at the fire base or at the rear dental clinic. The program resulted in an increase in the level of dental hygiene of 1st Cavalry Division personnel and a decrease of manpower loss to units.

13. Logistics: The logistical system continued service support operations but expanded convoy operations to reduce aircraft utilization. In contrast to a purely airmobile environment, all maneuver battalions relocated their major fire support bases near roads. As a result of these moves, the frequency of road convoys increased. This technique has reduced aircraft utilization in the Brigade AO and also insured that bases would be effectively resupplied during periods of adverse flying weather.

a. The increased use of vehicular transportation enabled the brigade to simultaneously move three major fire support bases during December and early January. The operation went smoothly because of the planning and programming that went into each separate unit move. By using road convoys, aircraft were released for higher priority missions. The closure of forward operating base MACE was accomplished in twenty-three days. The base had grown so large that demilitarization required 284 stake and platform trailers. While not as rapid as an airmobile move, the use of road convoys facilitated combat operations. Tactical units were compelled to relearn the techniques of road movement. As a lesson re-learned, unit SOP's should be regularly updated to cover this eventuality.

b. Helicopter rearm/refuel points operated by the 229th Aviation Battalion (Assault Helicopter) and the 215th Composite Service Battalion (Support) were reduced in number as the Brigade's AO reduced. During this period airmobile rearm/refuel equipment contributed significantly to the accomplishment of the combat mission. The need to maintain this capability within the Brigade was further emphasized during the NVA offensive which commenced in April. The availability of this equipment allowed the Brigade to immediately react to the combat situation.

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By establishing a rearm/refuel facility at a forward staging area (Song Be), the reconnaissance and armed helicopters were able to stay on station for longer periods of time. Also, the proximity of the rearm/refuel assets organic to the Brigade were the only ones available in MR III. This fact underscores the importance of retaining this capability within the TO&E structure of the Brigade. This equipment gives the Brigade the tools to establish a rearm/refuel point or to operate existing rearm/refuel facilities that may not be operating to their maximum capacity.

14. The Riggers: The parachute riggers are an essential feature of airmobility. The riggers, organic to the delivery platoon of the Composite Service Battalion (Support), S&T Company, perform a unique mission. They inspect all loads for the CH-47, UH-1H, and CH-54 helicopters, insure that all aerial delivery equipment within the Brigade is serviceable, and rig supplies and equipment for air drop. These highly skilled technicians proved invaluable during the NVA offensive in April and May. During the initial phase of the offensive, the riggers organic to the Brigade constituted all of the US Army rigging capability in MR III. They were used continually, rigging and inspecting loads to be delivered to the combat areas. They also were instrumental in insuring that the mobile rearm/refuel point was rapidly and efficiently moved to its forward location. The parachute rigger is the key to an efficient and safe airmobile resupply operation.

15. Maintaining a Garrison Headquarters: A problem faced by this Brigade was the accomplishment of base defense missions and the administrative operations of a permanent installation while actively engaged in combat operations. Tactical units do not have this capability and experience has shown that garrison functions can and must be carried out by a tailored TDA unit. In the case of Bien Hoa, approximately 130 personnel were required to maintain minimum operation of facilities and conduct the required long range planning and supervision of base defense activities. Bien Hoa Garrison also was responsible for the operation of a club system, an education center, and a special services activity in addition to base defense and base development functions. Even with this organization, certain inadequacies were noted: primarily, the fact that only a small 53 man TDA was approved to handle the garrison function. Thus personnel, of necessity, were taken from Brigade assets to augment the TDA. This created an increased hardship while trying to maintain our field strength.

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16. (U) Conclusion: During the past six months and during seven years of sustained combat duty in Vietnam the Garry Owen Brigade has added to a long list of battlefield achievements. Throughout those years, the morale and esprit of the Cav Trooper has been unequalled. Now, as more and more units depart for home, much of the 3d Brigade (Separate), 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) remains. It is an honor to be entrusted with this important mission, and our men have accepted it as such. Every trooper knows that he is a member of a team-he must do his job so that no other team member suffers. It is this spirit that has sustained THE FIRST TEAM throughout the years. Suffice it to say that I am convinced today's FIRST TEAM is the finest fighting organization within the United States Army.

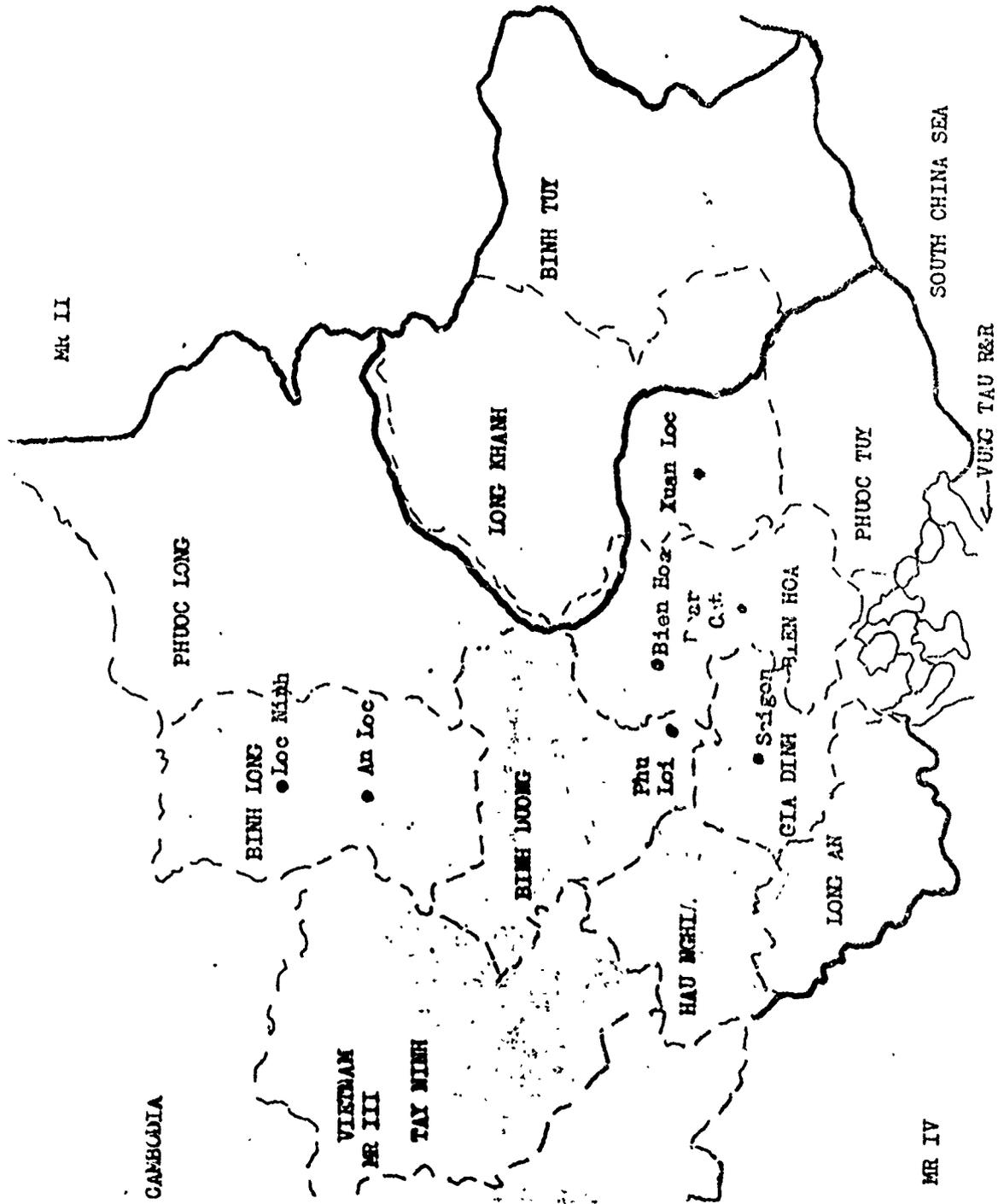


JAMES F. HAMLET
Brigadier General, USA
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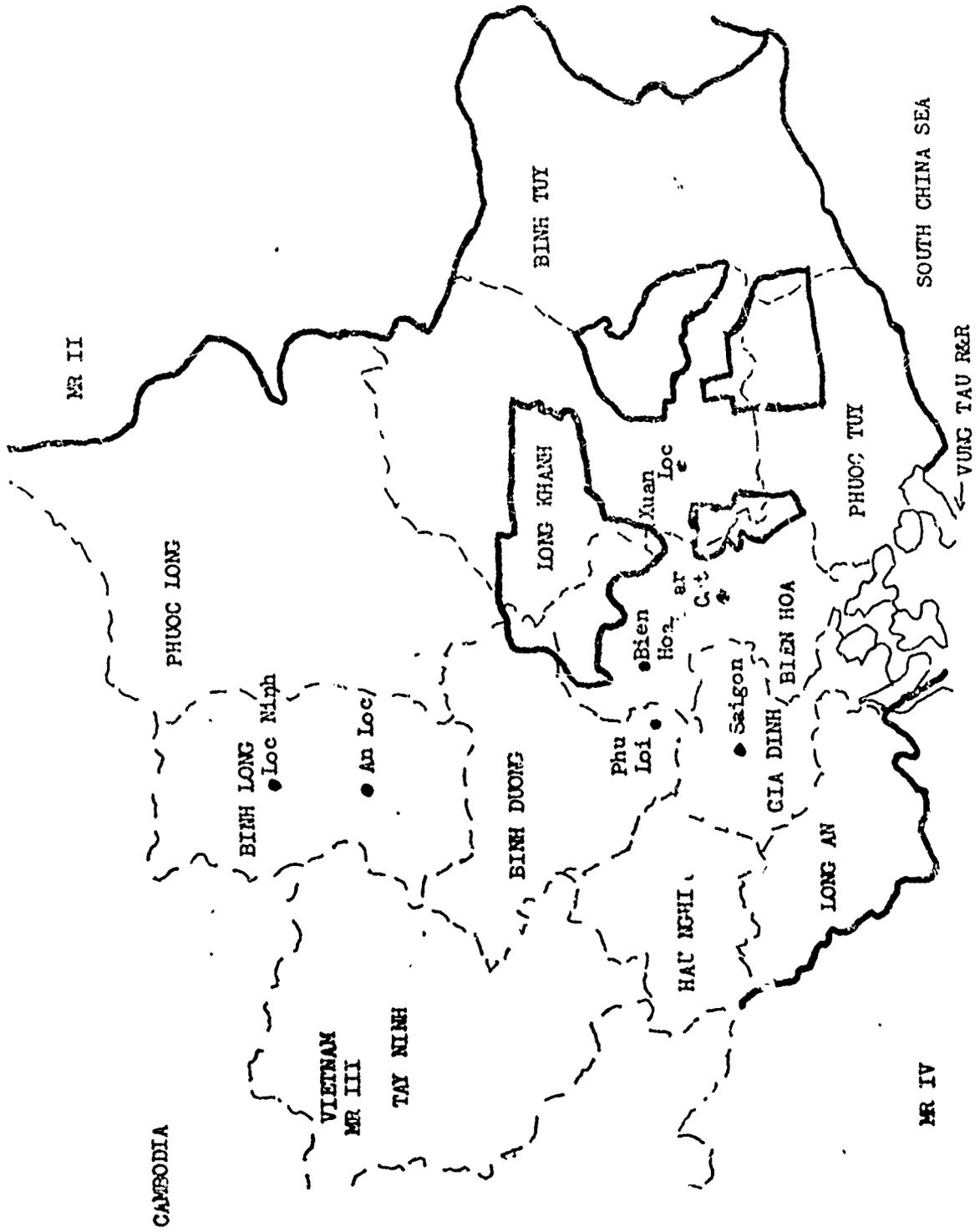
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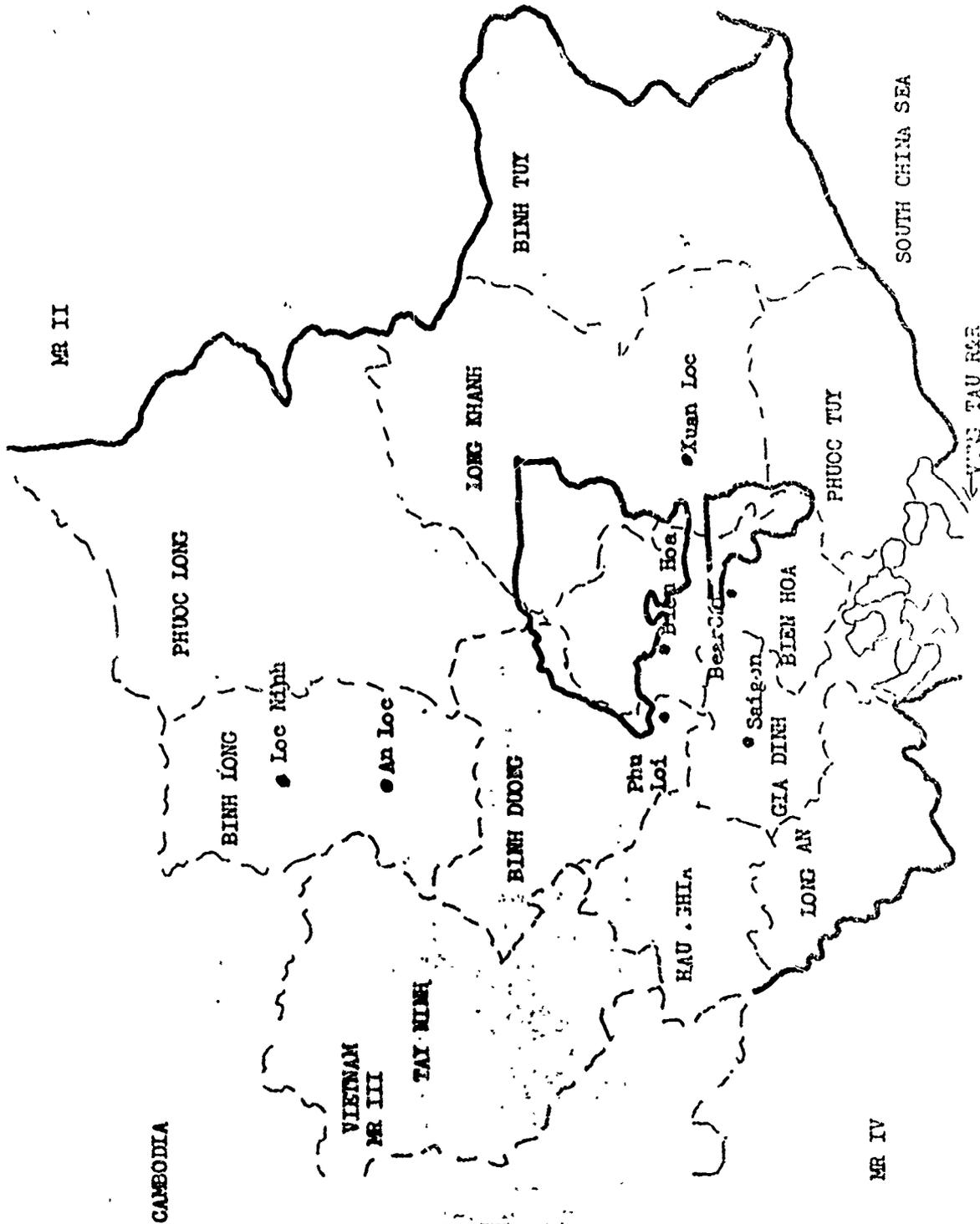
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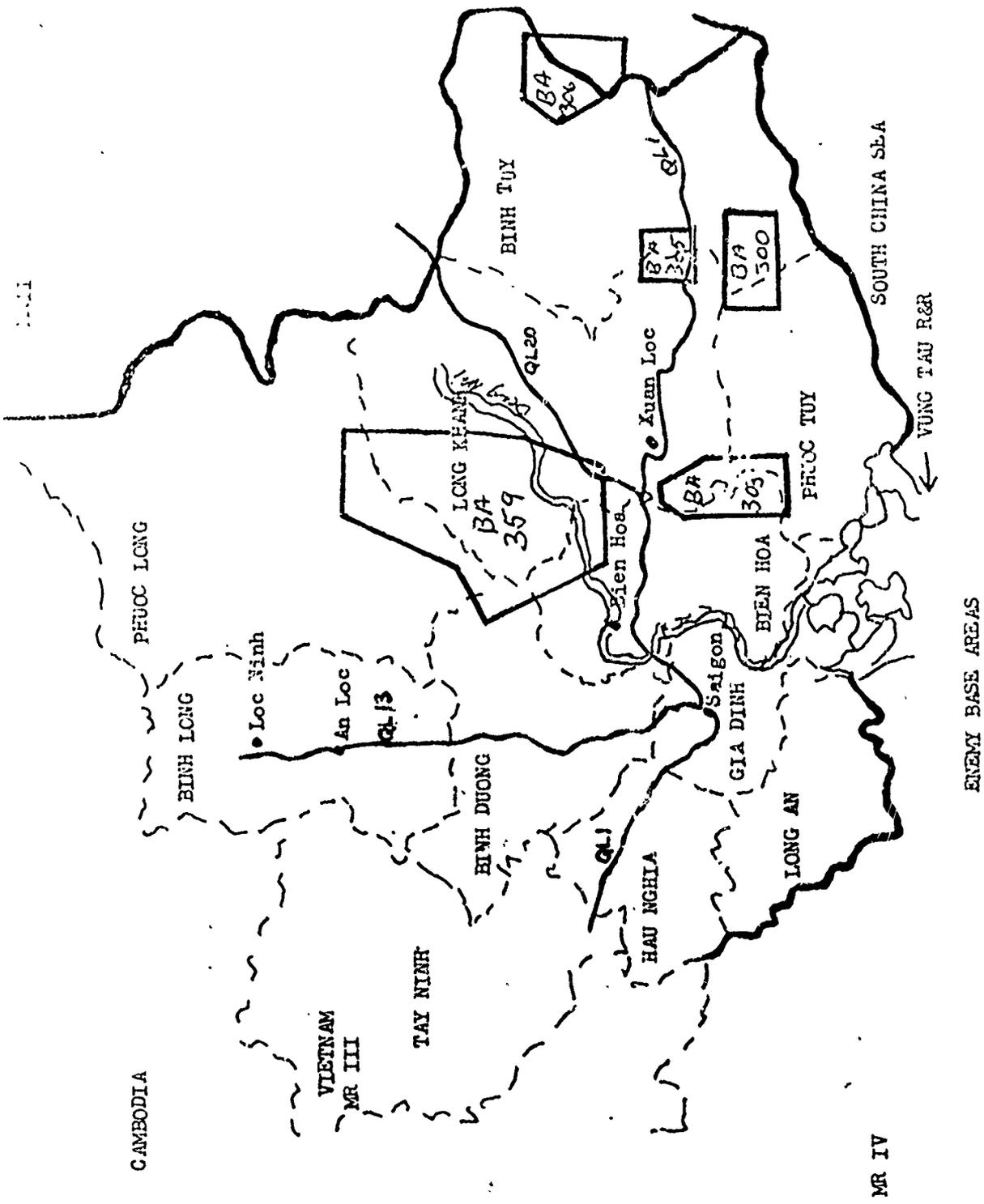
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