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Authority <u>UND 87354</u>
By <u>T</u> NARA Date <u>5/21/99</u>

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
 HEADQUARTERS
 1ST BATTALION (MECHANIZED), 50TH INFANTRY
 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE
 APO San Francisco 96250

11 June 1968

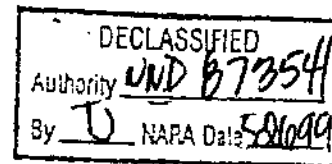
SUBJECT: After-Action Report - Battle at Trinh Van (I)

1. (U) Operation: Cochise
2. (U) Period Covered: 25-26 May 1968
3. (U) Location: Trinh Van (I)(H), My Trinh (V), Phu My (D), Binh Dinh (P), Republic of Vietnam (BR873728).
4. (U) Command Headquarters: 1st Bn (M), 50th Infantry
5. (U) Reporting Officer: Captain Richard P Guthrie
6. (C) Task Organization:
 - a. Co B 1/50 Inf
 - b. 1 Section, C Btry 4/60 Arty (AW) (SP) (Dusters)
 - c. Team GO:
 - (1) Co C (-) 1/50
 - (2) 1 Platoon, B 1/69 Armor
7. Supporting Forces:
 - a. 7/15 Arty
 - b. 7/13 Arty
 - c. FAC Det, 173d Bde (21st TASS)
8. Intelligence: Following the 11 May contact (See After-Action Report, this Hq, dtd 30 May 68) just north of the subject area, there were indications that the enemy had evacuated the area only temporarily. Several reliable sources indicated the presence of an undetermined size GP. Additionally, Phu My District Agents twice indicated that an enemy force was in the low ground in a general location northwest of Phu My. Another supporting reason for the selection of Trinh Van as an objective was that enemy activity had been noted in the area during the 11 May contact, but time and space factors did not permit a thorough search and clearing of the area.

Downgraded at 3 yrs
 intervals, declassified
 after 12 yrs.

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(1) 1/50 Inf (1) 1/50 Inf



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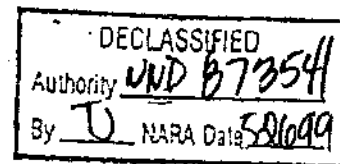
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9. Mission: Co B conducts Reconnaissance In Force 250730 May along axis BOLF and secures Objective TACK (BR870728). Team GO follows Co B and occupies block position SLIP (BR877731).

10. Execution:

- a. At 0721 and 0722, 25 May, Co's B and C (-) respectively departed night locations for movement to their objectives. The area through which they moved was well seeded with anti-tank mines and consequently their progress was slow. At 0835 an aerial observer reported sighting at BR864723 of a series of well fortified and camouflaged automatic weapons positions, which showed signs of recent work or construction. This information was relayed to both companies and to Brigade Net Control, but was not acted upon because it was 1000 meters south of the objective area.
- b. At 0903, the minesweep team with Co B discovered an anti-tank mine at BR898716. This location was secured awaiting arrival of EOD and the companies continued to march toward the objective area.
- c. The Companies moved west in a wedge formation; Co B on the south side of the axis checked the stream bed, Co C on the north. Lead elements of Co B had just crossed the north-south intermittent stream at BR874728 when at 1106 hours both companies came under a heavy attack from the west, northwest and northeast. Gunships, artillery and TAC Air were requested and arrived on station in minutes. The enemy was again well dug in, well camouflaged and well armed. Anti-tank rockets, machine guns, automatic rifles and mortar fires rained into the friendly positions. The Artillery forward observer was seriously wounded and later died when the Co B command track took a direct hit from an enemy 60mm mortar. As LT James H Lee, CO Co B, attempted to maneuver and flank the enemy position, his command APC threw a track near the crossing site. He extracted his element from the west side of the stream bed, removed the casualties from his APC, and attempted to attack toward the Northeast from where incoming fires were being received. Enemy mortars and rockets were too effectively registered on the area and LT Lee ordered his company to withdraw back to Co C's location for Dustoff.
- d. When the contact began, the Reconnaissance Platoon, 1/50 and elements of 1/69 Armor at LZ Uplift were alerted to be prepared to move to reinforce the elements in contact. Because a tank platoon from Co A, 1/69 Armor had just arrived at LZ Uplift bound for another mission, 10 APC, 50 Infantrymen and 5 tanks that were volunteered were available for reinforcement of Co B and Team GO.

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These were sent to the initial stream crossing site at BR906715 where the Scout Platoon was to secure the crossing and be prepared for commitment, and the tanks were to move up to assist in the counterattack.

- e. Co B and C required Dustoff and resupply prior to conducting the counterattack. They coiled at BR883720 to await the resupply aircraft, but came under heavy mortar and rocket fires from the south. The units moved farther east as air strikes pounded into the stream bed. From the CCH, at least six tank killer teams were seen spiraling skyward as they took direct hits from G.P. Bombs. Apparently, the enemy pursued the companies down the stream bed with their tank killer teams, occupying prepared positions while reloading their weapons. Dustoff aircraft orbited while a secure LZ was located at BR891722.
- f. Resupply aircraft were requested shortly after contact was made. Initially, one UH-1D was available, and an additional CH-47 was requested. The CH-47 was delayed several times, but eventually arrived in time to fly 4 sorties. Approximately 20 slick sorties, including those by the CCH, were flown prior to the arrival of the CH-47.
- g. With resupply completed, the counterattack began at 1612 hours. The companies advanced virtually without incident back into the contact area until they reached their westernmost point of advance. They then received heavy incoming fires from 3 directions. The original plan was to establish a combined Forward Operations Base with both companies at the initial contact area. However, because of a limited maneuver capability, no additional troop support being available, and darkness closing in, the position became untenable and the companies moved east. The railroad track was to be the limit of withdrawal, but once the companies arrived at the railroad track, they were still receiving heavy and accurate fires from all directions, including fires from the east. The final night location was at coordinates BR903710. Contact was broken at 1905 hours.
- h. "Spooky" came on station, but was later diverted to a mission with a higher priority. Artillery blocking fires were fired, though apparently with little effect on the enemy.
- i. The following morning, the units again swept through the contact area. They met with only limited resistance from one or two snipers located in the stream bed which was the TF southern boundary. Apparently, the main body of the enemy had been allowed to return, unopposed, to the hills in the west. Several more anti-tank mines were found in the contact area, indicating a great deal of engineer activity had taken place. No significant enemy activity or engage-

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ment followed.

j. The following is a list of personnel and equipment losses:

	<u>ENEMY</u>	<u>ENC 1/50</u>	<u>B 1/50</u>	<u>C 1/50</u>	<u>D 1/50</u>	<u>1/69</u>	<u>4/60</u>
KIA	38		1				
WIA		1	7	4	5	1	2
C/S Weapons							
S/A							

NOTE: 1 tank and 1 APC were damaged but not destroyed by mines.

12. Reporting Officer's Analysis: Once again, this unit was confronted by a well entrenched enemy, apparently awaiting the advance of the personnel carriers. In this case, the prepared positions were reinforced with bricks. The trench line through Trinh Van was some 500 meters long and running NE to SW. This fortification was invisible to fixed wing observation. The insertion of additional US troops into the contact area was too late to be of any value to the operation. The enemy's rear might have been sealed off when contact was first made. Had this taken place, greater casualties may have been inflicted on the enemy. There is little doubt that the enemy withdrew to the high ground west of the contact. Artillery blocking fires were good, but have not yet proven themselves to be as effective as troops on the ground. We again located the enemy and failed to take sufficient steps to destroy him in detail. The pile-on technique was not employed.

James G. Hattersley
 JAMES G. HATTERSLEY
 Major, Infantry
 S-3 Officer

- Incl 1
 1 - Lessons Learned
 2 - Sketch 1
 3 - Sketch 2

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Lessons Learned - Battle at Trinh Van (1)

1. In spite of the tremendous load carrying capability of the APC, units should enforce more rigid fire discipline. Troops and Junior Leaders must be made aware of the requirement to control fires and to engage only known targets except where specifically directed to conduct reconnaissance by fire.
2. From the volume of fire which came on both Co B and Co C (-) from the south it appears that the stream bed was not as thoroughly checked as it should have been.
3. The momentum of the attack was not obtained and maintained as is desired. Although under-strength, two mechanized companies with two twin forty mm guns and three tanks represent a formidable force. A great number of anti-tank rockets were fired, but none were effective. The only vehicles disabled were from mechanical failure or mines. More aggressive reaction on the part of the leaders in the company should be an automatic response.

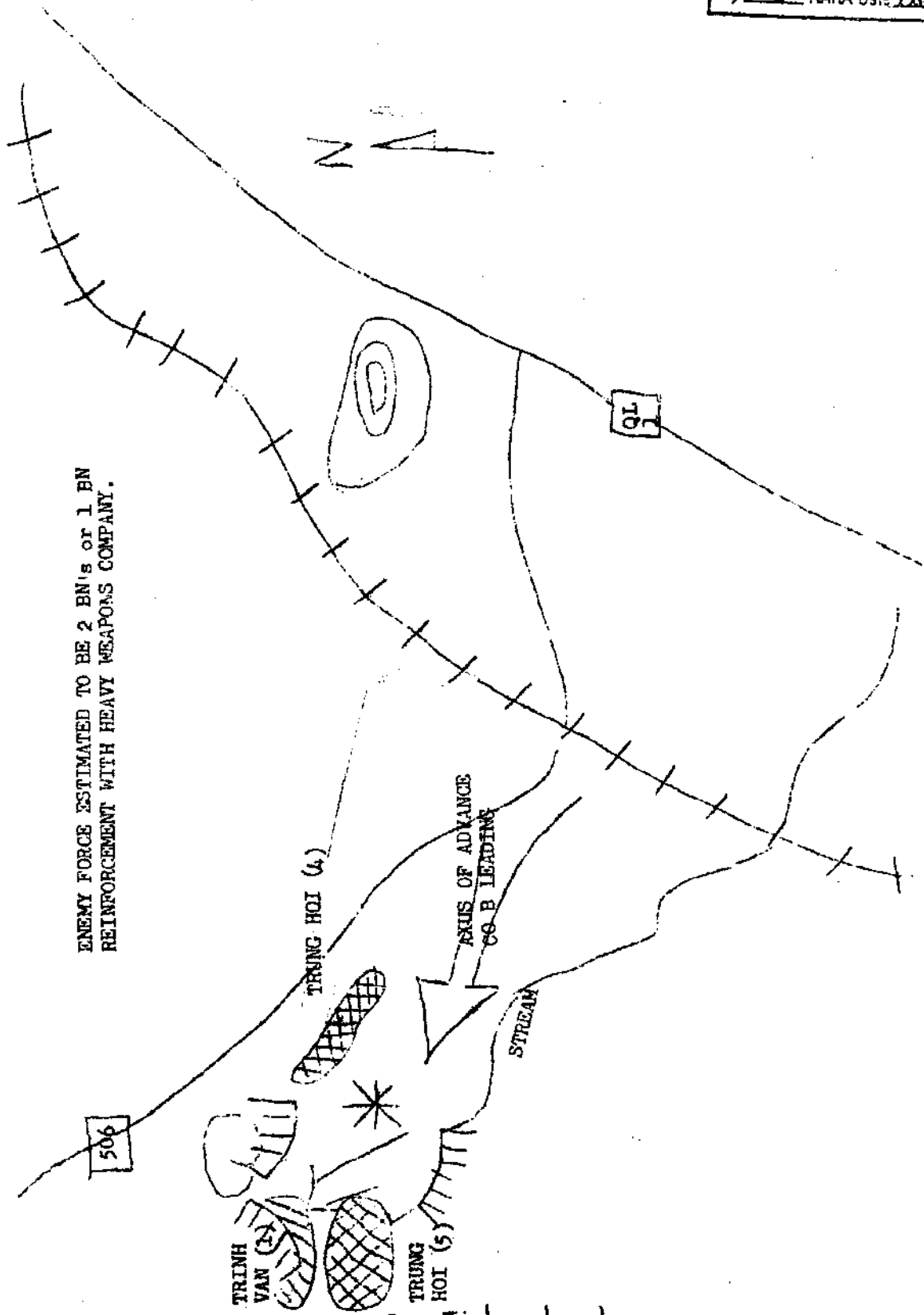
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SKETCH #1
Battle at Trinh Van (1)

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ENEMY FORCE ESTIMATED TO BE 2 BN'S or 1 BN
REINFORCEMENT WITH HEAVY WEAPONS COMPANY.

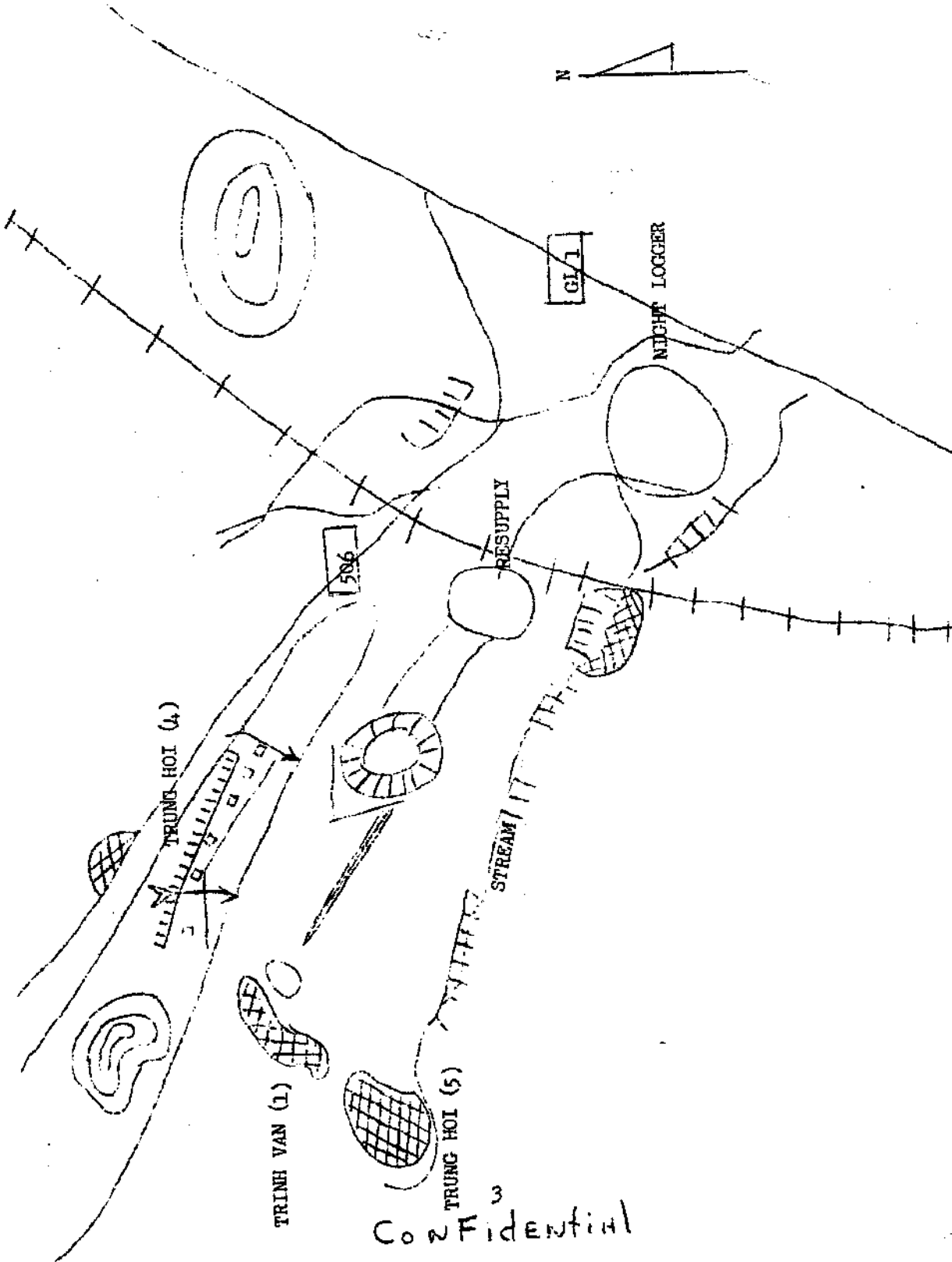
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SKETCH #2
Battle at Trinh Van (1)

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NOTE: Enemy positions were not occupied simultaneously.



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