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OPERATIONS OF SPECIAL FORCES DETACHMENT A-102, 5th SPECIAL FORCES GROUP (AIRBORNE), 1st SPECIAL FORCES, IN THE DEFENSE OF THE SPECIAL FORCES CAMP AT A SHAU, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, 9-12 MARCH 1966. (PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A SPECIAL FORCES "A" DETACHMENT COMMANDER.)

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#### INTRODUCTION

The A Chau Civilian Defense Group (CIDG) Camp had the primary mission of border surveillance and of interdiction of enemy infiltration routes from Laos through A Chau's assigned tactical area of responsibility (TAOR). The camp was located at coordinates YC 494834 in I Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ), Republic of Vietnam, approximately 45 kilometers southwest of Hue, 90 kilometers west of Da Nang, and 5 kilometers east of the Laotian border (Tab A, Sketch Map of Disposition of Friendly Forces in I CTZ). Camp A Chau was attacked on 9 March 1966, partially overrun on 10 March, and evacuated on that same day. This is the description of the Battle for Camp A Chau to include the following:

- (1) The intelligence buildup and background events precoding the battle;
- (2) The battle itself - the attack by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) 18B and 95B Regiments with their supporting forces and the defense of Camp A Chau by the special forces and CIDG garrison, supported by tactical aircraft;
- (3) The breakout and evasion of the garrison's survivors, 10-12 March.

#### STATUS OF HIGH LEVEL OPERATIONS

5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces (hereafter referred to as 5th SFGp), with headquarters at Nha Trang, had responsibility for execution of the CIDG program. The CIDG program consisted of using Vietnamese irregulars, under command of Vietnamese Special Forces (LDB) personnel advised by United States Army Special Forces (USASF) personnel, to conduct offensive operations from CIDG base camps against Viet Cong and NVA forces. More than seventy CIDG

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camps were scattered throughout Vietnam in the winter of 1965 - 1966, and at each camp there were one USAF "A" detachment, one LLDB "A" detachment, three or more CIDG light guerrilla companies, and one or more CIDG combat reconnaissance platoons (CRP's). The missions assigned to the CIDG camps included the following:

- (1) Conduct of offensive operations against the enemy;
- (2) Interdiction of enemy lines of communications;
- (3) Conduct of border surveillance operations;
- (4) Collection and reporting of information of intelligence value;
- (5) Conduct of psychological and civic action operations.

The CIDG program was effectively accomplishing its assigned missions in the winter of 1965 - 1966. In addition, it was accomplishing other important but not assigned functions:

- (1) Security to local populations;
- (2) Destruction of Viet Cong political and military infrastructures in populated areas under CIDG control;
- (3) Denial of military age manpower to the enemy; (Thousands of CIDG irregulars in the program were recruited from areas under predominately enemy control. Most of the irregulars would have been drafted by the Viet Cong had not special forces recruited them first.)
- (4) Control of local populations.

CIDG camps were generally located in areas under enemy control and where friendly conventional units did not habitually operate. The CIDG performed an economy of force function in the war effort, carrying the war to the enemy and causing the enemy to tie up many of his units for security roles. Because of their isolated locations and their interference with enemy operations, the CIDG camps were, in general, vulnerable to the enemy attack by superior forces at the time

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and place of the enemy's choosing.

Although the 5th SFGp and ILDB Headquarters exercised command over their respective "C", "B", and "A" detachments, they did not exercise operational control. One USASF and ILDB "C" detachment (company) was located in each of the CTZ's. They fulfilled command and control functions over their respective "B" and "A" detachments. Operational control over the USASF "C" detachment in each CTZ was exercised by the senior American military advisor. Operational control over the ILDB "C" detachment and over the CIDG camps in each CTZ was exercised by the ARVN corps commander.

The USASF personnel were advisors to the ILDB in execution of the CIDG program, except that in the case of the Mike Force battalions the Americans exercised direct command over the Vietnamese CIDG irregulars. The Mike Force battalions were the reserve and reaction forces for the CIDG program. The 5th SFGp Headquarters and each USASF "C" detachment in each CTZ had one Mike Force battalion. The battalions were generally referred to and informally identified by their home base camp, such as the "Nha Trang" Mike Force and the "Da Nang" Mike Force.

Since the USASF detachments were in "advisory" roles at the CIDG camps and the manpower for the CIDG program was Vietnamese, it was natural that each Vietnamese corps commander should exercise operational control over the camps in his CTZ. It also followed, naturally, that the Vietnamese corps commanders should be responsible for the security and defense of the CIDG camps, and indeed, until the Battle of A Chau, the Vietnamese I Corps Commander jealously guarded that responsibility. Since security and defense of the CIDG camps were Vietnamese responsibilities, the senior American military advisor in each CTZ, who was also commander of the American forces operating in the particular CTZ, felt little or no responsibility for assuring camp security and defense at American expense.

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In I CTZ during the winter of 1965 - 66, ARVN Lieutenant General Lam commanded ARVN I Corps and Lieutenant General Lewis Walt commanded III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) and was the senior advisor to General Lam. General Lam and not General Walt was tasked with the security and defense of CIDG camps, including A Chau, in I CTZ.

That winter, ARVN I Corps had its headquarters and a few combat battalions located at Da Nang, ARVN 1st Division Headquarters at Hue, and ARVN 2nd Division Headquarters at Quang Ngai city. ARVN forces were deployed around the large urban centers on the coastal plain and were largely defensive in posture.

III MAF had two infantry divisions and one air wing as major combat organizations. The 3d Division Headquarters and 1st Marine Air Wing (MAW) Headquarters, with several infantry battalions and air squadrons were located in the marine TAOR at Da Nang. A marine regiment of the 3d Division and some marine helicopter squadrons were located in a TAOR at Phu Bai. The entire 1st Division was in the TAOR at Chu Lai, along with several helicopter squadrons from the 1st MAW. III MAF combat forces were also deployed on the coastal plain and many of its units were tied up in defense of the TAOR's. III MAF conducted many offensive operations in and near its TAOR's, but most of its battalions were involved in security functions.

USASF Detachment C-1, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth B. Facey, and LLDB Detachment C-1, commanded by Major Nguyn Khoai, were co-located at Da Nang. The two "C" detachments each had nine "A" detachments at CIDG camps. In addition, USASF Detachment C-1 had a Mike Force battalion and an "A" detachment at Da Nang. (See Tab A, Sketch Map of Disposition of Friendly Forces in I CTZ).

Serious problems confronted Lieutenant Colonel Facey and Major Khoai during the winter. A heavy buildup of large enemy forces had taken place around all of the camps but Kham Duc and Gia Vuc. In January the enemy had inflicted heavy damage upon Camp Khe Sanh by



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shelling it with 120 mm mortars and delivered a crushing blow to the CIDG force at Camp Tra Bong by ambushing and annihilating a force of more than 90 CIDG irregulars, the district chief, and 4 USASF personnel. Only Camps Khe Sanh, Tien Phouc, and Tra Bong had any artillery support available. The Da Nang Mike Force was almost nonexistent following the Tet Lunar New Year holidays in January: most of the Chinese (Nung), who made up the battalion went AWOL, deserted, or quit during and following Tet. Rumors abounded that Khe Sanh, A Shau, Tien Phouc, Tra Bong, and Ba To were to be overrun and the presence of strong enemy forces around those camps gave credibility to the rumors. Furthermore, all camps but Gia Vuc were understrength with less than 300 irregulars in each one. Lieutenant Colonel Facey and Major Khoai could do little but await developments and request assistance from ARVN I Corps, III MAF, and 5th SFGp.

#### SPECIFIC SITUATION CONFRONTING CAMP A SHAU

##### General Description of the Terrain

The A Shau Valley, deep within the mountains of I CTZ, is approximately 25 kilometers in length from northwest to southeast, and between  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 kilometers in width. The Rao Lao Stream has its origin in the valley and flows westward by Ba Bat (YC 4295) to the Se Kong River in Laos. The Rao Lao Stream and the many streams feeding it in the A Shau Valley are swift, shallow and have rocky and clay loam bottoms. Adjoining the A Shau Valley on the southeast and separated only by a low saddle is the Be Loung Valley, where the Rao Nai Stream has its origin. The elevation of the A Shau Valley is approximately 600 meters. The ridgeline of the Ha Re and Ha Cop mountains west of the camp rises to 1556 meters and is the eastern side of the Plateau Tam R'Chett in Laos. The low ridgeline to the east of the camp rises to an elevation of 768 meters and is part of the Mar Bar Mountain which rises 825 meters. Thick elephant grass

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over 3 meters in height covers most of the A Chau Valley floor except on the low elevations in the valley where brushwood, bamboo, ferns, vines and low trees are dense. Numerous narrow animal trails meander through the valley and one large, road-like, manmade trail extends the length of the valley and has lesser manmade trails connecting with it and radiating out of the valley in all directions. The ridgelines are covered with dense, almost impenetrable jungle foliage. The mountain slopes are steep and numerous fingers radiate downward toward the valley. Major trails enter the A Chau Valley from the north, from the east and west and from the south. The A Chau Valley is a "crossroads" for trails from and to Laos and Vietnam. (See Tab B, 1:50,000 Scale Map of A Chau)

#### Military Aspects of the Terrain

##### (1) Observation and Fields of Fire

Observation on the ground in the mountains and in the valley is greatly limited by the thick vegetation. Observation into the camp from cleared spots and towers on the ridgelines is very good in general and is excellent from the finger vicinity YC 4883, a scant 700 meters from the camp. Conversely, observation of the ridges from the camp is extremely poor. Observation of the valley from the air is poor except of the trails and of poorly camouflaged enemy field fortifications.

Fields of fire for flat trajectory and high angle fire weapons are good in the valley, although numerous drainage features create many dead spaces that cannot be effectively covered by flat trajectory weapons. The thickness of the elephant grass in the valley reduces the fields of fire somewhat by impeding the trajectory of bullets and by obscuring observation. Fields of plunging fire for machine-guns, anti-aircraft guns, and recoilless rifles or guns are excellent from the ridgelines into the valley or into aircraft flight corridors running the length of the valley. The finger at YC 4883 affords an



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excellent vantage point for directing machinegun and recoilless rifle fire into Camp A Chau.

(2) Cover and Concealment

Natural cover and concealment are both excellent on the ridges and in the valley. Artificial cover was good in the camp and good in the enemy's fortified bases in the valley from Ta Bat (YC 4294) northward to A Luoi (YC 3809), in the southern portion of the valley (vicinity YC 5279), in the Be Luong Valley to the southeast (YC 5682), and in the area northeast of the camp (vicinity YC 5186).

The enemy could approach concealed to within about 75 meters of Camp A Chau. The elephant grass close around the camp was constantly cut, burned, and defoliated but still remained thick and tall. Furthermore, old and ineffective, but dangerous minefields on the eastside of the airstrip and on the south side of the camp were overgrown with elephant grass, which provided excellent concealment for the enemy. (Several CIDG irregulars had been killed by exploding mines while trying to cut the grass. The enemy, on the other hand, seemed to move with impunity through the minefields.)

Cover and concealment in the camp for the defenders was fair to good. (See Tab C, Sketch of the Camp and Photograph of Camp Prior to Attack) Walls were raised, filled with dirt, and revetted with tin, pierced steel planking (PSP), logs, and sandbags. The western half of the north and south walls of the triangular shaped camp were double walls. The remaining walls were single walls with sandbags stacked behind individual firing ports to protect the men from shrapnel. Men could move covered along the double wall but were exposed to shrapnel when moving elsewhere. The bunkers in the camp provided good cover on the sides but, except for one concrete bunker at the western apex of the camp, overhead cover was not good. Good cover was available in the USAF communications bunker. Good side cover but no overhead cover was provided by the raised walls of the mortar

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pits. Fair cover was available in the earth and log ammunition bunkers, in the shallow north-south drainage ditch bisecting the camp, and in a shallow east-west trench in the center of the camp. Concealment in the camp was good from the valley but only fair from the highground. (It was amazing, however, just how much cover and concealment both forces could and did find in and around the camp during the battle.)

### (3) Obstacles

Obstacles to the enemy consisted of the camp's defensive wire, Claymore mines all around the camp, and perhaps to some extent the abandoned minefields east of the airstrip and south of the camp. Dense jungle vegetation on the highground presented an obstacle to movement except on trails.

Obstacles to friendly ground forces at A Chau in conduct of the defense were the abandoned minefields and their own defensive wire. Obstacles to the A Chau ground forces during the evasion were their defensive wire, the steep-sloped mountains, and the thick jungle vegetation that restricted movement to trails.

Obstacles to air support were the ridgelines east and west of the valley that channelized aircraft to a narrow flight corridor and forced them to "run the gauntlet" of heavy antiaircraft fire from the ridgelines.

Obstacles to overland movement of any potential ground relief forces were the 45 kilometers of jungle-covered mountains between A Chau and the nearest friendly forces.

### (4) Key Terrain

For both forces, Camp A Chau and its airstrip were key terrain. The valley floor 300 to 500 meters north of the camp became key terrain late in the afternoon of 10 March, when it became <sup>a</sup> helicopter landing zone for evacuation of the garrison's survivors. The ridgelines east and west of the camp were key terrain.



## (5) Avenues of Approach

Camp A Shau could be approached through the valley by regimental size forces from either the north or from the south. Considering the enemy's tactics, where he demonstrated a willingness to mass large numbers of infantrymen on a narrow front and to use successive waves of assaulting riflemen to overwhelm and to smother opposition, it was possible for the enemy to concentrate an infantry battalion on a front of less than 300 meters. Thus, in considering avenues of approach for the enemy, one must consider the tactics used in the assault and in the approach. In the assault he crowded his forces. In the approach, he moved in files along trails or through trenches and used "infiltration" techniques. (See Tab D, Overlay Depicting Routes Into and Through the A Shau Valley.)

General Description of the Weather

During the period 8 - 12 March the sky was heavily overcast and cloud ceilings ranged from zero to 600 meters above the A Shau Valley floor. Thick ground fog generally settled around dusk and prevailed until 0730 - 0830 hours each day. The top of the ridgeline to the west of the camp and the top of the mountains to the east remained obscured in clouds at all times during the five day period. The air was extremely humid and a misty drizzle dampened everything. The temperature was cool, varying from an estimated 50° to 70° Fahrenheit. There was little wind. The clouds and fog prevented starlight from shining through and there was no moonlight. Sunrise was around 0600 hours and sunset around 1830 hours. Civil twilight was approximately 1/2 hour before sunrise and after sunset.

Overcast skies, low cloud covers, and ground fog were common occurrences at A Shau. During the fall and winter months, the cloudiness was especially bad, and it was not unusual for the camp to be without aerial resupply for days on end because of adverse weather conditions.



During the week or so preceding the battle, the weather had been fairly pleasant. The sky had been clear, or the clouds had been high.

#### Military Aspects of the Weather

The most significant military aspects of the weather were those pertaining to aerial operations. Low clouds prevented effective air support during much of the battle. One F-4 fighter aircraft crashed into the cloud obscured ridgeline west of the camp. High performance jet aircraft could not operate below the low cloud ceiling (with the exceptions of a single bomb run by a pair of B-57 "Canberras" and of the hapless F-4 "Phantom" that crashed). The low cloud ceiling also combined with terrain configurations to force the aircraft to fly low along the valley corridor, subject to anti-aircraft fire from weapons emplaced on the ridges and from individual weapons and machineguns of enemy soldiers in the valley. (Although the enemy made maximum use of the advantage afforded them by the weather, it is of significance to note that on occasions the cloud ceiling was so low that the anti-aircraft guns were obscured in the clouds and the enemy then could not place accurate fire on aircraft flying below the clouds.)

The clouds and fog restricted observation on the ground for both sides, but served the NVA forces to their advantage by concealing the movements and concentrations of their units. The fog at night worked to the disadvantage of the enemy by obscuring his pyrotechnic signals, and to the disadvantage of the A Chau garrison by dissipating the illumination from their flares.

Soil trafficability for foot movement was not affected significantly by the weather.

The weather conditions during the period of the battle were the most significant of all factors that contributed to the NVA success at A Chau, since the weather prevented adequate aerial support.



#### Local Population

An unknown number of hostile and secretive Fatu mountain tribesmen (montagnards) were indigenous to the A Chau area. The garrison at A Chau never succeeded in establishing a friendly contact with the Fatu, who lived in camouflaged long houses built on stilts and hidden among the foliage on the steep mountain slopes. The Fatu seemed to serve the NVA and other Viet Cong forces by providing scouts, guides, carrying parties, some food and shelter, and a few small combat units.

#### The Enemy Situation

During the fall and winter of 1965-66, the NVA 325B Division infiltrated by battalions from Quang Binh Province in North Vietnam, through Laos, and into Thua Thien Province of South Vietnam, where it was to become the "backbone" of the enemy military effort in that province. Because Camp A Chau was strategically located where it could interdict the major line of communication between the 325B Division in Thua Thien and its support bases in North Vietnam and Laos, the enemy decided to destroy it. To accomplish the destruction of Camp A Chau, the enemy employed the 18B and 95B Infantry Regiments of the 325B Division, believed to have been supported by elements of the Division's reconnaissance battalion and engineer (pioneer) battalion and by the "artillery" regiment. The artillery regiment is thought to have supported with one mixed battalion of 120mm and 82mm mortars, with one battalion of 12.7mm anti-aircraft machineguns, and one battalion of 7.62mm recoilless rifles or guns. It is probable that the third infantry regiment of the division was also in the vicinity, possibly deployed on likely helicopter landing zones in the A Chau or Be Loung Valleys for the purpose of ambushing ARVN, Marine, or CIDG relief forces.

It is thought that the attack on A Chau was a 325B Division controlled operation that was intended to be a major battle to destroy



A Shau, to draw friendly reinforcements into isolated terrain organized and fortified by the enemy and on which the friendly forces would be destroyed, to remove the threat to the 325B Division's line of communications, and to create a psychological victory for the enemy and a corresponding psychological defeat for the friendly forces. The enemy obviously intended to take advantage of an adverse weather period to minimize the effectiveness of friendly air support.

Enemy preparations for the attack on A Shau were lengthy, detailed and elaborate. At least two infantry regiments established themselves in bases in Laos a few kilometers west of A Shau during December and January and then moved in February into the A Shau and Be Loung Valleys where they dug in. From December through 8 March, the enemy reconnoitered Camp A Shau and made detailed and careful preparations for the attack on the camp.

The Battle for Camp A Shau was the first major action for most of the participating NVA soldiers, as borne out by comments in the diary of an NVA squad leader killed on 28 February and by testimony of two NVA defectors who "rallied" at Camp A Shau on 5 March. Combat strength was estimated near 90% for the participating units. Morale was estimated to be good. Combat efficiency was expected to be excellent but turned out to be only fair because tactics employed during the attack were clumsy and the enemy's scheme of maneuver and fire support were poorly coordinated. Excellent leadership and courage on the part of the enemy leaders and discipline and courage on the part of the enemy enlisted men were all that held together the enemy force and enabled it to continue the attack despite withering fire that inflicted massive casualties to it.

The NVA forces that participated in the attack were well-equipped with weapons and well supplied with ammunition. For weeks prior to the attack, large carrying parties brought a steady stream of supplies



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into the fortified, regimental size bases around Ta Lat (YC 4295),  
Ta Loung (YC 5782), and the southern end of the A Chau Valley (YC 5378).  
Close observation of the NVA defectors and dead showed that they had  
been adequately fed, although their diet was reported by the de-  
fectors and in the diary to be mostly rice, manioc, and bananas.  
The NVA soldiers appeared well uniformed in khakis, blue-grey uni-  
forms, or camouflage uniforms and shod in tire sandals. Most wore  
cloth helmets. The Viet Cong wore parts of uniforms, black pajamas,  
loin cloths, and shorts; they did not appear as well nourished as  
the NVA soldiers. The NVA soldiers seemed to have large number of  
M-16 assault rifles, although many of them and most of the Viet Cong  
were armed with 7.62mm VC rifles and carbines. The enemy infantry-  
men each carried several stick handled, cast iron handgrenades that  
were of poor quality. About  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the handgrenades failed to explode  
and those that did had poor fragmentation patterns and a burst radius  
of about 3 meters. Crew served weapons that were employed by the  
enemy consisted of an estimated four 120mm mortars, eighteen to  
twenty 82mm mortars, eighteen 60mm mortars, twelve 82mm anti-tank  
rocket launchers, nine 57mm and 75mm recoilless rifles and/or guns,  
twenty-seven to thirty 7.62mm machineguns, over one hundred auto-  
matic rifles, and eighteen 12.7mm anti-aircraft machineguns.

Training of the NVA force was fair. Tactics employed during the  
attack were clumsy, maneuver and fire support poorly coordinated,  
and communications poor. A combination of massive firepower and  
massive infantry assaults were employed during the attack to sub-  
merge the garrison. Special action teams failed to accomplish most  
assigned missions because they suffered heavy casualties, became  
disorganized, and dispersed among the masses of assaulting infantry.  
Individual rifle marksmanship and fire discipline were not good.  
The gunners on the crew served weapons, on the other hand, were  
accurate and deadly in delivering fire.

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# FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY PLAN OF DEFENSE

On 7 March the A Shau garrison was reinforced by one company of 143 Nungs, 6 interpreters and 7 Americans from USAF Detachment A-503 from the 5th SFG's Nha Trang Mike Force, which brought with it two 81mm mortars, three 60mm mortars and three M1919 A-6 caliber .30 light machineguns, and nine caliber .30 BAR's, and about 100 rounds of mortar ammunition for each mortar. The A Shau garrison prior to being reinforced consisted of 210 CIDG irregulars, 6 ILDB soldiers, 2 interpreters, 41 civilian laborers, 10 civilian prisoners, and 10 USAF soldiers of Detachment A-102. Weapons at A Shau before the reinforcement were one 4.2 inch mortar, two 82mm mortars, six 60mm mortars, one 57mm recoilless rifle, about thirty M1919 A-4 and A-6 caliber .30 light machineguns, and twenty-seven caliber .30 BAR's. All of the USAF soldiers were armed with the M16A1 5.56mm rifles and all of the Mike Force and CIDG irregulars, interpreters, and civilians not armed with BAR's or machinegun's were armed with M1 or M2 caliber .30 carbine. A recapitulation of forces and weapons available on the evening of 8 March follows:

| Type Personnel | Number | Weapons                | Number | Rounds per Weapon |    |     |       |
|----------------|--------|------------------------|--------|-------------------|----|-----|-------|
|                |        |                        |        | HE                | WP | ILL | Other |
| CIDG           | 210    | 4.2 in. mortar         | 1      | 160               | 30 | 20  |       |
| MIKE           | 143    | 81mm mortar            | 2      | 95                | 20 | 40  |       |
| USAF           | 17     | 60mm mortar            | 9      | 85                | 0  | 30  |       |
| ILDB           | 6      | 57mm recoilless rifle  | 1      | 70                | 20 | 0   | 20    |
| Interpreter    | 8      |                        |        |                   |    |     |       |
| Civilian       | 51     | .30 light machine gun  | 29     |                   |    |     |       |
| Total:         | 435    | .30 BAR                | 30     |                   |    |     |       |
|                |        | .40mm grenade launcher | 5      |                   |    |     |       |
|                |        | 12 gage shotgun        | 5      |                   |    |     |       |
|                |        | 5.56mm rifle (M16A1)   | 17     |                   |    |     |       |
|                |        | .30 carbine            | +400   |                   |    |     |       |
|                |        | M26 handgrenade        | +1200  |                   |    |     |       |
|                |        | Claymore mine          | +250   |                   |    |     |       |
|                |        | M72 LAW                | 12     |                   |    |     |       |

The CIDG companies stationed at A Shau were the 131, 141, and 154 Companies, each with approximately 60 men present for duty out of 132 authorized. The CRP had 30 out of 36 of its authorized men present



for duty.

The assignment of forces to defensive positions and their locations were as follows:

141 Company - From main gate along east wall to apex bunker and along south wall about 50 meters;

Mike Platoon - From 141 Company along south wall to middle bunker;

131 Company - From Mike Platoon at middle bunker along south wall to western apex bunker;

CRP Squad - Western apex bunker;

154 Company - From western apex bunker along north wall to within 50 meters of northeast apex bunker;

Mike Platoon - From 154 Company along north wall to northeast apex bunker along east wall to main gate;

Mike Company minus and civilians - In reserve in eastwest drainage trench in center of camp;

CRP minus - In reserve in the western apex portion of the camp;

Mortar crews - Scattered through the camp. (See Tab D, Sketch of Camp A Chau.)

The organization of the defense was that of a perimeter. Three CIDG squads were positioned as security forces about 100 to 200 meters out from each wall. Schematically, the defense looked like that shown on Tab E. (See Tab E, Schematic Defense of Camp A Chau.)



Basically, the plan of the defensive operation was to prevent the enemy from penetrating the perimeter, to eject him with all available forces if he did penetrate, and to hold on until reinforcements or a counterattack force arrived, or until the enemy broke off the attack. No consideration was given to evacuating the camp or to avoiding.

#### PREPARATION FOR DEFENSE

In the face of a combat ratio of approximately 10 to 1, there was little more that the garrison could do but dig in, sandbag, conduct security operations, and wait, once attack was imminent.

When it became obvious that the camp would be attacked, on 5 March Camp A Shau requested of Detachment C-1 that it be reinforced with at least two rifle companies of American marines, ARVN, or Mike Force and at least two 105mm howitzer and preferably a battery. ARVN I Corps and the III MAF refused to commit forces to reinforcement of the camp and Detachment C-1 had only one understrength Mike Force company, so Headquarters 5th SFGp sent one company of Mike Force to A Shau on 7 March and Detachment C-1 and 5th SFGp placed the remainder of their Mike Forces on alert.

Overflights were requested and received almost daily during late February and through 8 March. The overflights detected enemy carrying parties on trails and extensive fortifications being constructed north and south of the camp. Air strikes were requested and delivered against several of the fortified areas.

Between  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the CIDG garrison with USASF advisors was kept out on combat patrol operations until 7 March, at which time all offensive patrols were recalled in order to consolidate forces for defense of the camp. Another  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the camp strength was kept on local security operations and the remainder were engaged in maintenance and construction work and on standby as a reaction force.



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On 5 - 8 March the garrison conducted extensive local security operations, with approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the garrison (including most of the Mike Force Company on the 7th and 8th) conducting screening and reconnaissance patrols within a radius of 500 to 1000 meters around the camp.

On 7 March several thousand leaflets inducing the NVA to defect to the camp were dropped over the valley and loudspeaker broadcast appeals from the two defectors were delivered without results.

On 7 March the camp received an urgently needed resupply of 81mm mortar ammunition. It wasn't enough, but increased the available HE rounds per tube from about 40 to 95.

Between 5 and 8 March the CIDG irregulars lost a little of their natural laziness and worked fairly moderately on cutting grass around the camp, digging trenches, and sandbagging a gap on the southwall.

Upon arrival of the Mike Force Company on 7 March, the plan of defense was revised in order to intergrate the company into the camp defense organization.

On 7 and 8 March Captain Tennis Carter, who commanded the Mike Forces (Nung) Company; Chung Uy Dung, the LIDB Camp Commander; and Captain John B. Blair, who commanded USAF Detachment A-102 at A Chau, developed a plan for a raid (spoiling attack) on 10 March by the Nung Company, one CIDG Company, and the CIDG CRP against enemy fortifications in the southeast end of the A Chau Valley. It was hoped that the raid would throw the enemy off balance and cause him to delay or to call off his attack. The raid never got underway - the enemy initiated the attack at 0350 hours 9 March, one hour and ten minutes before the raid force was scheduled to depart the camp.

On the night of 8 March the LIDB Camp Commander placed the camp on general alert with all personnel at their defensive positions, since attack seemed imminent. The sky had become overcast with a cloud ceiling of less than 300 meters at dusk and an enemy squad

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leaves on the higher canopy of trees were removed by the herbicide.

Throughout the month of February and until 3 March, almost every aircraft coming in to or taking off from A Chau received sniper fire and several aircrafts were hit.

Almost nightly during February and through 4 March the camp received a few rounds of small arms fire from snipers. No real damage was done to the camp, but the enemy succeeded in his real purposes: low scale harassment designed to create complacency, reconnaissance to locate machineguns and fire patterns, costly expenditures by the garrison of mortar illumination shells and other munitions, and creation of anxiety among the garrison. The frequency of the sniper fire, small probes, and incidents was so great that it became somewhat routine for the camp, and the camp's reports of each incident became routine to Detachment C-1. The camp's garrison of CIDG became rather complacent as did higher headquarters, although the USAF Detachment A-102 and II DE "A" detachment members at Camp A Chau became daily more alarmed and worried. The CIDG irregulars responded to the nightly probes by opening fire with all their automatic weapons and by shooting several mortar illumination flares in the air. By so doing, the irregulars disclosed the locations and directions of fire of their automatic weapons and wasted much needed machinegun ammunition and mortar illumination shells. Once the CIDG irregulars began shooting, it was difficult to make them stop. The frequent probes also had an adverse psychological effect on the minds of the defenders by making them nervous and anxious.

An enemy reconnaissance patrol of 3 men was spotted by a local security patrol about 500 meters south of Camp A Chau just prior to dusk on 16 February. At about 2300 hours that night a small party of the enemy fired 10 to 20 rounds into the camp from a position about 200 meters south of the camp. In all probability, it was the

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same three man patrol observed at dusk.

On 17 February a FAC observed several khaki clad enemy soldiers on a trail on the Plateau Tan R'Chat in Laos, about 15 kilometers southwest of Camp A Chau.

On 18 - 19 February a combat patrol of 55 men operating in the valley about 5 kilometers north of Camp A Chau was twice ambushed by a squad of Viet Cong trail watchers, who inflicted no casualties upon the friendly patrol, thanks to their terrible marksmanship. About 1300 hours on the 18th, the CIDG patrol surprised a solitary NVA soldier in the act of defecating. The startled enemy left his trousers and scurried away amid a hail of bullets. (The CIDG irregulars at A Chau were not noted for their marksmanship.) In the abandoned trousers was found a detailed written reconnaissance report of what he had observed while scouting Camp A Chau. A few hours later the same patrol ambushed two NVA soldiers dressed in khaki who came carelessly ambling down the trail. The ambush was initiated prematurely and marksmanship was poor, with the result being that the two NVA soldiers got away, although one was wounded.

Also on the night of 18 February, a CIDG squad on a local security patrol ambushed a squad of NVA soldiers about 200 meters east of the airstrip and south of the camp. One CIDG irregular was killed. The enemy withdrew with undetermined casualties, although an inspection of the site on the morning of the 19th revealed two blood trails and two blood spattered magazines for an AK-47 rifle.

Again on the night of 24 February, an estimated 5 enemy soldiers fired on a local security patrol about 200 meters south of the camp. The CIDG patrol suffered no casualties and casualties to the enemy were unknown.

On 24 February a 40 man combat patrol accompanied by a pair of scout dogs and ARVN dog handlers left the camp at 0400 hours and proceeded westward onto the finger vicinity YC 4783, approximately

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2 kilometers from the camp. From the finger the patrol cut north and proceeded to about 4 1/2 kilometers northwest of the camp, where it stayed overnight in ambushes without results. On the 25th, the patrol began returning to camp. At about 1530 hours the patrol surprised approximately a dozen NVA soldiers in the valley about 2 kilometers northwest of A Shau. In the fight that followed two NVA soldiers were killed and one CIDG irregular was wounded. One of the Americans with the patrol found a diary on one of the corpses, who had been a squad leader. The diary revealed that Camp Ashau was being thoroughly reconnoitered in preparation for an enemy attack. (It is of interest to note that the scout dogs proved ineffective on this and on other combat patrols at A Shau because the dogs were not physically capable of "working" over the rough, jungle terrain in the area. Indeed, poncho litters had to be made to carry both dogs on the 24th and 25th of February.

The reconnaissance report captured on 18 February, the diary captured on 25 February, the numerous sniping incidents at aircraft and into the camp, and several firefights between local security patrols and enemy patrols convinced the camp's garrison that Camp A Shau was going to be attacked. To counter the threat, the 230 man military garrison could only continue as before: 1/3 on offensive operations, 1/3 on local security, and 1/3 on camp work and standby as a reaction force. The camp could and did request more observation aircraft support to increase and to extend its own reconnaissance and security capabilities.

At about 0200 hours 2 March, 3 enemy soldiers penetrated the outer perimeter of wire around the camp. A sentry caught the intruders in a spotlight beam, opened fire upon them with his carbine, and began shouting the alarm. The enemy escaped, apparently without injury.

Overflights on 4 March disclosed newly prepared anti-aircraft gun positions about 5 kilometers north of the camp on the eastern



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ridgeline. A tunnel complex was detected in the Be Loung Valley, approximately 8 kilometers west of Camp A Chau. A large herd of water buffalo was located and shot up by the observers in the OIE aircraft approximately 5 kilometers northwest of the A Chau ~~Valley~~ <sup>Camp</sup> in a side valley known to the USAF Detachment A-102 members as "Horne's Valley"- in memory of Sergeant Horne, who had been killed there in 1964.

The Camp dispatched a 32 man reconnaissance patrol 2 kilometers south of A Chau on 5 March. The patrol did not make contact with the enemy. An observation aircraft did observe extensive new field fortifications in the A Chau Valley 5 - 6 kilometers southeast of the camp; in the Be Loung Valley vicinity, 6 - 8 kilometers east and slightly south of the camp; and on the low ridgeline that separated the two valleys. Around noon on the 5th, tactical airstrikes were made against enemy fortifications in the Be Loung Valley.

About 1430 hours on 5 March, two khaki-clad NVA soldiers stepped out of the elephant grass and walked with raised arms onto the airstrip in front of a jeep being driven by a Vietnamese civilian mechanic. The startled mechanic, who was unarmed, took the defectors into custody and escorted them into the camp, where wild excitement was exhibited by the onlooking CIDG irregulars. A festive atmosphere developed among the Vietnamese, who welcomed and celebrated the defection of the enemy as the "father received the prodigal son." It was difficult to interrogate the defectors because of the wild pandemonium and crowding by curious onlookers. About all that could be gotten immediately as information was that the men were members of the 6th Battalion, 95B Regiment, 325B Division, which was located in the Be Loung Valley, and which was going to participate in an attack on Camp A Chau on or about 11 March, if weather conditions were favorable. The main determining factor for timing the attack would be the weather: the enemy planned to take full advantage of bad weather

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conditions to hinder tactical air support, reinforcement, and resupply attempts. The NVA defectors also reported that they thought the main assault would come from the north. In actuality, the direction from which the assault came was the south, and the direction of the attack was north. It is probable that either the NVA soldiers were confused about direction or that the interpreter made a translation error. Neither of the defectors could read a map.

The CIDG 141 Company and ORP were ordered to depart the camp at noon 5 March to conduct a raid on 6 March against enemy positions located on the small hill vicinity YC 5380 that overlooked the saddle separating the A Chau and Be Loung Valleys. The raiding force was scheduled to launch its assault against the objective at 1100 hours on 6 March after a tactical air strike had been delivered against it. The arrival and reports of the NVA defectors on the afternoon of the 5th caused the USAF and ILDB "A" detachment commanders at A Chau to become concerned that the raiders, about 90 men, were in danger of becoming engaged with a superior enemy force, surrounded, and destroyed. Since such a calamity was a distinct possibility and because the 90 men were slightly less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the garrison strength, it was decided that the patrol should be recalled. Defense of the camp would require concentration of all available forces and preparation for defense had to be initiated immediately. The patrol was recalled and closed the camp at dusk on the 5th.

An aircraft was sent by Detachment C-1 to pick up the two defectors. The aircraft, an "Otter," arrived about 1600 hours on 5 March to evacuate the men. The intelligence section of Detachment C-1 further interrogated the men and provided Camp A Chau with what additional information it obtained.

Prior to the rallying of the defectors, the garrison at A Chau had thought an enemy attack was probable. After the defectors came



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into the camp, the garrison became certain that enemy attack was inevitable. The same day that the defectors surrendered, the USAF Detachment A-102 Commander sent an urgent message to Lieutenant Colonelacey requesting immediate reinforcement of the camp by at least two companies of any kind of infantry and by at least two 105mm howitzers but preferably by a battery. In addition, a message was sent requesting early delivery of an emergency resupply of ammunition and medical supplies. 5 March was a frenzy of activity at Camp A Chau.

The two defectors indicated that among their motives for defecting were fear of being killed in the forthcoming battle and their demoralization resulting from privation, hunger, illness, and hardship while living in the jungle. The defectors said many other NVA soldiers in their battalion felt the same as they. The Commander of Detachment A-102 asked that psychological warfare leaflets and taped broadcast appeals by the defectors urging the NVA soldiers to defect to Camp A Chau be prepared and delivered as quickly as possible. On 7 March an Air Force U-10 dropped thousands of leaflets on top of the enemy fortifications in the area and broadcast the defection appeal. The results of the psychological warfare effort were nil - no more NVA soldiers rallied.

On 6 and 7 March more aerial reconnaissance and tactical airstrike missions were flown in the area. More extensive field fortifications were discovered in the southern end of the A Chau Valley. Airstrikes against enemy positions in the A Chau Valley were conducted north and south of the camp, in the Be Loung Valley, and northeast of the camp.

Before dawn on 6 March, a 45 man patrol was sent approximately 2 kilometers northwest of Camp A Chau with the mission to locate and to destroy a suspected enemy mortar position. The patrol was unable to locate the mortar positions and returned to the camp.

Headquarters I Corps disapproved Detachment C-1's requests to

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reinforce the camp. Lieutenant Colonelacey then requested of Headquarters 6th CFCp that it provide reinforcements from its Nha Trang Mike Force for Camp A Shau.

At 1600 hours 7 March one Mike Force company of Nungs from Nha Trang arrived at Camp A Shau with the mission of "improving the reconnaissance and defense capability of the camp." The same afternoon that they arrived, the three Nung rifle platoons, guided by CIDG irregulars and USASF soldiers from the A Shau garrison, conducted close-in reconnaissance patrols to familiarize the Nungs with the nature of the terrain around the camp. The Nung patrols returned at dusk without any contact with the enemy.

The A Shau CIDG irregulars posted the camp's only night security patrols in outguard positions within a few hundred meters to the southeast, south, and north of the camp on the nights of 7 and 8 March. The Nungs did not participate in night security patrols. In fact, there was no combat outpost line (COP) as such around the camp because a COP could not be supported adequately and because there was insufficient troop strength to man the camp's perimeter and to establish a COP. In lieu of a COP, security patrols were placed in outguard positions within a few hundred meters of the camp. (Previous experience with what amounted to a COP at A Shau had resulted in loss of the forces occupying the outposts.)

Captain Carter, of the Mike Force; the A Shau Camp Commander, Chung Uy Dung; and the USASF Detachment A-102 Commander, developed plans on the afternoon of 7 March for integrating the Nung company into the camp's defense plan and for a strong combat raid patrol (spoiling attack) on 9 March against a section of the enemy fortifications in the A Shau Valley southeast of the camp. A camp defense rehearsal was conducted that night. Also on 7 March some emergency resupplies of ammunition and medical supplies were brought in by CV-2 and C-123 aircraft. The resupplies were still not adequate for



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requirements but were better than nothing.

On 8 March the sky became heavily overcast and the cloud ceiling began descending. No friendly aircraft operated that day in the A Chau area. Friendly patrols conducted on the 8th were of a reconnaissance and security nature and stayed within a 2 kilometer radius of the camp. The worsening weather and the sure knowledge that an attack was imminent caused the spirits of many in the garrison to drop. Most of the men believed the attack would come that night.

The day of the 8th, like every preceding day since 25 February, when the diary was captured, was one of hard construction and maintenance work for that portion of the garrison remaining in camp. Grass was cut around the perimeter; sandbags were filled and placed around individual firing positions and bunkers; trenches and mortar positions were improved; and ammunition and handgrenades were removed from bunkers, unpacked, and distributed.

#### THE BATTLE

Before dark on 8 March, Chung Uy Dung ordered a general alert, since he believed an attack to be imminent. At dusk three security patrols of approximately 10 men each were sent to outguard positions about 200 meters southeast, south, and north of the camp, with the mission of warning the camp of the approach of enemy forces. All personnel occupied their assigned defensive positions at sunset. The civilians in camp were armed with carbines and attached to the Mike Force company, and became part of the reserve force.

At 1930 hours, 8 March, a squad of NVA soldiers was observed dashing from east to west across the north end of the airstrip. An 81mm mortar fired a few rounds into the area into which the squad moved.

By 2000 hours the groundfog was heavy and had merged with the thick clouds. Visibility, even with mortar illumination flares, was

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extremely poor. At 2300 hours, digging noises were heard off the southwall and some 40mm grenades were fired from a couple of M79's toward the noises. An occasional 81mm illumination flare was fired above the camp. At 0130 hours on 9 March, the sounds of concertina wire being cut were heard to the south of the camp. A Claymore mine, close to where the wire cutting was heard, was fired. Digging sounds continued south of the camp and some were heard also off the north and east walls. No one in the camp doubted that the attack would come that night. All activity was being reported by Detachment A-102 over the single side band radio to Detachment C-1.

At 0350 hours on 9 March a startling new noise, the "crumping" of many mortars firing rapidly, sent chills of fright through each man's body. Several seconds elapsed between the time the noise of firing was heard and the shells began crashing with explosive fury in the camp - the seconds seemed hours as the garrison braced itself. The mortar shells continued to fall rapidly in the camp until about 0630 hours when the shelling stopped. Firing too were several enemy recoilless rifles and guns, 82mm overcaliber antitank rocket launchers, and machineguns, which concentrated on bunkers on the walls. At 0430 hours, under cover of the intense shellings, approximately two companies of NVA infantry probed the south wall, but what appeared to be an assault was actually for the purpose of blowing gaps with Bangalore torpedoes in the tactical wire. The probe was met with heavy fire but fell back only after accomplishing its mission.

The mortar crews in the camp returned fire, but did so without due regard for ammunition economy. Precious illumination and HE shells were fired too rapidly and indiscriminately, with the result that by the time the enemy shelling stopped, the CIDG camp had almost exhausted its own mortar ammunition supply for the 81mm mortars and had used up almost half of its 60mm mortar ammunition. A considerable quantity of machinegun ammunition was also <sup>58</sup>squandered.



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The initial three hour bombardment was extremely accurate, caused heavy damage to the camp, and caused a number of casualties. The casualties from the initial shelling were as follows: 2 USARF soldiers KIA, 5 USARF soldiers MIA, 2 CIDG irregulars KIA, 25 CIDG irregulars MIA, 7 Mike Force Nungs KIA, 14 Mike Force Nungs MIA, 1 Civilian KIA, and 3 Civilian MIA. After the intense mortar shelling stopped, sporadic mortar and sniper fire continued during the day resulting in 1 Civilian KIA, 1 Civilian MIA, and 3 CIDG irregulars MIA.

The shelling disrupted radio communications from the camp to Da Nang. Antenna masts were blown down, antenna wires were cut, and the single side band (SSB) and AN/GRC-109 radios were jarred out of commission by the exploding shells. Inspection at dawn of the USARF communications complex revealed that the underground antenna wire had been cut with a knife and not broken by a bursting shell. This was the first indication of subversion and treachery among the Vietnamese CIDG irregulars, although it had been assumed that the CIDG units at the camp had been infiltrated by Viet Cong agents. Although the USARF Detachment A-102 radio operators were alert and on duty in their communications bunker, they were unable to notify Detachment C-1 that the camp was under attack before the radios were put out of action. The radios of the II DB "A" detachment at Camp A Chau lasted a few minutes longer than did the American's radios, but the II DB Detachment C-1 did not have its communications section on duty at Da Nang. Neither detachment at Camp A Chau managed to alert its parent unit that the camp was under attack until about 0745 hours when the II DB radio operator at A Chau made contact with the II DB Headquarters at Nha Trang. The message that the camp was under attack was telephoned from Nha Trang to Da Nang, first through Vietnamese channels and then, at 0815 hours, through American channels. By 0900 hours the A-102 Communications supervisor had repaired a

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damaged AN/GRC-109 radio and an antenna and was able to communicate again with Detachment C-1. Radio communication with Da Nang, once established, was restricted to Morse code on CW from the AN/GRC-109 because the 5 and 10 KW generators used to power the single side band radio were destroyed by the mortar fire.

Internal radio communications for the Americans in Camp A Chau on 8 and 9 March were excellent. Each American had one HT-1 radio and an assigned radio call sign. Radio discipline among the USAF members was excellent. No wire communications system was established in the camp because the camp had no telephones. The LLDB "A" detachment members also had HT-1 radios but did not use good radio discipline - everyone tried to talk at once and at length. The HT-1 frequencies of the LLDB and USAF detachments did not overlap.

At dawn on the 9th the three security patrols came slinking back into the camp. Each patrol had seen and heard the enemy forces before the mortar shelling began but they did not fire on the enemy or otherwise give an alarm for fear they would be discovered and attacked.

At 1100 hours on 9 March the first tactical airstrikes in support of the defense were received north and south of the camp. Because of heavy ground fog and the low cloud cover, the FAC could not observe the targets, so bombs were dropped from above the clouds and adjusted from within the camp by sound. The aircraft could not bomb with marine TPO-10 radar control because they were beyond the range of the radar. The air force MSQ-77 "Skyspot" radar control station at Dong Ha was out of action for repairs, and consequently couldn't control the bombing. Surprisingly, the bombing by sound technique worked fairly well, although the defenders in the camp held their breaths prior to each bomb release. All airstrikes were finally discontinued at 1500 hours due to the low cloud ceiling.

At 0930 hours 9 March, Camp A Chau requested an emergency resupply of ammunition and medical evacuation of wounded. Ammunition

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for the 81mm mortars was virtually exhausted and there were approximately 40 wounded who were hurt sufficiently to need evacuation. At the same time, Detachment C-1 was asked to provide reinforcements for Camp A Chau.

The intense mortar shelling of the camp by the enemy succeeded in neutralizing the Claymore minefield surrounding the camp. Almost all of the electrical wires connecting the Claymores with firing positions along the wall were cut or broken by the bursting shells and most of the mines were knocked down.

At 1100 hours two army C1E aircraft landed on the A Chau airstrip. They drew no fire as they came in. Their missions were to observe and to report on the situation in the camp, to determine whether the airstrip could be used by CV-2 and C-123 aircraft in case a decision was made to reinforce the camp, and to evacuate Master Sergeant Robert Gibson, the A-102 Operations Sergeant, who was seriously wounded. The CRP, a platoon from the Mike Force, and several Americans moved out of the camp and deployed around the airstrip in an effort to secure it for the landing of the aircraft. No enemy resistance was encountered by the units as they deployed around the strip. However, after the aircraft had landed and parked on the apron, a heavy volume of small arms fire was received by the aircraft and the party securing the airstrip. An old 2 1/2 ton truck was driven between one of the C1E aircraft and the area from which the fire was coming - the south half of the east wall of the camp, occupied by the CIDG 141 Company. One C1E pilot immediately cranked up his aircraft and took off, but the other waited until Master Sergeant Gibson had been loaded into his airplane before he, too, took off. The ground party securing the airstrip thought an enemy unit had gotten between the east wall of the camp and the airstrip, and began returning fire into that area. Within the camp itself, several Americans moved down to the 141 Company's sector of the

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perimeter to determine at what they were firing. Upon observing that the 141 Company was treacherously firing at the parked aircraft and at the friendly platoons securing the airstrip, they brought a Nung platoon into the rear of the 141 Company and forced it to cease firing.

Of course, the USASF soldiers at A Chau were enraged by the apparent treachery of the 141 Company. The decision had to be made what to do about the 141 Company. Consideration was given to attempting to disarm the company, but it was reasoned that perhaps the cause for the incident was that an American was evacuated instead of one of the many wounded Vietnamese. Because it was distinctly possible that the incident was an emotional display provoked by the Americans, it was decided that nothing would be done to the 141 Company. Anyway, the garrison needed all available manpower and could ill afford to disarm the 141 Company on grounds of suspicion of Viet Cong sympathy or to risk an internal battle on those grounds.

The most demoralizing single incident to occur during the battle happened around 1300 hours. The cloud ceiling finally lifted to about 200 meters above the valley floor, permitting an AC-47, "Puff the Magic Dragon," to penetrate under the clouds and come to the support of the camp. The AC-47 approached the camp from northwest to southeast, passing on the west side of the camp. The beleaguered garrison literally stood up and cheered and applauded the arrival of the AC-47, eagerly anticipating great damage being inflicted on the enemy by the aircraft's miniguns. Suddenly, when the AC-47 was still about 3 kilometers north of the camp, NVA anti-aircraft machineguns opened upon it from the ridgelines east and west of the camp and from the valley floor itself. The volume of fire placed upon the AC-47 was intense. The aircraft was hit repeatedly. It began descending with smoke trailing from an engine, circled south of the camp, still taking hits, and began a slow glide to the north. It crashed in the

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valley about 2 1/2 kilometers northeast of the camp. Enemy troops immediately began closing in on the downed airplane, and its surviving crewmen put up a valiant struggle. A CH-34 helicopter finally succeeded in rescuing the 3 surviving crewmen of the original 7 at about 1400 hours. The two miniguns and 22,000 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition were captured by the enemy. The AC-47 never had a chance to fire its guns.

The demoralization of the A Chau garrison resulting from the downing of the AC-47 centered around the following fears:

- (1) That the enemy was capable of preventing friendly air support, even when weather would permit air operations;
- (2) That friendly air units would not support the camp because of the effectiveness of enemy anti-aircraft fires;
- (3) That reinforcements or a counterattack force would not be flown in because of the anti-aircraft fire.

The first fear was partially correct, the second was completely unjustified, and the third was completely correct.

At 1115 hours an additional company of Nungs from the Nha Trang Mike Force departed by C-130 from Nha Trang for Phu Bai. A total of 121 Nungs, 1 interpreter, and 4 USASF soldiers were on board. The intent was to take the Nung Company to Phu Bai to be transloaded into marine CH-34 helicopters and then flown to A Chau as reinforcements. The Detachment C-1 company of Nungs from its depleted Da Nang Mike Force was on alert and would be flown to A Chau by marine helicopters if the first reinforcement attempt with the Nha Trang company succeeded.

At 1309 hours the A Chau garrison sent the following message to USASF Detachment C-1: "Advise troop carrying aircraft be choppers and have choppers land in camp. If necessary we will secure airstrip for fixed wing." It was hoped and expected by the A Chau garrison that reinforcement would be coming.

At 1415, 1620, and 1700 hours separate parachute resupply drops

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were made by single aircraft sorties conducted by two CV-2's and one C-123 aircraft. The aircraft made low level runs under the cloud ceiling (about 200 meters above the valley floor) from north to south, running a gauntlet of anti-aircraft fire. The first two loads, one CV-2 and one C-123 load hit south of the camp, and the third load by a CV-2 hit both in the camp and just off the south wall. The CRP and a platoon of Nungs valiantly sallied out of the camp and, while under enemy small arms fire, recovered about 60% of the supplies that fell outside the perimeter. Ammunition, medical items, and two AN/PRC-25 radios with batteries were recovered. These urgently needed supplies were key factors in permitting the continued defense of the camp until it was ordered evacuated at 1720 hours on 10 March.

Several members of the CIDG 141 Company were observed firing on the CV-2 and C-123 aircraft as they flew over the camp. An American apprehended two irregulars from that company in the act of firing on the aircraft and brought them at gunpoint to the Detachment A-102 Commander. The guilty pair were then turned over to the 11DB Camp Commander, with the recommendation that they be executed for their treachery. He refused to have them executed and expressed the opinion that the 141 Company was loyal. USASF Detachment C-1 in Da Nang was advised that the garrison was having more trouble with the 141 Company and that it was suspected the Company was either Viet Cong entirely or infiltrated heavily by Viet Cong agents. The Nung Company's platoon in reserve, located near the center of the camp was told to keep a close watch on the 141 Company and to fire on it if any further signs of subversion were detected and the two CIDG irregulars who had been apprehended were given to that platoon for custody. The ultimate fate of the two traitors is unknown, but they were probably killed by the Nungs.

At about 1700 hours a marine CH-34 attempted to land in the camp in order to evacuate the wounded. As it began to settle down in the

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center of the camp, it was hit repeatedly by enemy machinegun and rifle fire, which downed it. A few minutes later an air force CH-3 helicopter came into the camp amid a hail of enemy small arms fire and successfully evacuated 26 wounded men (including one badly wounded American USAF soldier, Sergeant Bradford) and the 4 uninjured crewmen of the downed marine CH-34.

For some reason, a higher echelon of command above A Chau decided not to reinforce the camp with the two Mike Force companies from Iha Trang and Da Nang that were on standby alert and ready to go. ARVN I Corps and III MAF either decided or were told not to attempt a reinforcement or counterattack with ARVN or American marine units. At any rate, even though the low ceiling was sufficient all afternoon on the 9th and on the 10th to enable helicopters to get into A Chau, no reinforcement or counterattack was attempted by any force outside A Chau.

A Chau stood alone as darkness settled on 9 March - a single AC-47 flare/gunship arrived at 2000 hours and stayed on station all night several hundred meters above the thick cloud cover that enshrouded the valley and mountains. It could not effectively support the camp through the clouds, but at least it was psychologically comforting to hear the airplane's engine droning overhead and to speak to the pilot with the AN/PRC-25 radio.

At dark the IIDE Camp Commander, Chung Uy Dung, established his command post in an empty ammunition bunker near the western apex of the camp. The USAF Detachment A-102 Commander co-located with him initially, but went at about 0500 hours to the south wall.

At 2030 hours and from 2300 to 2400 hours, Camp A Chau received several mortar rounds. The enemy was checking the registration of the mortar fire.

At 0230 hours 10 March, Camp A Chau began receiving intense and accurate fire from mortars, antitank rocket launchers, recoilless

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rifles and guns, and machineguns. The ferocity of the enemy fire was stunning. The interior of the camp was engulfed in what seemed to be a continuous explosion. The heavy bombardment continued unabated until it slackened about 0700 hours, pulverizing the camp and inflicting heavy casualties upon the defenders. All of the bunkers on the walls took several direct hits from recoilless weapons, which destroyed about half of the machineguns. Most of the mortar crews in the camp were killed and most mortars were put out of action. In the "American" 81mm mortar pit, three direct hits by enemy mortars killed 7 Vietnamese and wounded 6 men, including Sergeant First Class Bennie G. Adkins and Sergeant Herrill Robbins, the Americans in the pit. The men in the "American" mortar pit repeatedly relaid their mortar each time it was knocked down by hits and near hits, and continued to service it. The same such determination in servicing all mortars in the camp was shown by all crews and replacement crews. Only exhaustion of ammunition, destruction of the mortars, or destruction of crews finally silenced the friendly mortars.

At 0500 hours massive ground assaults were initiated by the enemy against the south and east walls. The enemy rushed against the walls in tightly packed waves. The enemy supporting fires continued to fall with devastating fury inside of the camp. Repeatedly the enemy waves were cut down or repulsed by the return fire from the south wall and from the northern half of the east wall. The defenders on the south wall fought with great tenacity and valor was truly commonplace.

The situation was somewhat different in the sector of the perimeter held by the CIDG 141 Company. When the enemy hit the 141 Company's sector, that company failed to resist the assault. Many members of the 141 Company joined the enemy in the assault, and were observed assisting the enemy in getting over the wall. There were a few men in the 141 Company who resisted the assault and who withdrew to the north wall and continued fighting after the enemy breached

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the perimeter, however those men were few. Most of the 141 Company defected or surrendered.

The enemy poured into the camp through the large gap in the perimeter. A green star cluster was fired by the enemy after the penetration was accomplished. It was apparently the signal for the enemy mortars to shift or to lift fires; but, the smoke, fog, and clouds were thick and the signal was not observed. At anyrate, the enemy mortar fire continued to pulverize the camp, and the enemy forces achieving the penetration assaulted into their own supporting fires, taking heavy casualties in doing so.

Being advised of the breakthrough by the enemy, the Detachment A-102 Commander, who was then fighting on the south wall, ran over to the ammunition bunker in which the LLDB Commander had established his command post to urge an immediate counterattack by the GRP. The LLDB Chung Uy Dung was literally cowering in the bunker. He refused to commit the GRP for the counterattack - he wanted it to remain around his bunker for his protection!

As the enemy poured into the gap created by the 141 Company's defection, they began placing enfilade fire on the defenders on the south and east walls. The remainder of the Nung platoon and the civilians in the reserve force positioned in the center of the camp attempted a counterattack but could not eject the numerous enemy soldiers assaulting through the rubble in the south east portion of the camp. During its counterattack the reserve force sustained heavy casualties from mortar and small arms fire and had to withdraw to the western portion of the camp and to the north wall.

While the reserve was counterattacking, the few friendly survivors on the south wall were forced by the enfilade fire and the frontal assaults to withdraw to the north wall at about 0800 hours. The defenders on the northern half of the east wall were also receiving heavy enfilade fire from the NVA infantry assaulting through

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the camp. The east wall defenders requested and received permission to withdraw to the north wall, which they did in an orderly manner at about 0830 hours.

Friendly small-arms and machinegun fire and handgrenades within the camp from a pocket of defenders around the "American" mortar pit and USAF communications bunker in the western portion of the camp, and from the north wall, checked the assault of the NVA infantry coming from the south and east walls. The enemy mortar fire continued uninterrupted and did much to assist the garrison in blocking the enemy advance. When the momentum of the enemy assault stepped, the enemy infantry took cover in the rubble and on the south and east walls. All of the USAF personnel were wounded and two more were killed (Sergeant McCann and Specialist Stahl) during this phase of the battle. The courage, self-sacrifice, resourcefulness, and leadership of the Americans were so widespread as to be commonplace.

At 0600 hours airstrikes were delivered immediately north and south of the camp. The groundfog was heavy but the cloud ceiling had risen to about 200 meters, permitting A1F "Skyraiders" to penetrate under the clouds. The strikes were effective but could not be assessed because of the close combat in progress inside of the camp. By 0830 hours only the north wall and the American communications bunker were still held. The one remaining 81mm and 60mm mortar continued to fire but were destroyed or out of ammunition before 1200 hours.

At 0830 hours the USAF A-102 Commander requested airstrikes on and south of the south wall. At 0900 hours, after airstrikes had hit the south wall, the Americans and a number of Nungs and a few CIDG irregulars attempted another counterattack to clear the south and east walls. Half of the east wall was cleared, but efforts to regain the south wall were unsuccessful. The failure of the friendly

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assault stemmed primarily from lack of participation by most of the CIDG irregulars and by all but one of the LLDB members. Most of the LLDB and CIDG personnel covered in the north wall trench and bunkers during this and subsequent phases of the fighting. The heavy shelling and the NVA infantry assaults had inflicted considerable casualties on all elements in the camp but had been particularly demoralizing to the CIDG and LLDB elements, a great many of whom were completely ineffective during the remainder of the battle. (The LLDB Camp Commander, Chung Uy Dung, stayed hidden in various bunkers throughout the battle and made no effort to lead or to command.) The GRP, which had been the best trained and led of the CIDG units, had done very well on the 9th, and elements of it continued to do well throughout the battle, but failed to perform well on the 10th only because Chung Uy Dung retained it as bodyguard.

Upon failing to clear the camp of the enemy, the Detachment A-102 Commander requested the entire camp, except for the north wall and the American communications bunker, be bombed and strafed, to include napalm in the south wall trench. Between 1000 and 1200 hours the airstrikes continued in and around the camp, inflicting heavy casualties upon the enemy and discouraging further enemy assaults against the communications bunker and the north wall.

The camp made repeated requests of Detachment C-1 for reinforcements. The A Shau defenders still had faith that help would be forthcoming. When the situation inside the camp became desperate, Detachment C-1 was advised not to attempt to land the reinforcements in the camp, but instead to land a few hundred meters to the north.

At approximately 1000 hours the Detachment A-102 Commander recommended that F-52 bombers conduct "Arclights" (a massive bombing) immediately south of the camp, between Ta Pat and A Luoi to the north, in the Be Loung Valley, and along the ridgelines east and west of the camp. It was seriously felt by him that an excellent opportunity to inflict great casualties on the enemy existed and that the advantages

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to be gained by the B-52 bombings would offset the risk to the survivors still fighting in the camp. Unfortunately, some higher echelon of command disapproved the request for B-52 bombings. The camp did, however, receive napalm strikes on and south of the south wall, which did considerable injury to the enemy.

At 1150 hours an A1E crash-landed on the strip. The pilot jumped out of the aircraft and crawled into the drainage ditch on the west side of the airstrip. Enemy riflemen and machinggunners east of the airstrip began firing at him. The A Chau defenders in the north-east apex bunker returned fire at the enemy and kept them from maneuvering against the pilot. Sergeant First Class Victor Underwood attempted to go over the wall and out to assist the pilot, but each time he stood up to go over the wall he drew considerable small arms fire. An army O1E aviator attempted to land on the strip to rescue the pilot, but took several hits from small arms fire and had to give up the effort. Then an A1E "Skyraider" began descending from south to north onto the strip with landing gear down. The defenders in the camp thought the aircraft was also crash-landing, but were mistaken. Major Bernie Fisher landed his "Skyraider," turned it around on the north end of the strip, taxied to where the downed pilot lay in the ditch, opened his cockpit, and motioned to him to climb into the cockpit. The eastern bunker on the north wall all the while kept up a heavy volumn of machinsegun and rifle fire on the enemy in an effort to cover the landing and take off of Major Fisher's "Skyraider." After getting the downed pilot in his cockpit, Major Fisher took off, while the men in the camp vocally cheered and applauded his feat of valor.

A CV-2 attempted another resupply drop at 1215 hours. In the bundles were badly needed ammunition and medical supplies. The bundles landed about 20 meters west of the western apex bunker. Enemy machineguns opened fire on the bundles and shot them up on the

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ground. The defenders could not get to them.

The USAF soldiers at A Chau began to realize that reinforcement might not arrive in time and that with ammunition almost exhausted continued defense would be impossible. It was reasoned that the western half of the camp, at a minimum, must be retaken in order that a perimeter could be established for the defense that night and in order that the defenders could gain an area in which to receive ammunition resupply drops. Accordingly, at 1358 hours A Chau sent the following radio message: "Want strikes on south wall, inside 50 meters on east side of runway, and on east wall. US attempting to assault from north to south and to sweep south wall." (At the same time A Chau reported: "Several large explosions within the camp but do not know what they are.")

The counterattack to retake the western half, if not all of the camp, began 1410 hours, following airstrikes on the south wall. Some Mungs swept along the east wall to the main gate bunker. Captain Carter and some Mungs drove from the north wall along the east-west drainage ditch to the center of the camp. Captain Blair, Sergeants Carnahan and Underwood, an interpreter, and a few CIDG irregulars drove from the north wall across the camp by the flagpole and into the rubble within 10 meters of the south wall. Lieutenant Mari, Sergeants Adkins and Robbins, and Specialist Murray dashed out of the American communications bunker from which they had been fighting into the "American" mortar pit. All elements got no further. Enemy machinegun and small arms fire and handgrenades from the south wall were heavy and effectively blocked any further advance. The counterattack effort failed but the men participating in it held their positions until about 1530. Enemy mortars continued to round the camp and they and the NVA riflemen and machinegunners inside the camp inflicted several casualties on the counterattack force and made it almost impossible to hold that portion of the camp that had been

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recovered. Consequently, airstrikes were again requested on the south wall to cover the withdrawal of those exposed personnel who had attempted the counterattack. With bombs falling less than 20 meters away from the most forward elements of the counterattack force, the withdrawal was accomplished. Each time a "Skyraider" made a bombing or strafing run over the south wall and the enemy trenches south of the wall, several machineguns and many rifles were fired at them. The enemy was densely packed in the wall and trenches.

While the counterattack was in progress, an enemy force of battalion size was observed massing on the east side of the airstrip, apparently preparing for an assault. An immediate airstrike was requested on the enemy. Two B-57 "Canberra" bombers each made a single low altitude bomb run with CBU antipersonnel bombs against the enemy battalion, catching it in mass formation in the open just as it was beginning to dash across the airstrip. That particular NVA battalion was almost completely destroyed and its assault was broken before it reached the east wall.

After the failure of the counterattack effort, the A Chau defenders consolidated and reorganized as best they could in the north wall and in the American communications bunker. Ammunition was redistributed and efforts were made to restore order. There was little tactical integrity of units. The men were crammed in the north wall. About half of the garrison was dead and almost everyone was wounded. Dead and wounded choked the north wall, and only about 50 men remained combat effective. After redistributing ammunition, each man who could still fight had approximately 20 rounds and there were an approximate total of 12 M26 handgrenades. There seemed little more that could be done but to hold on and to hope reinforcements would arrive in time to prevent the complete loss of all of the garrison. Heavy explosions from large caliber weapons, presumably 120mm mortars, continued to hit in the camp and several near hits were scored



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on the American communications bunker. The enemy 82mm mortars continued to shell the camp and NVA riflemen and machinegunners continued to fire within the camp itself. There were some LDB soldiers and several CIDG irregulars overheard by an interpreter discussing the possibility of surrendering to the enemy. Those several individuals were assured by the Detachment A-102 Commander that no one would surrender and no one would attempt to surrender himself or the garrison. The Americans and Nungs and many of the CIDG were resolved to hold the north wall at all costs. All of the defenders were hungry and thirsty for there had been no food or water available for thirty-six hours. Although ammunition was low, casualties were many, hunger and thirst were tormenting, many men were demoralized, and no further offensive capability existed, at 1630 hours the survivors were still fighting and most of them were determined to fight to the finish.

III MAF decided at 1500 hours to commit Marine helicopters to evacuate the survivors from Camp A Chau. The 163d HAP Squadron at Phu Bai was given the mission. The Detachment A-102 Commander was notified at about 1630 hours that the survivors would be evacuated by helicopter from a landing zone a few hundred meters north of the camp.

At 1700 hours, all communications equipment and SOI's were destroyed by the men in the American communications bunker. In the north wall the LDB Commander and leaders among CIDG and Nungs were thoroughly briefed on the plan for the withdrawal:

- (1) When the evacuation helicopters began to approach the wire barricades on the path leading from the narrow north wall side gate would be removed by two Americans;
- (2) Then, two Americans and a squad of Nungs from the Mike Force would spearhead the breakout and lead the way to the landing zone;

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(3) While the evacuation was taking place all able-bodied Americans and Nungs would stay behind in camp to cover the withdrawal;

(4) All able-bodied CIDG irregulars would assist all of the wounded down to the landing zone and put them aboard helicopters;

(5) First priority for evacuation would be the wounded, then the men in the landing zone, and last the rear guard left in the camp.

The information regarding the plan was at least partially disseminated, as evidenced by the rippling of conversation along the trench.

At 1720 hours the evacuation helicopters were observed approaching the landing zone from the north. The ground fog was beginning to build up and swirl, and the cloud ceiling was about 100 meters above the valley and dropping fast. 16 CH-34 helicopters in flights of 4, escorted by 4 HU-1B gunships, participated in the attempt. The low cloud ceiling obscured observation by enemy anti-aircraft gunners on the ridgelines and thereby gave some concealment to the helicopters. However, as the helicopters approached the landing zone, they began receiving considerable rifle, machinegun, and recoilless rifle fire that hit several. Only half of the CH-34's landed. The remainder waived off. The already demoralized CIDG irregulars, seeing half of the helicopters turn away, panicked. The part of the plan for opening the gate, providing the advance guard, and fighting the rear guard worked well; the part of the plan for priority for evacuation and for nonwounded CIDG assisting the wounded failed.

Captains Carter and Blair crawled out and opened the wire barricades on the path from the north wall gate a few minutes before the helicopters appeared. They then took up positions with the able-bodied Americans, Nungs, and a few CIDG irregulars to cover the withdrawal. The LLDB Camp Commander set the pattern for the withdrawal of the LLDB and CIDG elements: he panicked and began running at the

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head of the mob for the landing helicopters. Most able-bodied men of the CIDG and LLDB ran off and left the equally as frightened wounded to get to the aircraft as best they could. In their rout from the camp, the LLDB and CIDG trampled Sergeant First Class Carnahan, who was already seriously wounded but who voluntarily stayed behind with the rear guard to cover the withdrawal. They also trampled and smashed the AN/PRC-25 radio Sergeant Carnahan had been operating. Many of the fleeing men dropped their weapons. There were insufficient helicopters to evacuate all of the frantic mob of CIDG irregulars, who overloaded the helicopters and fought among themselves to get on board. Lieutenant Colonel House, the 163d HMM Squadron Commander, had to order the helicopter crews to shoot off those men who mobbed the aircraft, overloading them and preventing their takeoff. Several CIDG irregulars were killed by helicopter crews, and several were killed by enemy rifle, machine-gun, recoilless rifle and mortar fire enroute to and in the landing zone.

At 1720 hours the men in the American communications bunker broke out and raced amid a hail of bullets for the north wall gate. Specialist Poynton, who had had both arms shattered and had suffered a large open chest wound before daylight, ran by himself from the bunker all the way to the landing zone - almost 400 meters - only to find all the CH-34 helicopters gone. One marine HU-1B, flown by Captain Jim Rider, was still firing at enemy personnel in the area. Captain Rider saw Specialist Poynton. He dropped his empty rocket pods, took Poynton and 14 other wounded men on board, and evacuated them to safety.

Lieutenant Mari and Sergeant Adkins left the communications bunker at 1720 hours, after covering the withdrawal of the other men in the bunker, and went to the center bunker on the north wall where mortally wounded Sergeant Taylor lay on a stretcher. Mari and Adkins

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carried Taylor through the wall trench to the north wall side gate. Sergeant Adkins killed an enemy soldier who got in his way in the trench. Mari and Adkins carried Taylor down to the landing zone only to find all helicopters had gone. Taylor died less than an hour later, and his body was hidden in the brush.

As the camp was being evacuated, the NVA infantrymen in the camp renewed their assaults. The rearguard action became extremely violent but the rearguard succeeded in holding the north wall until everyone who was still alive got out of the camp. With the evacuation complete, the rearguard began a leapfrog withdrawal. As it withdrew, individuals in the rearguard picked up or assisted wounded men who had fallen enroute to the landing zone. By the time most of the rearguard reached the landing zone, all helicopters, except for two that had been shot down were gone. All that was left in the landing zone were 8 marine helicopter crewmen (including Lieutenant Colonel House, whose OH-34 had been shot down) and about 90 wounded Americans, Nungs and CIDG irregulars, and 2 women. Most of the wounded CIDG irregulars and many of the wounded Nungs were in a state of shock over having been left behind and were quite demoralized. Enemy fire was hitting in the landing zone and NVA soldiers could be heard shouting to one another. The situation was serious and it was obvious that the only course of action that could be taken was to begin evasion.

#### THE EVASION

The weather, terrain, and time favored evasion. The cloud ceiling was descending fast and fog was rapidly forming in the valley. The tall elephant grass in the valley also provided concealment. Furthermore, darkness was almost at hand.

The only USASF soldiers who had been evacuated were those whose wounds were so serious as to preclude their walking. Four of the 5

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surviving LDB soldiers, only one of whom was wounded, had been evacuated. A total of 69 men were evacuated at the time, 4 of whom were Americans (Sergeants Carnahan and Robbins and Specialists Murray and Pointen), 7 USASF soldiers were left to evade, one of whom, Sergeant Taylor, died of wounds. 4 USASF soldiers were killed in camp and their bodies left behind. (They were Sergeants Allen, Hall and McCann, and Specialist Stahl, who had declined an opportunity to be evacuated for wounds on 9 March because he was a medic and felt his medical skills were needed.)

The USASF soldiers left behind immediately began organizing the distraught Vietnamese and Kungs for evacuation. Many of the wounded natives literally lay or squatted in fetal positions, wailing and awaiting death. One CH-34 that had been shot down was packed with wounded men, almost all of whom refused to get off the aircraft and to accompany the evaders. The USASF soldiers had to kick, beat, and rough-handle many of the wounded men to force them on their feet and into a file formation for evasion. While in the process of establishing order among the evaders, Captains Blair and Carter located Lieutenant Colonel House, who was the senior combat arms officer present. Lieutenant Colonel House was told that the USASF soldiers there would follow his orders and the A Chau garrison survivors were preparing to begin evasion, with hope that rescue helicopters would pick them up the following day. If no rescue was accomplished, House was told that the survivors planned to infiltrate through enemy held territory to Hue. Lieutenant Colonel House assured Captains Blair and Carter and First Lieutenant Mari, the USASF officers present, that no subsequent rescue attempts would be made because of the high degree of risk involved for the helicopters and he felt that the evaders should attempt to cross into Thailand. The conversation took only a few seconds. By 1745 hours the evaders were moving. USASF soldiers interspersed themselves throughout the file to control and to provide

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security to the many wounded men. House and the other seven Marines were close to the front of the formation.

The route of the evaders was initially north up the valley and then west onto a finger of the western ridgeline. Enemy patrols could be heard moving all through the area. At about 1800 hours the evaders heard considerable rifle and automatic weapons fire in the landing zone, and it was presumed that the NVA soldiers were killing some of the wounded men who had refused to get off the downed helicopter.

When darkness fell the evaders were climbing up the western ridge line. About two hours after dark the file stopped to rest - fatigue, hunger, thirst, and wounds made movement slow and painful. The halt was called a bare 35 meters below an enemy antiaircraft gun position. The NVA soldiers on the position fired several rifle shots toward the noises made by the resting evaders but did not leave their positions to investigate the source of the sounds. The USASF soldiers considered the possibility of assaulting the antiaircraft gun position, but dismissed the consideration as being too risky in view of the status of forces, the shortage of ammunition, and the certainty that such action would disclose the location of the evading force.

The evaders rested until about 0200 hours of the 11th on the mountain side about 2 kilometers northwest of the camp. While in that position, the USASF officers persuaded Lieutenant Colonel House that the serious physical condition of most of the evaders would prevent their being able to evade to Thailand and that if evasion to friendly territory was necessary, it should be to Hue. The party then began moving north on the eastern slope of the western ridgeline, and continued that movement until dawn. During this portion of the evasion, the party became split in the dark. Captain Carter, Sergeant Adkins, and approximately 8 Nungs became separated from the main body and continued movement northward on their own. Several

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men suffering from extreme exhaustion and serious wounds dropped out of the file and were lost in the darkness and the brush. Both groups cut back onto the valley floor at dawn. The main body moved in a northeasterly direction and the other party moved in a more northerly direction through the valley. Both groups halted frequently to rest.

Enemy patrols were heard and detected searching for the evaders. Enemy soldiers were spraying clumps of bushes, grass, and brush with AK-47 rifles in their efforts to flush the evaders.

One small party of 14 CIDG irregulars and a woman, led by one LIDR soldier, miraculously avoided enemy contact by running north during the night along the main trail through the A Shau Valley up to Ta Bat, where they were picked up by a marine CH-34 around 1300 hours on the 11th.

Around noon on 11 March, several marine CH-34 helicopters were observed by the evaders to be circling around Ta Bat and a pair of army OIE aircraft were seen searching the valley south of Ta Bat. The party with Lieutenant Colonel House was in a swampy thicket when it spotted the search aircraft, so Lieutenant Mari went to Lieutenant Colonel House to tell him in which direction to go in order to reach a suitable landing zone for helicopters. Lieutenant Colonel House told Lieutenant Mari that the party would not go to a landing zone for pickup because it was too dangerous for the helicopters to land. Lieutenant Mari argued with Colonel House, but House was adamant. Mari then told House he didn't care what House did, but that the A Shau people were going to try to signal the aircraft, to get to a suitable landing zone, and to get picked up. Lieutenant Mari struck out toward an area suitable for landing helicopters, leaving Lieutenant Colonel House standing on the spot fuming and threatening to have Mari courtmartialed, should they both get back to a secure area. The 7 marines with House and all of the

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other men followed Mari, and House then rejoined the party. An area where the trees were low and with thin trunks and no foliage was found. The overhead OIE pilots were signaled with a smoke grenade, flare, and a mirror.

A small landing zone sufficient to accommodate one CH-34 was hacked out, but the CH-34 pilots, remembering the uncontrolled mobbing of aircraft by panicked Vietnamese on the previous day, wisely refused to land. Instead, the helicopters hovered one at a time and lowered slings with which they hoisted the men aboard. The rescue started about 1445 hours and ended around 1515 hours. Those rescued included Lieutenant Colonel House and all marines; Sergeant Underwood, a USASF soldier who was wounded badly in the leg; 2 women; and 4 seriously wounded CIDG irregulars. 3 USASF soldiers and about 50 or more Vietnamese and Nungs, all wounded in varying degrees, were not picked up and had to continue evading.

Captain Carter's small party made contact with an OIE aircraft further north. A CH-34 helicopter landed and took them on board, but as it was taking off, it was hit by enemy small arms fire and crashed. Captain Carter and his party, joined by the 4 marine helicopter crewmen, again had to evade. The party ran into a squad of NVA soldiers as they fled the downed helicopter and in the brief skirmish that resulted, one Nung was killed and one became separated from the group. Carter's group broke contact and managed to continue evasion.

The main body of evaders, abandoned by the 8 unwounded marines, established a perimeter around its small landing zone and rested for the remainder of the afternoon and that night. The reasoning behind the decision to stay there was severalfold:

- (1) Movement only increased the chances of running into the enemy patrols searching for the evaders;
- (2) The location of the landing zone was known by rescue

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and search aircraft, and it was thought probable that search aircraft would return to it on the morning of 12 March;

(3) It was hoped that the enemy would think that whatever friendly force had been there had been already picked up by the helicopters on the 11th;

(4) The men were all extremely fatigued and their untreated wounds were bleeding and becoming infected.

About 2 1/2 kilometers further north, Captain Carter's party established a tight perimeter for the night. During the night a tiger continuously circled around the perimeter and frightened the men somewhat. Undoubtably, the stench of the wounds that each man had attracted the tiger and whetted his appetite. The tiger eventually gave up the hunt and went to find easier prey.

At 0930 hours 12 March Captain Carter's party was picked up without incident.

At approximately 1030 hours 12 March, marine CH-34 helicopters returned to the landing zone held by the main body and began hoisting men aboard by sling. Many of the wounded, frightened, demoralized Vietnamese CIDG irregulars, had to be hit with rifle butts and kicked away from the sling collar. They attempted to mob it, and many of those with less serious wounds, who were on the perimeter, began coming into the center of perimeter. They were afraid they would be abandoned, although this fear was obviously without cause, for they could see that the three USASF soldiers remaining with them were not leaving them but were sending Vietnamese first to the hovering helicopters. Animal fears prevailed over human reason, however, and the CIDG irregulars began killing one another in their efforts to get to the sling and <sup>to</sup> be hauled aboard a helicopter. The first to start shooting were some of the men on the perimeter. Soon everyone was shooting at everyone else and the Americans could not stop the killing. Someone threw a handgrenade into the mob crowding

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around the sling. The exploding handgrenade killed and wounded several of the Vietnamese. The three Americans in the landing zone grabbed the collars of the helicopter slings and were snatched to safety, being hauled aboard the helicopters as they rapidly climbed for altitude.

#### STATISTICS

The friendly personnel situation was as follows:

|                         | CIDG | MIKE<br>FORCE | CIVILIAN | USAF | LLDB | INTERPRETER | TOTAL |
|-------------------------|------|---------------|----------|------|------|-------------|-------|
| Originally<br>in camp - | 210  | 143           | 51       | 17   | 6    | 8           | 435   |
| Returned -              | 109  | 53            | 6        | 12   | 5    | 3           | 188   |
| Returned<br>Wounded -   | 52   | 33            | 2        | 12   | 1    | 1           | 101   |
| MIA -                   | 101  | 90            | 45       | 5    | 1    | 5           | 247   |
| MIA<br>Believed -       | 50   | 75            | 42       | 1    | 1    | 5           | 178   |
| KIA                     | -    | -             | -        | -    | -    | -           | -     |
| KIA -                   | -    | -             | -        | 4    | -    | -           | 4     |

#### Weapons Lost (Estimated):

100 Carbines  
10 Light machineguns  
5 BAR's  
4 60mm Mortars  
2 81mm Mortars

#### Aircraft Lost:

1 AC-47  
1 F-4  
1 A-1E  
4 CH-34's  
1 HU-1D

Enemy casualties during the battle were extremely heavy. It was impossible to get a body count, of course; however, a conservative estimate by consensus of the USAF personnel at A Chau was that the enemy suffered between 500 and 800 killed. Several months after the battle, some NVA soldiers were captured in II CTZ who said they participated in the battle for Camp A Chau. Their testimony concerning casualties was that the NVA had over 1,200 men killed. They said that the remnants of 95B Regiment returned to North Vietnam after

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the battle to retrain on "techniques for attacking fortified strong-points."

In November 1966 the enemy released the Vietnamese and Nungs they had taken prisoner during the battle. A total of 24 men were returned. The released prisoners said that they had participated in the mass burial of a huge number of NVA corpses. They estimated that the enemy had approximately 1,000 men killed.

In May 1966 USASF Detachment C-1 conducted a body recovery operation at Camp A Shau. The bodies of Allen, Hall, McCann, and Stahl were retrieved. The body of Taylor, who had died during the evasion, was not found. The recovery force noted that the enemy did not attempt to salvage weapons and material abandoned by the A Shau garrison when it evacuated the camp. This, too, was considered an indicator that the normally frugal and scavenging enemy force was badly mauled in the battle.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. The enemy buildup and preparations for attack on Camp A Shau were observed and reported over a two month period. The certainty of an impending attack became obvious to the A Shau garrison when the two NVA defectors came into the camp. The saddest aspect of the entire battle was that ARVN I Corps refused to reinforce the camp with infantry and artillery before the battle, despite the fact that it had responsibility for the defense and security of CIDG camps and had every indication that Camp A Shau would be attacked. The ARVN I Corps failure must be shared by III MAF, USASF Detachment C-1, and 5th SFGp, for all of those headquarters also failed to take adequate measures to reinforce sufficiently Camp A Shau prior to the battle. The special forces contribution to the preparation for defense was not what was requested by the USASF Detachment A-102 Commander and was inadequate.

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2. Insufficient ammunition for all weapons was stockpiled at A Shau. In consequence, there was not enough ammunition on hand for a sustained defense.

3. There was no COP established in the Camp A Shau security area. The absence of suitable terrain, except on the finger of the ridge west of the camp, was one reason why no COP was established. The other reasons were that there was insufficient troop strength for establishing a COP and that a COP could not have been adequately supported by indirect fire weapons. Furthermore, there would have been no means available to cover effectively the gaps between elements on the COP, since there were no organic aerial surveillance means or radar available, manpower was limited, fire support means were restricted to mortars with very little ammunition, and concealment available to the enemy was excellent. Outguards were established by local security patrols in lieu of establishing a COP. The CIDG irregulars on outguard duty did not attempt to delay the enemy or to give the alarm when the attack took place, and there were too few outguards to prevent enemy patrols from closely reconnoitering the perimeter prior to the battle. The Camp A Shau security area was relatively ineffective, except that considerable effort was successfully exerted to keep friendly reconnaissance and combat patrols out and to keep aerial reconnaissance active in the area to prevent surprise.

4. The organization of the Camp A Shau forward defense area was satisfactory, although the conduct of the forward defense was not. Fire discipline was not maintained before or during the attack. Enemy reconnaissance probes had succeeded in determining the location of almost every automatic weapon and every firing post. Furthermore, poor fire discipline resulted in waste of ammunition. Mutual support between units on the perimeter (FEBA) was good, except that the treacherous actions of the CIDG 141 Company resulted in a gap

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that could not be closed and permitted an enemy penetration of the FEBA.

5. The organization of the rear area at Camp A Chau was fairly good. The unit reserves, command and control elements, and fire support elements were well located throughout the interior of the camp. The most serious problems were that there was no fortified and covered inner defense perimeter and that there was not adequate cover, especially overhead cover, inside the camp.

6. The Detachment C-1 and 5th SFGp Mike Force reserves could not be employed as effective reinforcements or counterattack forces after the battle began because the special forces organization lacked an organic airmobile capability.

7. When the FEBA was penetrated the initial counterattack was conducted piecemeal by a reserve not sufficiently strong to eject the enemy from the battle area and to restore the FEBA. The reasons <sup>as</sup> were that the CIDG CRP was not released by Chung Uy Dung to participate in the counterattack with the reserve platoon and civilians from the Mike Force Company. The Mike Force reserve platoon had already given up one squad to reinforce the hard pressed force on the south wall and had sustained heavy casualties from the mortar shelling. The forces on the north wall were not able to participate in the counterattack because they, too, had given up some people to reinforce the south wall, were receiving machinegun fire from the north, and had too far to move uncovered and exposed to the violent mortar shelling in progress. The counterattack was launched promptly, and the forces executing it were aggressive; however, it just was not strong enough.

Subsequent attempts at counterattack to restore the FEBA were unsuccessful because the enemy was too strong in the camp, because all of the Vietnamese who could have joined in the counterattacks did not do so, and because ammunition shortages were acute and

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restricted fire power. The inability of the reserve to restore the FEBR with the initial counterattack and the failures of subsequent counterattacks made defeat of the A Shau garrison inevitable since no outside reinforcement or counterattack force was committed.

8. The defense of the camp was sufficiently flexible. The plans for defense were simple enough and each unit understood what was expected of it. The three contingencies that developed for which no prior plans had been made were the defection of the CIDG 141 Company and the large gap in the perimeter that developed; the cowardice of Chung Uy Dung, the LLDB Camp Commander, who refused to commit the CIDG CRF, when it was in reserve, for participation in the initial counterattack; and the evacuation of the camp. The failure to foresee these contingencies contributed to the disaster that occurred.

Although a counterattack plan existed, the counterattack had not been rehearsed. Perhaps had a rehearsal been conducted, Dung's refusal to release the CRF would have been of no consequence and the CRF would have instinctively participated in the counterattack.

9. Leadership exercised by all of the USAF soldiers was truly outstanding. By actions and orders, the Americans held the defense together for almost 36 hours in the face of an attack by almost 4,000 NVA infantrymen with excellent and massive fire support. The Mungs in the Mike Force had strong Mung leaders, who exercised forceful control over their men. The CIDG leaders were not as forceful as the Mung leaders, and in consequence, most of the CIDG irregulars did not fight as well as did the Mungs. The LLDB leadership was the worst and it was primarily the failure of the LLDB leadership that caused most of the CIDG to do poorly. The USAF policy in execution of the CIDG program had been to build up the image of the LLDB as leaders of the CIDG. The policy had succeeded

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fairly well, with the consequence that weak ILDB leadership at Camp A Chau resulted in weak performance by most of the CIDG irregulars during the battle. (There were some notable exceptions on the part of particular CIDG irregulars, and some of the CIDG leaders exercised strong leadership.) The CIDG irregulars responded fairly well to American leadership but the sphere of direct influence exercised by each American was limited because of the language barrier and the confusion of battle. Consequently, only a few CIDG irregulars could be influenced at any one time, but those usually performed well.

10. The lack of discipline inherent in the CIDG irregulars (because there was no binding military obligation) makes it all the more unusual that most of them showed the staying power and determination they did during the battle. Additionally, formal military training of the CIDG irregulars had been a 6 week basic training course at Camp Xham Duc, and on-the-job training at A Chau. The CIDG CRP had received an additional 4 week unit training course at Camp Dong Da Tinh. Thus, the irregulars were neither disciplined nor well-trained. Their performance during the battle, the evacuation, and the evasion demonstrated those weaknesses, but even so, their performances were better than might have been expected under the circumstances. The only unforgivable lack of discipline was that displayed by the ILDB Camp Commander, Chung Ty Dung, for it could not be explained away as anything other than cowardice.

11. The NVA forces that attacked Camp A Chau were well-led, well-equipped, and aggressive; however, their tactics were clumsy and they demonstrated a lack of ability to coordinate fire support with their scheme of maneuver. The NVA forces also showed an inability to exploit the success of their penetration: they could not maintain the momentum of their assault and became frustrated by friendly strong points within the camp. The success of the enemy

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attack on Camp A Shau was the result of the enemy concentrating a combat force ratio of approximately 10 to 1 against the A Shau garrison. The relative combat power scale was, of course, offset somewhat by the tactical air support available to the defense during periods when weather conditions would permit air support operations. However, tactical airpower alone was insufficient to compensate for the relative disparity in ground combat power. The NVA forces also showed a willingness to accept extremely heavy casualties in order to gain a victory at Camp A Shau.

12. There was no unity of command at A Shau. Theoretically the LIDB "A" detachment commander was the camp commander. In practice, he commanded nothing, both because of his fear and because the Americans and Nungs in practice did not accept his command authority. In actuality, the Americans usurped command during the crisis. The problem with usurpation of command was that the LIDB and CING elements were unaccustomed to command by Americans and did not always respond promptly and confidently to American leadership.

13. The psychological effect of being stationed at a remote, isolated camp that was surrounded by vastly superior forces was one of loneliness and demoralization. The demoralization of the A Shau garrison was increased by the certainty that an attack was coming and that forces and supplies available at the Camp were probably not enough to withstand a strong attack over an extended period. The CING irregulars became progressively more demoralized as the battle raged and no reinforcements came. The result of all of the demoralization of the Vietnamese irregulars, coupled with their lack of discipline and inadequate training, was their eventual disintegration as a combat effective force after prolonged hours of fierce, close combat.



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14. The mass evacuation effort by the 163d HMM Squadron on 10 March was a heroic effort by the marines. It saved all of the survivors of the A Chau garrison by causing the defenders to break out of the camp and to be evacuated immediately or to evade. Most of the LDB soldiers and CIDG irregulars were wild and unreasonable with fear at the time the camp was evacuated and they believed their only chance of survival was to get aboard a helicopter. They saw that half of the helicopters did not land and realized that there were not enough helicopters to evacuate everyone. Self-survival became the strongest motivation for many Vietnamese and they fought like animals to get aboard one of the helicopters that did land. The marine crewmen, who shot several of the Vietnamese, had no choice, since physical force and persuasion could not prevent the Vietnamese from overloading the helicopters.

15. The Commander of the 163d HMM Squadron and the unwounded 7 marines with him left the main evading party on 11 March. The extraction by helicopter of those able-bodied Americans caused the already panicked, demoralized, and wounded CIDG irregulars left behind to conclude that they would be abandoned by the Americans. This conclusion was intensified by having observed on 10 March that half of the evacuation helicopters did not land and they had been left behind. Having been twice left behind and thinking that the American helicopters intended to rescue only the Americans, the CIDG irregulars in the main party of evaders became uncontrollable in their panic and began to kill one another in their frenzy to be evacuated on 12 March.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

1. The vulnerability of remote special forces camps should be considered in determining the desirability of holding these locations at all costs or of abandoning them when enemy pressure mounts to the

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point that the camp can be destroyed.

2. A significant percentage of the CIDG irregulars are either apathetic toward the CIDG program or may be sympathetic with the Viet Cong political objectives to the point they may assist the enemy in attacks against CIDG camps. At any rate, the CIDG irregulars are mercenaries and for the most part are not psychologically motivated by patriotic loyalty toward the National Government.

3. CIDG units in Vietnam are frequently infiltrated by enemy agents or enemy sympathizers, who conduct subversive activities in support of the Viet Cong.

4. The lack of a binding military obligation, of a system of military justice and enforced military discipline, and of thorough military training for CIDG irregulars makes them frequently less effective than regular friendly and enemy military forces.

5. Regular NVA units in mass have superior firepower to most CIDG camps, whose defenses were built to withstand only the attacks of guerrilla units of battalion size.

6. The lack of discipline displayed by many CIDG soldiers and CIDG irregulars should be considered in planning a helicopter evacuation of those forces under fire.

7. Remote CIDG camps must be provided with a strong garrison, adequate organic fire support (preferably howitzer) and sufficient ammunition and supplies to conduct semi-independent offensive operations and sustained camp defense, if the camps are to be effective.

8. Valor won't compensate for mass and firepower in conducting a counterattack against superior enemy forces. Counterattacks should be rehearsed and must have a combat strength at least equal to that of the enemy in the penetration, in order to succeed.

9. Plans should be made and rehearsals conducted for accomplishing a withdrawal under fire by an irregular force from a CIDG camp,

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if there is any possibility that such an operation could be ordered.

10. CIDG camps should have strong internal defenses, to include an inner perimeter, machinegun bunkers, and communications trenches. Such an organization of defense would effectively neutralize enemy penetrations of the FEBA by blocking them, would facilitate launching of the counterattack to restore the FEBA, and would provide good cover for the rear area elements of the defense.

11. The special forces advisor must be aware of the possibility that LLDB leadership over the CIDG irregulars may collapse in a crisis.

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Captain, Infantry

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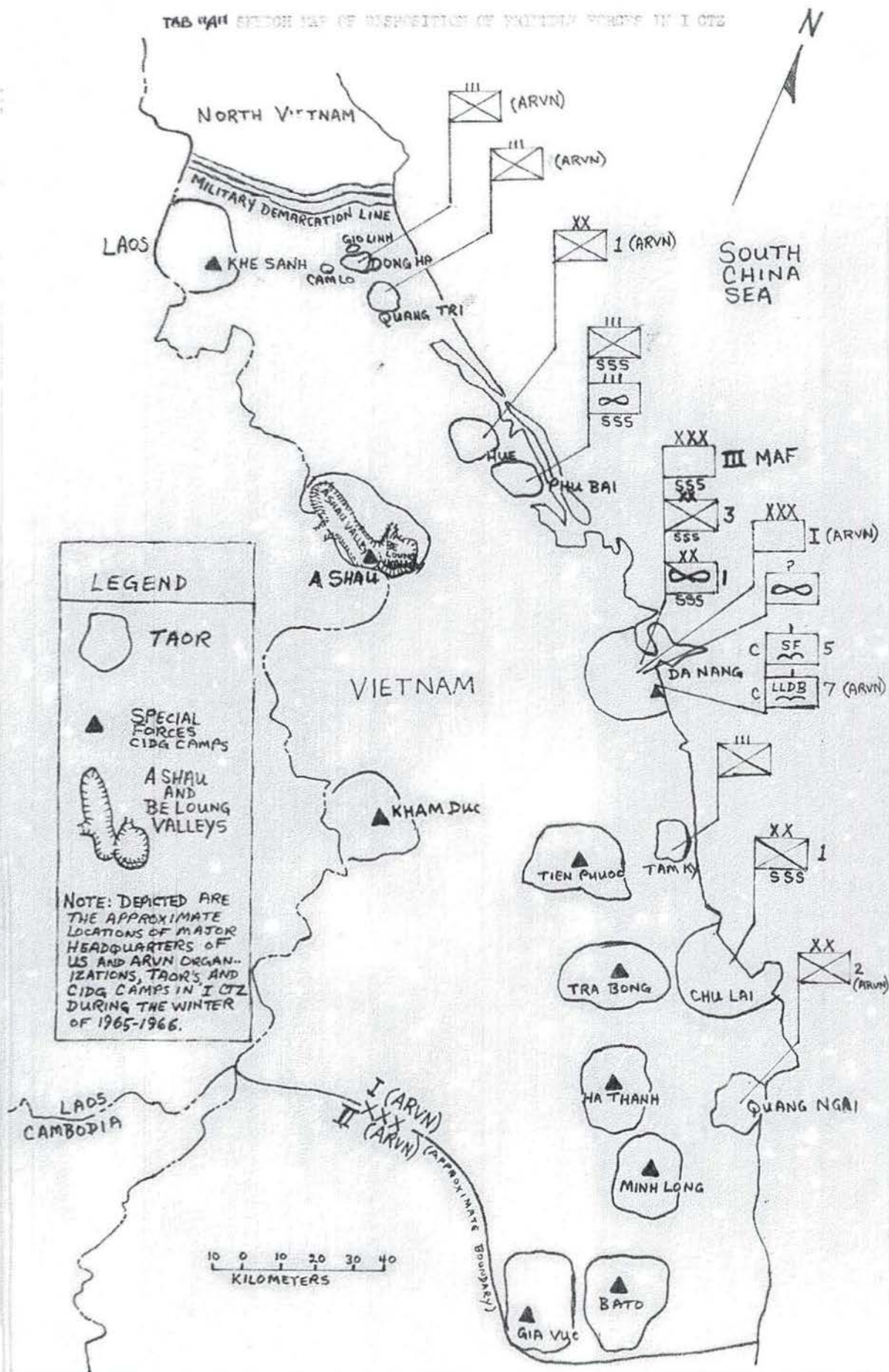
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2. Lucas, Jim, "The Agony of A Chau," Argosy, 365, p.19, August 1967.

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TAB 44H SKETCH MAP OF DISPOSITION OF VIETNAM FORCES IN I CTZ





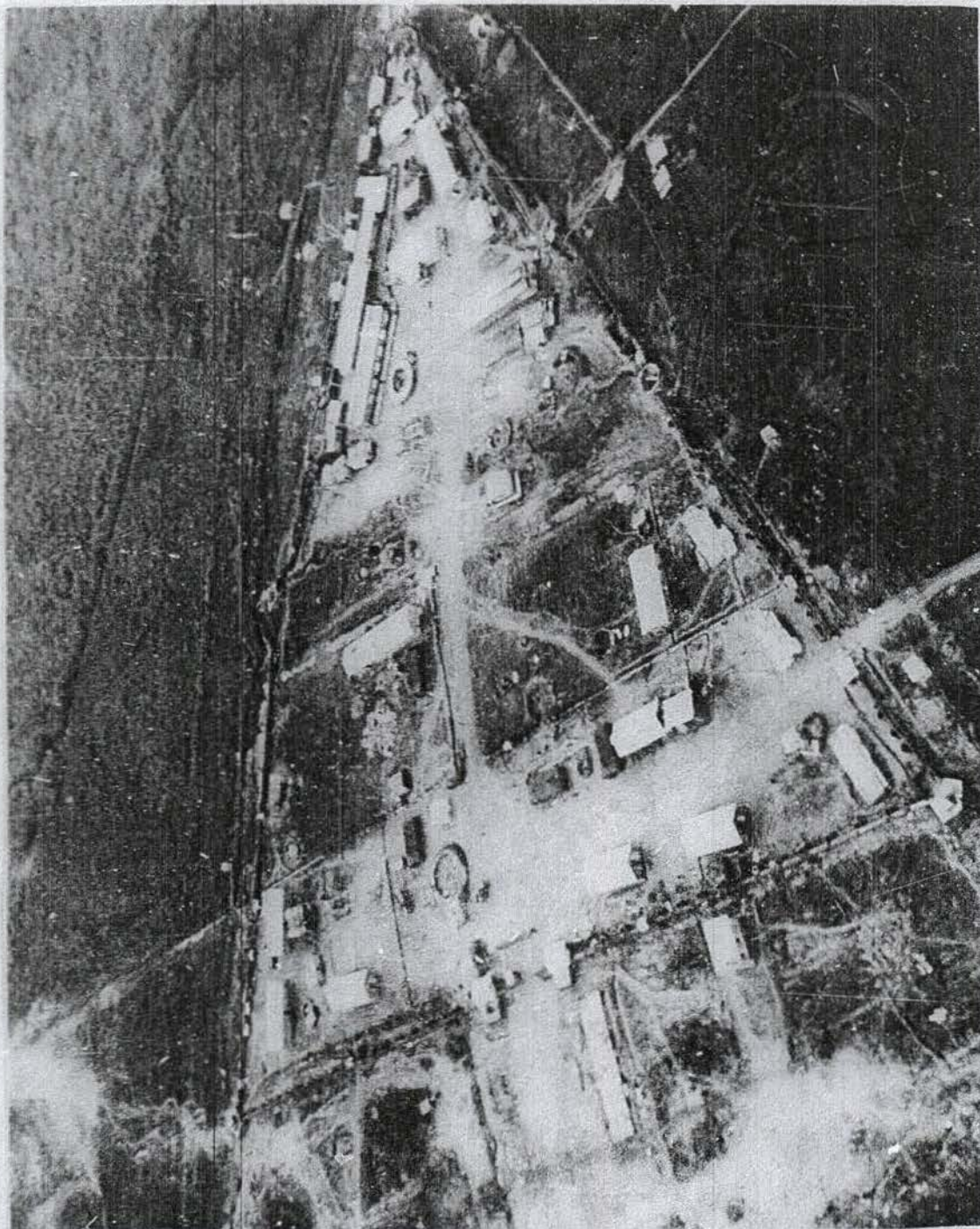
TAB "B"

1:50,000 SCALE MAP OF A SHAU





TAB "C" - PHOTOGRAPH OF CAMP PRIOR TO ATTACK



CIDG CAMP A SHAU

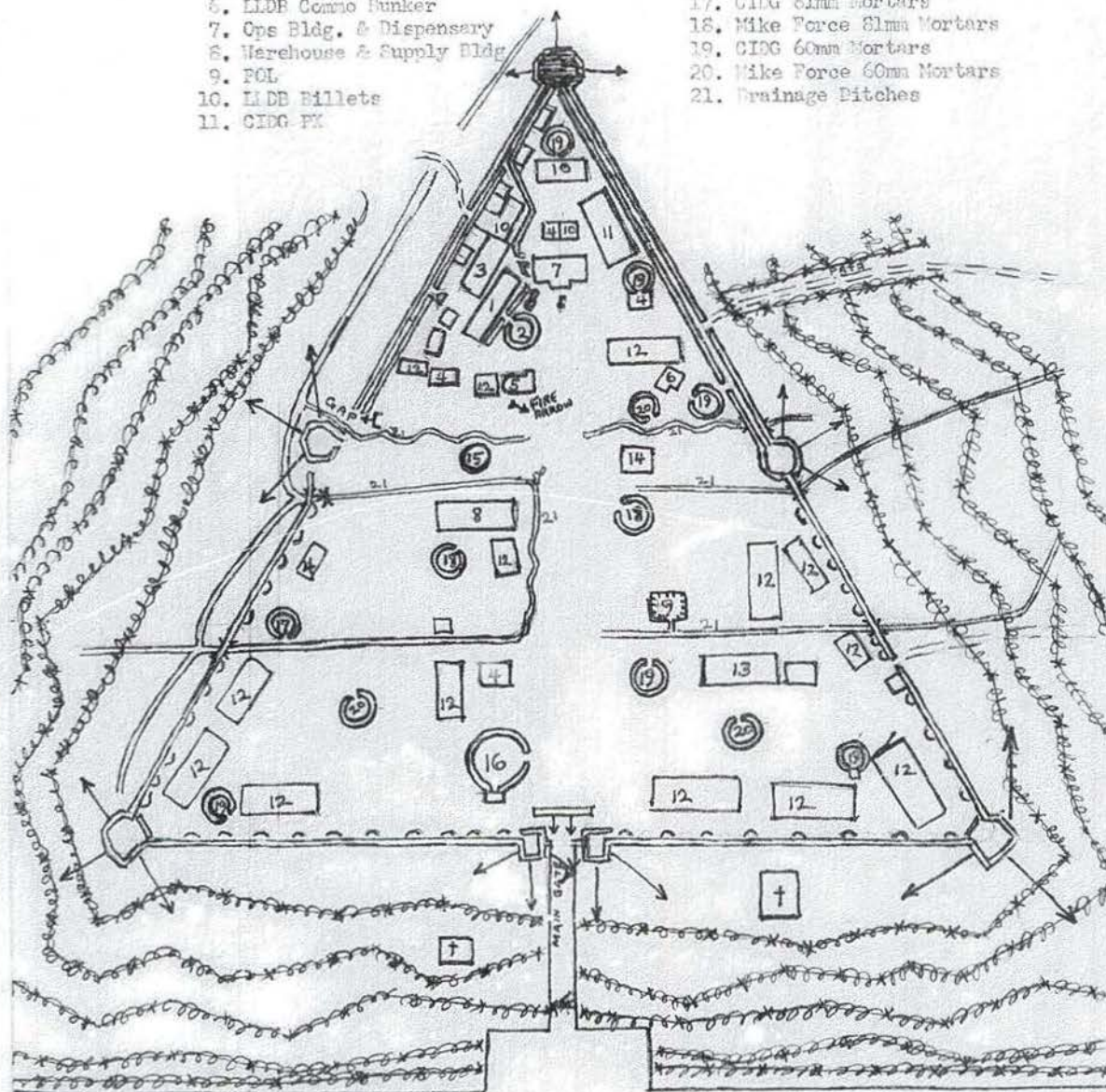
50 0 50  
SCALE IN METERS



TABLE "C" SKETCH OF THE CAMP  
PRIOR TO ATTACK

Legend

- |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. US Team House           | 12. CIDG Billets            |
| 2. US 81mm Mortar          | 13. CIDG Mess               |
| 3. US Supply & Arms Room   | 14. Generators              |
| 4. Ammo Bunkers            | 15. Water Pump & Tower      |
| 5. US Commo Bunker         | 16. 4.2 in Mortar           |
| 6. LLDB Commo Bunker       | 17. CIDG 81mm Mortars       |
| 7. Ops Bldg. & Dispensary  | 18. Mike Force 81mm Mortars |
| 8. Warehouse & Supply Bldg | 19. CIDG 60mm Mortars       |
| 9. POL                     | 20. Mike Force 60mm Mortars |
| 10. LLDB Billets           | 21. Drainage Ditches        |
| 11. CIDG PX                |                             |



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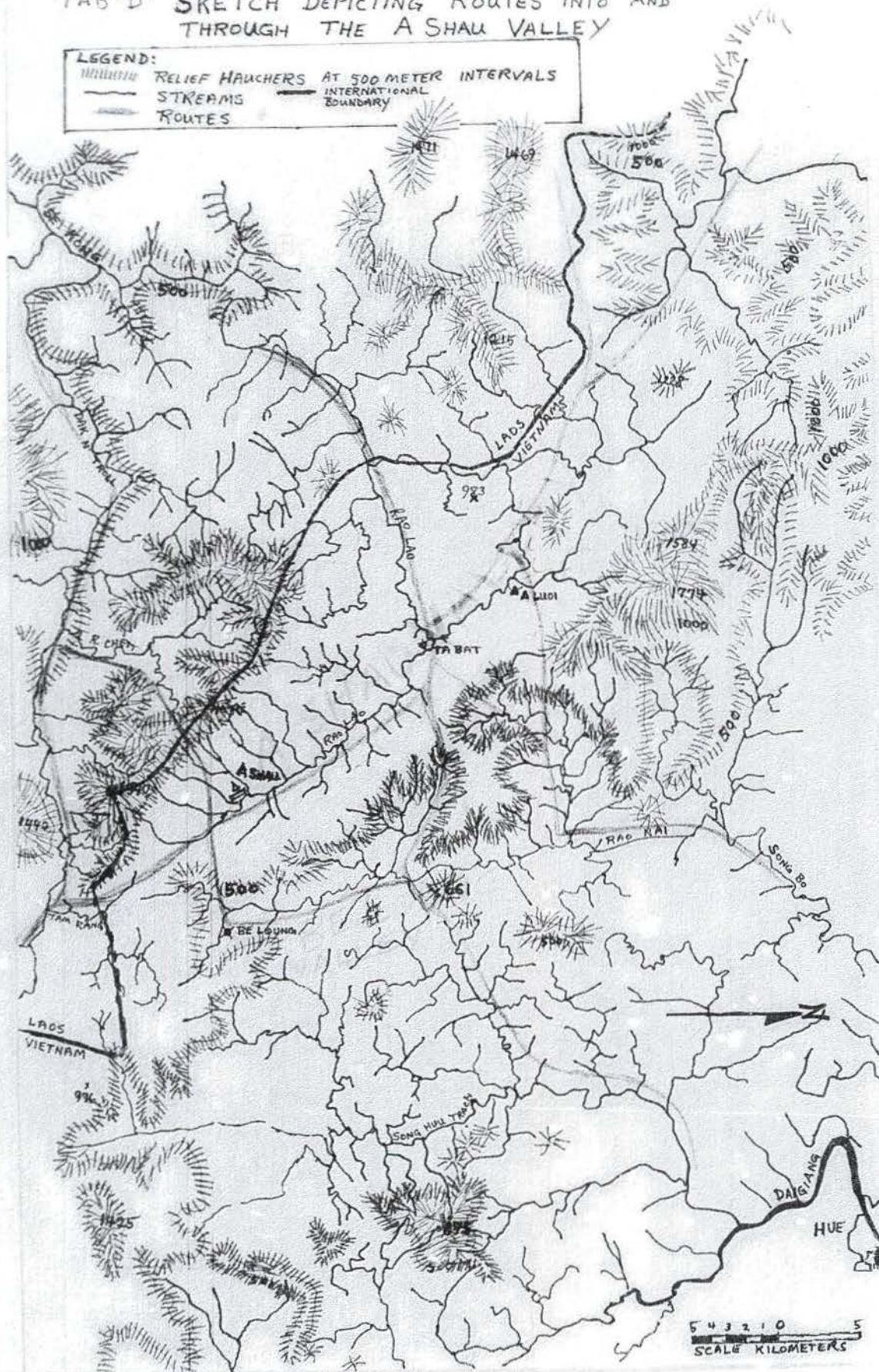
50 0 50 100 150  
SCALE IN METERS



TAB "D" SKETCH DEPICTING ROUTES INTO AND THROUGH THE A SHAU VALLEY

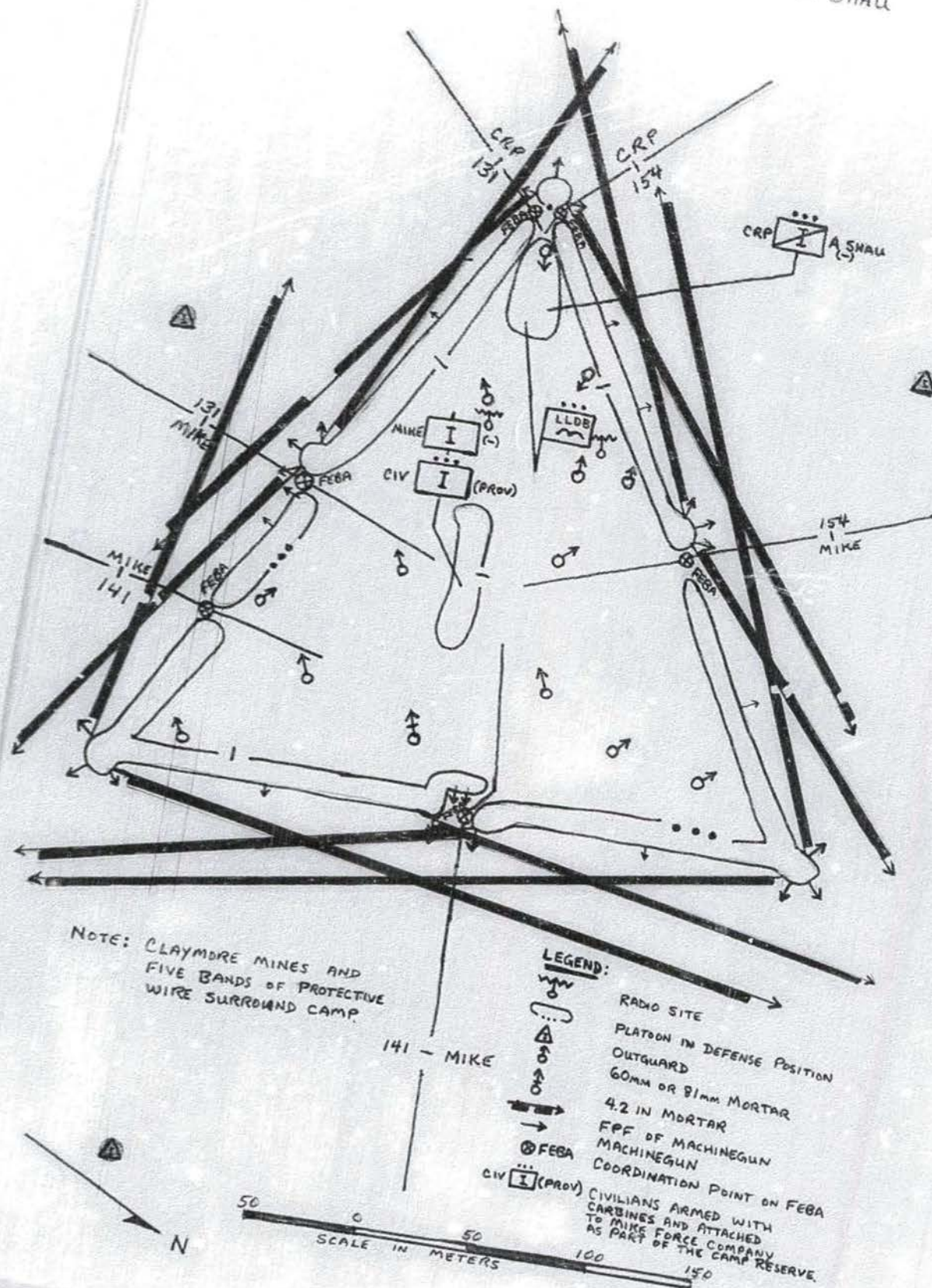
LEGEND:

RELIEF HAUNCHERS AT 500 METER INTERVALS  
 STREAMS  
 ROUTES  
 INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY





# TAB "E" SCHEMATIC DEFENSE OF CAMP A SHAU



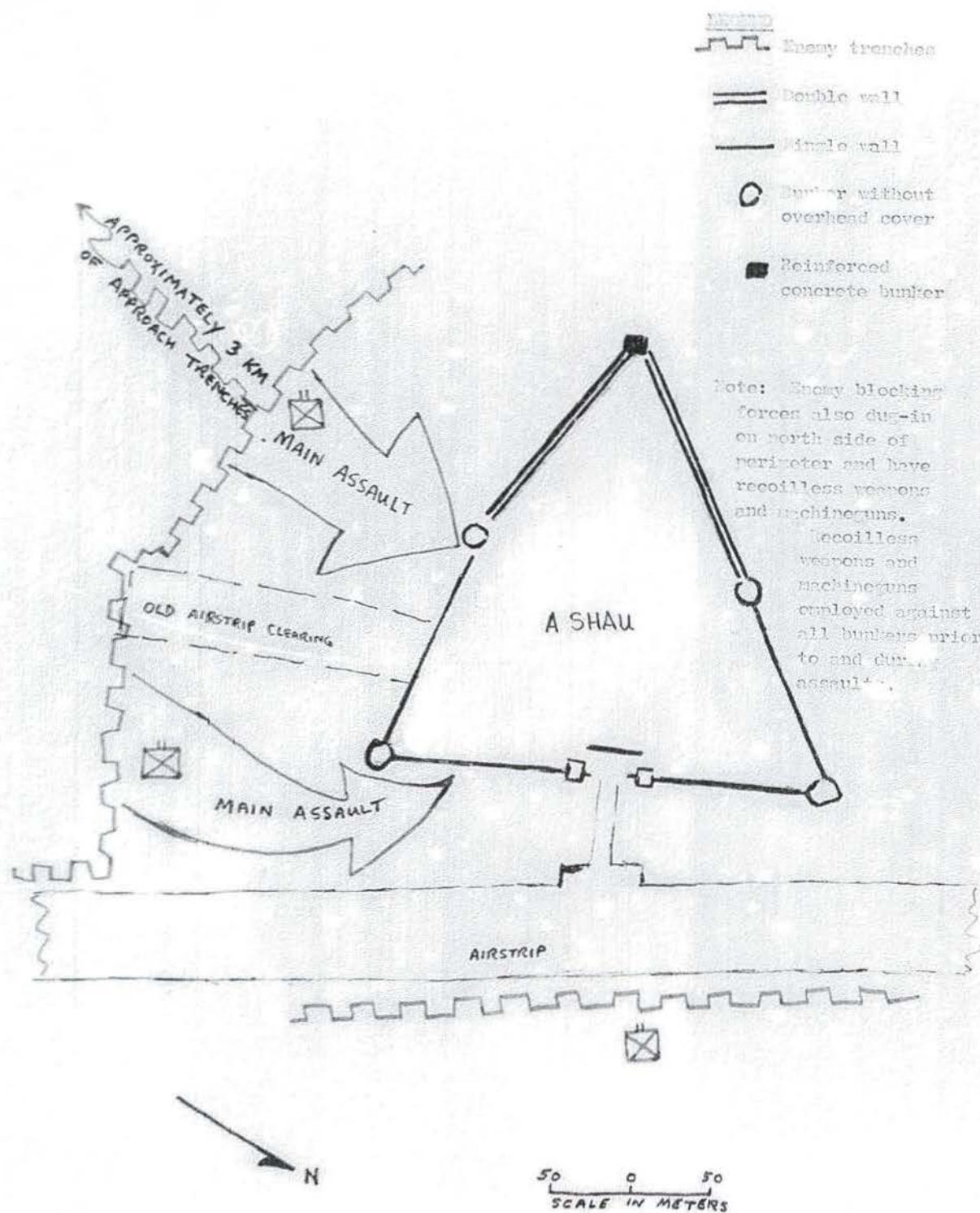


# TAB 11 - SKETCH OF ENEMY ATTACK AND FRIENDLY COUNTERATTACKS

SKETCH #1 - ENEMY BREACH A SHAU BY ENEMY AGAINST

KUIN AND EAST WALL AT APPROXIMATELY

0500 HOURS 10 MARCH.



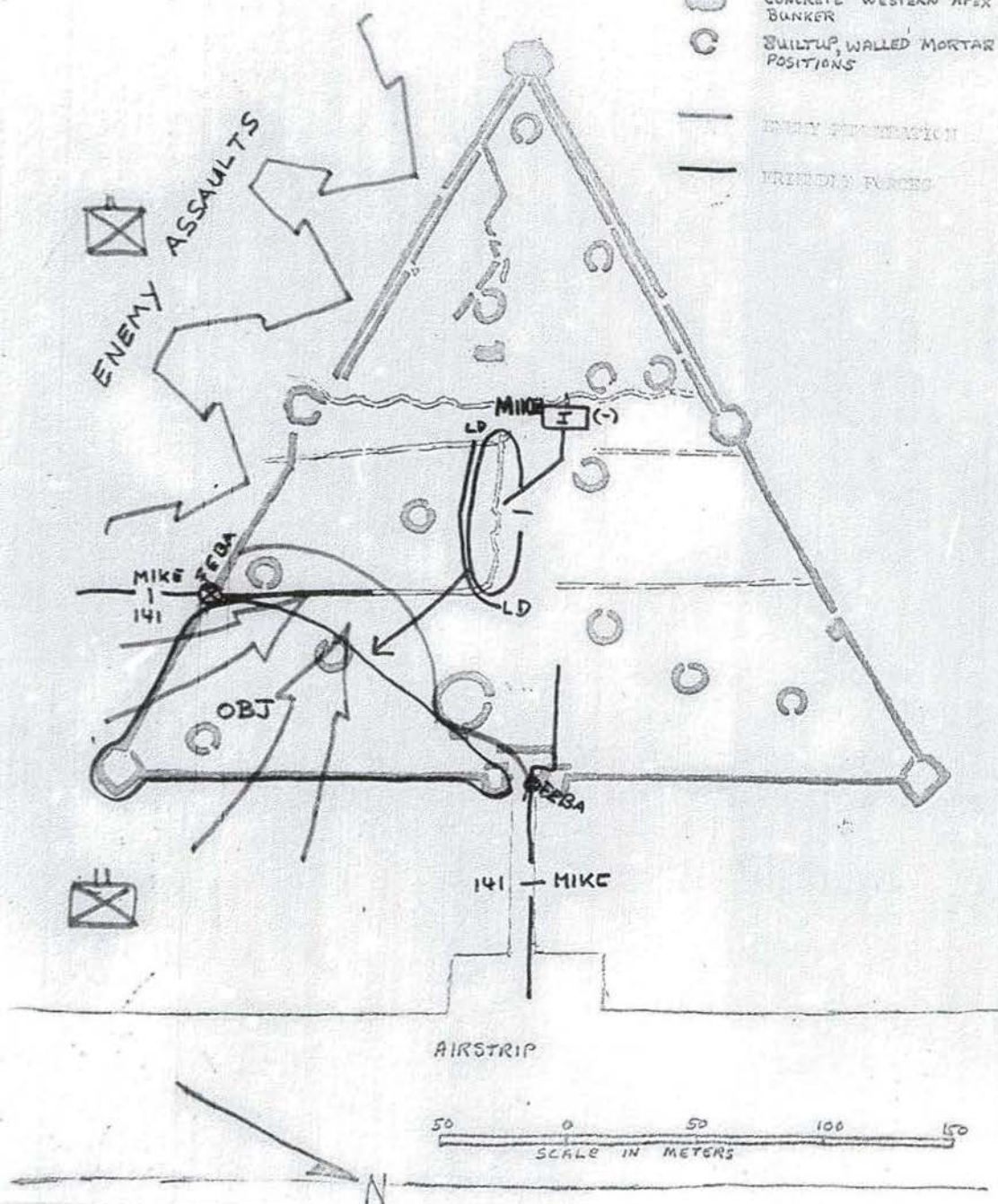


TAB "F1" (CONTINUED)

SKETCH #2 - ENEMY POSITIONING IN AND THROUGH THE  
141 COMPANY'S BUNKER AT APPROXIMATELY 0630 HOURS  
10 MARCH, AND COUNTERATTACK BY A RIFLE PLATOON  
AND A PROVISIONAL PLATOON OF CIVILIANS UNDER  
CONTROL OF THE 141 INFANTRY COMPANY.

LEGEND

- TRENCHES AND DRAINAGE DITCHES
- WALL
- ☼ US COMMUNICATIONS BUNKER WITH DIRT MOUND AROUND IT
- CONCRETE WESTERN APEX BUNKER
- BUILTUP, WALLED MORTAR POSITIONS
- ENEMY POSITIONING
- FRIENDLY FORCES



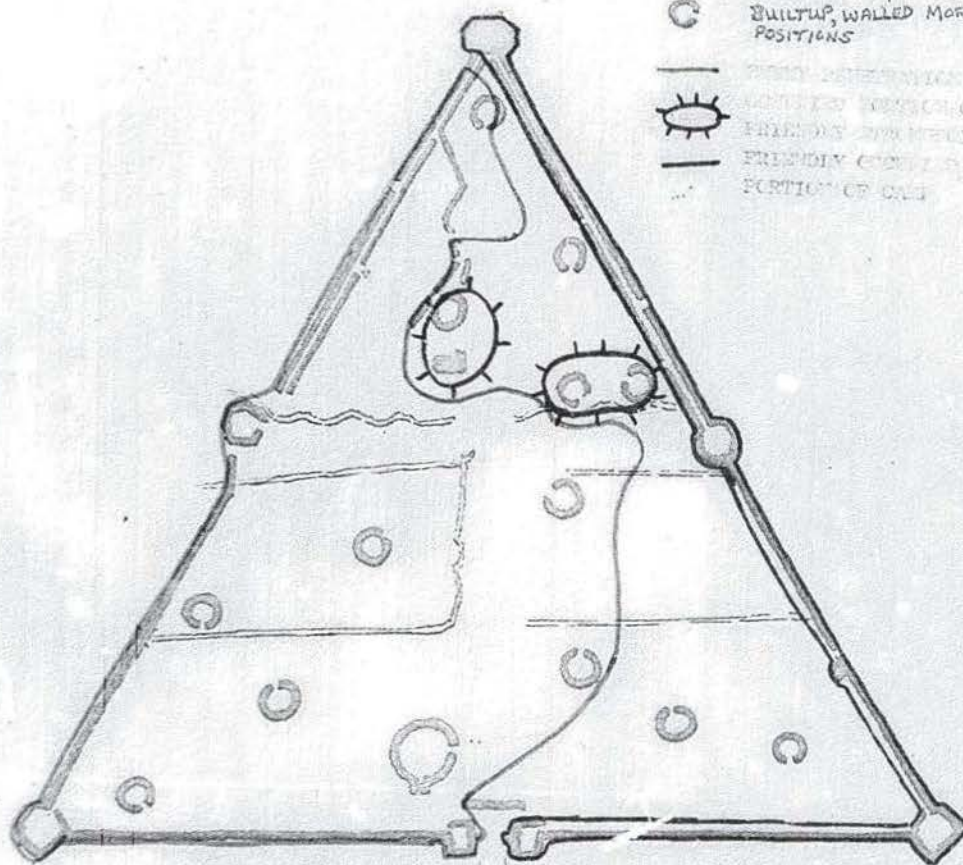


TAB "P1" (CONTINUED)

SKETCH #3 - REINFORCEMENT OF WEST WALL SECTION  
AND ADVANCE TRENCH EAST AT APPROXIMATELY  
0800 HOURS 10 MARCH

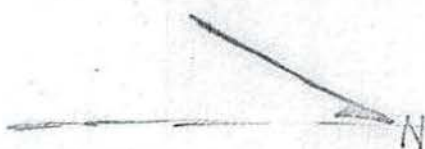
# LEGEND

- TRENCHES AND DRAINAGE DITCHES
- WALL
- ☼ US COMMUNICATIONS BUNKER WITH DIRT MOUND AROUND IT
- CONCRETE WESTERN APEX BUNKER
- BUILTUP, WALLED MORTAR POSITIONS
- REINFORCEMENT AND ADVANCE TRENCH OF EAST FRIENDLY POSITION
- ☼ FRIENDLY POSITION PORTION OF GLE



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50 0 50 100 150  
SCALE IN METERS














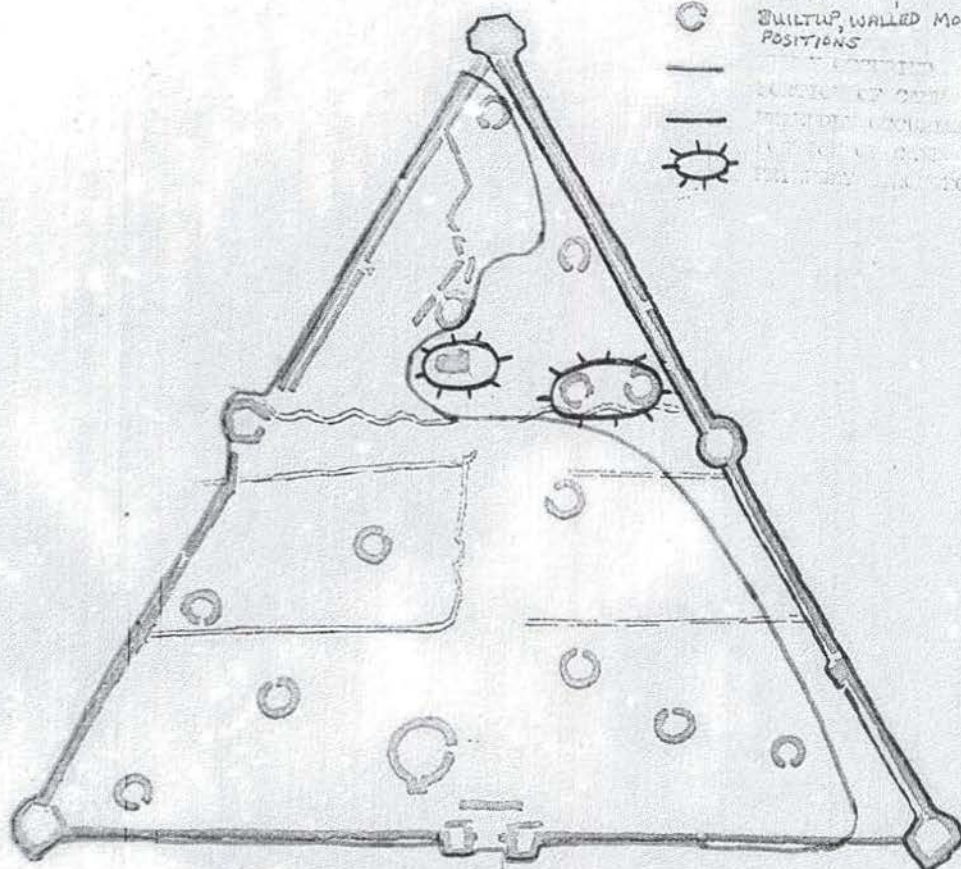
TAB "F" (CONTINUED)

SKETCH #4

THE LAYOUT OF THE BUNKER COMPLEX AT  
WILL BE A TYPICAL ADVANCE OF THE T-100  
AND WILL BE SIMILARLY ORSC "KIND" TO MARCH

# LEGEND

-  TRENCHES AND DRAINAGE DITCHES
-  WALL
-  US COMMUNICATIONS BUNKER WITH DIRT MOUND AROUND IT
-  CONCRETE WESTERN APEX BUNKER
-  BUILTUP, WALLED MORTAR POSITIONS
-  FENCE LINE
-  BUNKER AT 200
-  BUNKER AT 100
-  BUNKER AT 50



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SCALE IN METERS

N

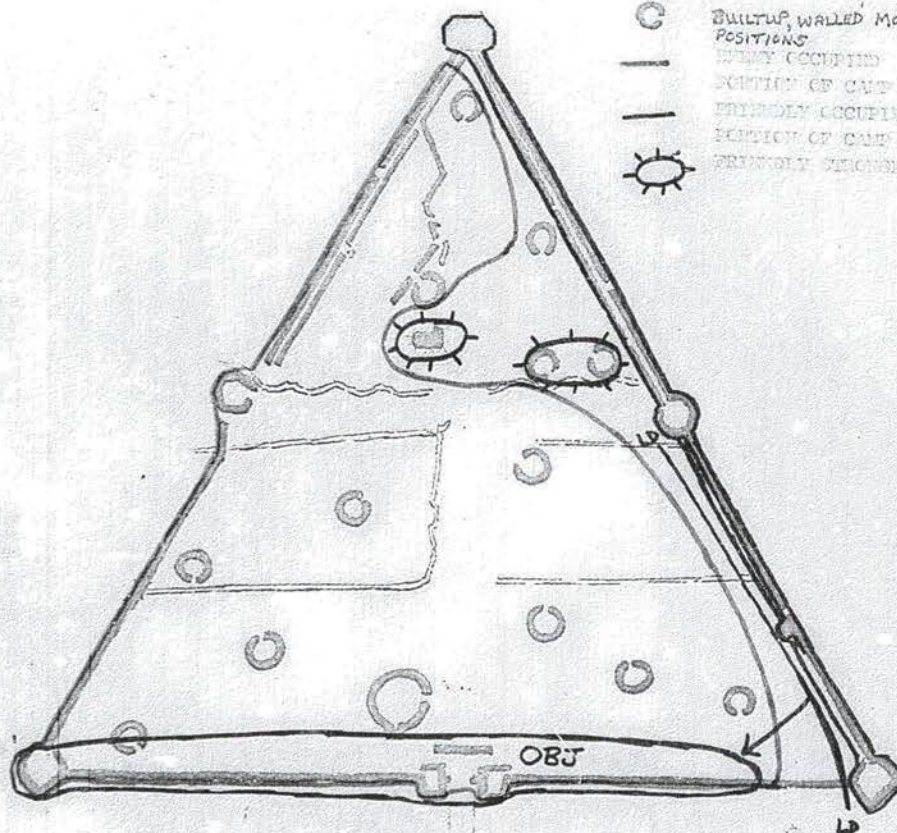


TAB 4F11 (CONTINUED)

SKETCH #5 - TROOP CAMP AND BUNKER AT WASHINGTON BY DEPT. WIRE 10 INCH

LEGEND

- TRENCHES AND DRAINAGE DITCHES
- WALL
- ☼ US COMMUNICATIONS BUNKER WITH DIRT MOUNDED AROUND IT
- CONCRETE WESTERN APOX BUNKER
- BUILTUP, WALLED MORTAR POSITIONS
- PARTLY OCCUPIED
- PARTLY OCCUPIED
- PARTLY OCCUPIED
- ☼ PARTLY OCCUPIED



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SCALE IN METERS

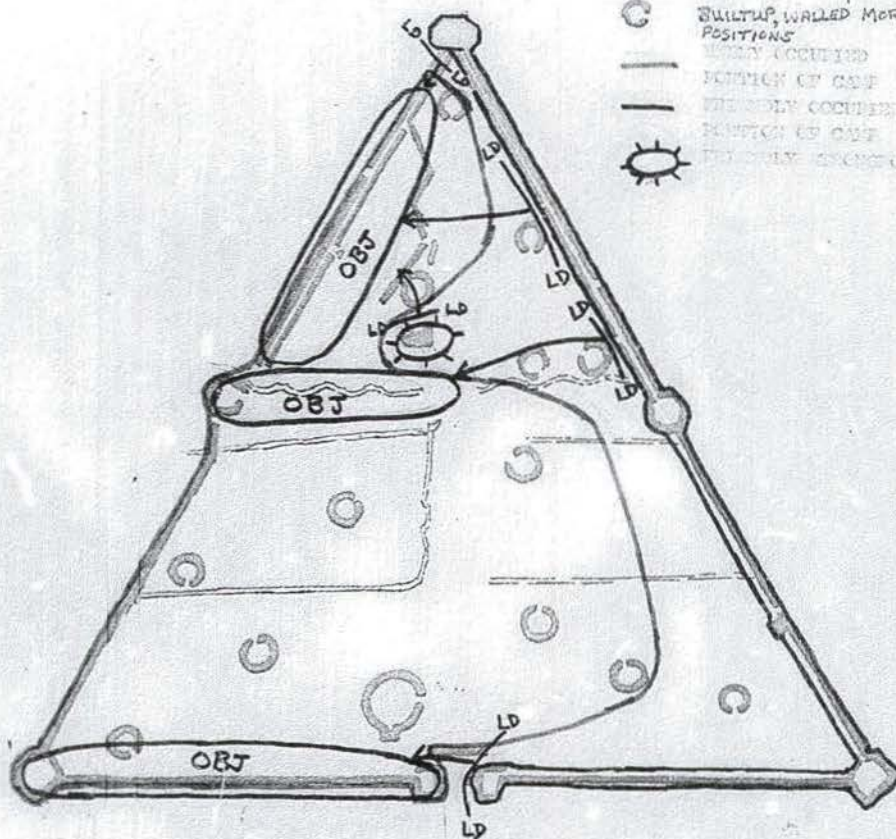


TAB "F" (CONTINUED)

SKETCH #6 - THE ONLY QUARTERMASTER BUNKER ON THE  
WESTERN PORTION OF CAMP AND TRENCH CAMP.  
IF IN BUNKER, BY APPROXIMATELY 1910 TRENCH  
CAMP BUNKER.

LEGEND

- TRENCHES AND DRAINAGE DITCHES
- WALL
- ☼ US COMMUNICATIONS BUNKER WITH DIRT MOUNDED AROUND IT
- CONCRETE WESTERN APEX BUNKER
- BUILTUP, WALLED MORTAR POSITIONS
- ONLY OCCUPIED
- PARTLY OCCUPIED
- ONLY OCCUPIED
- ☼ ONLY OCCUPIED



AIRSTRIIP

50 0 50 100 150  
SCALE IN METERS

N