

TELEPHONE

From: Major P.D. MUDD

UNCLASSIFIED
CONFIDENTIAL**AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES**1 DIV 1107
8 Nov 83
MR

Quote in Reply

D0/5/66

ADDRESS

103 Sig Sqn
APPO 3
CPO SYDNEY

28 Jul 66

(5)

Lieutenant-Colonel K.J. TAYLOR
1 Signal Regiment
Milpo
INGLEBURN
NSW

Dear Colonel Taylor,

Operations

During this last month, operations to gain domination over the TAOR have continued. The operation following the clearance of LONG PHUOC was Op SYDNEY, conducted by 5 RAR. This operation was designed to clear the feature NUI NGHE, about 6,000 yards to the NW of our base. The operation was carried out successfully with little enemy contact. A number of VC installations and defensive positions were discovered, but most had not been occupied for some-time. Because of the lack of contact, it was decided to leave 5 RAR out to carry on with Op SYDNEY 2. This was a cordon and search operation at the village just south of the BINH BA rubber plantation to our NORTH and a search and clear operation to the EAST of the village.

At the time 5 RAR were concentrating for this Op, information was received of an enemy force to our WEST in the valley through square 3165. It was decided to launch 6 RAR on Op BRISBANE to try to catch this force. Op SYDNEY 2 was halted with 5 RAR remaining in the operation area, except for one company which was brought back for base camp protection. Op BRISBANE did not produce any significant contact and Op SYDNEY 2 resumed a few days later.

The cordon and search operation was very successful and apparently caught most of the local VC squad from the village. The subsequent search and clear operation gave a few more small contacts only.

6 RAR is now carrying out Op HOBART, to clear the village of LONG TAN (to our SE) and the areas to the NORTH and EAST of the village. This operation yesterday produced our most significant contact to date, with at least a company of apparently main force VC, and is continuing.

/Radio

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Radio

You will see from the description I have given of operations to date that we have not been presented with any very challenging radio communications problems yet. It has all been very straight forward except for the requirement to re-broadcast during Op BRISBANE. Timings here were very fortunate as the necessary information for modification of the PRC-25s was received from D Sigs the day before it was decided to mount the operation and the first few sets were modified and tested the day the operation was arranged. We were therefore able to meet this first requirement. The set modification does seem to be completely satisfactory. The remaining problem now is the re-transmission cable which does seem to be suffering a high fault rate. It is now being examined with a view to submitting defect reports.

Radio relay

I won't write very much about radio relay as it doesn't belong to me. However, as it terminates in our telegraph terminal or switchboard it is of interest. There are three systems working out of here:

- a. 145 Sig Sqn. This provides switchboard to switchboard, sole user and telegraph circuits to AFV and ALSG.
- b. 39 (US) Sig Bn. This provides a back up for the 145 Sig Sqn system which may have to re-deploy if the TF HQ moves forward on operations and also provides telephone trunk access direct from TF HQ into the US Communications base system.
- c. 53 (US) Sig Bn. This provides switchboard to switchboard, sole user and telegraph circuits to 2 Field Force, VIETNAM (2FFV). These are essentially tactical circuits for control by and reporting to our superior HQ.

Line

The line situation has begun to settle down a little. The area road plan is now fairly well established and damage to lines by engineer plant has become the exception rather than the rule. The main task now is the tidying up and improving of all the lines which were laid in a hurry. This is, of course, a more leisurely process and the linemen are now working normal hours.

Sigcen and Telegraph Terminal

I think we have now reached as satisfactory a state as we can in the organisation of the telegraph terminal until we get our building to install it in. (We are to get a KINGSTRAND hut, an aluminium building 60feet x 20 feet for our operational functions). We now have the RAAF terminal, our two terminals and a spare position set up in a box bodied 3 ton truck we have borrowed for the purpose, and a tape preparation position in the back of the sigcen tent.

/The Problem

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The problem is that with two people on shift, one must normally be in the sigcen and the other in the telegraph terminal. If there are two tapes to be prepared simultaneously, either the sigcen counter must be left unattended or the second message must wait, unless there is a tape preparation position where the counter clerk can work and still be able to see the counter. This present system seems to work satisfactorily, though we are still having quite a high failure rate with TT-4A/TG, TT-76, TH-5/TG and KW7s.

You may be interested in getting an indication of the amount of traffic of all types which is being handled by the squadron. I will attach a graph showing the total number of messages and despatches passing through the sigcen and SDS offices daily and a pro-forma showing the break-up of the traffic for one day. You will note there has been a steady increase in volume handled since we have been here. We also seem to be getting towards a six day week, as the volume drops markedly on Sundays.

Tech Maint

In tech maint we are running up against the problem which seems to be almost universal. It is equipped for mobile operations and not for establishing a base camp workshop. As far as I am able to foresee, the tech maint workshop will probably not move from its present location for the whole time we are here. I expect that a few technicians would go forward with the squadron on operations, but that equipment requiring all but the simplest repairs would be backloaded to the base here and replaced one for one.

In these circumstances, it is a complete waste of a vehicle to leave it sitting underneath a tel repair workshop. We are therefore now in the process of setting up the workshop separate from the vehicle, which will then be able to help supplement the transport which is available for our daily domestic requirements.

Transport

Transport is at a premium. We are in the position of having to do all the miscellaneous tasks associated with living in a camp, which the mainland supplement was intended to provide for, without having the mainland supplement. Some of the tasks which are daily commitments are:

- a. Collection of rations and POL.
- b. Collection and delivery of laundry and collection of ice for the canteen from BARIA.
- c. Rubbish disposal.
- d. Water re-supply from the waterpoint.
- e. Mail collection and delivery.
- f. Collection of stores from OFF and Engrs.
- g. Carting gravel, laterite, defence stores and building materials for camp development work.

I'm sure I could add to the list but you will see the nature of the problem. Probably only two things have enabled us to survive. The first is that we were authorised to bring one 2½ ton truck to transport our shelters. With the shelters dismantled this is available for other tasks. The second is that we are at the moment providing radio communications for only two battalions instead of three. We have had to remove the radio equipment from these two PFR's and are using them for general work.

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Miscellaneous

We are running a squadron canteen to provide drinks, cigarettes and the miscellaneous requirements in the way of soap, writing pads, hair oil, toothpaste and that type of thing. We carry no high priced, slow moving items as these will be available direct from the ASCO bulk canteen which is being established here in the TFMA. To run the canteen I have appointed a Cpl as full time canteen manager. He has the job for a month and then another Cpl will take over the job. During the time he is canteen manager he is relieved of all other duties and is responsible for all aspects of running the canteen. He also wins the job of looking after the laundry as an extra task. We also run a squadron Sgts' Mess (26 members with all the attached). This is on a part time, self help basis as far as operation is concerned. The officers belong to the TF HQ mess but are guests in our Sergeants' Mess on the appropriate occasions.

We have now been up here in this base camp location for nearly two months and boredom is becoming a problem. It is still a "no light" area at night with the result that there is nothing that people can do between evening "stand down" and morning "stand down". In addition there is the problem of the apparently endless continuation of the same routine without any form of a break. R and R and R and C are to come but they do not solve the problem really. To try to help with a break we have pitched a tent down in 145 Sig Sqn's area in VUNG TAU and this week have begun a programme of sending three people down each night for a night's leave. Even this won't be much, of course, one night a month at the best. However, work must go on and I am hoping that this will help with a bit of a break in routine.

General VINCENT was up here yesterday and spoke of the forthcoming exercise. I hope that it goes well for you and that the supply of aspirin is up to the headache involved.

Regards,
Peter Whitley

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1000

IN —
OUT —
TOTAL —

900

800

700

600

500

400

300

200

100

0

June

July

6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

