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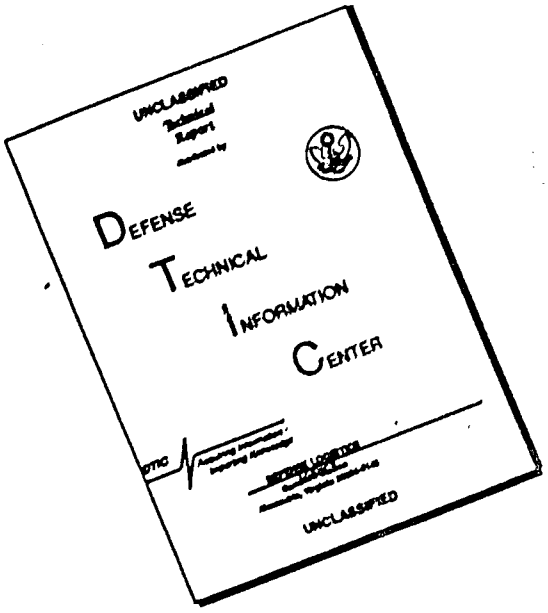

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310

IN REPLY REFER TO

AGDA (M) (14 May 70) FOR OT UT 701139 19 May 1970

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 14th Engineer Battalion, Period Ending 31 January 1970

SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Subject report is forwarded for review and evaluation in accordance with paragraph 4b, AR 525-15. Evaluations and corrective actions should be reported to ACSFOR OT UT, Operational Reports Branch, within 90 days of receipt of covering letter.

2. Information contained in this report is provided to insure appropriate benefits in the future from lessons learned during current operations and may be adapted for use in developing training material.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:

Kenneth G. Wickham

KENNETH G. WICKHAM
Major General, USA
The Adjutant General

1 Incl
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 14TH ENGINEER BATTALION (COMBAT)
APO San Francisco 96495

AGA-BB-3 31 January 1970

SUBJECT: Operational Report of 14th Engineer Battalion (Combat) for Period Ending 31 January 1970, RCSFOR-65(R1)

THRU: Commanding Officer
45th Engineer Group
APO 96308

Commanding General
18th Engineer Brigade
ATTN: AVBC-C
APO 96377

Commanding General
United States Army, Vietnam
ATTN: AVHGC-DST
APO 96375

Commander in Chief
United States Army, Pacific
ATTN: GPOP-DT
APO 96558

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development
Department of the Army (ACSFOR DA)
Washington, DC 20310

1. Section 1, Operations: Significant Activities

The headquarters of the 14th Engineer Battalion (Combat) has been located at FSB Nancy throughout the reporting period. During the quarter the battalion had units deployed from the DMZ to Phu Bai, a distance of approximately 90 kilometers. Gunpad and bunker construction at Fire Sup-

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port bases, pioneer road construction and several short duration combat support missions have been the primary missions. During the reporting period the weather had a detrimental effect on mission accomplishment. From 1 Nov to 31 Jan the area of operations received 32.4 inches of rain and benefitted from only 28 non-rainy days.

Enemy activity increased substantially during the period, and totalled 1 ambush, 3 sniper incidents, 2 mortar fire incidents, 11 rocket fire incidents, and 30 mines located. Results were; 2 VC KIA, 2 US KIA, 13 US WIA, and 17 pieces of equipment damaged or destroyed. Increased precautions necessary to counter enemy activity had an adverse effect on productivity principally on the road to FSB Barbara project.

The demand for air support (helicopters) to properly command, control, and supply the numerous projects continued to intensify. A suitable arrangement combining logistical air support from the 101st ABN DIV (AMBL) and command and control air support from the 45th Engr Gp (Const) aviation section enabled the battalion to operate very efficiently at several remote project sites. For example during the month of January alone the battalion utilized 2 CH54 sorties, 63 CH47 sorties, 40 UH-1 sorties, and 35 Ranger, LOH, and H-23 sorties. The dollar value of this support at schedule rates totals $59,000.

A considerable increase in manhours devoted to mineswoop operations occurred this quarter. Increased mining activity by the enemy forced the use of mineswoop teams to support the majority of the projects. Road clearing, clearing of areas reported through intelligence gathering, response to emergency mining incidents, and combat support mineswoops complimented the normal daily mineswoop requirements. Total manhours devoted to mineswoops reached 13,300 during the quarter.

During the quarter, the battalion conducted 83 1/2 days of operations and 7 days of training, and devoted 1 1/2 days to annual holidays.

The CP of A/14 was located at Quang Tri throughout the reporting period. To accomplish the missions required of A/14 tailoring of the platoons was considered. Operational Support at FSB A-4 and continued Duel Blade (large steel and reinforced concrete bunkers) construction at FSB A-2 and FSB C-1 were tasks requiring significant manpower. It was decided to develop two full strength platoons and commit one to each project. The remaining personnel, which consisted of approximately two squads were utilized for mineswoops and combat support. This system worked well as special, short notice combat support missions were handled by the support platoon, allowing complete continuity of effort by the other platoons. The small platoon was augmented with equipment not required at the two primary work sites allowing them to work on road projects and rock hauling missions which required few supervisory personnel.

A resume of accomplishments by A/14 during reporting period is as follows:

1. Completed 8 Duel Blade bunkers at FSB A-2 which concluded construction at that site.

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2. Completed 24 Duel Blade bunkers at FSB C-1.

3. Constructed 11 living bunkers, 2 FDC's, 8 ammunition bunkers, and repaired entrances to 8 existing bunkers at FSB A-4.

4. Constructed a 56' x 72' Tactical Operations Center for 8/4th Artillery, Dong Ha.

5. Completed 400 LF of 5' high revetments at 45th Engineer Group (Const), Phu Bai.

6. Conducted soil-cement stabilization test at FSB A-4.

7. Supported 4 separate combat operations with mineswep teams and bulldozers.

8. Upgraded 4.8 km of road from I-1 to LZ Sharon.

9. Constructed a 25' x 25' platform for radar at FSB C-1.

The CP of B/14 was located at Quang Tri throughout the reporting period. The principal missions included continued major artillery base camp construction at Camp Carroll, bunker and tower construction for a radar facility adjacent to Camp Carroll, construction of a 60 foot class 50 timber bridge, land clearing for 1st ARVN Division, and construction of heavy gun pads at LZ Sharon.

Construction of living bunkers and propellant and projectile bunkers at Camp Carroll occupied the majority of B/14 personnel during the reporting period. Work site conditions were extremely muddy due to the monsoon rains and it was decided that a prefabrication yard for timber bunkers could be set up in the rear area to expedite construction. Up to that time materials were cut on site and living bunkers were requiring 6 days to construct, and propellant and projectile bunkers took approximately 4 days each. After the prefabrication yard was developed, the precut components were delivered to the site and construction time was improved considerably. Living bunkers now take approximately three days and propellant and projectile bunkers 2 days each to build.

The tower on Nui Kiem, adjacent to Camp Carroll, was an interesting construction problem because the hill was relatively inaccessible to trucks and the available working space prohibited on site construction. It was decided to construct the tower in Quang Tri where materials and personnel were available and air lift the completed tower into place. A CH-54 flying crane provided the air support and the move was quite successful.

A class 60 bridge was required to allow armored vehicles access to a vital area of operations. Seasonal rains made the access roads usable by tracked vehicles only. Due to the urgency of the mission, an alternate plan was made and a D7E bulldozer was used as a materials expeditor. Piles and timbers were rigged to slide on skids and were towed to the work site. A rough terrain crane and pile driver were pulled to the site and the bridge was successfully completed in two weeks.

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The most unique project tasked B/14 was a land clearing mission for the 1st ARVN Division. An area north of Cua Viet on the coast of the South China Sea needed clearing but was too wet to be handled by bulldozers. A 20 man force from B/14 equipped with axes, chain saws and demolitions moved into the area and in 7 days cleared those areas a bulldozer could not negotiate.

A resume of accomplishments of B/14 during the reporting period is as follows:

1. Constructed 1, 60 foot, class 50 bridge.

2. Constructed 4 gunpads, 7 powder bunkers, 7 propellant bunkers, 17 living bunkers, and 1 operations bunker at Camp Carroll.

3. Constructed 2 personnel bunkers, reinforced an existing bunker, and erected a 35 foot tower at Nui Kiem.

4. Provided supervision for construction of Ai Tu Children's Hospital, Quang Tri.

5. Cleared 22 acres of land by hand.

6. Constructed 4 heavy gunpads at LZ Sharon.

7. Removed 100 LF of revetment to allow removal of communications vans from a revetted bunker complex, Dong Ha.

8. Conducted test on practicability of reusing steel revetments by disassembling and reassembling a 20 foot section.

9. Constructed 50' x 70' TOC, 1/61 Inf, Quang Tri.

The CP of C/14 was located at FSB Nancy through-out the reporting period. During this quarter C/14 has been responsible for completing the pioneer trace from FSB Nancy to FSB Barbara, relocating the defensive perimeter at Cua Viet, constructing projectile and propellant bunkers for an artillery Battery at FSB Nancy, constructing drainage structures on the road to Barbara, and upgrading of 12 km of Rt 555A.

The pioneer trace to FSB Barbara proved to be a formidable task during the monsoon season. A platoon from C/14 remained in night defensive positions (NDP's) along the trace from 1 November to 23 December. Side hill cuts and extremely steep slopes, combined with rainy weather, made rapid progress difficult. On 23 December the trace was completed and an overland route established from FSB Nancy to FSB Barbara. The platoon was then withdrawn from the field.

The next major decision was to determine the best way to accelerate the upgrading of the pioneer trace. Due to the fact that many tasks in several locations along the trace were required, it was decided to change from the NDP concept and deliberately open the road each day with a minesweep team and security. C Co was tasked to complete all required drainage structures, and is currently engrossed in this task.

A common problem with tactical roads is that hastily constructed drainage structures do not hold up during heavy rains. In an effort to

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overcome this problem it was decided to make a more permanent structure. A river run rock source in the proximity of the Barbara road was located through reconnaissance. Capitalizing on this asset, the culverts installed are being back filled with mixed in place concrete and thoroughly compacted. Special attention is given the upstream side of the culverts and a rock-cement slope is developed. It is intended that this design will withstand heavy inundation and overtopping without significant damage.

C/14 has maintained a platoon sized force which responds to a wide variety of missions. During the reporting period special minesweeps, emergency road repair, reaction force for enemy attacks, and base defense construction occupied this element.

C/14 was given the unique mission to construct a bunker on top of FSB Sargo, a forward fire base inaccessible by road. To build the bunker, a suitable space had to be excavated from the side of the mountain. A detailed plan was devised and all required materials were precut and rigged for airlift. An air compressor was also airlifted so that pneumatic digging devices could assist in excavation. The project was completed in 10 days.

Progress on Rt 555A was minimal due to heavy rains.

A resume of accomplishments by C/14 during the reporting period is as follows:

1. Completed a 17 km pioneer trace from FSB Nancy to FSB Barbara.

2. Reorganized as infantry and conducted two counterattacks.

3. Completed 4 major drainage structures on Barbara road.

4. Constructed 4 propellant bunkers and 4 projectile bunkers for 2/94th Artillery, FSB Nancy.

5. Constructed 22' x 10' x 8' bunker for 40th Comm Det at Quang Tri.

6. Constructed 200 LF of helicopter revetments.

7. Responded to 6 short term emergency road repair missions.

8. Provided 12 special minesweeps.

9. Conducted daily minesweeps.

10. Constructed a 10' x 16' x 8' bunker and observation tower at FSB Sargo.

The CP of D/14 was located at Camp Evans throughout the reporting period. The primary missions assigned were OV-10 revetment construction at Camp Evans, 12 kilometers of perimeter road at Camp Evans, 15 km of pioneer road construction from Camp Evans to FSB Rakkasan, and major artillery base construction at FSB Barbara.

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The project requiring the most planning and resourcefulness was operational construction at FSB Barbara. The scope of work includes 4 heavy gun pads, 4 projectile bunkers, 4 propellant bunkers, 11 living bunkers, 1 FDC, and 1 XO post. No overland supply was available. A plan was devised whereby all bunkers and gunpad timbers would be pre-cut, rigged for helilift, and taken to FSB Barbara by CH-47. A design for a heavy gun pad was developed which could be made without concrete mixer, pile driver, and other heavy equipment normally associated with gun pad construction. A detailed survey of the hill mass allowed excavation planning to be quite precise. Two D7E bulldozers which completed the pioneer trace to FSB Barbara remained to support this operation. Construction was initiated on 26 December. On 31 January 4 gun pads, 3 projectile bunkers, 3 propellant bunkers, and 3 living bunkers have been completed, and 31,500 cubic yards of fill have been excavated. A Navy tractor from NCB10 equipped with back hoe and front loader, was airlifted to the construction site and proved most valuable.

D/14 worked diligently on the pioneer trace to FSB Rakkasan and were within 150 meters of completing the trace when the enemy situation necessitated abandoning the Night Defensive Position and the unit returned to Camp Evans. Upon return, D/14 began upgrading the 5 km trace from Camp Evans to FSB Jack to enhance mobility of heavy artillery to that site.

A resume of accomplishments of D/14 during the reporting period is as follows:

1. Constructed 400 LF of 10' high revetments.

2. Placed 24,000 square feet of MSA1 taxiway and apron.

3. Pioneered 15 km of trace from Camp Evans to FSB Rakkasan.

4. Upgraded 5 km of pioneer road from Camp Evans to FSB Jack.

5. Upgraded 12 km of perimeter road, Camp Evans.

6. Constructed a 20' x 32' x 8' command bunker at FSB Nancy.

7. Constructed 4 heavy gun pads, 3 propellant bunkers, 3 projectile bunkers and 3 living bunkers at FSB Barbara.

8. Provided daily minesweeps.

9. Participated in 2 combat support missions, providing special minesweeps and bulldozer support.

The 630th LE Company remained attached to 14th EBC throughout the reporting period. The 630th was instrumental in completing road construction of Rt 560 and is primarily responsible for upgrading the pioneer trace from FSB Nancy to FSB Barbara. In addition, the 630th supported all horizontal construction efforts throughout the battalion.

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The 59th Land Clearing Company (59LCC) remained under operational control of the 14th EBC during most of the quarter. At the beginning of the reporting period this unit was clearing land west of Camp Evans. This was completed on 17 Nov and then maintenance stand down from 18 Nov to 5 Dec was conducted. Then 59LCC moved en masse to vicinity FSB C-2 and began clearing a 6000 acre area for 1/5 Mech. During this quarter 59LCC has cleared approximately 6945 acres. A significant problem was the frequency of mining incidents in the vicinity of FSB C-2. Four dozers were heavily damaged by mines and a total of 7 mines were detonated by bulldozers. No injuries resulted from these incidents.

2. Section 2, Lessons Learned: Commanders Observations, Evaluations, and Recommendations.

a. Personnel:

(a) Observation: The reduction of 96 personnel from the authorized manning level of the battalion, brought about by reduced manning levels throughout Engineer Troops in Viet Nam caused realignments.

(b) Evaluation: An overhead saving solution would be to reduce one company to zero strength, but this was rejected because of the unknown duration of the reduction, because of officer personnel utilization and training considerations, and because of the considerable need for maximum command and control elements required for our many different project locations. Instead one platoon per company was drawn down, and companies were accordingly tasked with only two major projects apiece. The bobtail platoon was utilized on combat support and minesweeps, on company pre-cutting yards and on small jobs.

(c) Recommendations: Not used.

b. Operations:

(1) Capping Revetments

(a) Observation: Sand-cement caps on revetments tend to crack as settlement occurs in the fill.

(b) Evaluation: The design for helicopter revetments currently used incorporates timber A-frame braces, roofing tin sides, earth fill, and a cap. The cap is built immediately after back filling is completed. When a sand-cement cap is used, in a short time the fill settles allowing the cap to crack and creating a dust problem.

(c) Recommendation: Utilize a roofing tin cap in lieu of sand-cement. Several advantages accrue for a tin cap is easier to construct, water proof, and permanent.

(2) Pioneer Road construction:

(a) Observation: Numerous time consuming false start traces occur when pioneering a new trace in heavy jungle growth.

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(b) Evaluation: When pioneering through thick jungle it is very difficult to judge precisely the best location of the trace. Often clearing is accomplished along what appears to be suitable ridgeline or saddle but a significant obstacle frequently is encountered, and new direction must be chosen.

(c) Recommendation: Provide the OIC of the road construction force sufficient helicopter support so that he can better see the best route and can continually plan ahead in an effort to minimize false starts.

(3) Prefabrication of standard bunkers:

(a) Observation: On site cutting of materials for standard bunkers has caused delays in construction.

(b) Evaluation: A combination of poor working conditions, inaccessibility of maintenance facilities and parts for power saws, and sporadic procurement of necessary timbers has delayed construction effort at sites where significant timber cutting is required. When a rear prefabrication yard was established so that precut, ready to assemble timbers could be delivered to the site, a 50% increase in productivity was realized. Another important factor is that when air lifting materials to work sites, prefabricated loads eliminate hauling any waste materials to the site.

(c) Recommendation: Prefabrication sites in rear areas near maintenance facilities and materials should be established for projects requiring construction of a large number of standard size timber structures.

(4) Back-pack vs Vehicle mounted radios.

(a) Observation: Work site crews with only vehicle mounted radios often cannot properly respond to enemy attacks.

(b) Evaluation: Vehicle mounted radios are imperative for command and control but are inadequate in areas where ambushes or sniper fire will cause evacuation from the vehicle. The back-pack radio gives required flexibility to maneuver and respond to enemy activity.

(c) Recommendation: Ensure Engineer personnel at work sites in contested areas do not become dependent on vehicle mounted radios. Ambush tactics and sniper fire normally cause personnel to abandon vehicles and no back-up communications would be available. A back-pack radio available to the OIC/NCOIC is imperative.

c. Training: none

d. Intelligence:

(a) Observation: The use of movement and acoustic sensors in areas adjacent to FSB Barbara has given effective early warning of enemy movements, and has contributed to the effectiveness of our base and ambush defense.

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(b) Engineer units are not normally trained in nor issued sensors. We have acquired ours by liaison and persuasion justified by our base defense and road construction responsibilities.

(c) Recommendations: Engineer brigades be provided sensors and sensor training teams, for use as needed.

e. Logistics: none

f. Organization: none

g. Other: Morale:

(a) Observation: The publication of change 1 to AR 10-6, changing the Corps of Engineers from a Combat Arm to a Combat Support Arm , has had a serious impact on the morale and motivation of my career-oriented Officers.

(b) Evaluation: Casualties taken, risks involved, tasks performed, and comparison with, in particular, the artillery, makes the change appear most unjust. It further threatens to lead to discrimination in assignment and school selections in the future. It has made my more ambitious and better officers consider seriously changing branches or leaving the service.

(c) Recommendation: AR10-6 be changed once again to re-establish the Corps of Engineers as a Combat Arm.

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DRAKE WILSON
LTC, CE
Commanding

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EGD-3 (31 Jan 70) 1st Ind
SUBJECT: Operational Report of the 14th Engineer Battalion (Combat) for the Period Ending 31 January 1970 (RCS CSFOR-65)

DA, Headquarters, 45th Engineer Group (Const), APO 96308

TO: Commanding General, 18th Engineer Brigade, ATTN: AVBC-C, APO 96377

1. The Operational Report - Lessons Learned of the 14th Engineer Battalion (Combat) has been reviewed by this headquarters and is considered to be an excellent account of the 14th Engineer Battalion's activities during the reporting period ending 31 January 1970.

2. I concur with the observations and recommendations of the Battalion Commander.

WILLIAM R. WRAY
COL, CE
Commanding

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AVBC-OP (31 Jan 70) 2nd Ind
SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned, 14th Engineer Battalion (Combat), Period Ending 31 January 1970, RCS CSFOR-65 (R2)

DA, HEADQUARTERS, 18TH ENGINEER BRIGADE, APO 96377 21 MAR 1970

TO: Commanding General, U.S. Army Vietnam, ATTN: AVHGC-DST, APO 96375

1. This Headquarters has reviewed the Operational Report - Lessons Learned for the 14th Engineer Battalion (Combat), as indorsed by the 45th Engineer Group (Construction). The report is considered to be an accurate account of the Battalion's activities during the reporting period.

2. This Headquarters concurs with the observations and recommendations of the Battalion and Group Commanders, with the following comments added:

Reference: Section 2, item d. Concur. The Defense Communication Planning Group at MACV has been requested by this Headquarters to provide a liaison team for the purpose of briefing Group and Battalion Commanders concerning the use and availability of sensor devices. According to LT Levitsky of DCPG, the team will be available to make on-site visits to evaluate the requirement and suitability of sensor employment at specific locations. LT Levitsky indicated that sensor devices are available on an urgency of need basis. Sensor training is conducted at the Vung Tau Training Facility. Three individuals of the Brigade have recently attended this training and there are presently three additional allocations available to the Brigade.

H. B. COFFMAN, JR.
Colonel, CE
Acting Commander

CF:
1 - CO, 45th Engr Gp
1 - CO, 14th Engr Bn

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AVHGC-DST (31 Jan 70) 3d Ind
SUBJECT: Operational Report of 14th Engineer Battalion (Combat) for Period Ending 31 January 1970, RCSFOR-65 (R2)

Headquarters, United States Army, Vietnam, APO San Francisco 96375 12 APR 1970

TO: Commander in Chief, United States Army, Pacific, ATTN: GPOP-DT, APO 96558

1. This headquarters has reviewed the Operational Report-Lessons Learned for the quarterly period ending 31 January 1970 from Headquarters, 14th Engineer Battalion (Combat) and concurs with the comments of indorsing headquarters.

2. Reference item concerning "Morale", page 9, paragraph g: nonconcur. The primary mission of an Engineer Battalion (Combat) is to increase combat effectiveness at Corps and Army level by means of engineer combat support and general engineer work. Change 1 to AR 10-6 may have initially caused a morale problem among younger officers but the change in the Corps of Engineers' classification adequately describes its mission. No action by DA or USARPAC is recommended.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

C. E. MICHELS
MAJ, AGC
Assistant Adjutant General

CF:
18th Engr Bde
14th Engr Bn

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GPOP-DT (31 Jan 70) 4th Ind
SUBJECT: Operational Report of HQ, 14th Engineer Battalion (Combat) for Period Ending 31 January 1970, RCS CSFOR-65 (R2)

HQ, US Army, Pacific, APO San Francisco 96558 17 APR 70

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

This headquarters concurs in subject report as indorsed.

FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF:

D. D. Cline

D. D. CLINE
CLT, AGC
Asst AG

EGD-BB-3

31 January 1970

SUBJECT: Operational Report--Lessons Learned RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)
for Quarterly Period Ending 31 January 1970

1. Headquarters and Headquarters Company

2. Four Engineer Companies (A, B, C, and D)

3. 630th Engineer Company (Light Equipment)

4. 59th Engineer Company (Land Clearing)

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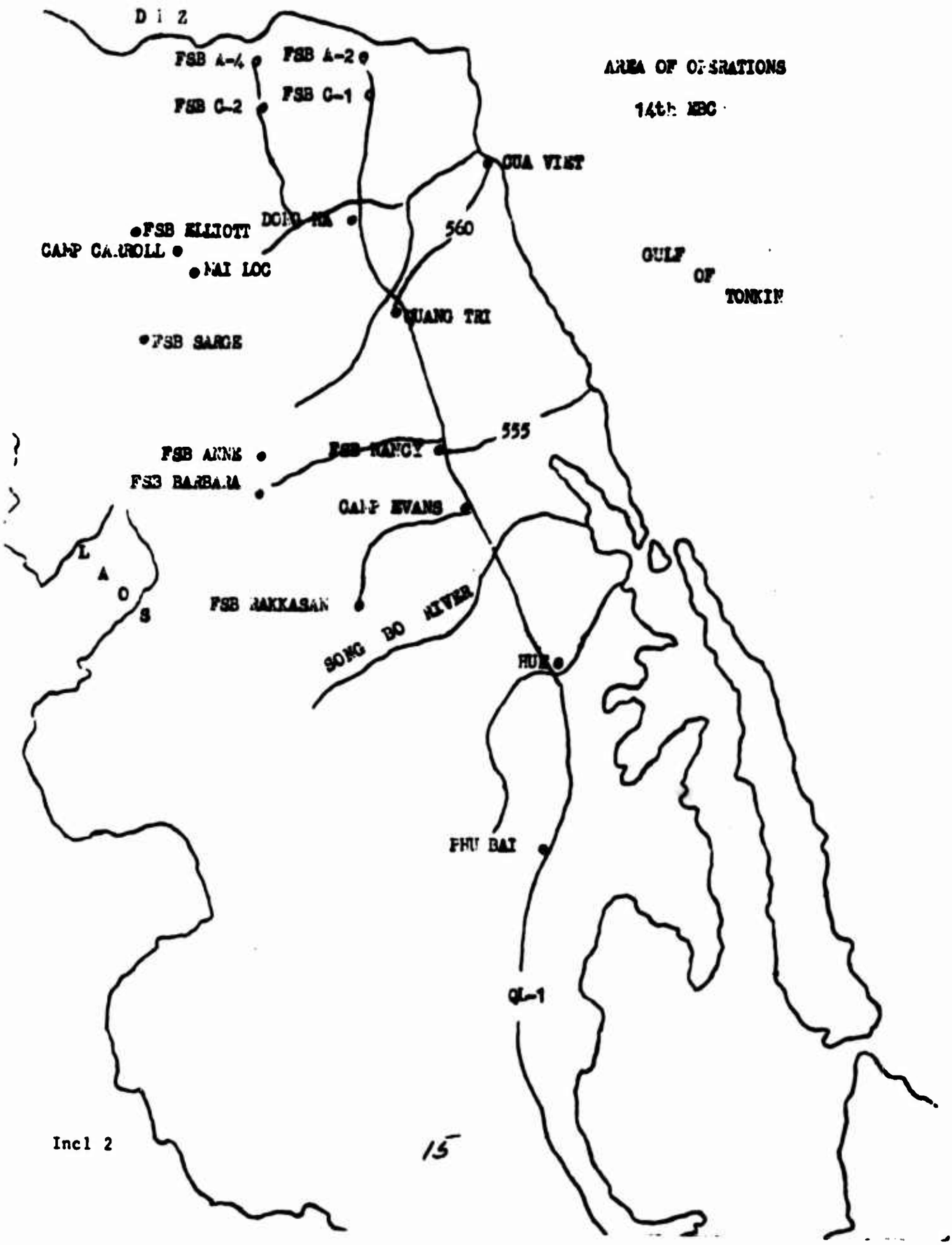
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DOCUMENT CONTROL DATA - R & D

(Security classification of title, body of abstract and indexing annotation must be entered when the overall report is classified)

1. ORIGINATING ACTIVITY *(Corporate author)* HQ, OACSFOR, DA, Washington, D.C. 20310	2a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY 2b. GROUP

3. REPORT TITLE

Operational Report - Lessons Learned, HQ, 14th Engineer Battalion

4. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES *(Type of report and inclusive dates)*

Experiences of unit engaged in counterinsurgency operations, 1 Nov 69 to 31 Jan 70.

5. AUTHOR(S) *(First name, middle initial, last name)*

CO, 14th Engineer Battalion

6. REPORT DATE 31 January 1970	7a. TOTAL NO. OF PAGES 18	7b. NO. OF REFS
8a. CONTRACT OR GRANT NO. b. PROJECT NO. N/A c. d.	9a. ORIGINATOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) 701139 9b. OTHER REPORT NO(S) *(Any other numbers that may be assigned this report)*	

10. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES N/A	12. SPONSORING MILITARY ACTIVITY OACSFOR, DA, Washington, D.C. 20310

13. ABSTRACT

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