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9th Mar. Regt.
Control No. 00322-69
Copy No. 8 of 15

MEMORANDUMS

1st Battalion, 9th Marines
3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF
APO San Francisco 96602

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3/TJC/lrl
001869
31 May 1969

From: Commanding Officer
To: Commanding General, 3d Marine Division
Via: Commanding Officer, 9th Marines

Ref: (a) DivC 3100.1
(b) 1st Battalion, 9th Marines Operation Order 4-69

1. Code Name. APACHE SNOW
2. Dates of Operation. 10-28 May 1969
3. Location. South of the Lower Dr. Krong River Valley
4. Task Organization:

1st Battalion, 9th Marines

LtCol T.J. GUELF
10-28 May 1969

H&S Company

1stLt T.G. JACKSON
10-28 May 1969

Company A (Rein)

1stLt E.J. CONWAY III
10-28 May 1969

Company B

PO tm, D Btry 2/12

Det, H&S Company

P.C. tm

PO tm, 81mm

Det, Med Plt

Det, Comm Plt

Det, 1stPlt, Co C, 3d EngrBn

Company B (Rein)

Capt E.N. JENNIS JR.
10-28 May 1969

Company B

PO tm, D Btry 2/12

Det, H&S Company

P.C. tm

PO tm, 81mm

Det, Med Plt

Det, Comm Plt

Det, 1stPlt, Co C, 3d Engr Bn

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1/9
A/A Rpt
Open APACHE SNOW
10-28 May 1969

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Company C (Rein)
Company C
FC tm, D Btry 2/12
Det, H&S Company
E-C tm
FC tm, 81mm
Det, Med Plt
Det, Comm Plt
Det, 1stPlt, Co C, 3d Engr Bn

Capt J. H. HAY
10-28 May 1969

Company D (Rein)
Company D
FC tm, D Btry 2/12
Det, H&S Company
E-C tm
FC tm, 81mm
Det, Med Plt
Det, Comm Plt
Det, 1stPlt, Co C, 3d Engr Bn

Capt L. F. G. GIBSON III
10-28 May 1969

Company G, 2nd Bn, 9th Marines

1stLt J. H. HAY
24-28 May 1969

T.J. GURKE

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5. Supporting Arms.a. Artillery.

- (1) General. During Operation Apache Snow there were a number of counter-battery fire missions shot on active artillery, rocket and mortar positions. Even though there were few contact missions, response from FSB BERSKITE, FSB BAZOR and FSB TURNICE was satisfactory.

For the first time, H&I's and TOT's were submitted with a nature of target included. During the operation more than 2500 rounds of HE were expended on H&I's and TOT's, and almost 5000 rounds of HE were expended on observed fire missions.

- (2) Significant Events: On 13 May, all six guns of D 2/12 were destroyed by fire and explosions, from a fire that accidentally ignited in a gun permit. D 2/12 replaced D 2/12 at FSB BERSKITE on 17 May. Fire missions were kept at a minimum during the four day period between the fire and the arrival of the replacing battery.

The ARV batteries at FSB TURNICE were used several times to suppress enemy artillery, rocket, and mortar attacks directed at FSB BERSKITE. Their response was extremely fast and coordination with their liaison officer was exceptionally good.

b. Air.

- (1) Helicopter Support. Overall helicopter support received by 1st Bn, 9th Marines during Operation Apache Snow was excellent. General troop transportation, resupply and medical evacuation were provided as requested, although not in the time frame required by the battalion.

During Apache Snow the following major troop lifts were made by 1st Bn, 9th Marines.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Units Lifted</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>L/C Utilized</u>
10 May	H&S, Co C, Co A Co B, Co B	FSB CAUOHO IZ T LAWA	FSB BERSKITE FSB BERSKITE	8CH-46; 2UH-1E 8CH-46, 2UH-1E
21 May	Co B	YD 114047	FSB BERSKITE	4CH-46, 2UH-1E
28 May	H&S, Co A, Co C and Co D	YD 236150	VCB	5CH-46, 2CH-53, 1CH-47 2UH-1E
	Co B	FSB BERSKITE	VCB	2CH-53, 2CH-47 2UH-1E

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- (2) Fixed Wing Air Support. During the period covered by Operation Apache Snow the following fixed wing support was utilized by 1st Battalion, 9th Marines.

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Flights</u>	<u>Grid</u>	<u>BDA</u>	<u>AO Support</u>
10 May	4	138100	Several bunkers destroyed	E/
19 May	1	YD 164060	Unknown	Smitty Zulu
22 May	1	YD 194952	80/100 3 trucks damaged	Smitty Fox
23 May	3	YD 182953	58/45 2 trucks damaged	Smitty "I"
	1	YD 1603	90/90 5 bunkers destr.	Killer "I"
	1	YD 1603	100/100 1 bunker destr. 1 crew served w/w site uncovered	Killer "I"

(3) AO Support

The following AO support was utilized by 1st Battalion, 6th Marines during Operation Torch Snow.

<u>Date</u>	<u>FLTS</u>	<u>Tos - Hrs</u>	<u>Work/Accomplished</u>
10 May	4	6	Ben air in support of assault
11 May	2	2	VR for B 1/9
12 May	2	3½	VR for B 1/9, C 1/9
13 May	3	2½	VR for B1/9, C1/9, D1/9
14 May	3	2½	VR for C1/9, and for HI from B1/9
15 May	1	2	VR for D1/9
16 May	2	2	VR for B1/9, C1/9, D1/9
17 May	1	1½	VR for B1/9, C1/9
18 May	3	2½	VR for B1/9, C1/9
19 May	1	1 3/4	Ben air strike
20 May	2	1	VR for C1/9
21 May	3	3½	VR for C1/9
22 May	3	4	Ben air strike; VR for B1/9
23 May	6	6	VR for 1/9; Ben air strike
24 May	1	½	VR for C1/9

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<u>Date</u>	<u>FLTS</u>	<u>Tos - Hrs</u>	<u>Work accomplished</u>
25 May	1	1	VR for D1/9, C1/9
26 May	1	2½	VR for D1/9
27 May	1	1	VR for B1/9
28 May	3	5½	VR for troop lift attempted to locate source of mortars hitting FESKIE

6. Intelligence

a. Estimated enemy strength, location and disposition in objective areas prior to the operation:

- (1) Base Area 101
 - (a) 6th Bn, 212th Regt
 - (b) Elements K-10 Bn
 - (c) Elements K-32 Bn
- (2) Quang-Tri Laos Border Area
 - (a) Elements K-8 Bn
 - (b) Elements K-10 Bn
 - (c) Elements 814th Bn
- (3) Base Area 611
 - (a) No Military Region Tri Tien Hue (MLITH)
 - (b) 675th Artillery Regt
 - (c) 4th Engineer/559th Transportation Group
 - (d) Elements of Bin Tron 42
 - (1) 55th Transportation Bn
 - (2) 3d IA Bn
 - (3) 14th Comm Liaison Bn
 - (e) 9th NV Regt
 - (f) 6th NV Regt

(4) Sources of information: St/Mr/O/C 4-69

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b. Between 10-28 May 1969 there was no significant contact with the enemy. FSB FESKIE was secured and reconnaissance in force conducted in the area with the following results:

- (1) 19 May 1969 at TD 151071 the battalion was hit by an estimated force of 4-5 enemy armed with automatic weapons. There were 2 confirmed enemy KIA and no confirmed enemy WPI's.

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(2) 23 May 1969 at YD 158038 the battalion was hit by an estimated enemy force of 8-10 enemy armed with LAW's, RPG's and M-79's. There were no confirmed enemy KIA or WIA's.

(3) Route 9221 was covered by this battalion from YD 115061 to YD 232148. The road was in disuse as evidenced by the trees and underbrush found lying on the roadbed and numerous craters where the road had been interdicted by air with no signs of an attempt to repair the road sighted.

(4) Numerous bunker complexes and base areas were found and all indications are that they had been in disuse for at least 3-4 weeks.

(5) Due to the limited contact no positive identification or location of enemy units were made.

c. Weather. The daily temperature averaged 97° - 104° with occasional afternoon or evening showers.

d. CA/PsY Ops were not employed by this battalion during the period covered by this report.

7. Mission: At L-Hour on D-Day conduct a heliborne assault to secure FSB ERSKINE; upon which deploy a minimum force of one company to block the South Viet extension of Ft 9221 SW of ERSKINE to prevent enemy escape from the southern Da Krong Valley into Laos, as well as to deny his movement along that route to reinforce committed forces in RVN. Subsequent to D-Day, with uncommitted forces, conduct RIF operations in AO to destroy enemy and his caches.

8. Concept of Operations: Make a helo-assault into and occupy FSB ERSKINE and conduct RIF operations in AO.

9. Execution.

10 MY At 1000H Company A at YD 163107 received 3 rounds of 61mm mortar fire and sniper fire from YD 166104 and fired a counterbattery of 60mm mortars, 81mm mortars and artillery with unknown results. At 1005H a CH46 helicopter from HHC 262, HHC-39, crashed, killing 5 and injuring 6 men from the battalion.

11 MY There were no significant events on this day.

12 MY At 1800H Company B discovered a complex of 5 bunkers at YD 181106. The bunkers had not been recently occupied. At 0630H Company C found an enemy base camp at YD 167095. The camp contained 40 bamboo thatched living structures, each of which had a bomb shelter/bunker under it, and the entire base camp was contained within a perimeter of fighting holes. The area had not been occupied, except by 2-3 individuals, for 3 months. Communications

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wire led out of the camp to YD 165090 where another small camp with 4 huts, 1 new bomb shelter, wet sneaker tracks, warm fires and fresh food were found. An estimated squad had just departed the area leaving behind 200 lbs of polished rice, 100 feet of detonating cord, 50 new AK-47 rounds and assorted gear, all of which was destroyed. The former base camp at YD 167095 was also destroyed by an artillery mission. At 2120H a Company B listening post sighted 8-10 enemy at YD 150100, fired claymores and 60mm mortars at them, and killed 2 enemy, probable.

13 MAY At 0730H on PSB FUSKIE (YD 163107) a fire was started in the gun and ammunition pits which went out of control and detonated and spread a great deal of ordnance over the entire base, injuring 28 battalion personnel. At 1400H Company C found at YD 157094 an enemy storage area containing (90) 100 lb bags of polished rice, 1 destroyed Russian truck, (153) 61mm mortar rounds, 69,150 AK-47 rounds, (900) 12.7mm AA gun rounds, and (39) 82mm mortar rounds. The ordnance and rice were either evacuated or destroyed. At 1630H Company B found at YD 148099 a fresh grave with 1 NVA body in it. The body had been dead and in the grave from 1 to 3 weeks. At 1625H Company B found a destroyed living area with huts at YD 144107.

14 MAY At 1200H Company B suffered 1 MIA at YD 142099. The incident was not the result of contact with the enemy, and the man was recovered at 1800H on 16 May.

15 MAY From 0600H to 1700H Company D patrolled Rt. 9221 from YD 103918 to YD 194115 and found: roadmark stakes numbered H-2, H-4 and H-5, 100 noters apart; 22 reinforced bunkers; 11 bamboo huts; 5 empty food boxes labelled "Brazed Pork" from the People's Republic of China; 1 concrete reinforced bunker; (5) 100 lb bags of potatoes; 10 U.S. 5 gallon water cans; (2) 82mm mortar rounds; 2 sticks of TNT; and 1 water gourd full of food. All finds were destroyed.

16 MAY There were no significant events on this day.

17 MAY At 1015H at YD 162102 a CH-47 U.S. Army helicopter crashed, injuring a Company B platoon commander. At 0945H a bamboo spike boobytrap at YD 162102 was tripped and Company B suffered 1 MIA. At 1200H Company B found a 122mm rocket, complete, at YD 194102 and destroyed it. At 1304H Company B found at YD 170903 a suspected NVA supply trail, numerous bunkers with thatched roofing, a grave at YD 194120, (2) 122mm rocket canisters carrying cases empty, and green communication wire running to a large bunker at YD 196094.

18 MAY At 1730H Company B heard and observed an enemy mortar firing from YD 134110, and called 81mm mortar and artillery missions on the position with unknown results.

19 MAY At 1815H Company C's rear elements were taken under fire by 4-5 enemy using automatic weapons. The company returned fire, killing 2 enemy, while suffering 1 MIA. At 2115H an estimated 20 enemy probed Company A's perimeter at PSB FUSKIE at YD 163107. Company A suffered 1 MIA while killing 1 enemy.

20-21 MAY There were no significant events on these days.

22 MAY At 0900H Company B encountered a Montagnard woman at YD 129070 and extracted her during the afternoon to Vandegrift Combat Base. At 1130H Company C found 2 graves at YD 144046.

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Each grave contained the body of an MIA wrapped in a parachute, and the MIA had been buried from 3 to 6 months. A marker over the graves read:

M456

MIS

MUYER

MGCC

UYT

21-2-69

At 1430H Company A at FSB BASKIN (YD 163107) received 8-9 122mm artillery and 122mm rocket rounds outside the perimeter. Artillery missions and fixed wing air strikes were run on the suspected enemy grid, YD 189007, with unknown results. At 1445 Company B observed a destroyed enemy armored tracked vehicle at YD 155025.

23 MAY At 0930H Company B found a fresh, well constructed trail and stairway system at YD 117048 with new reinforced bunkers built along side every 50 or 60 meters. At 1115H Company B found 15 blocks of TNT in a bunker at YD 111044. At 1130H a Company D patrol was ambushed at its point by 8-10 enemy using LAWs, RPGs, M-79s and automatic weapons. Company D suffered 2 KIA and 1 MIA, while inflicting 3 enemy killed, probable, and capturing 4 LAWs, 1 RPG and 4 M-79 rounds. At 1400H Company D suffered an MIA, not recovered.

24 MAY At 2030H Company B sighted 2 enemy outside their lines at FSB BASKIN (YD 163107), and took them under fire with unknown results.

25 MAY There were no significant events on this date.

26 MAY At 1200H Company G, 2d Battalion, 9th Marines had a chance contact on its rear with 1 enemy at YD 191168. After a short exchange of fire, Company G pursued with negative results. At 1400H Company G at YD 193173 received sniper round and suffered 1 WIA.

27 MAY At 1530H Company B at FSB BASKIN (YD 163107) received 38 61mm mortar rounds outside its perimeter, fired from YD 180087 and YD 167079. Counterbattery was fired with artillery, 81mm mortars and 106 recoilless rifles. At 1807H Company B received 4 122mm rockets, suffered 1 MIA, and fired counterbattery with artillery.

28 MAY At 1745H Company B while extracting from FSB BASKIN (YD 163107) received 12 rounds of 61mm mortar fire. UH-1E gunships and OV-10 gunships fired suppressive fires on the suspected enemy positions.

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10. Results.a. Casualties Sustained.

- (1) 7 KIA
- (2) 12 WIA
- (3) 1 MIA

b. Losses Inflicted Upon the Enemy.(1) Personnel.

6 KIA Confirmed
5 KIA Probable

(2) Munitions.

100 feet of detonating cord
69,200 AK47 rds
900 12.7mm AA rds.
153 61mm mortar rds.
39 82mm mortar rds.
17 sticks of TNT
1 122mm rocket, complete
2 122mm rocket carrying cases
1 RPG

(3) Structures Destroyed.

40 bamboo huts with bunkers.

(4) Miscellaneous.

9200 lbs of polished rice
1 Russian truck, destroyed
5 100 lb bags of potatoes
1 armored tracked vehicle, destroyed

c. Material of U.S. Origin Recovered.(1) Munitions.

4 LAWS
4 M-79 rds.

(2) Miscellaneous.

10 U.S. 5 gallon water cans

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11. Administrative Matters.

a. Supply: Unit distribution was employed. Initial combat loads were normal with food and water for 3 days.

b. Maintenance: First and second echelon maintenance only were effected.

c. Treatment of Casualties/Medical Report: From the period of 10-28 May a total of 14 individuals were redevac'd for fevers of unknown origins, and two MI's were evacuated.

There were several medical problems encountered in the field during operation Apache Snow. There were 35 cases of diarrhea which was attributed to receiving contaminated water in one resupply from Fire Support Base Razor. The patients were put on medications and responded satisfactorily to treatment.

Also during the operation the battalion suffered a high number of additional fevers of unknown origin who were not redevac'd. The great majority of these individuals have been diagnosed as paludic fever malaria. The daily prophylactic program of G-Prone was strictly followed, as was that of the Sunday G-P. At the end of the operation there were 56 cases of FUO diagnosed as malaria.

The high incidence of malaria can be attributed to the area of operations, which was predominantly low, wet, jungled terrain and therefore is a most viable area for malaria. Furthermore, battalion personnel were physically exhausted by their efforts to accomplish the military mission, and this made them particularly susceptible to disease of any kind. By the time the incubation period (7-21 days) is over, the number of confirmed cases of malaria will probably be significantly higher.

d. Transportation: Troop and supply transportation was accomplished by helicopter.

e. Communications: During operation Apache Snow the following communications problems were encountered:

(1) On 10 May a helicopter crashed and burned while making an approach to FSB IMKIE, resulting in the loss of one AN/PKC-88 and one AN/PRC-25.

(2) On 13 May a fire and ammunition explosion in artillery area of FSB IMKIE destroyed the following:

- (1) AN/PRC-47, (3) AN/PRC-25,
 (5) RB-451; (2) AS-2236/CIC,
 (1) IC-292, (3) TS-10 and (1) T-312.

The destruction of the AN/PRC-47 made the TAE net unsatisfactory.

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(3) Direct communications to the battalion rear and Vandegrift Combat Base, was poor due to significant intervening hill masses. As a result, a relay station was located on intermediate dominating terrain.

(4) On 26 May the battalion moved to vicinity YD 238151 and communications deteriorated seriously due to high surrounding hill masses and did not improve until the battalion was extracted on 28 May.

12. Special Techniques and Equipment: None.

13. Commander's Analysis: The necessity for a coordinated fire support plan for helicopterborne assaults must be understood by all supporting agencies. The plan should be simple to insure flexible response for unforeseen time changes and targets of opportunity. The responsibility of fire support rests with the helicopterborne force commander and this responsibility can only be exercised through direct communications. Control can be greatly enhanced if the ground commander and the air commander reconnoiter the landing zone prior to D-Day.

A detailed defensive fire plan is necessary when units are responsible for the defense of a fire support base. A plan was drawn up and implementation was insured by periodic "dry" and "wet" runs. The final protective fires were exercised to enhance the effectiveness of the unit. It was felt that an actual "wet" run was necessary to insure timing, total response, signaling, communications, adequate coverage of dead space by indirect fire and proper employment of reaction forces.

Reconnaissance in force was conducted by three rifle companies while one rifle company had the responsibility for the defense of FSB BASKIN. Detailed reconnoitering of the area around FSB BASKIN was accomplished by employing company patrol bases. Combat and reconnaissance patrols traversed the majority of the ground around the fire support base.

During the latter stages of the operation, three rifle companies moved overland to the Lation border. It was necessary to move the command group and two companies on the high ground to maintain communications while one company moved along the LA KONG river.

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Communications presented a small problem during the two company move from the border via route #9221. A radio relay was established at FSB BASHKE. Security on the march was maintained by a combination of "lean frogging" and aerial observation. Resupply was maintained through estimated times of arrival by lead companies. By supplying the lead company, march speed was maintained by the company in trace. The trace company would pass through the lead company, obtain their resupply and then commence movement as the lead company. This "lean frogging" method facilitated resupply and maintained the momentum of the march. The lead company that received the resupply would not only resupply the trace company but would remain as the trace company and secure the landing zone for extraction of external helicopter loads.

Route #9221 was interdicted in two places by utilizing cratering and shape charges. It was estimated that heavy earth moving equipment would be necessary to open the road.

The operation did not net a great number of enemy KIA. The battalion did, however, uncover substantial rice and ammunition caches by a process of detailed and patient searching.

14. Recommendations: On future operations involving a helicopterborne assault, all supporting agency representatives should meet well in advance and plan for fire support at the discretion of the commander of the helicopterborne assault force at a place chosen by that commander.

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