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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE
APO San Francisco 96250

15 November 1968

AVBE-SC/MHD

SUBJECT: Operational Report Lessons Learned
(1 August - 31 October 1968)

THRU: Commanding General
I FFORCEV
ATTN: AVFA-GC-OT
APO 96350

THRU: Deputy Commanding General
USARV
ATTN: AVHGC-DH
APO 96375

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

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

The inclosed Operational Report Lessons Learned is forwarded in compliance with AR 525-15, USARPAC Regulation 525-15 and USARV Regulation 525-15.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

11 Incl
as

W. R. Stamp
W. R. STAMP
1LT, AGC
Asst AG

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OF THE SEC ARMY BY TAG
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FOR DIRECTIVE 5200.10

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I. Significant Organizational and Unit Activities

1. Introduction

This Operational Report Lessons Learned covers the period 1 August 1968 through 31 October 1968. The 173d Airborne Brigade has continued to conduct combat operations aimed at locating and destroying Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces and installations. As I Field Force's reserve, the Brigade remained ready to meet any required mission, and continued operations in the Brigade's TAOR (Tactical Area of Responsibility). Its civic action program continued to play a key role in the Brigade's counterinsurgency efforts.

To best accomplish its mission, the 173d Airborne Brigade conducted four major operations during the reporting period. Operation Dan Hoa, which commenced 17 September 1967, continues to be conducted in Phu Yen Province by the 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry and D Company 16th Armor. Operation Walker, including the defense of Camp Radcliff at An Khe and the surrounding AO, is being conducted by the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 50th Infantry. Operation Cochise, involving the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry and the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry continues to be centered in the Bong Son plains area of Binh Dinh Province. The 3d Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry continued to remain OPCON to Task Force South, conducting Operation McClain in southern II Corps.

The 173d Airborne Brigade continued to be under the leadership of Brigadier General Richard J. Allen, who assumed command of the unit on 20 March 1968.

A native of Atlanta, Georgia, General Allen joined the Army as an enlisted man in 1940 and rose in rank to First Sergeant. After attending and graduating from Infantry OCS in 1942, he served as an officer with the 101st Airborne Division during World War II and participated in the invasion of Normandy, the invasion of Holland, and the battle of Bastogne.

General Allen's last assignment was as assistant division commander of the 101st Airborne Division. His decorations include the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Combat Infantryman's Badge, Distinguished Unit Citation with one oak leaf cluster, Army Commendation Medal, and Croix de Guerre with Bronze Star (France).

He is a graduate of Georgia Military Academy, the University of Maryland, Infantry OCS, Parachute School, Armor Advanced Course, the Command and General Staff College, the Armed Forces Staff College, and the Air War College.

On 6 September 1968, General Creighton W. Abrams, Commanding General, United States Army Vietnam, presented the Meritorious Unit Commendation to the 173d Airborne Brigade for the period May 1965 to May 1967.

After attaching the red Meritorious Unit Commendation streamer to the Brigade colors, General Abrams said, "That little streamer represents months and years of devoted and dedicated service by the men of this Brigade. It represents the sacrifices of a great many...who have served their government, their country and their people."

The Meritorious Unit Commendation reads: "In every confrontation with the stubborn insurgents the 173d Airborne Brigade displayed marked aggressiveness which enabled them to neutralize enemy strongholds and capture thousands of logistical items. In addition to remarkable skill and tenacity in combat the Sky Soldiers of the Brigade carried on an extensive civic actions program characterized by sincere compassion for the suppressed local populace. During each of the Brigade's combat operations, the Sky Soldiers immeasurably aided the allied counterinsurgency effort by winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people."

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UNIT	EST STRENGTH			PROBABLE LOCATION		
	AUG	SEPT	OCT	AUG	SEPT	OCT
D Co, 40th Sapper Bn	120	65	65	BS9202	BS8510	BS8305
XC II LF Bn	155	155	155	BS9301	BS9301	BS9599
300th Sapper Bn	200	200	165	CR1532	CR1532	BR9854
50th LF Bn	150	150	150	CR1133	CRO949	CRO949

(2) Operation Dan Hoa

(a) Enemy Situation:

1. Disposition: AO Bolling is located north and west of Tuy Hoa City. The major enemy force close enough to have influence within the Bolling area of operations continues to be the 5th NVA Division, with an estimated strength of 5,200 men. Currently located in the general location of BQ 8920. The 5th NVA Division has two subordinate regiments, the 18B operates to the south of our AO in the Nha Trang area, and has recently been involved with elements of the "White Horse" ROK Division, suffering heavy casualties.

The 95th NVA Regiment suffered heavy losses during the TET offensive in the Battle of Tuy Hoa North (see 173d Airborne Brigade CAAR) and withdrew to the west to receive replacements and train. It appeared next on 5 April at XQ 0943, and had its 4th and 6th Battalions soundly beaten by a combined ARVN/ROK Task Force. After this second defeat, the 95th again withdrew to the mountains and jungles to the west.

On 11 July a captured document indicated that the 95th NVA Regiment and its 4th and 5th Battalions had moved further west into Cambodia for resupply and to conduct a training cycle, leaving the 6th Bn as a stay-behind element in AO Bolling. The current strength of the 6th Bn, 85th Regiment is estimated at 500. It is expected that the 95th NVA Regiment will return to AO Bolling in November from its Cambodian base camps.

The 30th MF Bn, with a strength of 140, is subordinate to the 5th Division and continues to operate in AO Bolling. It is currently operating in squad-sized "sapper" units, being targeted against military installations in Phu Yen Province, particularly in Phu Hiep. Since August, the 47th Regiment, 22d Infantry Division (ARVN) has had two contacts with the 85th LF Bn, resulting in 74 enemy KIA (BC).

Thus, the following units are located within the Tuy Hoa area or close enough to have influence within the Dan Hoa area of operations:

- a. HQ, 5th NVA Division
- b. 6th Bn/95th NVA Regiment
- c. 30th MF Bn
- d. 85th MF Bn
- e. DK-7 LF Company
- f. DK-9 LF Company

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g. 122200 CQ041488 D/16 Armor rec'd 3-4 M-79 rds fm the N resulting in 1 US WHA slightly; fire was returned w/neg results.

h. 121445 CQ035482 B/4/503 found a sqd size rest area and observed 2 weapons and a hammock in a tree and moved to check the area. Elem rec'd AW fire from 3 indiv and engaged w/SA resulting in 2 VC KIA (BC) and 3 M1 carbines CIA.

i. 150240 CQ046437 A/4/503 made contact w/und size enemy force employing SA/AW and HG. Fire was returned w/und enemy results and 1 US WHA not evacuated.

j. 150950 BQ985572 LRP Tm 12 engaged 4 VC w/SA & AW resulting in 1 VC KIA (BC), 1 Russian 7.62mm pistol, 1 rucksack and 1 M-26 HG CIA.

k. 151940 CQ055413 A/4/503 established contact w/poss Co sized enemy force and was reinforced by D/16. Arty, gunships and spookys were employed and contact broke at 2045H. There were 5 US WHA and neg enemy results.

l. 151945 CQ044432 E/4/503 rec'd 2-3 rds of (poss) 60mm mort and SA fire. Fire was returned resulting in 2 VC KIA (BC).

m. 160833 CQ046435 elements of 4/503 made contact w/und size enemy force. Fire was exchanged resulting in 1 US WHA.

n. 211341 CQ034511 A/4/503 engaged 1 VC w/SA resulting in 1 VC KIA (BC) and 1 rifle CIA.

o. 221240 CQ059520 A/4/503 engaged 1 VC sqd resulting in 1 VC KIA and 1 AK-47, 2 Chicom HG and 1 wallet w/papers CIA.

p. 270945 CQ015421 LRP Tm 16 made contact w/an und size enemy force. SA fire was exchanged and the team broke contact and moved to an LZ and were extracted at 1035H.

2. September: From period 28 September 1968 to 15 October 1968, the 4th Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry was OPCON to the 4th Infantry Division: Operation McArthur. For review, see ORLL, 1 August-31 October, 4th Infantry Division.

3. October:

a. 241350 BQ939649 C/4/503 rec'd 2 SA rds of harassing fire. Artillery was fired on the enemy position and the area searched with neg results. Neg US casualties.

b. 250830 CQ123298 4/503 reported FAC A/C sighted 7 VC and arty fired resulting in 1 VC WHA. The other 6 VC fled SE from the area. 0939H, at CQ122284 a reaction force from 4/503 was inserted and made contact with an est VC squad and SA fire was exchanged. Contact broke at approx 0915H w/neg US casualties and und enemy results. The reaction force searched the area and found and destroyed 15 kilos of rice, 4 bottles of vitamins and 8 bandages. The reaction force was extracted at 0920H w/o incident.

(c) Enemy Disposition:

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of supplies and ammunition. The Rome Flows were able to clear extensive areas on both sides of the Valley, destroying many trench and cave systems. Due to the Rome Flow operations, it is felt that ambushes will be significantly reduced, better control of the Valley road will be realized and the the Valley road's being open will promote civilian travel and open the Valley and the "Crow's Foot" area to further commercial exchange.

During the reporting quarter the Brigade continued making forays into the jungle highlands, to watch for the return of the 3d NVA Division from the northwest and to pinpoint the location of the 3d NVA Division's 18th NVA Regiment to the southwest in the Suoi Ca - Vinh Thanh area. Elements of the 41st ARVN Regiment, 22d Infantry Division (ARVN) made contact with the 18th NVA Regiment in the Suoi Ca Mountains on 22 September 1968. The 1st Bn (Abn) 503d Infantry reinforced this contact on 23 September and by 6 October, 197 VC/NVA had been killed (BC). For a further resume of the Battle of Suoi Ca Valley, see Section II - Intelligence and attached CAAR.

After the Battle of Suoi Ca the Brigade continued to conduct combat operations in the Vinh Thanh Mountains, along the Kron River, in the Tiger Mountains, in the crescent area and along the Dam Trao Plains. In the conduct of the operations the 1st Bn (Abn) 503d Infantry, as reported in Section II, made significant findings of enemy ammunition and supply caches, severely cutting into the enemy's offensive capabilities. The purpose of these operations in the above areas was to destroy VC/NVA strongholds and base camp areas and destroy the offensive capabilities of the local Viet Cong. Thus, if the main force NVA units of the 3d NVA Division do return to their former areas, they will find their VC logistical and intelligence networks destroyed and their base camps depleted and destroyed also. Significant contacts are as reported in Section VI, Intelligence: Operation Dan Sinh.

c. Operation Dan Hoa: AO Bolling is located in Phu Yen Province, to the west and north of Tuy Hoa, and contains an estimated 150,000 people, most of whom live in the coastal rice-producing lowlands or along the Song Ba River. Of these 150,000 people, less than 5,00 are considered as being under Viet Cong control and about 13,000 are in contested areas. The principal occupations, as in AO Cochise, are fishing, again on an individual basis, and farming, with rice being the main crop. AO Bolling is the normal area of operation of the 4th Bn (Abn) 503d Infantry and Company D, 16th Armor. From 24 August until 15 October the 4th Bn (Abn) 503d Infantry was OPCON to the 4th Infantry Division in Operation McArthur.

For the reporting period the main enemy force in AO Bolling, the 95th NVA Regiment of the 5th NVA Division, remained out of the AO, for the most part in Cambodia, re-supplying, and receiving new replacements. The 6th Bn/95th NVA Regiment was left in AO Bolling, but has remained out of contact with allied forces for the reporting period.

The continuing mission of TF 4th Bn (Abn) 503d Infantry was that of locating and destroying the 6th Bn/95th NVA Regiment, providing security for the continuance of the civilian rice harvest (in conjunction with the 28th ROK Regiment and the 47th ARVN Regiment, 22d ARVN Division), providing security for the 577th Engineer Battalion and the 173d Engineer Company for their mission of construction along Highway 436 and Routes 68 and 2D, and constantly providing Phu Yen Province with a company designed for rapid reaction. Throughout the reporting period, TF 4th Bn 503d Infantry conducted reconnaissance in force and search and destroy operations west of TUY HOA CITY in effort to locate and destroy enemy forces. The enemy was not to be found, and though enemy bunkers, rice caches and base camps were located, few proved to be fresh.

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Thus for the period the enemy had no desire to either be located or to enter contact. In addition to its continuing search and destroy and reconnaissance in force operations, TF 4th Bn (Abn) 503d Infantry, utilizing Company D 16th Armor, continued to provide security for the Vietnamese rice harvest, provide security for the 577th Engineer Battalion for their construction and mine sweeping missions along Highway 436 and Routes 68 and 2D and assist the Air Force in the defense of Tuy Hoa Air Force Base and provide at all times an infantry company for a ready reaction force as needed. For significant contacts during the months of August, September and October in AO Bolling, see Section III, Intelligence: Operation Dan Hoa.

d. Operation Walker: From 1 August until 18 August the 1st Bn (Abn) 503d Infantry continued to secure the Camp Radcliff/An Khe complex, secure and maintain for vehicular traffic QL 19 in the tactical area of responsibility. It also conducted reconnaissance in force, search and destroy and cordon and search operations within AO Walker and continued to support revolutionary development and civic action projects.

On 18 August, the 1st Bn (Mech) 50th Infantry assumed the tactical responsibility of TAOR Walker and continued to carry out combat operations designed to locate and destroy the VC/NVA and secure QL 19 and Camp Radcliff. The 173d Support Bn (Abn) continued to furnish perimeter guards (2d Provisional Rifle Company) and emergency support for Camp Radcliff.

Contact as a whole was light, but continued to increase during the reporting period. The 1st Bn (Mech) 50th Infantry, under the command of LTC John B Carter, continued to guard against increasing enemy pressure along QL 19 and on Camp Radcliff, employed company-sized search and destroy operations, night ambushes, joint US-RF/PF operations (there are no ARVN units in TAOR Walker) and constantly held one mechanized company as a ready-reaction force. It is felt that continued close cooperation between the Vietnamese civilian populace, RF/PF units and the US forces were instrumental in keeping enemy incidents along the Camp Radcliff perimeter and

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programmed but operational requirements prevented the 40th Regiment from attending. The training will be resumed as operational commitments permit.

The 2d Battalion also made liaison visits to Hoai Nhon subsector headquarters on 5, 7, 13, 23 and 27 August. Although the 2d Bn 503d Infantry was committed to field operations remote from populated areas throughout the reporting period, one combined cordon and search operation utilizing one US rifle company and one RF company was conducted on 26 August.

(c) 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry: The 4th Battalion and Company D 16th Armor conducted combined operations with the 47th Infantry Regiment in Phu Yen Province. During the period 13-15 August D-16th Armor and 1 rifle company from the 47th Regiment conducted blocking/screening missions for the 2d Bn 47th Regiment to north and northeast of the Tuy Hoa Valley. On 15-17 August D/4-503d Infantry and D-16th Armor conducted blocking and screening operations for the 47th Regiment in the vicinity of the Soui Cai stream (CQ 045490 to CQ 075490). On 20 August the 4-503d Infantry and D-16th Armor assisted the 47th Regiment in a two day combat sweep by establishing blocking/screening positions. On 1 and 2 August the chemical NCA, 4-503d Infantry assisted by ARVN interpreters conducted 4 hours of instruction for the 2d company 3-47th Infantry on the employment of fougasse in the defense. Two hours of instruction on demolitions were also presented. In addition, on 7 August the 2-47th Infantry conducted a separate operation with the aviation assets made available from the 4th Bn resources. Two UH-1H, 2 CH-47 supported by helicopter gunships moved 450 personnel. During combined operations a combined heliborne command post successfully controlled the air assault phases of the operations. Four Command visits were conducted by the CO 4th Bn 503d Infantry and CO 47th ARVN Regiment. In addition, eight visits were made by the Brigade Deputy Commander and members of his staff. Sitreps and instums continue to be exchanged daily.

The 4th Battalion and D Company 16th Armor also continued support of RF/PF efforts in Phu Yen Province. During the reporting period the CO and staff of the 4th Battalion and the 173d Airborne Brigade Deputy Commander made a total of 38 visits to the Phu Yen and Phu Bon Sector headquarters. A combined reconnaissance in force operation was conducted from 7-12 August, utilizing D Co 16th Armor and a RF mechanized platoon. The 201st RF Company and 4th Bn 503d Infantry conducted 2 combined operations during the period 18-23 August and 23-27 August. During each of these operations one platoon from the 201st Company was assigned to work with a US rifle company. On 17 August, PF Platoon # 16 was helilifted to CQ 981422 to occupy blocking positions with D Co 16th Armor. This operation terminated on 20 August. On 26 August the 101st RF Company and D Co 16th Armor conducted a search and clear operation west of Tuy Hoa vicinity CQ132579. From 24 August to 15 October the 4th Bn was OPCON to the 4th Infantry Division, participating in Operation McArthur. For a resume of their activities during this period, see ORLL, 4th Infantry Division, 1 August-31 October.

(d) 1st Battalion (Mechanized) 50th Infantry: The 1st Battalion participated in a combined operation with the 41st ARVN Regiment from 4-7 August in the Soui Cai Valley. Command Posts were co-located during the operations. In addition, the Battalion Commander 1-50th visited the Regimental commander at Phu My. The 41st Regiment was provided six UH-1H helicopters for combat assaults on 4 August and six UH-1H aircraft for extractions on 7 August. 24 CH-47 sorties were flown, eight for combat assaults and eight for the extraction on 7 August. Eight CH-47 sorties were flown during the operation to effect resupply of water

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During the reporting period there were numerous liaison and social visits made to the 41st ARVN Regiment, Phu My District Headquarters, and various villages.

One squad from C Company, 1st Bn 503d Infantry conducted a joint security operation with a Van Truong PF platoon on the 6th and 7th of October. From the 7th to the 11th of October the 1st Bn 503d Infantry conducted joint training for one RF company at LZ Courage. The training consisted of squad tactics, care and cleaning of individual weapons and the organization of perimeter defenses. The commander and staff of the 1st Bn, 503d Infantry made 20 visits to Phu My District Headquarters during the reporting period and there were exchanges of Sitreps and Intsums daily. In addition, several RF/PF units were visited and given approximately 5000 sandbags, some medical supplies and soap.

(b) 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry: The 2d Battalion and the 40th ARVN Regiment continued operating together throughout the month of October as a continuation of Operation Dan Sinh 22-6 (see OPERATIONS).

The 40th ARVN Regiment received US helicopter support during the month of October to conduct 8 combat assaults lifting 840 troops and delivering approximately 8,000 pounds of resupplies in support of operations.

The command posts of the 40th ARVN Regiment and the 2d Battalion 503d Infantry continued to be located at LZ English. Daily liaison visits, exchange of Sitreps and Intsums, and frequent social calls continued to enhance operations. Personal meetings between LTC Long and LTC Nicholson have been very beneficial in mutually understanding and appreciating the challenges and progress made in executing the phases of Dan Sinh 22-6.

A combined training program to familiarize RF/PF soldiers in the use of the 81mm mortar was initiated on 23 September and has continued through the reporting period. A total of 13 RF/PF personnel received this training during the month. They were transported by helicopter to and from FSB Corregidor and were provided rations, quarters, and ammunition during the training cycle.

Several liaison visits were made by members of the 2d Bn 503d Infantry staff to Hoai Nhon District Headquarters during the month which facilitated coordination of training and the exchange of tactical information. In addition, numerous administrative and logistical details were resolved which enhanced the joint relationship of US RF/PF units.

The 2d Bn, 503d Infantry conducted two combined operations with Hoai Nhon District RF units during the month of October. Each operation involved one US and one RF company. In both cases the US unit maneuvered, while the RF unit acted as a blocking force. The first operation in the west Tiger Mountains was initiated on 7 October and terminated on 13 October and resulted in one VC KIA. The second operation in the South An Lao Valley, was conducted from the 12th to the 18th of October and resulted in two VC KIA. Both operations were effective in that the two areas were searched and cleared through the cooperation and efforts of both forces. Several liaison visits were effected prior to each operation which contributed to their success.

(c) 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry: From the 1st to the 14th of October, the 4th Bn 503d Infantry operated OPCON to the Commanding General, 4th Infantry Division. The 4th Battalion closed at Tuy Hoa North on the 15th of October and on the 21st participated in a combined operation with two battalions of the 47th ARVN Regiment. The operation which terminated on the 29th, initially involved a combat assault by the 4th Battalion into an AO west and north of where two ARVN battalions were located, and subsequently a reconnaissance in force.

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On the 16th and 17th of October, the 4th Bn S3 conducted liaison visits with the 47th ARVN Regimental Commander. The 17th October visit included an awards ceremony attended by LG Peers, IFFV Commanding General. This ceremony was hosted by Colonel Ba, Phu Yen Province Chief, and LTC Binh, Commanding Officer, 47th ARVN Regiment. LTC Binh has displayed a keen interest in combined operations and for first time has suggested that one US and one ARVN company work together as a task force under a single commander.

During the period 10-15 October, D Company 16th Armor and the 3d Bn 47th ARVN Regiment conducted a joint operation in defense of the Tuy Hoa District rice harvest. In addition, D Co 16th Armor (-) conducted a combined operation with one company from the 3d Bn, 47th ARVN Regiment on the 24th of October.

On the 24th of October, the 735th RF company of Son Hoa District was combat assaulted into an AO to conduct a screening mission for the 4th Bn 503d Infantry. Elements of the company conducted night ambushes on the 24th and the unit was extracted on the 25th.

A 35 man RF platoon of the 151st Company was lifted from Tuy Hoa North by CH-47 to FSB Judy on 25 October. They were attached to Co D, 4th Bn, 503d Infantry for security operations and training. Training and classes were conducted on the use and employment of claymore mines and trip flares with the aid of an RF platoon interpreter. Liaison visits by the 4th Bn S3 and S2 precipitated the above operation and training.

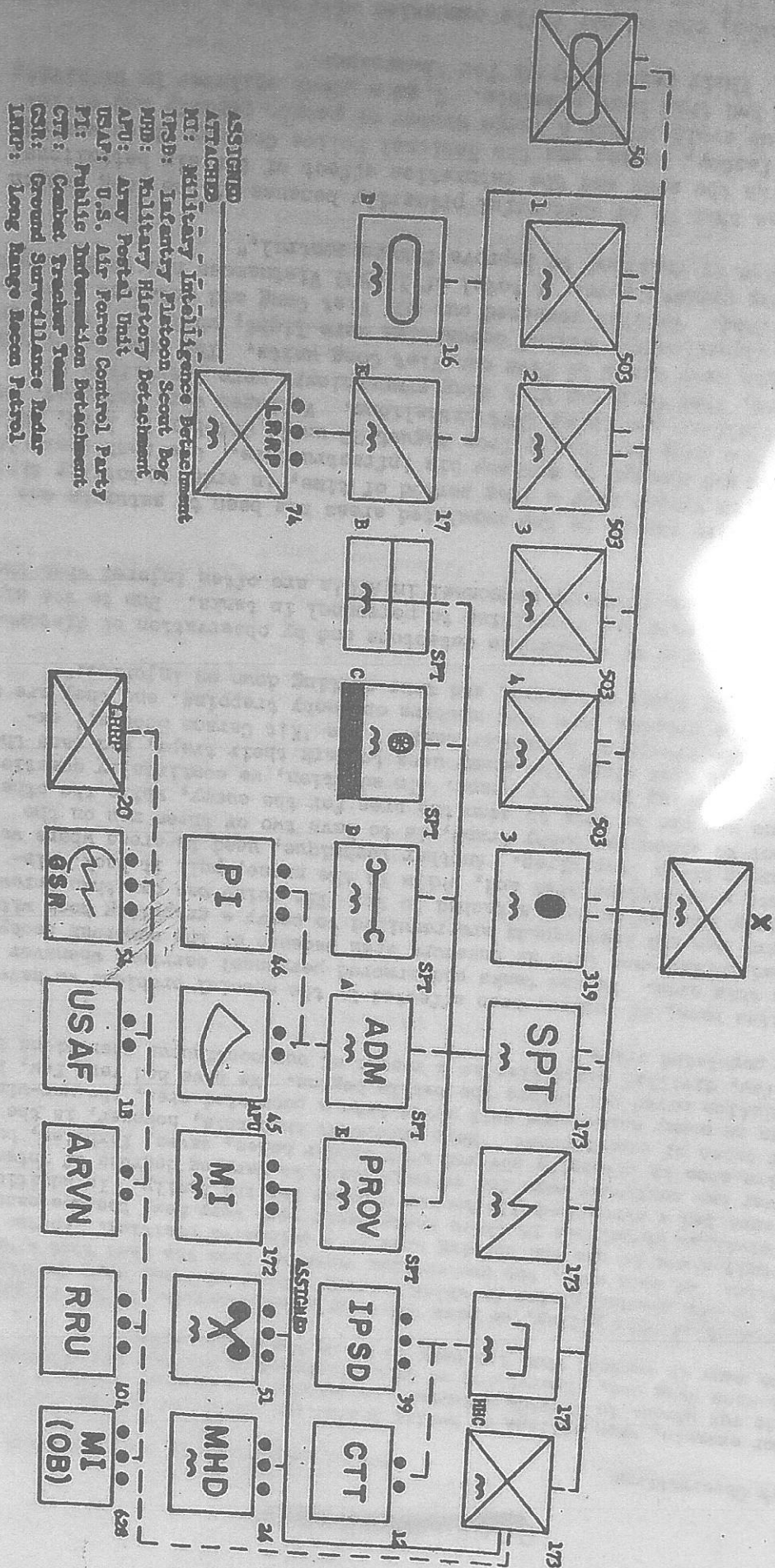
First Platoon, RF Company 151 is presently being sponsored by Co D, 4th Bn 503d Infantry. Plans are currently being formulated to have each unit of the 4th Bn 503d Infantry sponsor an RF/PF unit.

(d) 1st Battalion 69th Armor: From the 1st to the 18th of October, the 1st Bn, 69th Armor continued operations in AO Cochise as directed by the Commanding General, 173d Airborne Brigade. On 19 October 1968, the battalion (-) moved to Camp Enari to prepare for future operations with the 4th Infantry Division. Company C remained at LZ Uplift under the OPCON of 1st Bn, 503d Infantry. during the period 2-5 October the 1st Bn, 69th Armor conducted a combined combat operation with elements of the 40th Regiment, 22d ARVN Division in the crescent area, south of Bong Son in AO Cochise. The ARVN units participating were the 4th Bn, 40th Regiment, two companies of the 2d Bn, 40th Regiment, and an APC troop of 1st ARVN Cavalry Squadron. The US units were two tank companies and an air-

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UNIT/DUTY	NAME/BRANCH/SERVICE NUMBER	AUTH/ACT
HHC CMDR	GIVENS, JOHN W IN OF 100 701	CPT/CPT
BDE CHAPLAIN	WILLIAMS, DENNY D CH 02 100 701	MAJ/LTC
BDE INSPECTOR GENERAL	HERBERT, ANTHONY B IN 078 348	MAJ/LTC Assumed duties 3 Sept 68
BDE AG	CROUCH, JAMES E AG 05 304 941	MAJ/MAJ
BDE SJA	RAY, PAUL H JR OF 102 604	MAJ/MAJ
BDE INFO OFF	GARDO, THOMAS E TC 05 244 454	CPT/1LT
D-16th ARM CO	HICKMAN, JAMES L AR 05 324 937	CPT/CPT
E-17th CAV	WILLIAMS, RICHARD G AR OF 109 046	CPT/CPT
173d ENGR CO	AILINGER, LAWRENCE G EN 095 763	CPT/CPT
173d SIG CO	CULLEN, JOHN N III SC OF 104 692	CPT/CPT Assumed duties 10 Sept 68
CO, 1-503d INF	PERCY, FRANCIS J IN 070 908	LTC/LTC Assumed duties 15 Sept 68
CO, 2-503d INF	NICHOLSON, JOHN W IN 073 807	LTC/LTC Assumed duties 12 Aug 68

LTC/LTC

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