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

1st BN. 9th MAR
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5 Jun 67
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From: Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines
To: Commanding General, 3rd Marine Division
Via: Commanding Officer, 9th Marines

Subj: Combat Operations After Action Report

Ref: (a) Maps: Vietnam 1:50,000 AMS, Series
L7014, Sheets 6442IV, 6342I

Encl: ✓(1) Operation Overlay Hickory for 17 May 1967
✓(2) Operation Overlay Hickory for 21 May 1967
✓(3) Operation Overlay Hickory for 23 May 1967

1. Code Name. Hickory
2. Dates of Operation. 170001H to 282400H May 1967
3. Location. Cam Lo and Gio Linh District, Quang Tri Province
4. Task Organization.

1st Battalion, 9th Marines

Maj FULHAM

H&S Company (Rein)

Lt THOMPSON

H&S Co
Ltn "D" Btry, 2nd Bn, 12th Mar

Company "A" (Rein)

Capt SLATER

Co "A"
FO Em, Btry "D", 2nd Bn, 12th Mar
Det, H&S Co
EAC Em
FO Em, 81mm
Det, Med Plt
Det, Comm Plt

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TAB-4

1/4
A/R Rpt (Opn Hickory)
17-28 MAY 1967

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Capt CURD

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Co "B"
FO Tm, Btry "D", 2nd Bn, 12th Mar
Det, H&S Co
FO Tm, 81mm
Det, Med Plt
Det, Comm Plt

Company "C" (Rein)

Capt HUTCHINSON

Co "C"
FO Tm, Btry "D", 2nd Bn, 12th Mar
Det, H&S Co
FO Tm, 81mm
Det, Med Plt
Det, Comm Plt

Company "D" (Rein)

Capt SASEK

Co "D"
FO Tm, Btry "D", 2nd Bn, 12th Mar
Det, H&S Co
FO Tm, 81mm
Det, Med Plt
Det, Comm Plt

5. Supporting Forces.

a. Artillery. The first day of Operation Hickory (17 May 1967) saw the largest single mission fired by artillery during the entire operation. This was a prep fire mission fired early on the morning of the 17th. The day before, the battalion had encountered a heavily entrenched NVA force. The area was well covered with large bunkers and many small fighting holes. The reduction of this area was held up by darkness and postponed until the next day. During the night, a prep fire was planned by 2nd Bn, 12th Marines. At 0550 on the morning of the 17th the prep began and during the next forty minutes 685 - 105mm rounds and 155mm rounds were fired into the objective area by five batteries. The area was completely covered by the fires and excellent results were obtained. As 1st Bn, 9th Marines units moved into and through the area a good surveillance was obtained. Many bunkers were damaged or destroyed by the fires. Twenty-seven NVA KIA's were found throughout the area most of them killed in their bunkers by shrapnel. Companies "B" and "C" moved through the complex encountering only light sniper fire. Covering fires were also planned and fired as the battalion moved through the objective.

During the night of 19 May 1967 Company "C" received six rounds of artillery fire directly in one of their positions, resulting in four WIA's. These fires were not planned or fired by 1st Bn, 9th Marines FSCC and as yet no definite information has been received as to where the rounds came from.

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During the next several days, few missions were fired as the battalion was fairly stable. Due to the large number of marine units operating in and around the area, coordination of fires was quite difficult. Normal H&I's were fired during this period and nightly on calls were planned.

On 21 May 1967 the battalion moved into the Con Thien area and remained there until the end of the operation. During this period, fire coordination was extremely complex because several marine battalions were operating on all sides of 1st Bn, 9th Marines. After about two days, most problems were solved and coordination ran smoothly. From the time the battalion moved into Con Thien until the close of "Hickory", the battalion was under daily VC artillery fire. Many counter battery missions were fired and several secondary explosions and numerous fires were observed but no definite surveillance was possible. Numerous missions were also fired in support of the operating companies during the late stages of "Hickory" and extremely large amounts of H&I's were fired. A total of 1726 - 105mm and 155mm rounds were fired during the operation. All fires were cleared through the 9th Marine FSCC and excellent artillery support was provided.

b. Air. Operation Hickory found 1st Bn, 9th Marines once again relying heavily on air as a supporting arm. Although most of its routine resupply was handled by truck to positions at 1st Bn, 9th Marines CP, two companies were resupplied daily by air. Millpoint medevacs were particularly expedient in evacuating the relatively limited casualties.

Line companies continue to improve in making efficient use of O-1 aircraft. There was and still is, however, a demand for O-1 aircraft to spot enemy artillery positions firing from north of the DMZ. These aircraft are limited from going into this area.

During this period approximately 58 - 500 pound bombs, 39,000 pounds napalm and 600 rds of 20mm from fixed wing aircraft were used. Of this total 30 of the 500 pound bombs and 4,000 pounds of napalm were used against active enemy artillery in North Vietnam. On 26 May 1967 use of fixed wing aircraft against targets in North Vietnam was restricted. The regimental air officer advised that the USAF would cover all targets in North Vietnam. However there appears to be difficulty in getting USAF aircraft on a short notice when the battalion is under an artillery attack.

On 28 May 1967 a USAF O-1E, working with the ground FAC, controlled one particularly effective close air strike. Approximately 35,000 pounds of napalm was dropped up to 50 meters from Company "D" which was heavily engaged. This weapon was an overwhelming cover for the egress of casualties and a pinned down platoon.

c. Armor. The battalion had one platoon of M-48 tanks in direct support during the entire operation. The tanks were utilized in both an offensive and defensive role. The tanks were utilized in an offensive role when Companies "B" and "C" moved through the fortified area in vicinity of YD 130680. When the battalion relieved the 1st Bn, 4th Marines of the mission of providing security for Con Thien CIDG Camp, four U.S. Army twin 40mm M-42 were placed in direct support of the

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battalion. The platoon of tanks and the M-42 were utilized in the static defense role. No contact with the enemy was made by the armor in either role.

6. Intelligence. Within the battalion's zone of action, agent reports had listed elements of the 341st NVA Division and the 815th Regiment. Also of note was the increased capability of the enemy to deliver rocket and mortar fire on friendly positions. The 15th CTF intelligence report placed one NVA company at Cam Sen (YD 0875). This company was reported to have a mortar capability. Local force companies had been reported in the hamlets of Van Kim, Phu An, and Thon Bat An. Because of the relatively short lines of communication to North Vietnam, it was anticipated that enemy units would be well fed, well equipped and well trained. Aerial photography of the battalion's ZON revealed numerous enemy emplacements. Enemy contact up to battalion size was considered possible. Enemy activities during the operation were as follows:

On 18 May, Company "B" searched the vicinity of YD 130680 which had previously been subjected to heavy preparation fires. The area was swept without contact. However 35 NVA bodies were discovered in the complex of approximately 75 bunkers. These bunkers were destroyed with demolitions on 18 May.

On 20 May, the interpreter with Company "D" questioned a catholic priest who stated that there was a company of VC in the vicinity of YD 147682. Its strength was reported as 100 - 120 with no mortar capability.

On 24 May, the battalion CP, located at Con Thien received 19 artillery rounds between 0935 -1830 from an unknown enemy position.

Also on 24 May, Company "B" found 11 bunkers at YD 112722. These bunkers, measuring 3 X 8 feet, were destroyed.

On 25 May, Company "C" found 25 bunkers at YD 146707, measuring 4 X 4 feet. They were destroyed with demolitions.

The battalion CP, located at Con Thien, received 20 rounds of enemy artillery on 26 May. Close examination of a dud revealed it to be an 85mm round.

Company "D" made contact with a reinforced NVA company at YD 144729 on 28 May. The enemy was taken under fire resulting in 10 NVA KIA confirmed and 21 KIA probable. As Company "D" began to break contact because of impending darkness, the enemy attempted to physically pursue.

Weather. During the period 17-20 May, the weather was fair with moderate temperatures. Wind was from the northeast accompanied by scattered clouds. From 21 through 28 May clear skies prevailed with warm temperatures, high clouds and northeasterly winds. There were occasional thunder showers in the late afternoon and early evening.

Cover and Concealment. Within the zone of action there was generally heavy secondary growth which hampered cross country movement and tended to channelize movement along existing trails. The area is interlaced with hedgerows. The combination of hedgerows and underbrush offered excellent cover and concealment.

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Terrain. The area is characterized by rolling terrain interlaced with small stream beds. As the area was formerly populated, abandoned paddies and dry farming areas are found throughout. These form dense hedgerows hampering movement and limiting fields of fire while affording excellent ambush sites.

7. Mission. The mission of the 1st Bn, 9th Marines from 17-20 May was to provide a screening force in the assigned ZOA; to provide security for the MSR in the ZOA in order to prevent enemy mining and/or ambushes; and to be prepared to be employed anywhere in the 9th Marines OA.

On 21 May the battalion was ordered to relieve the 1st Bn, 4th Marines and assume its mission of providing security for the Con Thien CIDG Camp, conducting patrols and ambushes throughout the assigned ZOA and providing security for elements of 11th Engineer Battalion as they accomplished their assigned engineering tasks. This mission remained the same until the end of Operation Hickory.

8. Concept of Operation. The concept of operation for Operation Hickory was to deploy the rifle companies of the battalion along the MSR, to carry out the initial mission. One rifle company was to be located in the vicinity of the constructed ford at YD 134665 to provide security for the ford and the battalion CP located at YD 136667. The battalion ZOA was then to be divided into three sectors with the three remaining rifle companies each assigned a sector to screen and patrol.

When the mission was changed on 21 May 1967 the concept was to position the battalion CP and two rifle companies patrolling the assigned ZOA.

9. Execution. Operation Hickory commenced at 170001H May 1967 with the battalion deployed in a night defensive position preparing to engage a heavily fortified enemy bunker complex in vicinity of YD 130680. The previous day two of the rifle companies had partially swept through the complex after heavy fighting but had to break contact and withdraw to establish a night defensive position. At 0555 on 17 May a heavy artillery prep fire was conducted on the strongly fortified area. A total of 685 rounds of 105mm and 155mm Howitzer were fired. After the artillery prep fire ceased, extensive air strikes commenced. Eight sorties of two aircraft each dropped 1,000 pound, 750 pound, and napalm bombs on the objective area. At 1400 after this extensive prep, Companies "B" and "C" with tanks in support swept through the area. The only contact encountered was 5 sniper rounds. Over 75 strongly constructed bunkers were discovered over an area of 250 by 300 meters. Both companies continued to sweep up to the northern boundary of the ZOA. Company "C" set in a night defensive position at YD 123688 while Company "B" returned and occupied the fortified area to deny its use to the enemy. Company "A" and CP remained in position at YD 131679 and conducted normal night activities with no enemy contact. Company "D" provided security for 2nd Bn, 12th Marines with one platoon providing security for a ford located at YD 134665.

On 18 May Company "B" conducted an extensive search of the fortified area and with engineer assistance destroyed all the bunkers. Twenty-seven NVA bodies were found with numerous weapons and equipment: 4 AK-47's, 7

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carbines, 4 machineguns, 1 heavy machinegun, 3 RPG rocket launchers, 177 82mm mortar rounds, and over 100 ChiCom grenades.

Companies "C" and "D" conducted normal search and destroy operations within their assigned portions of the ZOA. Company "A" and the CP moved to YD 136667 with one platoon relieving the Company "D" platoon as security for the ford at YD 134665. No contact was made on the 18th except for 4-5 rounds of artillery received by Company "C" within its perimeter which resulted in 4 friendly wounded. The artillery fire was from the south and is believed to have been friendly. No fire mission had been requested by this battalion.

The 19th of May was an uneventful day with Companies "B", "C", and "D" conducting normal search and destroy operations in their assigned ZOA. At 1045 one platoon from Company "B" discovered three bunkers with one NVA body at YD 127679. The dead NVA was probably the result of the heavy prep fires on 17 May. The companies set in night defensive positions in their assigned zones and conducted their normal ambushes and patrols but no contact was made.

On 20 May a patrol from Company "B" located a boobytrap consisting of a ChiCom grenade with a trip wire across the trail at YD 143692. A platoon from Company "D" encountered a catholic priest from Van Kim who volunteered some intelligence information. He reported a VC company operating to the north of Van Kim armed with AK-47's. This information was forwarded to higher headquarters because the area was out of the battalion's ZOA. A battalion resupply convoy along the MSR was fired on by VC with two RPG rounds and small arms. Fire was returned and no casualties were sustained. At 1315 a platoon from Company "B" found three dead NVA bodies in green uniforms which were located at YD 144692. The bodies appeared to have been dead 4 or 5 days. No further contact was made as the companies conducted their normal search and destroy operations and nightly ambushes in their zone.

The battalion mission was changed and on the morning of 21 May the battalion CP and Companies "A" and "D" moved in to the Con Thien CIDG Camp. Companies "B" and "C" were assigned portions of the battalion ZOA with the mission to conduct patrols and ambushes to screen the camp. Upon arrival at Con Thien the battalion was greeted with enemy artillery fire. Due to the close proximity of Con Thien to the DMZ, artillery fire from North Vietnam was received quite frequently. The fire was normally from a 85mm gun and was delivered intermittently. The pattern was one round followed by a second round after a 4 or 5 minute delay. This pattern of fire continued throughout the rest of Operation Hickory. The normal counter measures were a 24-hour FO watch, an AO overhead, artillery fired in counterbattery at all suspected gun positions and when a flash or smoke gave away the position of the enemy gun, air strikes were called in. Although the guns were firing from well fortified positions, a "Chieu Hoi" confirmed the fact that at least one gun was hit and put out of action.

When the battalion relieved 1st Bn, 4th Marines an LVT platoon, an engineer platoon (Rein) and four twin 40mm M-42 were left at Con Thien in direct support of the battalion.

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At 1245 an increase of tempo in the enemy artillery fire with several accurate hits resulted in one friendly KIA and 1 WIA. Later at 1620 several direct hits resulted in 1 KIA and 6 WIA. At 1625 a patrol from Company "D" at YD 115702 moving to an outpost had one man hit in the arm by sniper fire. The area was searched with negative results.

The two rifle companies outside the perimeter set in night defensive position with Company "B" at YD 126687 and Company "C" at YD 134668. Normal night ambushes and patrols were conducted but no contact was made.

On 22 May, Companies "B" and "C" conducted search and destroy operations in their assigned zones. Company "A" improved its positions at Con Thien and Company "D" provided security for the engineer platoon which continued to improve fields of fire around Con Thien.

About 0910 at YD 147655, 2 NVA threw two grenades at a platoon from Company "C" causing 1 friendly WIA. The platoon returned fire killing the 2 NVA who were wearing light gray utilities, sneaker type boots and camouflage plastic helmets. A search of the area resulted in finding 1 RPG rocket, 2 ChiCom grenades and some small arms ammunition. Later in the afternoon the platoon located an enemy base camp at YD 152654 consisting of 6 bunkers and an unknown size VC force. The platoon pulled back and called in an artillery missions on the enemy camp. Darkness precluded a search of the area and the following day 2nd Bn, 9th Marines relieved Company "C" of that portion of the 9th Marines OA. Company "C" did provide a guide and the base camp was later swept by 2nd Bn, 9th Marines with good results. No further contact was made by any units on 22 May 1967.

The mission of all the companies remained the same on 23 May with Company "D" providing security for the engineers as they continued to improve the field of fire around Con Thien. The ZOA for the battalion was changed by the Commanding Officer, 9th Marines and Companies "B" and "C" were assigned sectors to the south of Con Thien. The LVT platoon that had been in direct support was recalled by the 9th Marines with the exception of one LVTC and one LVTP-5 which remained as the battalion COC. No enemy contact was made on 23 May and Con Thien CIDG Camp received no incoming artillery, probably because of the declared cease fire in honor of Buddha's birthday.

No enemy contact was encountered on 24 May with the exception of enemy artillery fire which resumed after the cease fire. Twenty-four 85mm artillery rounds were fired at Con Thien. The rounds were spread throughout the day and resulted in 1 USMC KIA and 3 USMC WIA. Company "B" did discover 11 bunkers, approximately 3 X 8 feet, containing small arms ammunition, grenades, RPG rockets, mines and demolitions at YD 112722.

On 25 May at about 0610, a patrol from Company "D" returning from a night listening post triggered an M-26 grenade which wounded 3 Marines. The grenade was believed to have been rigged by ARVN forces who had previously occupied the area at YD 146707. Company "C" found a large bunker complex which appeared to have been used recently but was searched with negative results. Company "B" found an even larger bunker and trench complex in the vicinity of YD 115725. The complex was spread over a large area and consisted of over 100 bunkers which appeared to be

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built for 1 to 5 men. Enemy artillery continued to harass Con Thien even though an extensive use of counter battery and air strikes were returned. A total of 21 rounds of 85mm fire was received with no casualties.

No contact was made on 26 May 1967 except for incoming enemy artillery. A total of 17 rounds was received resulting in one Marine wounded. On 27 May, again no contact was made although the two rifle companies continually searched their assigned zones. Enemy artillery was responsible for 1 USMC KIA and 4 WIA.

On the morning of 28 May Company "B" relieved Company "D" of the mission of providing security for Con Thien. Company "D" moved out and conducted a search and destroy operation to the northeast of Con Thien. At 1420 the 1st platoon of Company "D" received automatic fire from an estimated NVA company at YD 145725. The platoon assaulted the forward positions of the NVA unit resulting in 6 NVA KIA confirmed and 10 KIA probables. The 3rd platoon moved up to assist the 1st platoon. The 2nd platoon moved to join the rest of the company to assist in withdrawing the casualties. While the 2nd platoon was enroute they were taken under fire by 20 NVA. The platoon returned fire resulting in 4 NVA KIA confirmed and 11 NVA KIA probables. Company "C" moved into position to assist Company "D" but contact was broken by Company "D" because of approaching darkness. Heavy artillery fire and air strikes were called and the supporting arms were most effective. During one napalm attack screams from the NVA casualties could be heard 200 meters away. Medical evacuation of the friendly casualties was conducted by the two rifle companies and then the companies moved to a new location in vicinity of YD 135708 and set up a night defensive position. The friendly casualties sustained were 5 USMC KIA and 18 USMC WIA.

At 1845 an engineer water run with two marine squads for security was ambushed at YD 133677 while on the MSR. The ambush was a hasty "L" shaped ambush of estimated squad size. The NVA utilized automatic small arms fire and 60mm mortar fire. The convoy returned fire and pushed right through the ambush at high speed. No friendly casualties were sustained. The 9th Marines were notified so that the appropriate action could be taken against the enemy.

At 2010 the Con Thien Camp received 50 rounds of 82mm mortar fire which resulted in 1 USMC KIA and 2 USMC WIA. This was the only time Con Thien was hit by mortars while the battalion was there during Operation Hickory. No further contact was made that night. Operation Hickory ended at 202400H May 1967.

10. Results.

a. Casualties sustained

USMC KIA	10
USMC WIA	56
USN KIA	00
USN WIA	02

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NVA/VC KIA	43 (confirmed)
NVA/VC KIA	21 (probable)
Chieu Hoi	01

c. Captured materials

3 - Russian carbines
 7 - Carbines
 5 - AK-47 (med) machineguns w/2 spare barrels
 1 - Machinegun (heavy)
 3 - RPG rocket launchers
 1 - Heavy .30 cal machinegun
 191 - ChiCom grenades
 182 - 82mm mortar rounds
 2 - ChiCom mines
 8500 - Rounds of small arms ammo
 47 - Cans of fuses 2/increments for 82mm
 3 - Claymore mines
 1 - Box blasting caps
 5 - Pounds of demolition
 52 - AK-47 magazines
 6 - Magazine drums for (med) machinegun
 3 - Home made tomato can mines
 7 - Machinegun belt carriers
 1 - Bag medicine supplies
 20 - E-tools
 18 - Packs
 35 - Sets miscellaneous web gear
 20 - Canteens
 650 - Pounds (20 lbs bags - rice)
 12 - Machinegun drums
 2 - Machinegun belts
 7 - RPG rocket rounds 2/propellent
 2 - RPG rocket round carriers
 15 - Vials of fluid
 1 - Hypodermic needle
 1 - Name tag
 1 - Bottle of pills
 1 - Notebook w/arithmetric and writing
 2 - Electric firing devices
 1 - Cartridge belt
 1 - Possible anti-tank mine
 1 - Magazine for .50 cal spotting rifle
 1 - Rocket (ChiCom)
 5 - Bags of food
 80 - Rounds of carbine ammo
 1 - Box .30 cal ammo
 16 - Bottles penicillen
 2 - Bags of documents

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- 7 - Bottles streptomycin
- 1 - Bottle sulpha pills
- 12 - Bottles sulphur diazineo
- 1 - Gas mask
- 1 - "A" cup brassier
- 30 - Rounds 60mm mortar
- 54 - 60mm igniters
- 56 - 60mm fuses
- 9 - M-26 grenades
- 2 - RPG boosters
- 340 - Blasting caps
- 7 - Small blocks of TNT
- 1 - Anti-tank mine
- 1 - Ram rod for 82mm
- 1 - NVA belt
- 16 - 60mm mortar rounds
- 6 - M-79 rounds (US type)
- 3 - Charges for 60mm rounds
- 1 - M-16 magazine
- 1 - Set cleaning gear
- Assorted other medical supplies

11. Administrative.

a. Supply. All units on operational assignment were issued one day Class I, basic allowance of Class V and combat essential Class II. The battalion was resupplied by helicopter and motor transportation.

b. Maintenance. Nothing significant

c. Treatment of Casualties, Evacuation, and Hospitalization. Casualties were treated in the field by the battalion surgeon or corpsman and evacuated by helicopter, if required, as quickly as possible.

d. Transportation. Motor transport and helicopter were used for non-tactical moves. All tactical moves were made on foot.

e. Communication. Nothing significant

f. Medical evaluation. No new or unusual medical circumstances occurred during Operation Hickory.

12. Special Equipment and Techniques. None13. Commanders Analysis.

a. Enemy artillery continually harassed the Con Thien CIDG Camp during the period this battalion was located there as had been the case with the previous battalion. Although constant surveillance was maintained and on several occasions either the flash or smoke from the firing was observed, the enemy artillery was never completely silenced.

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Extensive use of artillery fire and air strikes were utilized on all suspected firing positions. On one occasion the artillery liaison officer spotted three vehicles which appeared to be self-propelled guns. It is felt that several enemy guns were hit and put out of action. This is substantiated by a Chieu Hoi's report that air strikes did knock out an artillery piece on or about 24 or 25 May. Most of the suspected gun positions were in North Vietnam. It is felt that the artillery is firing from extremely well fortified positions such as a cave or constantly shifting their position to avoid counter battery. Because of their accuracy, the guns are probably firing from a fixed position and then being rolled back in a cave for protection. Since the firing is from North Vietnam, the number of weapons available are almost inexhaustible so any unit occupying Con Thien CIDG Camp must be prepared at all times for enemy artillery fire.

b. No civic action was taken due to the fact that the battalion ZOA was deserted.

c. No psy-ops were conducted.

D. J. Fulham
D. J. FULHAM

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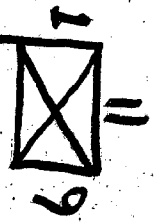
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DMZ

9 ≡ ARUN - 76

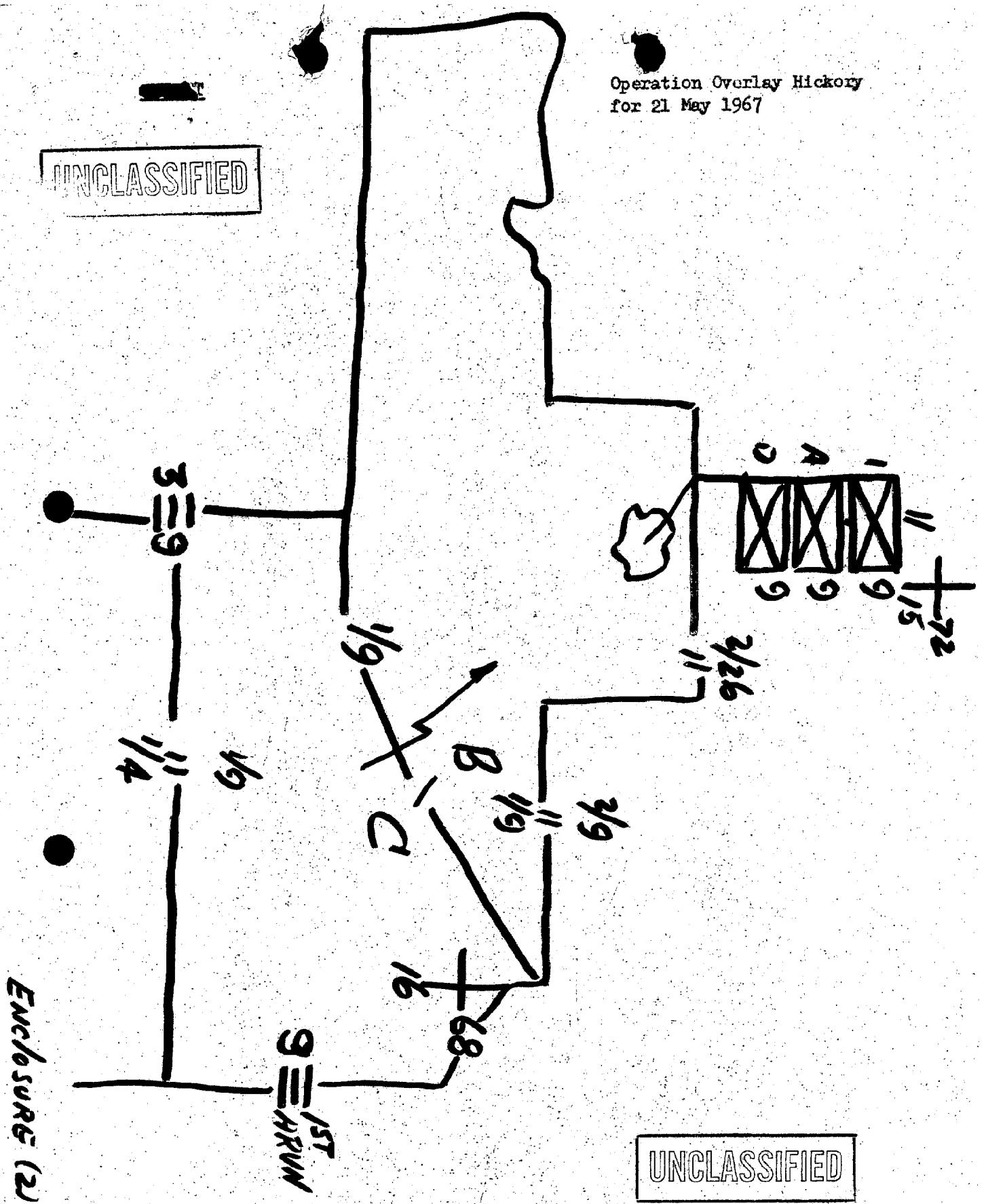
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Enclosure (3)

Operation Overlay Hickory
for 21 May 1967

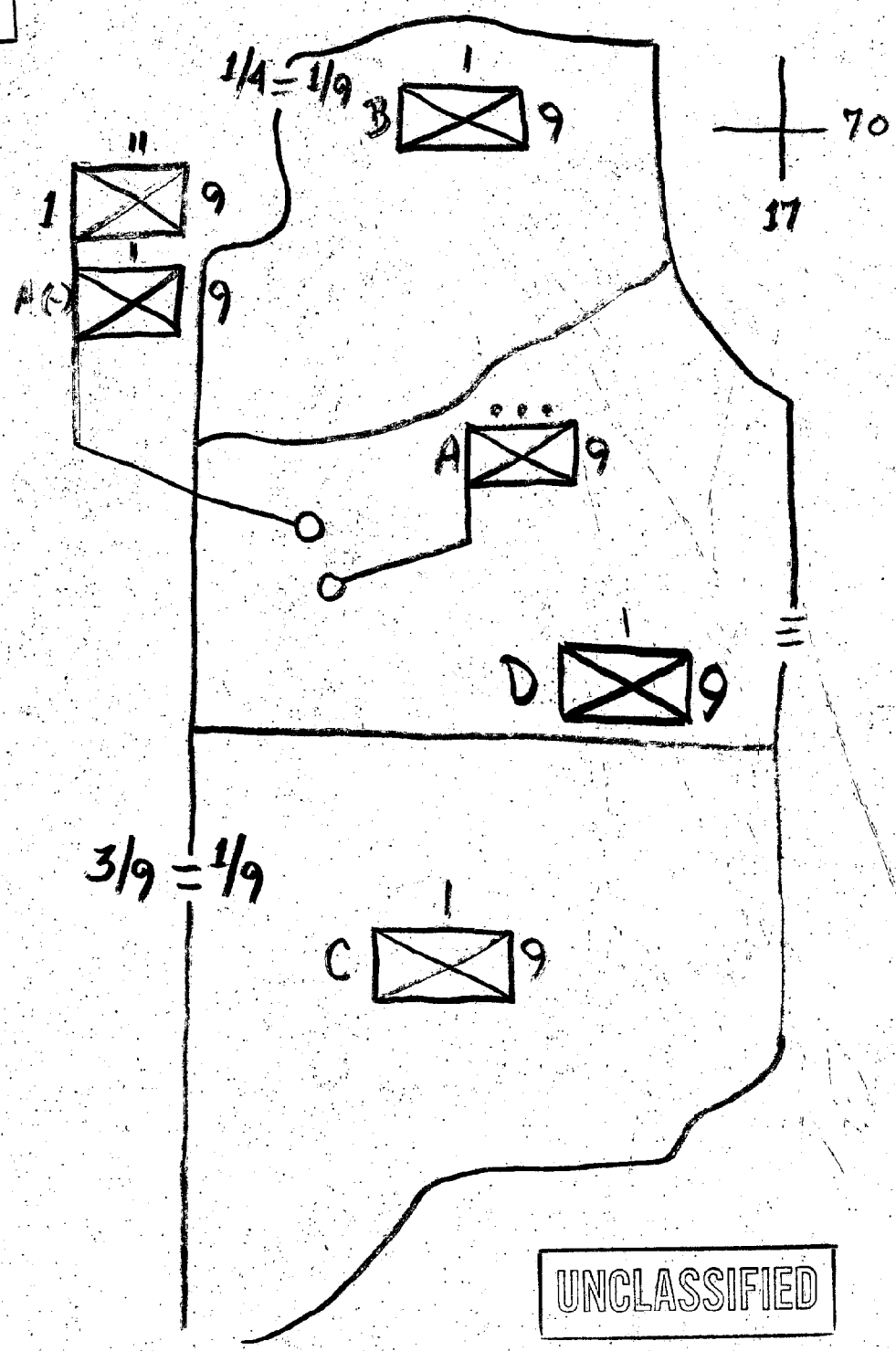
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Operation Overlay Hickory
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ENCLOSURE (1)

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