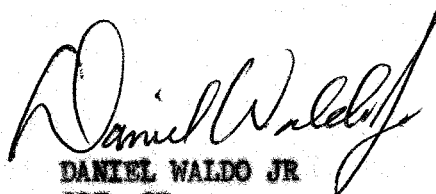


DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
COMPANY A, 70TH ENGINEER BATTALION (COMBAT)(ARMY)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96297

1 November 1968

SUBJECT: Narrative of Unit Activities, ORLL, from 1 August 1968 to 31 October 1968

Commanding Officer
70th Engr Bn (Cbt)(A)
APO 96297


DANIEL WALDO JR
CPT, CE
Commanding

A. OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

1. Engineer Hill Security

Company A continued the placing of concertina around Engineer Hill. The directive was to have a total of 5 rows of triple concertina around the hill. This necessitated constructing anywhere from 2 to 5 rows of triple concertina in various locations around the hill. A radius of approximately 150 meters had to be cleared and existing barbed wire entanglements, double apron fence, etc had to be moved. Thirty meters had to be cleared between each row of triple concertina and 50 meters had to be cleared beyond the last row. The company was pulled off the project on 27 August 1968.

2. Mine Sweep

a. Pleiku

The company swept different sections of Rt 14N each morning before the Pleiku-Kontum convoy departed. During the reporting period a total of 8 mines were found. The following information and disposition is supplied.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>COORDINATE</u>	<u>MAKE & WEIGHT</u>	<u>DISPOSAL</u>
3 Aug	ZA 196685	30LB	Blown in place
19 Aug	ZA 191649	Local Mfg	Blown in place
27 Aug	ZA 191648	Local Mfg	Blown in place
1 Sept	ZA 191646	2 Local Mfg	Blown in place
6 Sept	ZA 197685	Local Mfg	Blown in place
12 Sept	ZA 192648	Local Mfg	Blown in place
14 Sept	ZA 191688	Local Mfg	Blown in place

b. Ban Me Thuot

A daily reconnaissance (visual) mine sweep is made from AQ 901052-AQ 912056 in front of the Battalion area. To date no mines have been found nor have there been any mining incidents.

3. Pleiku-Kontum Convoy Escort

During this period the company made 12 trips to Kontum. A minimum of four (4) security vehicles were used with 24-30 personnel to include one (1) OIC, NCOIC and a medic. No enemy action was reported.

4. Bridge Repair of 14-24

On 29 Aug 68, bridge 14-24 was damaged due to enemy action. A reconnaissance of the bridge on 30 Aug 68 revealed a damaged center abutment and partially destroyed road-way on the double span concrete bridge. Measurements of the damaged areas and estimate of materials needed were obtained during the recon. Prefabbed forms were made in the company area, materials loaded, and equipment prepared. On 31 Aug 68, at 1100 hrs work began. Rubble and loose rock had to be removed by hand because the stone masonry construction would crumble with the use of the air hammer. The rebar in the pavement was straightened and additional rebar was installed.

The first load of concrete was poured at 1300 hrs and the repairs completed at 1730 hrs. The forms were removed three (3) days later and an inspection showed a good repair job.

5. Move to Ban Me Thuot

On or about September 7, 1968, A Co 70th Engr Bn was notified of an expected move to Ban Me Thuot on 30 Sept 68. As a preparation to the move, all trailers, generators and other equipment which are not used extensively, were completely serviced and deficiencies corrected. After those items were completed light service was performed on all vehicles. On or about 14 Sept 68, the company was notified to move on 21 Sept 68. Equipment was put in conexas, and all wall lockers were disassembled. During the final days before the move all personnel slept on cots with all but a minimum amount of gear packed. The loading plan was made to the last detail and was only disrupted by the mortar attack the night before the move. The company moved out at 0530 hrs on 21 Sept 68 and closed in on the new Battalion area in Ban Me Thuot at approximately 1600 hrs that evening. The convey went smoothly and few problems were encountered along the way.

B. CONSTRUCTION SUPPORT

1. 283rd Medical Detachment

One platoon of B Co, was attached to A Co, and assigned the project at the 283rd Medical Detachment. This project consisted of the construction of one (1) 50 man bunker, ten (10) 3 man bunkers, two (2) guard towers and five (5) helicopter revetments. The location of all but one of the helicopter revetments were layed out. The 50 man bunker and one 3 man bunker were constructed before the platoon was pulled off to move to Ban Me Thuot. The placing of sandbags on these structures was self-help.

2. 2400 Man Cantonment Area

This project consisted of one (1) 960 sq ft orderly room, one (1) 1,920 sq ft storage building, and one (1) 1,500 sq ft maintenance shop. The site preparation, forming, and pouring of the pads were finished before the company moved to Ban Me Thuot. The site preparation and some forming was completed on the maintenance shop.

3. Pysops Radio Station

a. Generator Pad

A 15'x75'x6" concrete pad with rebar was constructed at the Pysops Radio Station, Pleiku, RVN. Steel pickets were placed in the concrete to secure the generators. A shed with 2"x4" framing and tin roof was constructed and again steel pickets were placed in the concrete to anchor the posts of the shed. The shed was situated by an earth embankment for added protection and M8A1 matting was used as a retainer wall for the fill.

b. Main Bunker

Once fill was placed on Pysops Radio Station bunker, the telephone poles started to drive through the stringers and the building shifted. Therefore, two (2) additional posts were placed at each original. This was done by removing most of the back-fill and raising the roof with hydraulic jacks. The fill was then replaced by using a crane and a drag line. At this point the project was stopped to wait for the radio equipment to be placed in the bunker.

4. WABTOC Buildings

This project consisted of the construction of six (6) GP medium and one (1) GP large WABTOC structures. These were used as living quarters for in-coming personnel. Prefabbing was done by the 815th Engineer Battalion and assembled by Company A on site. The floor came in 8'x16' sections and leveled by 2"x4" cribbing and legs.

5. Ban Me Thuot Cantonment Area

Since moving into the new area the company has set up it's area utilizing GP medium tents for billets, mess hall, GP and supply room. Temporary bunkers were built immediately and since then up-graded. Five (5) rows of triple concertina, trip flares and claymore mines have been set up on the barrier. A permanent six (6) hole latrine 7'x18' was constructed with 1", 2", and 4" material.

6. Company TOC

On 30 Sep 68, the company began work on the company TOC, a 12'x24'x8' wood structure resting on compacted three (3") inch minus rock foundation. The bunker was constructed with the floor three (3') feet below ground level. A hole was dozed out several feet wider than the structure to allow sufficient working room during construction. Rock was brought in, leveled and compacted. The rock served as a foundation and a place for water seepage to collect without flooding the TOC. Footers were then placed and leveled. The bents, using 8"x14" caps and sills and 4"x8" studs, were prefabbed and lowered into position by a crane. Stringers 8"x14" were then placed in conjunction with end walls. Sheathing of 2"x6" material was then used to cover the structure, and roofing felt and MC70 asphalt compound was used as a sealer. Dry laterite was then placed on the bunker as protection and additional resistance to water leakage.

C. LESSONS LEARNED

1. WABTOC Prefabrication

a. Observation:

Prefabricated sections of the WABTOC did not fit properly together causing structural deficiencies.

b. Evaluation:

The biggest problem on the construction was the 8'x16' floor sections which did not fit properly together. There was also some difficulty with the wall sections. Thus a lot of time was wasted in getting these floor and wall sections matched properly.

c. Conclusion:

WABTOC buildings could be constructed better and quicker if all the construction is done on site without prefabrication.

2. Proper Reconnaissance

a. Observation:

A proper reconnaissance can save a great deal of time when engineer work is needed in an insecure area.

b. Evaluation

A complete bridge reconnaissance was made on bridge 14-24, thus enabling a rapid repair job. A good deal of form prefabbing could be accomplished in the company area due to this reconnaissance. The men were also prepared and rehearsed in the company area on this mission.

c. Conclusion:

With a thorough reconnaissance, planning and prefabbing can be done in the company area and thus reduce the exposure time of the troops in an insecure area.

3. Monsoon Construction

a. Observation:

Due to pressure for completion, the generator pad at the Pysops Radio Station was poured on approximately six (6") inches of mud.

b. Evaluation:

The construction of the generator pad was during the monsoon season and the entire area was muddy. Soil cement was utilized to stabilize the area, but due to the ground moisture and rain it never set. Although only minor failures showed upon completion, a much better job could have been done if a week or two delay was permitted.

c. Conclusion:

The rain was due to stop and the station was not ready to operate. Some time and operation coordination could have prevented the pouring of this pad in the mud.

4. Back Filling Of Bunkers

a. Observation:

Unequal back filling and soil weight errors in the design caused failures in the Pysops Radio Station bunker.

b. Evaluation:

One side of the bunker had to remain open so that the radio equipment could be placed in the bunker. Yet the back filling was to begin on the roof and other three (3) sides. With no equal soil bearing on the open side caused a shifting in the structure. Also the weight calculated for the covering was not based on the moisture weight due to monsoons. This caused further design problems.

c. Conclusion:

When back filling a bunker with soil it should be done in steps and equally on all four (4) sides. This gives equal weight and setting on all surfaces to the structure. All soil weight should be calculated for monsoon moisture to insure the proper safety factor.

5. Use Of Telephone Poles As Posts

a. Observation:

An underestimate of soil weight on the roof at the Pysops Radio Station caused the stringers to drive down on the posts.

b. Evaluation:

Telephone posts 10" dia were used as substitutes of large dimension timbers for posts on the Pysops Radio Station. Due to excessive weight these posts were driven up into the stringers causing failures throughout the structure.

c. Conclusion:

Dimensional timber should be used as posts on structures which will carry heavy loads. Dimensional timbers will give better surface area. When posts must be used, a bearing plate should be used between the posts and stringers.

6. Footers Of Company TOC

a. Observation:

Although the structure has held up well with no failures after back filling the footers seem to be sinking.

b. Evaluation:

The weight of the back fill on the structure has made the 3"x12" footers slowly sink. Now the floor is slightly bowed.

c. Conclusion:

The structure has now seemed to settle but in the future a concrete foundation would prevent the footers from sinking.

7. Local Nationals

a. Observation

Local National hire are definitely an intelligence source for the enemy.

b. Evaluation

The company moved from Pleiku to Ban Me Thuot on 21 Sep 68. All Local hires were notified that 19 Sep 68, would be their last day in the area. Most of the hired Local Nationals knew of the move, but were under the impression that the company was to depart on 20 Sep 68. At 0430 hours, 20 Sep 68, "A" Company came under an intense mortar attack with 25 82MM mortar rounds landing in and around the company billet area. The attack resulted in two (2) KIA, eight (8) WIA and five (5) trucks damaged. Probable enemy source of intelligence on time of the move and billet area location was the Local National hires. On the morning after the attack, two (2) of the previously hired personnel tried to enter the compound, presumably to observe the damage caused by the mortar attack.

c. Conclusion:

Incidents such as these indicate the use of Local National hire on posts as obtainers of intelligence, despite American and Vietnamese security checks. Their employment greatly reduces the use of troop labor for many repetitious jobs but it is extremely doubtful that this saving in US man hours can be justified by the cost of US lives.