

UNCLASSIFIED

EGD-BE-CO

30 April 1967

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned (RCS CSFOR-65), for Quarterly Period Ending 30 April 1967

(2) A detailed deliberate study of Route QL 1 from the Phu Tai ASP (CR 026 160) to Song Cau (CQ 080 881) was made for the purpose of preparing a report to support planning for the possible expansion of this road to two lanes. Included in the study are forty-one cross sections taken at various points along the pertinent sections of Route 1, roadway photographs, soils test results of several potential fill sites, areas of possible flooding, and a color-coded overlay which categorizes the road into four general descriptions (cut, side hill cut, level, and fill).

(3) A detailed deliberate study of Route QL 1 from RJ Routes QL 1 and 440 (CR 003 252) to the Song Cai River (CQ 066 736) was made for the purpose of estimating the time and equipment required to upgrade by the most expedient means that section of road to Class 31, dry weather. It was concluded that an engineer platoon, augmented with appropriate equipment, could accomplish the task in about three weeks.

(4) An attempt was made to undertake a deliberate bridge and road reconnaissance of the section of Route LTL 6B from Van Canh (BR 838 065) to the southern boundary of the Area of Engineer Responsibility of the 19th Engineer Battalion (BQ 894 880). Since the road is closed to vehicular traffic, the reconnaissance team proceeded on foot. Security was provided by a platoon of CIDG troops with a Special Forces advisor. After examining about 5km of road and two bridge sites, the party was ambushed by an estimated NVA platoon. The resulting firefight, which involved mortar, gunship, and F-100 support acquired through the Van Canh Special Forces Camp, accounted for four NVA KIA by body count. Friendly casualties were two CIDG KIA and one USSF advisor WIA. Enough information was gathered, however, to ascertain that an earlier reconnaissance performed in the spring of 1966 is still essentially valid.

(5) In conjunction with Qui Nhon Support Command and the 523rd Engineer Company (Port Construction), reconnaissance was performed of several potential LST Beach sites in the Song Cau Area. The purpose of the mission was to find a suitable location for an ammunition off-loading facility.

(6) Other minor reconnaissance missions required monitoring of the T-17 membrane airfield at Van Canh (BR 833 065) to insure that all damage is reported and the airfield is maintained in a high state of repair. Periodic hasty reconnaissances of LOC's adjacent to the battalion's area of responsibility were made to include Route QL 19 from Qui Nhon to Pleiku and QL 1 from it's intersection with QL 19 to Bong Son.

b. Coincident with the relocation of the battalion to the new cantonment site, the intelligence section prepared plans for the perimeter fence and guard towers and drafted a set of instructions for interior guards. An innovation in the new guard system includes a roving patrol in a 1/4 ton truck with a post mounted M-60 machine gun. This concept provided the capability of checking the guards more frequently, plus provides ready fire power for any perimeter incident.

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and waste soil, the land was generally level, with a slight slope to the southeast providing natural drainage. In order to construct the sixteen 60' x 100' pads, 1,250' taxiway and a 450' x 400' maintenance area, over 73,000 cubic yards of laterite were hauled to provide a stable base. To waterproof and provide a firm base, 11,200 tons of river run and crushed rock were employed in a single surface treatment over the entire area. As the perimeter of the facility was being penneprimed, the 40' x 90' touchdown areas on each pad were covered with MBA1 steel matting. Matting was then laid down the length of the taxiway providing a 44' wide strip. This strip was connected on the south end to a 300' x 330' section of steel covered area for maintenance. Despite inclement weather and saturated soil conditions during the critical clearing and stripping phases, the Beneficial Occupancy Date of 1 March was achieved. The total project, completed on 18 March required 47,497 manhours and 10,354 equipment hours.

(2) In support of pending combat operations, the project of rehabilitating Van Canh Airfield, located 40 miles southwest of Qui Nhon was assigned and completed during the quarter (See inclosure 4). The 3,600' airstrip covered with T-17 membrane was originally completed in September 1966; however, constant use and the monsoon season deteriorated the field to the extent that a major reconstruction effort was required. On 8 February 1967 a platoon of "C" Company initiated repair. Beginning at the northern end of the runway, 1,600' of membrane was cut at 75' intervals perpendicular to the runway and rolled back. The exposed soil on the airstrip was then permitted to dry, while sections badly saturated were excavated. Fill was then placed and compacted. Most of the exposed runway surface was scarified, regraded and compacted. The membrane was then replaced and sealed with a double seal, both under and over the seams. The entire apron area had been originally constructed on existing soil and contained numerous tree stumps. Also the natural drainage was insufficient for the area. Thus, the apron, taxiway and drainage system required complete rehabilitation. After removal of the existing matting the exposed apron was completely stripped to a depth of 10 inches. A cut and fill operation was then started raising the height of the area approximately 2 feet and sloping it toward the new drainage ditches. Drainage constructed about the apron area consisted of 12' wide trapezoidal ditches on the perimeter which emptied into a low area to the west of the apron. Similar trapezoidal ditches were cut on both sides of the runway to draw the water table 3' below the runway crown. These ditches were sloped to run off into a natural stream at the north end of the field. Multiple 2' and 3' culverts were placed in the runway ditches where the taxiway joined the runway and under the access road to the airfield. A small hill mass between the apron and runway was lowered 6' to 8' to satisfy design clearance and slope criteria. Final phases of the project included finish grading and compaction of runway shoulders, ditch banks, and cleared areas and application of 580 barrels of penneprime. After resurfacing the complete apron and taxiways with new T-17 membrane, the entire runway was given a new application of non-skid compound and airfield markings were repainted. On the project, 17,970 manhours, 1,235 Vietnamese manhours and 1,315 equipment hours were expended.

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Period Ending 31 January 1967

9 (c) "A" Company on 17 November was assigned the mission to correct the drainage of Van Canh Airfield to prevent further rain damage and repair existing tears in T-17 membrane on the airfield. The 1st platoon undertook the project and before returning on 24 December 1966, the unit surveyed, designed, and constructed 4,750 feet of all weather drainage system to protect the field from further damage. It also corrected 2,250 feet of eroded spots along the apron and the runway, plus constructed 3,175 feet of new drainage systems to divert water flow. Despite heavy rains of the monsoon season, complicating resupply and working conditions, the project was expediently accomplished.

(d) On 27 December, the battalion was given the mission to provide direct support to the ROK Tiger Division in opening Route 1 South from Qui Nhon to Song Cau. The concept of the operation was, in conjunction with previous operations Thayer and John Paul Jones, to open Route 1 from Bong Son and eventually from the I Corps Border to Cam Ranh Bay. The mission to open the last remaining stretch of road in this vital link was assigned to "A" Company. With elements of the ROK Tiger Division, the engineer mission was to open the road from the Cu Mong pass to Song Cau. Simultaneously, the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division was to secure the area from Tuy Hoa to Song Cau, as elements of the 39th Engineer Battalion pushed North on Route 1 to Song Cau.

From 27 December to 2 January, "A" Company made reconnaissance, equipment preparation and preliminary stockpiling of critical materials in anticipation of the operation. Moving South from the Cu Mong Pass on 2 January, "A" Company repaired deep cuts in 23 miles of road with "B" and "C" Companies hauling 1000 cubic yards of 3" minus rock from the crusher at the 45th Engineer Group Construction Support Complex. One corduroy by-pass and several PSP by-passes were constructed for heavy equipment, 150 feet of Eiffel bridging was rebuilt and redecked for use, plus roads were reconstructed to make landslide areas in the mountains passable. Bridging included construction of a 29'6" steel stringer bridge, replacing a destroyed 110' SS Bailey and building a 28'6" single span timber trestle bridge on existing abutments. At an existing site with an intermediate masonry pier, a 48'6" timber trestle bridge was constructed. With the assistance of the 509th Float Bridge platoon, three bailey bridges were assembled, one 70 foot DS and a 80 foot DS on existing abutments. In addition, a 190 foot DS bridge was constructed on existing abutments with four stone masonry intermediate supports...

The mission was accomplished on 20 January, prior to operation "Road Runner" scheduled 22 January. Operation "Road Runner" emphasized the strategic importance of opening Route 1 when a Reconnaissance Platoon of the 101st Airborne Division returned from Kontum down Route 19 to Qui Nhon, then proceeded down Route 1 through Song Cau to Phang Rang to accomplish the longest road drive to date in Viet Nam. With the mission successfully completed, "A" Company closed at the battalion command post on 24 January 1967.

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