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ARMY CONCEPT TEAM IN VIETNAM
APO 143, San Francisco, California

① 15 July 1963

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⑥ MECHANIZED RIFLE TROOP (M13) (u) ⑧

⑦ Monthly Test Report, Number 4,
1 - 31 May 1963.

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ARMY CONCEPT TEAM IN VIETNAM
APO 143, San Francisco, California

ACTIV-GM

SUBJECT: Monthly Test Report Number 4 -- Mechanized Rifle Troop (M113)
(1-31 May 1963) (U)

TO: See Distribution

1. (C) General

During the 1-31 May reporting period there was only one M113 operation of interest observed by the test team. An account of the operation, which took place near Moc Hoa from 18 through 20 May 1963, comprises this fourth monthly M113 test report. There were no data gathered that could be used in answering any of the specific objectives of the test. The Moc Hoa operation is reported, however, as it emphasizes the effectiveness of armor in counterinsurgency operations and illustrates the advantages of using surveillance aircraft in support of mechanized operations.

For a description of the test unit, a discussion of test objectives, and the operational plan for the test, see previous monthly test reports.

The test is considered to be 95 percent complete.

2. (C) References

a. DA letter, AGAM-P (M) 381 (31 Oct 62) DCSOPS, subject: "Army Troop Test Program in Vietnam (U)", 6 November 1962, as amended.

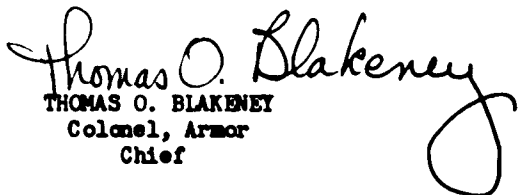
b. ACTIV letter (to CGUSACDC), subject: "Plan of Test, Mechanized Rifle Troop (M113)," 28 November 1962.

c. ACTIV letter (to CINCPAC through COMUSMACV), subject: "Summary of Test Plan for Mechanized Rifle Troop (M113) (U)," 3 December 1962.

d. CINCPAC message, subject: "Proposal for US Army Tests in Vietnam" DTG 220216Z (January 1963).

e. Monthly Test Reports Numbers 1 through 3 -- Mechanized Rifle Troop (M113), Army Concept Team in Vietnam.

1 Incl
Rpt of M113 Operations
near Moc Hoa 18-20 May 63


THOMAS O. BLAKENEY
Colonel, Armor
Chief

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Monthly Test Report Number 4 -- Mechanized Rifle Troop (M113)

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REPORT OF M113 OPERATIONS NEAR MCC HOA 18-20 MAY 1963

1. (C) General

During the period 18 - 20 May, the 4th Mechanized Rifle Troop, 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron and the 4th Mechanized Rifle Troop, 4th Armored Cavalry Squadron, participated in a 7th Division operation along the Cambodian border on the north side of the Plain of Reeds. See Figure 1, map and overlay. Although there were other 7th Division and Civil Guard units participating in the operation, this report is primarily concerned with the actions of the two mechanized rifle troops.

2. (C) Participating units (Under control of 7th Division)

a. Operation Duc Thang 23/63, 18 May 1963

- (1) Hq, 7th Div
- (2) Hq, 12th Regt, 7th Div
- (3) 3d Bn, 12th Regt
- (4) 3d Bn, 10th Regt
- (5) 3d Bn, 11th Regt
- (6) Hq, 10th Regt, 7th Div
- (7) 2d Bn, 10th Regt (-)
- (8) 4th Troop, 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron and a Civil Guard Co.
- (9) 4th Troop, 4th Armored Cavalry Squadron and a Civil Guard Co.
- (10) 4.2" Mortar Platoon, 7th Div, Heavy Mortar Battalion
- (11) Battery "A", (105mm Howitzer), 7th Arty Bn
- (12) Dinh Binh Co, 12th Regt (Rifle Co)

b. Operation Duc Thang 24/63, 20 May 1963

- (1) Hq, 7th Div
- (2) Hq, 12th Regt
- (3) 3d Bn, 12th Regt
- (4) 2d Bn, 12th Regt
- (5) 4th Troop, 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron
- (6) 4th Troop, 4th Armored Cavalry Squadron
- (7) Battery "A", (105mm Howitzer), 7th Arty Bn

3. (C) Mission of Mechanized Troops

a. Duc Thang 23/63. 4th Troop, 2d Squadron, and 4th Troop, 4th Squadron move by landing craft up the Mekong River to vic of Cambodian border.

Incl 1

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Cross LD (see Figure 1, map and overlay) 180630 May to conduct a sweep operation on axis eastward along the border. Seize and clear assigned objectives. Link up with other 7th Division units operation west of Hoc Hoa (XS 0391).

b. Duc Thang 24/63. 4th Troop, 2d Squadron and 4th Troop, 4th Squadron cross LD at 200630 May, attack along assigned axis eastward from Hoc Hoa (XS 0391) along the border to seize and clear assigned objectives.

4. (C) Summary of Results

- a. Insurgents claimed killed: 129
- b. Insurgents captured: 23
- c. Materiel captured: 14 weapons, 2 mines, 15 grenades
- d. Friendly killed: 4
- e. Friendly wounded: 13

5. (C) Description of Operations

a. Commanding Officer, 4th Troop, 2d Squadron received the operations order late on 16 May at 7th Division Headquarters in My Tho. Early on 17 May, the troop loaded five M113s on an LCT and seven M113s on an LCM. It departed My Tho at 0800 and sailed up the Mekong River toward the designated LD. The landing site had been used previously and was known to be a good one. The distance to be traveled by water was about 150 km. Three unit vehicles did not accompany the troop. Two were receiving quarterly service and one was in ordnance.

b. The 4th Troop, 4th Squadron was operating in Vinh Long Province near Tra Vinh (XR 4698) when orders for the operation were received early on 17 May. Only one LSM was available to move the unit up the Mekong River. This craft can carry only 12 M113s. Therefore, one platoon of three M113s and the unit trains were left behind. The unit moved 35 km to a ferry site (XR 4012), loaded, and departed for the LD at 172000. It also had about 150 km to travel.

c. Both units arrived at the landing site and disembarked without incident. They were met by the district chief, an ARVN Major, who was surprised to hear of the operation. He stated that a VC camp was located near the axis of advance at WS 4798. The M113 troops joined their attached Civil Guard Companies at the landing site. Some time was lost in effecting necessary coordination and the units were one hour late in moving from the designated LD on the axis of advance. They moved at 180730.

d. There was no task force commander designated; consequently, there was some difficulty in coordinating the actions of the two troops.

e. At about 0800, an OV-1 aircraft established communications with the mechanized units. At 0815 it reported an insurgent camp near the area as reported by the district chief. The 4th Troop, 2d Squadron reached this area at 0830. An insurgent squad was sighted, and four M113s pursued them through heavy brush. A general fire fight developed, with the insurgents attempting to throw grenades into the carriers. One succeeded in getting a grenade into a carrier, wounding six men. The attached Civil Guard Company dismounted and searched the area, which contained numerous tunnels. The results of this action were 22 VC claimed killed, two captured, four weapons captured and six friendly personnel wounded seriously enough to require evacuation. They were quickly evacuated by the command HULB, which arrived

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in the area just after the fire fight ended at 0900. The 4th Troop, 4th Squadron did not become heavily engaged in this action and continued to move along the axis at 1100. 4th Troop, 2d Squadron had to wait for the HULB to return to pick up the command group. This troop also conducted a thorough search of the insurgent camp and moved on at 1200 hours.

f. The OV-1 performed excellent service in guiding the carriers over the best routes and in keeping the units informed of their location. Since this area is brush-filled and flat, it is almost impossible to determine the exact unit position of the map.

g. At 1330, 4th Troop, 4th Squadron engaged a group of about 150 VC near WT 6206 (near Objective T3). This group broke and ran for the Cambodian border about 5 km to the north. The carriers gave chase all the way to the border which was marked by a canal at that point. The VC stopped at a safe distance on the other side of the border and watched the carriers. This action resulted in 51 VC killed and 15 captured; five weapons were taken.

h. At 1630, three VC were sighted and killed near Objective T10. Both troops covered the remaining objective and met on Objective T9 at 1700. They spent the night at that location. No refueling was necessary.

i. The next day the units were moved cross country to Moc Hoa (BS 0291). They left Objective T9 at 0630 and closed at Moc Hoa at 1300. Again the OV-1 aircraft saved many hours by finding routes around canals and by selecting crossing sites.

j. On the afternoon of the 19th, the order was issued for the operation of 20 May. The vehicles were refueled by the unit's organic tankers which had come to Moc Hoa by road.

k. On 20 May, the units moved into the river at Moc Hoa at 0615 and floated about 2 km to the designated LD, which was the far bank. It was difficult to get out and demolitions were employed to make a suitable exit site. All carriers were out of the canal by 0610 and the units moved out. Crossing the LD had been scheduled for 0630.

l. At 0900 both units sighted many groups of men fleeing north in the vicinity of XS 1296 and took them under fire. The Commanding Officer, 4th Troop, 4th Squadron, while in hot pursuit, became convinced he had crossed into Cambodia (he had not) halted his troop and withdrew to the south. 4th Troop, 2d Squadron continued to operate in the area. Results are unknown.

m. At 0945, 4th Troop, 4th Squadron, searched an area in the vicinity of WS 1391 believing it to be Objective 5. The OV-1 finally gave the commander his actual location. At 1250 the troop reached a canal in the vicinity of XS 1692, crossed it, and stopped to wait for 4th Troop, 2d Squadron. The OV-1 reported sighting six VC in the woods near Objective 6. For some unexplained reason the troop commander did not advance. When he was ready to advance about 1330 an air strike, which was not needed, caused further delay. By now the OV-1 estimated a VC company in the area. The 4th Troop, 2d Squadron had by now reached Objective 4, where one soldier was killed and three wounded when one carrier struck a mine. The carrier was following vehicle tracks made on a previous operation. The men who were wounded were sitting on top of the vehicle with their feet hanging over the side. This troop was then ordered to go to Objective 4 to assist 4th Troop, 4th Squadron with the attack south.

n. At 1430 the two troops attacked abreast thru the objectives on a one-km front. The VC fought back with grenades and small arms. The area was heavily booby trapped with grenades. Results were 50 VC claimed KIA (incl the

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company commander of the 211th Co, 502d Bn, and a platoon leader), five prisoners and four weapons were captured. ARVN losses were three killed and three wounded. The two troops reached the river at the south edge of the objective area at 1700. They then returned over the same route to Moc Hoa where they spent the night.

c. On 21 May the two troops road marched back to My Tho by way of Cai Lai.

6. (C) Findings

a. More success could have been gained by proper task force organization. Lack of a task force commander resulted in lack of coordination and cooperation between the two troops. Had a task force commander been designated to direct the action from an Airborne CP, more decisive results could have been expected.

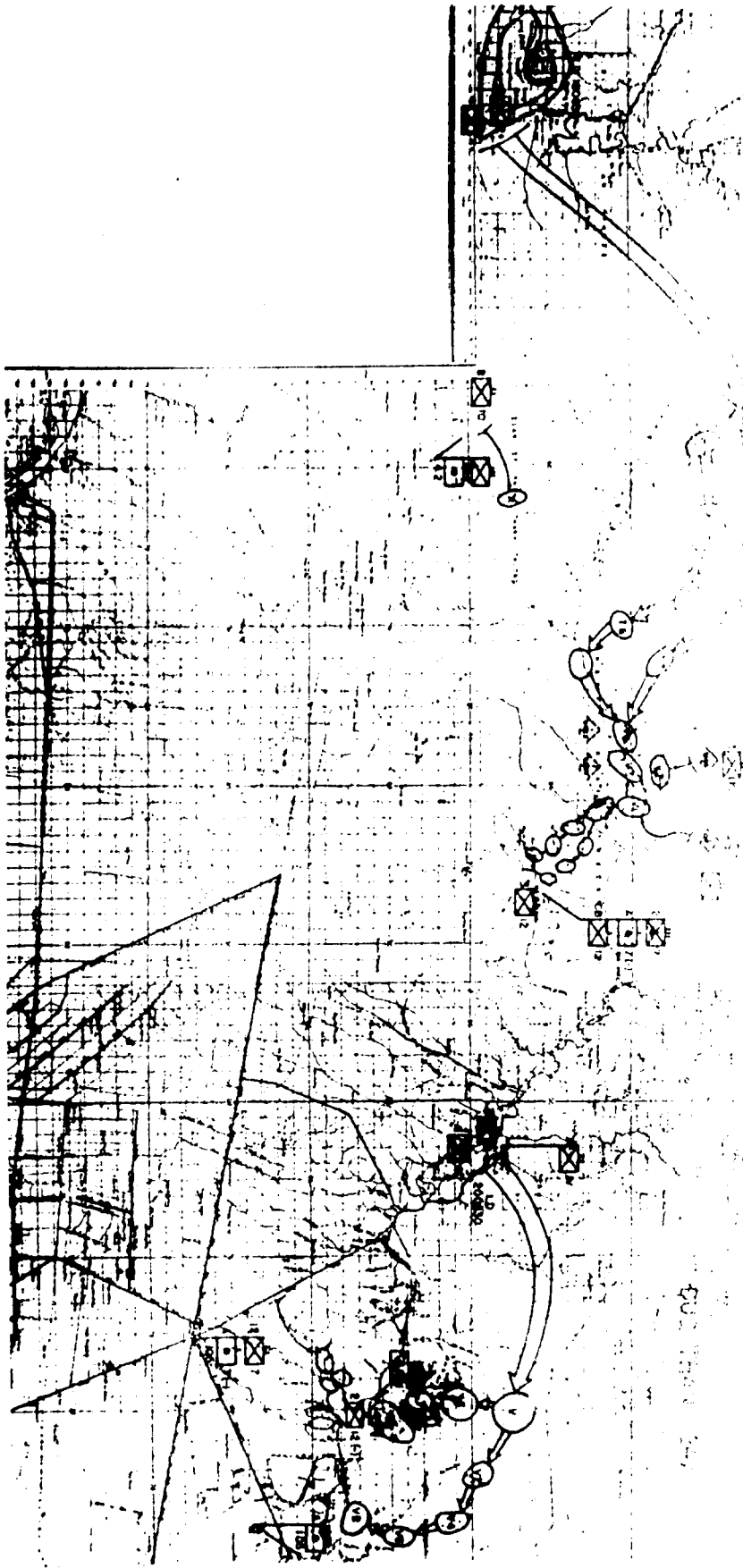
b. Aircraft as guides are essential in this type operation.

c. Although the objectives assigned for the operation on the 18th were apparently based on intelligence, the units were not informed as to the strength and disposition of the enemy on each objective until they reached Moc Hoa.

d. Carriers should not follow routes previously used.

e. Soldiers should stay inside carriers for protection from mines.

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