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[Vietnam]

Headquarters units

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**Item:** Headquarters, 1 Australian  
Task Force

Commanding Officer After  
Action Report

[COAAR]

Operation Smithfield

[1-31 Jan 1967]



1<sup>ST</sup> AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE  
VIETNAM



COMBAT OPERATIONS AFTER ACTION REPORT

OPERATION SMITHFIELD

OP SMITHFIELD

AUSTRALIAN ARMY HEADQUARTERS  
HEADQUARTERS, FIRST AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE  
NUI DAT

R723-1-5

December, 1966

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report

TO: Commanding General  
11 Field Force Vietnam (5)  
Attn: AC of S, G3  
APO 9626 6

COPY TO: HQ AFV (5)  
HQ NZ Force Vietnam (2)

1. Reference is made to: Maps: VIETNAM 1:50,000 Sheet 6442 I.  
1:25,000 Sheet 6430 IIS.
2. Name and Type of Operation: Operation SMITHFIELD - commenced as a company patrol and developed into a battalion search and destroy operation.
3. Dates of Operation: The operation was conducted during the period 181500H August to 211700H August 1966.
4. Location: NORTH, NE and EAST of XA LONG TAN YS 4865.
5. Command Headquarters: Initially company headquarters D/6 RAR, subsequently battalion headquarters 6 RAR with Task Force fire support and coordination of operations effected by HQ 1 ATF.
6. Reporting Officer: Brigadier O.D. JACKSON.
7. Task Organization:
  - a. 6 RAR plus: D/5 RAR  
1 APC Sqn  
1 Fd Regt RAA  
UHIBs 9 Sqn RAAF  
One H13 161 (Indep) Recce Flt
  - b. B/6 RAR consisted of only one platoon and company headquarters until 201600H August when two platoons returned from rest and convalescent leave.
8. Supporting Forces:
  - a. Infantry: 5 RAR Group had been on Operation HOLSWORTHY in the BINH BA YS 4473 area and the dense country to the EAST from 5 August. Two companies of 6 RAR (C and D Coys) had been operating with 5 RAR and had returned to base on 13 and 10 August respectively. 5 RAR had completed its mission and was returning to base the afternoon of 18 August when D Coy 6 RAR made contact near LONG TAN.
  - b. Armour:
    - (1) Planned Support:
      - (a) Under command from 181700H August 3 Tp 1 APC Sqn.
      - (b) Under command from 190630H August - 1 APC Sqn less one troop.

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FIGURE 1: SUMMARY OF ENEMY ARTILLERY ACTION 17 AUGUST 1966

Serial	Enemy Weapon	Area Deduced	Area Confirmed	Comments
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
1.	82mm Mortar	YS 459674	YS 459671	Area initially deduced by mortreps. Nearest target was a fire mission Regt at YS 459674. No damage or casualties detected. Area confirmed as YS 459671 by patrol which found 5 mortar base plate positions and pits for 36 men. The enemy fired a minimum of 67 bomb (determined by crater count) and a maximim of approximately 100 (determined by rough plug count at the firing site).
2.	Mortar (Possibly 82mm Mortar)	YS 395655 YS 395660	Not confirmed	Areas deduced by mortreps and flash reports. Regt Fire Mission fired in this area.
3.	70mm Japanese Howitzer	YS 458667	Not confirmed	Weapon identified by: a. Crater examination in Regt gun area. b. Positive identification of Unexploded Shell.
4.	75mm RCL	Not detected	YS 469668	3 Pits with 23 fired cartridges found by 6 RAR patrol at YS 469688. Signs of casualties and hasty evacuation detected.
5.	Enemy Silt Trenches	Not detected	YS 472674	Found by patrol from 6 RAR and engaged by Regt under CB fire plan. Do not consider that any casualties were caused by own fire.

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## (2) Extent of Employment and Effectiveness:

- (a) The surprise achieved by the arrival of 3 Tp 1 APC Sqn at the rear of D/6 RAR broke up the movement of an estimated two companies of VC and undoubtedly was turning point in the battle.
- (b) The troop was subsequently of great assistance in the follow up of the enemy force and search of the area.
- (c) APCs were also used to secure and mark (by showing interior lights through open hatches) the landing zone for the extraction of casualties by night.

## c. Artillery:

## (1) Planned Support:

- (a) In direct support - 161 Fd Bty RNZA.
- (b) In support - 1 Fd Regt RAA less  
161 Fd Bty RNZA

## (2) Extent of Employment and Effectiveness:

- (a) The 105mm howitzers were used to give close support to the infantry and were instrumental in breaking up many of the assaults and caused heavy casualties amongst the enemy.
- (b) The 155mm guns provided support in depth and also silenced the enemy 82mm mortars when used in a counter bombardment role.
- (c) Both types of guns were also used on harrassing fire tasks on likely enemy withdrawal routes and staging areas.

## d. Aust Aviation:

## (1) Planned Support:

- (a) On call - UH1Bs 9 Sqn RAAF  
One H13 161 (Indep) Recc & Flt.

## (b) Extent of Employment and Effectiveness:

- i. RAAF Iroquois RW aircraft were used to drop ammunition through the tree canopy to D/6 RAR during the battle, evacuate casualties, and to extract elements of one rifle company to 1 ATF base area. The aircraft were most effective in all tasks.
- ii. The SIOUX RW aircraft was used for reconnaissance, liaison, extraction of enemy casualties, and command and control. As usual, it was invaluable.

## e. USAF:

- (1) Planned Support: Aircraft were available for airstrikes on a normal basis.

## (2) Extent of Employment and Effectiveness:

- (a) An airstrike was requested during the D/6 RAR battle. Low cloud and torrential monsoonal rain prevented recognition of the target or of own troops, and ordnance was dropped on likely enemy positions in depth, assembly areas, and mortar positions.
- (b) No accurate assessment of bomb damage can be made, but it is believed that the enemy sustained casualties on a withdrawal route to the EAST of NUI DAT.
- (c) Air strikes were conducted during the night after contact was broken against known enemy camps and areas where it was considered likely that enemy were concentrating during reorganization or prior to further withdrawal. No assessment of casualties was practicable.

## 9. Intelligence:

- a. Prior to the operation there had been numerous low grade reports and indications of enemy activity in the area of XA LONG TAN YS 4865 and NUI DAT YS 4860. The main items of intelligence were:
  - (1) 8 August. A police agent reported 300 VC in greens with crew served weapons in the vicinity of YS 487687 on 1 August. On 1 August D/6 RAR had patrolled within 200 metres of this grid reference and it was thought that the report could have been referring to own troops.
  - (2) 11 August: An aircraft reported approximately 150 civilians moving SOUTH from XA LONG TAN.
  - (3) 11 August: An agent reported a VC battalion at YS 485670 and a VC company at each YS 490650 and YS 488625.
  - (4) 11 August: Contact was made by a 6 RAR patrol with a VC section at YS 4767.
  - (5) 12 August: A VC company was reported moving NORTH from YS 5364.
  - (6) 13 August: Radio interference was received by a H13 aircraft flying over XA LONG TAN. The glide path indicator in the aircraft indicated that the transmissions were emanating from the southern base of the NUI DAT feature.
  - (7) 17 August: From 0243 hours to 0305 hours the enemy shelled and mortared 1 ATF Base Area. (Map 1 and Figure 1). Effective interdiction and suppression missions were fired between 0250 hours and approximately 0410 hours.
  - (8) 30 July to 17 August: 6 RAR patrolled the area generally bounded by the 65 and 72 NORTHINGS and the 50 EASTING with only minor contact. Patrol areas included NUI DAT YS 4868 and XA LONG TAN YS 4865.

- (9) At the time D/6 RAR commenced its patrol it was thought possible that a heavy weapons company plus at least one rifle company could be in the area of NUI DAT YS 4868 - XA LONG TAN YS 4865.
- b. However, with the exception of the enemy mortar and artillery attack on 17 August (a.(7) above) there was little in these reports during August which differed from previous indications of enemy activity in this area or many others in other parts of the Task Force area of operations. 6 RAR patrol activity in the area NORTH, SOUTH and EAST of the NUI DAT feature YS 4868 disclosed no unusual activity. There were however, other indications of increasing enemy interest to the EAST of the Task Force base area which resulted in our attention being directed towards this area in order to locate any sizable enemy force. The area EAST of LONG TAN was also believed to be one of the normal operating zones of the VC Provincial Mobile Battalion D445 and it was in area bounded by 65 and 69 NORTHINGS and 49 and 54 EASTINGS that 6 RAR fought at least two companies of D445 during operation HOBART between 24 and 29 Jul 66.
- c. Enemy Strength and Situation Found in the Area:
- (1) Intelligence obtained from VCC and documents and examination of the battle area indicate that D/6 RAR contacted 275 Regt plus elements of D445 Bn which were moving towards 1 ATF base area on the night 18/19 August. At least one NVA battalion was integrated into 275 Regt for their operation.
- (2) It is estimated that two battalions of 275 Regt were involved in the battle with D/6 RAR, the third battalion of the Regt being in depth. D445 Bn was moving to assault D/6 RAR from the WEST when contacted by the relief force of A/6 RAR and 3 Tp 1 RPC Sqn.
- d. Terrain and Vegetation: The battle area (Map 2) was in a five year old rubber plantation containing mostly clean rubber with some undergrowth in places. The D/6 RAR area was on a gradual slope the final position being a reverse slope position facing SE. Outside the rubber plantation the area varied between open padi and thick scrubby timber with virtually impenetrable spiky bamboo thickets in many places.
- e. Weather: The battle was fought in a heavy monsoonal rain storm which reduced visibility to thirty metres or less during the late afternoon and early evening.
10. Mission:
- a. The D/6 RAR mission was to search for and destroy the enemy force that mortared and shelled 1 ATF base area on 17 August.
- b. The 6 RAR mission after the initial battle was to determine the direction of the enemy withdrawal, to follow up the enemy within the limitations of artillery range and to destroy any elements remaining in the area.

11. Concept of Operation: After the initial battle the concept of operations for 19 August was to sweep quickly to the EAST (the most likely avenue of enemy withdrawal) with mounted infantry to confirm that the enemy had withdrawn and then to carry out a detailed search for withdrawal routes and to destroy any elements of the enemy force that may have remained in the area.

12. Execution:

a. On 18 August 1966 6 RAR was carrying out company size patrolling of the TAOR. D/6 RAR was patrolling NORTH of XA LONG TAN, A/6 RAR returned to base location at 1530 hours after a three day company patrol to the NORTH, NE and WEST of NUI DAT YS 4868. B (-)/6 RAR had located the sites of the 82mm mortars and the 75mm RCLs which had shelled and mortared the 1 ATF base area on 17 August, and after following trails until they dispersed and could no longer be detected on 17 and 18 August, was returning to base at the time the D/6 RAR action commenced. C/6 RAR was defending the 6 RAR base area and providing one platoon under command 1 APC Sqn.

b. A statement of events in chronological order is as follows:

- (1) D/6 RAR, strength 108, moved EAST from YS475675, two platoons up, 10 Platoon on LEFT, 11 Platoon on RIGHT with Company HQ and 12 Platoon centre rear. The company covered a frontage of 400 meters and a similar distance in depth.
- (2) 1540 hours: D/6 RAR contacted 6 to 8 enemy believed to be local guerrillas dressed in khaki at YS 478673 and possibly wounded one. The remainder fled EAST, Map 14. This report reached HQ 1 ATF at 181607 hours.
- (3) 1542 hours: Artillery fire mission on YS458665.
- (4) 1555 hours: D/6 RAR recovered one AK carbine at YS 478673 (a body was recovered later).
- (5) 1600 hours:
  - (a) B/6 RAR was ordered to stop at YS 458665.
  - (b) 11 Platoon D/6 RAR reported movement and noise in a house at YS 481672 and cleared the house without incident.
- (6) 1608 hours: 11 Platoon D/6 RAR came under heavy small arms fire from YS 485669, that is, from its LEFT front.
- (7) 1610 hours: 11 Platoon D/6 RAR estimated that an enemy platoon was located at YS 487674 and called for artillery fire on YS487674. 11 Platoon also reported more enemy and that casualties were being sustained as the enemy attacked on the LEFT, FRONT, and RIGHT. OC D/6 RAR ordered 11 Pl to withdraw. (Map 15).
- (8) 1616 hours: Artillery fire mission on YS 487674.
- (9) 1626 hours: D/6 RAR estimated that the enemy force was company size. D Coy HQ and 12 Platoon continued to move forward as firing increased and reached YS 480674 where they came under fire from rounds passing over 11 Platoon. Approximately twenty 82mm mortar rounds fell on the RIGHT flank of Coy HQ Area. 12 Platoon and Coy HQ immediately moved NE out of the mortared area to YS 482674.



(10) 1630 hours:

(a) A/6 RAR which had just returned from a three day patrol was warned for movement and B/6 RAR was ordered to move towards D/6 RAR by 6 RAR.

(b) Artillery fire mission on YS 490672.

(11) 1637 hours: HQ 1 ATF received report from 6 RAR that enemy force was estimated at a company.

(12) 1638 hours: Artillery fire mission on YS 485660.

(13) 1640 hours: 1 APC Squadron placed on 15 minutes notice to move one rifle company of 6 RAR to scene of action.

(14) 1650 hours: Action discussed by Commander 1 ATF and CO 6 RAR. Decision made for A/6 RAR mounted in troop of 1 APC Sqn to reinforce D/6 RAR. Agreed that CO 6 RAR would also move to scene of action and take command there.

(15) 1650 hours: D/6 RAR reported to 6 RAR that they considered enemy force to be at least a battalion. 11 Platoon had reported that they were almost surrounded, suffering heavy casualties, could not extract themselves, and were almost out of ammunition. Artillery fire continued to support them, with the FO talking to the Platoon Sergeant after the Platoon Commander was killed. There was some confusion as to exact location of enemy and own troops, and initially fire support was not close but in fact did untold damage to the enemy in depth. 10 Platoon were not under fire and ordered to attack from the NORTH. 10 Platoon were observed advancing and then a large volume of fire broke out in their area and radio contact was lost. 11 Platoon then lost communications after reporting that VC were all around them. Strike aircraft requested by HQ 1 ATF for immediate air alert over D/6 RAR.

(16) 1655 hours:

(a) 12 Platoon and D Coy HQ moved forward to get closer to 11 Platoon and assist in their withdrawal. 12 Platoon moved SE followed by D Coy HQ. 12 Platoon communications were restored when the Coy HQ second operator reached them. 10 Platoon stated that they had casualties and that they were under attack from the high ground to the NORTH at YS448675. 10 Platoon had approached to within 100 meters of 11 Platoon before being stopped initially by small arms and mortar fire, and subsequently by infantry assaults. 10 Platoon were ordered to withdraw as their wounded were arriving at D Coy HQ. (Map 16).

(b) B/6 RAR came under fire from 60mm mortar.

(c) APCs to lift one company and CO's group were ordered to move to 6 RAR as soon as possible.

(d) Aircap airborne for contact area.

(17) 181700 hours:

(a) D/6 RAR requested ammunition be dropped to them through the rubber trees.

(b) 12 Platoon had moved to the SE and it was impossible to move D Coy HQ with 10 P1 wounded. 10 Platoon then reached D Coy HQ.

- (c) 12 Platoon reached a position at YS 483673, about 150 meters behind 11 Platoon, and then came under heavy fire and was subsequently attacked from the area of the house at YS 481672, and also from the NE. Map 18.
- (d) Artillery fire mission on YS 487669.
- (18) 1702 hours: 6 RAR requested airstrike on YS 487669 to YS 487672.
- (19) 1705 hours:
- (a) 3 Tp 1 APC Sqn moved to 6 RAR.
- (b) The enemy attacked the D Coy defended area from the EAST. Coy HQ engaged enemy in area of YS 480673. HMG and MMG was received into the company area from YS 485674. (Map 15).
- (20) 1707 hours: Artillery fire mission on YS 48046780.
- (21) 1710 hours:
- (a) 6 RAR requested target for airstrike, mortar location at YS 488661. Napalm requested. Bombs required on YS 487669, and YS 487672.
- (b) D/6 RAR reported enemy dug in on feature 200 meters to their front.
- (22) 1715 hours: D/6 RAR reported 11 Platoon appeared to be surrounded. 12 Platoon was attempting to reach 11 Platoon but was pinned down.
- (23) 1724 hours: Artillery fire mission on YS 481664.
- (24) 1726 hours: TF Artillery fired regimental fire mission on YS 486678.
- (25) 1720 hours: Artillery fire mission on YS 481669.
- (26) 1730 hours: A/6 RAR was ordered to move as soon as possible.
- (27) 1735 hours: D/6 RAR reported all platoons and company headquarters were under attack from the EAST and SOUTH.
- (28) 1736 hours: Artillery fire mission on YS 485669.
- (29) 1740 hours:
- (a) Aircraft unable to strike primary target due to low cloud cover and heavy monsoonal rain. Aircraft diverted and ordered to drop bombs and napalm on northern end of NUI DAT YS 4868.
- (b) D/6 RAR advised that they would attempt to extract casualties.
- (30) 1745 hours:
- (a) Artillery engaged YS 477668. Regimental mission, Bty A, 2/35 Arty engaged mortar location.
- (b) D/6 RAR was being engaged by small arms fire at short range.
- (c) A/6 RAR departed 6 RAR Base Area in APCs of 3 Tp 1 APC Sqn.
- (31) 1752 hours: Artillery net reported company of VC were moving towards D/6 RAR.
- (32) 1755 hours: Commander 1 ATF directed 5 RAR to:
- (a) Take over perimeter defence of 6 RAR base area.

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- (b) Send one platoon to 1 APC Sqn base area.
- (c) Provide one company on standby on one hours notice to move.
- (33) 1800 hours: 9 Sqn RAAF dropped ammunition to D Company headquarters in a small clearing indicated by coloured smoke.
- (34) 1810 hours:
  - (a) D/6 RAR were concentrated with the exception of 15 dead and missing from 11 Platoon. VC appeared to have broken contact.
  - (b) F00 reported that VC has apparently broken contact.
  - (c) Ammunition resupply was completed.
  - (d) A/6 RAR contacted support elements D445 Bn at YS 476667. Enemy withdrew EAST. (Map 20).
- (35) 1820 hours: D/6 RAR reported that enemy appeared to be regrouping for an attack. D/6 RAR was under heavy machine gun fire mainly from the EAST and SE.
- (36) 1820 to 1910 hours: Enemy launched repeated assaults, mainly from the SE, but also from the EAST, NE and SOUTH. (Map 19).
- (37) 1832 hours: Artillery regimental fire mission was fired at YS 482671.
- (38) 1837 hours: Artillery fire mission on YS 485654.
- (39) 1850 hours: A/6 RAR and 3 Tp 1 APC Sqn contacted an estimated two companies of enemy at YS 478570. The enemy were moving to the WEST with the apparent intention of attacking the rear of D/6 RAR. A cavalry assault caused heavy casualties amongst the enemy who broke contact and withdrew EAST.
- (40) 1858 hours: Artillery fire mission on YS 434675.
- (41) 1900 hours: B(-)/6 RAR arrived in location with D/6 RAR and deployed to cover WEST approach.
- (42) 1910 hours: CO 6 RAR and A/6 RAR and 3 Tp 1 APC Sqn arrived in location with D/6 RAR and B(-)/6 RAR. A/6 RAR secured area EAST of D/6 RAR, CO 6 RAR assumed command. Enemy broke contact and withdrew Eastward.
- (43) 1915 hours:
  - (a) Reorganization after action. A/6 RAR continued to hold EAST and SOUTH.
  - (b) Artillery fire mission on YS 493671.
- (44) 1921 hours: Artillery engaged YS 493671 - VC withdrawal route.
- (45) 1926 hours: Artillery ammunition state - 105 Fd Bty RAA 2400 rounds, 103 Fd Bty RAA 1300 rounds, 161 Fd Bty RNZA 1800 rounds.
- (46) 1935 hours: Artillery fire mission on YS 493671.
- (47) 1937 hours: Airstrike on YS53006780.

(48) 1937 hours: Airstrike on YS 50607070.

(49) 1937 hours: Airstrike on YS 53006780.

(50) 2030 hours: 5 RAR

A Coy: One platoon in 1 APC Sqn Base Area.  
One platoon in A/6 RAR Base Area.  
One platoon in own area.

B Coy: One platoon in C/6 RAR area.  
One platoon in own area.  
One platoon in C/6 RAR area.

C Coy: Security force in XA BINH BA YS 4474.

D Coy: On one hours notice to move to assistance of 6 RAR as ready reaction force.

Atk Platoon in D/6 RAR base area.

Aslt Pnr Platoon on one hours notice to move for night security patrol.

(51) 2041 hours: Airstrike on YS49706640.

(52) 2116 hours: Artillery fire mission on YS 510662 and YS 493671.

(53) 2045 hours: Aviation advised that Chinook RW aircraft resupply of artillery ammunition due to arrive at gun positions in one hour. 5 RAR ordered to patrol to WEST of landing zone and HQ Company 1 ATF was warned to provide work party.

(54) 2050 hours: 6 RAR advised that CO had just completed conference with company commanders; that he was reasonably sure that heavy casualties had been inflicted on VC; that he proposed to withdraw D/6 RAR with dead and wounded in APCs through A/6 RAR to a landing zone; and that after DUSTOFF evacuation was complete the force would close in to perimeter for the night. In conference between Comd 1 ATF and CO 6 RAR it was agreed that it was not possible to secure the D/6 RAR battleground or to attempt to locate 16 missing soldiers of D/6 RAR. Reports indicated that it was almost certain that these soldiers had all been killed. It was pitch dark in the rubber plantation and still raining.

(55) 2052 hours: Airstrike on YS 49506700.

(56) 2100 hours: 6 RAR advised that DUSTOFF was required in approximately one hour. APCs from 3 Tp 1 APC Sqn would form a hollow square around landing zone and illuminate the landing zone by showing internal lights with the hatches open. Details of casualties - 4 KIA, 8 litter cases, 6 walking wounded, 16 missing. Other details required for DUSTOFF to follow. Details of casualty evacuation were then coordinated with DUSTOFF, 2 Fd Amb, RAAF ATOC and 6 RAR.

(57) 2140 hours: 6 RAR made a tentative bid for APCs for one section of mortars plus one troop per company. Required at 190630 hours.

(58) 2217 hours: Airstrike on YS 49306755.

(59) 2240 hours: Airstrike on YS 49706750.

- (60) 2251 hours: Airstrike on YS 51306620.
- (61) 2304 hours: Airstrike on YS 51306775.
- (62) 2330 hours: Airstrike on YS 51905799.
- (63) 2343 hours: Airstrike on YS 51006870.
- (64) 2400 hours:
- (a) Artillery sitrep advised that 2638 rounds of 105mm ammunition and 155 rounds of 155mm ammunition had been expended between 180001 and 182400 hours.
  - (b) Commander 1 ATF issued following orders subject to confirmation after discussion with CO 6 RAR when movement and casualty evacuation completed: 6 RAR Bn HQ and associated subunits with C/6 RAR move to forward area as soon as possible after first light 19 August in APCs 18 APCs including 2 mortar APCs, report to 6 RAR at 190630 hours. D/5 RAR to move from base by airmobile company to forward landing zone at first light and to come under command 6 RAR on arrival in forward area. Debussing point for first APC lift to be advised by 6 RAR. APCs to lift D/5 RAR report to D/5 RAR at 190730 hours if airmobile company not available.
- (65) 190030 hours: 6 RAR reported that DUSTOFF was proceeding. Other elements of the battalion were moving to marry up with D/6 RAR at the landing zone at YS 472674.
- (66) 0035 hours: Aviation reported that a Chinook RW aircraft received approximately six rounds, including two tracer rounds 500 meters WEST of Inter-Provincial Route 2 at approximately YS 431682. Also reported one explosion in the area.
- (67) 0036 hours: Airstrike on YS 48906900.
- (68) 0050 hours: Last casualty evacuation aircraft departed landing zone without incident. Total of seven sorties flown, one sortie by US DUSTOFF, six sorties by RAAF.
- (69) 0054 hours: Airstrike on YS 49706640.
- (70) 0210 hours: USAF ALO advised that a total of twelve immediate airstrikes had been flown, 1 Negative BDA.
- (71) 0320 hours: Resupply of gun ammunition completed.
- (72) 0410 hours: 6 RAR confirmed request for all available APCs to lift 6 RAR Bn HQ, one mortar section and C/6 RAR at 190630 hours plus helicopter lift for D/5 RAR at same time.
- (73) 0415 hours: II Field Force Vietnam requested to provide one airmobile company.
- (74) 0505 hours: Request for airmobile company approved by II Field Force Vietnam.
- (75) 0532 hours: II Field Force Vietnam advised that nine helicopters due to arrive 1 ATF for airlift of D/5 RAR at 190630 hours.
- (76) 0645 hours: 6 RAR Bn HQ, C/6 RAR, one sec mor pl 6 RAR and 2 Tp 1 APC Sqn moved from 6 RAR base area to area of operation.

- (77) 0700 hours: D/5 RAR came under command 6 RAR and moved by US Airmobile Company to landing zone at YS 462675.
- (78) 0730 hours: OO 6 RAR issued verbal orders.
- (79) 0735 hours: Commander 1 ATF visited 6 RAR forward.
- (80) 0750 hours: Airstrike on suspected VC location at YS 489659.
- (81) 0815 hours: FAC reported that a secondary explosion occurred and that intense black smoke was coming from area of airstrike at YS 489659. Thought to be oil or gas installation.
- (82) 0845 hours: Airstrike on YS 517667.
- (83) 0845 hours: 6 RAR advanced to scene of contact. D/6 RAR and D/5 RAR were mounted in APCs followed by A/6 RAR, B/6 RAR, 6 RAR Bn HQ, and C/6 RAR on foot.
- (84) 0900 to 1100 hours: Initial clearance was made of battle area. Two wounded enemy were captured. Two of 6 RAR wounded and thirteen of 6 RAR dead were recovered and evacuated by US DUSTOFF and RAAF Iroquois.
- (85) 1000 hours: Commander 1 ATF returned to HQ 1 ATF and advised sitrep as follows:
- "SITREP. Contact yesterday was a minimum of one to two battalions. All enemy dressed in greens with full web equipment. Weapons used were 82 mm mortars from two separate base plates, one to EAST, one to SOUTH, a large number of 50 and 30 cal MG, M7 grenades launchers, 57 and 75mm RCL. Enemy carrying large quantities of ammunition and heavily engaged our people for approximately 3 1/2 hours without ceasing fire. Consider we inflicted very heavy casualties on enemy. This is being checked out this morning. At 190706H D/5 RAR was airlifted out to LZ YS 462675. C Coy 6 RAR plus remainder of HQ moved out by tracks this morning, arriving 0830H.
- Future plans - 6 RAR to conduct search operations in three phases. Phase 1. D/5 RAR and D/6 RAR with 1 APC Sqn (31 Tracks) advance from LZ YS 473675 to area of yesterday's battle, area YS 483674. A/6 RAR to follow APC forces on foot, D/6 RAR to search battle area. Reserve for Phase 1. D/6 RAR and C/6 RAR to remain area LZ. Phase 2. D/5 RAR with APCs continue sweep EAST to the end of the rubber at YS 486668 to YS 494664 then to continue to sweep WEST back to LZ moving to SOUTH of track from YS 494664 to YS 480673. Bn HQ and B/6 RAR and C/6 RAR to move to new location YS 485673. Phase 3. A/6 RAR plus one troop 1 APC Sqn to sweep EAST through LONG TAN then WEST to YS 489654. At the same time D/5 RAR NE to feature NUI DAT. B/6 RAR and D/6 RAR to remain in reserve."
- (86) 1045 hours: Preliminary interrogation of one captured wounded enemy indicated that he was North Vietnamese.
- (87) 1100 hours: A/6 RAR, D/5 RAR and 1 APC Sqn (-) conducted sweep to EAST.
- (88) 1105 hours: 6 RAR reported as follows: "Enemy. 113 bodies and 2 WIA collected at this time. Collection continues. Possibility that they are North Vietnamese. Own Troops. 2 casualties recovered and evacuated. 13 bodies recovered which accounts for all MIA. LOCSTAT 6 RAR YS480672. Will commence Phase 2 as approved by Commander 1 ATF in ten minutes."

- (89) Interrogation of two captured enemy confirmed that they were North Vietnamese from 45 Regt which had two battalions in the area, namely 2 Bn and 3 Bn 45 Regt NVA. They had been in the area for about one month in the vicinity of BINH GIA.
- (90) 1130 hours: 1 APC Sqn (-) located extensive trench system at YS 489666. Over 100 trenches - considered that they were dug for protection rather than for defence. Some enemy bodies, weapons and equipment were found.
- (91) 1210 hours: D/5 RAR found a track leading almost due EAST from YS 490665. Assessed as being the main enemy withdrawal route.
- (92) 1215 hours: 6 RAR reported as follows:  
 "Enemy. Body count difficult to assess at this stage. Bodies have been sighted as far EAST as YS 487667. Approximately 40 weapons have been recovered, including four LMGs, one 60mm mortar, one .50 cal MG, and three RLs of unknown origin. As reported, enemy are of 45 Regt NVA. Further information obtained indicates that they were on their way to 1 ATF base when contacted. PW states rice cache for whole province is located five kilometers WEST of this location, protected by 4 Coy 5 Bn 45 Regt NVA which has six 82mm mortars; These are said to be the mortars that shelled base area. All tracks from area lead EAST. OWN sit. A/6 RAR and D/5 RAR located at YS 489669. Remainder at YS 483764.
- (93) 1220 hours: 6 RAR located a trail leading NE from YS 496667 and requested approval to search trail. Commander 1 ATF approved movement along trail for no further than 1000 meters.
- (94) 1315 hours: D/5 RAR sweeping enemy withdrawal trail to EAST from YS 498665 to a limit of 1000 meters.
- (95) 1320 hours: 6 RAR evacuated prisoners strapped to the stretcher frames of a H13 RW aircraft.
- (96) 1503 hours: Airstrike conducted at YS 598770 (105mm howitzer location) and YS 602768 (75mm RCL location).
- (97) 1505 hours: Commander 1 ATF visited 6 RAR.
- (98) 1540 hours: D/5 RAR had followed trail from YS 498665 to YS503667 without contact.
- (99) 1650 hours: Airstrike was conducted on a suspected camp of 45 Regt NVA at YS 51 8 2; armament 1000 pound bombs; direction of fly in from SOUTH to NORTH; nearest troops 1500 meters WEST.
- (100) 1700 hours: C/6 RAR had patrolled to area YS 487674 after finding a track running generally NORTH and blood trail and discarded enemy equipment and captured one wounded VC.
- (101) 1800 hours: A/6 RAR and 1 APC Sqn (-) arrived at battalion harbour area YS 485672 after completing a sweep of area generally YS 600664 - YS 498657 - YS 476667.

- (102) 2030 hours: CO 6 RAR issued verbal orders for operations on 29 August as follows:
- (a) A/6 RAR and 1 APC Sqn (-) sweep and search the village of XA LONG TAN.
  - (b) B/6 RAR in reserve and protection for 6 RAR Bn HQ.
  - (c) C/6 RAR and D/5 RAR carry out search of area to NORTH, including NUI DAT feature YS 4868.
  - (d) D/6 RAR continue with clearance of battlefield.
- (103) 200800 hours: A/6 RAR and 1 APC Sqn (-) departed 6 RAR harbour area on allotted task.
- (104) 0830 hours: C/6 RAR and D/5 RAR departed 6 RAR harbour area on allotted task.
- (105) 1037 hours: 1 APC Sqn (-) apprehended 40 civilians at YS 488650. An interpreter was flown to the area and the civilians were cleared and released.
- (106) 1040 hours: D/5 RAR located a dump of 27 gallons of kerosine, 21 gallons of cooking oil, 20 pick heads, and some clothing at YS 483681.
- (107) 1200 hours: C/6 RAR found small quantities of ammunition, magazines and equipment at YS 488676.
- (108) 1226 hours: D/5 RAR found two recently dug weapon pits at YS4786 0. Personal equipment near the pits included a wallet containing photographs and documents.
- (109) 1600 hours: A/6 RAR and 1 APC Sqn (-) returned to harbour area.
- (110) 1630 hours: D/6 RAR and 1 APC Sqn less 2 Tp returned to 6 RAR base area.
- (111) 1730 hours: C/6 RAR located in night harbour position at YS 489687.
- (112) 1800 hours: D/5 RAR located in night harbour position at YS 379691.
- (113) 1830 hours: C/6 RAR issued verbal orders for 21 August. Concept of operations was as follows:
- (a) A/6 RAR move by APC to search area bounded by creeks in YS5065 and 5066.
  - (b) B/6 RAR search general area YS510670.
  - (c) C/6 RAR search general area YS505685.
  - (d) D/5 RAR revert to under command 5 RAR at 210700 hours.
- (114) 210830 hours: B/6 RAR located a track heading generally EAST from YS 508663 which had been used about 36 hours previously by a large number of troops.
- (115) 1020 hours: A/6 RAR found tracks of an estimated 300 troops in vicinity of YS 508659. Tracks veered EAST.



- (116) 211130 hours: A/6 RAR located a crossing place where the main enemy withdrawal crossed the SUOI DA BANG at YS 511660.
- (117) 211310 hours: A/6 RAR found delaying positions about 36 hours old at YS 514661 and some discarded VC equipment on the track.
- (118) 211315 hours: C/6 RAR located a large enemy camp at YS 508678 which had recently been occupied. 14 bodies were found in graves.
- (119) 211335 hours: A/6 RAR located a recently used enemy camp at YS 517662. Tracks out of the camp led NORTH and NE.
- (120) 211515 hours: 6 RAR concentrated at YS 504660.
- (121) 211515 hours: B/6 RAR departed for 6 RAR base area in APCs of 3 Tp 1 APC Sqn.
- (122) 211523 to 211600 hours: Two platoons of C/6 RAR returned to 6 RAR base area in RAAF Iroquois.
- (123) 211600 hours: 6 RAR Bn HQ, A/6 RAR and C(-)/6 RAR departed for 6 RAR in APCs of 1 APC Sqn (-).
- (124) 211730 hours: 6 RAR concentrated in base area. Operation SMITHFIELD concluded.

13. Results:

a. Casualties:

Friendly	Enemy
KIA: 17	KIA (BC): 245
WIA: 21	VCC: 3
MIA: None	(It is estimated that the enemy evacuated at least 350 casualties)
DOW: 1	

b. Weapons and Ammunition:

Friendly	Enemy
Wpns: One M16	(1) D/6 RAR Area
	33 7.62mm AK Aslt Rifles.
	5 7.62mm SKS Rifles
	7 7.62mm RPD LMG
	1 .30 cal M1 Carbine
	1 7.62mm PP Sh M1941 SMG (Burp Gun)
	1 7.62mm SGH HMG on wheels mounted with shield
	1 .30 cal M1 Garand Rifle
	1 .57mm RR Type 30 with modified 'Bren' LMG tripod.
	4 Rocket launchers RPG-2.
	(2) 3 Tp 1 APC Sqn Contact Area
	57mm RR type 30 with telescopic sight and 'Bren' tripod.
	.30 cal Browning LMG (BAR)
	.45 Thompson M141 SMG
	.30 Cal M1 Carbine.

(3) Ammunition (Approximate):  
 3700 rounds 7.62mm M1943 rifle (AK, SKA)  
 2700 rounds 7.62mm Soviet 1943 link (RPD)  
 1900 rounds 7.62mm M1908 Soviet link  
 (MMG)

120 rounds .45 cal (Thompson)  
 1000 rounds .30 cal (M1 Carbine)  
 7 M27 US Grenades  
 300 Misc Hand Grenades  
 1 Pineapple grenade  
 22 rounds 57mm RR  
 28 rounds Rocket RPG-2  
 40 rounds 60mm Mor (US and Chicom)

(4) Magazines.  
 26 Drum Magazines (RPD LMG)  
 105 AK rifle curved magazines  
 12 BAR Magazines  
 4 Thompson magazines.  
 2 "Snail-type" Spandau  
 MG-34 magazines  
 Mixed ammunition liner

14. Administrative Matters.

a. There were no administrative problems. Some resupply was effected by both UH1B and M113. The resupply of ammunition by free drop from HU1B during the battle proved very effective and timely.

b. Most of the casualties sustained by D/6 RAR remained in the battle area for seven hours before being evacuated. This was unavoidable as the battle raged until last light. After last light two main problems had to be faced. There was no moonlight at all and it was literally pitch dark, whilst movement was heard on several occasions to the east and it was highly possible that an enemy force of over 1000 men still faced the 300 men of 6 RAR and 1 APC Sqn. The securing of the landing site and the evacuation of casualties was therefore carried out under extremely difficult conditions and requirements for maximum security.

15.

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95 Messages:

a. The following Congratulatory messages were received:

- (1) For Brigadier Jackson. The Prime Ministers Press Secretary has asked that the following message be despatched to you. "Our forces in their latest engagement have acquitted themselves with skill effectiveness and high courage in the best Australian tradition. Please tell them that Australia is proud of them. I have publicly expressed my sympathy to the bereaved. My sympathy goes also to the wounded I send them best wishes for speedy recovery. Signed Harold Holt Prime Minister".
- (2) Following message received in Canberra from COMUSMACV. \*For General Mackay from General Westmoreland. Your troops have won a spectacular victory over the enemy near BARIA. Aggressiveness, quick reaction, good use of fire power, and old fashioned Australian courage have produced outstanding results. Hearty congratulations"
- (3) Following message sent from Canberra to COMUSMACV. "For General Westmoreland from Mackay. Your personal message conveying your praise and congratulations on victory in Phuoc Tuy was received with pleasure and pride and will be appreciated especially by the troops and the people of Australia".
- (4) For Comd 1 ATF. "Comd AFV adds his personal congratulations to you and all ranks Australian Force particularly 6 RAR and supporting ground and air elements on their magnificent performance and achievement".
- (5) From Maj Gen Soaman. "Please pass on to the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, my heartiest congratulations for the outstanding results obtained during Operation SMITHFIELD. The large number of enemy killed as compared to the light casualties on the Australians is indicative of the professionalism of your Task Force. I especially want to congratulate D Company for its outstanding performance during this operation.
- (6) The following message was received from Lieutenant General Coa Van Vien, Chief of JGS/RVNAF. "I wish to express the gratitude of the people and the Armed Forces of Vietnam for the courageous and highly successful performance of the men of the Australian Task Force during Operation SMITHFIELD. Their action demonstrated to our enemies and to the world the professional competence of your troops and their determination to help our nation in the preservation of its freedom. We share the pride of your people in the accomplishments of your brave soldiers, we also share the grief of the families of those who lost their lives in this action and other actions. We hope for the speedy and satisfactory recovery of those who suffered wounds."

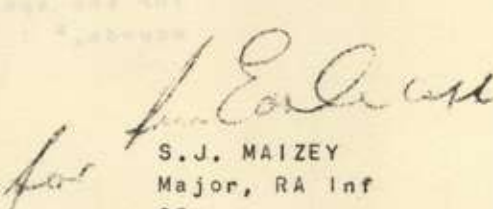
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b. The Communists, by comparison, issued the following statements on the results of the Battle:

(1) At 1749 GMT on 27 August 1966 Radio Hanoi reported that "The Australian mercenaries, who are no less husky and beefy than their allies, the US aggressors, have proved as good fresh targets for the South Vietnam Liberation Fighters. According to LPA - Liberation Press Agency, in two days ending 18 August, the LAF - Liberation Armed Forces - wiped out over 500 Australian mercenaries in BARIA Province. LPA reported; On 18 August in the coastal province of BARIA east of SAIGON, the LAF wiped out almost completely one Battalion of Australian mercenaries in an ambush in LONG TAN village. At 1500 hours that day, an Australian mercenary Battalion and a column of Armoured cars fell into an ambush. Within the first few minutes the LAF fiercely attacked the enemy and made short work of two companies, set fire to three M113 Armoured Cars, and drove the remnants into a corner of the battlefield. The LAF then concentrated their fire on them and heavily decimated the remaining company. The LAF also shot down one of the US aircraft which went to the rescue of the battered Australians. According to first reports, in this battle the LAF put out of action 400 Australian mercenaries, thus annihilating two full sized companies, heavily decimated another, set afire three M113 Armoured cars, downed one US Jet fighter, and captured a great quantity of arms and ammunition. The day before, 17 August, the LAF in the same province wiped out 100 Australian mercenaries. For these victories, the South Vietnam LAF command has decided to award the Liberation Military Exploit Order Third Class to the victorious units."

(2) At 1419 GMT on 28 August 1966 Radio PEKING International Service in English reported that: "More than 500 Australian Satellite Troops including two whole companies were wiped out by the South Vietnam Liberation Army in BARIA Province on 17 and 18 August when it launched fierce attacks on an Australian battalion and an armoured car column, reported the South Vietnam Liberation Press Agency. In an attack on an Australian Base in NUI THU on 17 August, the Liberation Army in BARIA Province wiped out more than 100 Australian troops. In the afternoon of the following day, the Liberation Army knocked out a number of Australian troops which fell into an ambush in the LONG TAN Hamlet. Then, the Liberation Forces concentrated their fire on the rest of the enemy and wiped out more than four hundred Australian Satellite Troops. Two companies were completely wiped out and another company was heavily battered. Three M113 Armoured cars were destroyed. The command of the South Vietnam Liberation Armed Forces has recently decided to award this victorious unit with the Liberation Exploit Order, Third Class".

FOR THE COMMANDER:

  
S.J. MAIZEY  
Major, RA Inf  
S3

Encl: Maps 1 through 9.  
D/6 RAR After Action Report.

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D COY AFTER ACTION REPORT : OPERATION "SMITHFIELD"

1. Reference Map: 1:25,000 PICTO

1. OPERATIONS

D Coy Operation "VENDETTA", later renamed Operation "SMITHFIELD".

2. REPORT BY

6776 Maj H A SMITH OC D Coy 6 RAR

3. FORCE

D Coy 6 RAR; strength 108 All Ranks.

4. TIME OF ACTION

1540 - 1910 hrs 18 Aug 66.  
Duration: 3½ hours.

5. LOCATION

YS4767, YS4867.

6. COMPANY TASK

Search for, and locate enemy force that Mortarted 1 ATF area on 17 Aug 66.

7. DESCRIPTION OF ACTION IN OWN WORDS

D Coy, with a strength of 108, moved from its base location through B Coy area at 1100hrs on 18 Aug 66, arriving at YS473673 to RV with B Coy HQ at 1300hrs. After studying the evidence of enemy tracks, I ordered an advance, one-up, to the NORTH EAST, commencing at 1500hrs, following the line of a fresh VC track. At YS475675 the track divided into 2 tracks, both heading EAST SOUTH EAST, roughly parallel, and about 300 yds apart. At this point there was evidence of 82mm mortar ammo being prepared for firing, and signs that the enemy had fled EAST in a hurry to escape CB. Several grenades, sandals, and pieces of equipment were found over a wide area.

At this point I ordered the advance to continue, but now with two platoons up; 10Pl on the LEFT, 11Pl on the RIGHT - on the high ground, with Coy HQ and 12Pl in the centre rear. The Coy covered a frontage of 400 metres and a similar distance in depth. (Sketch 1)

At 1540hrs, 11Pl contacted 6 VC at YS478673. The report was 6 - 8 local VC, dressed in khaki, no equipment, fled EAST. One AK rifle was recovered. (A body later recovered). I instructed 11Pl to continue sweeping EAST, with the rest of the Coy moving as before.

At 1600hrs, 11Pl reported movement and noise in the house at YS481672 and prepared to assault the house. I ordered 10Pl to continue advancing EAST and to get into a "cut-off" position facing SOUTH in case enemy fled NORTH. 11Pl cleared the house without incident and I gave orders to continue the advance to the EAST.

At 1608hrs firing was heard in 11Pl area and the Pl Comd. reported a platoon size force to his LEFT front and called for Artillery fire on YS487674. He further reported more enemy, and said he was suffering casualties as he was being attacked on his LEFT, FRONT and RIGHT. I ordered 11Pl to withdraw. The Coy was disposed as shown in Sketch 2.

Coy HQ and 12 Pl continued to move forward as firing increased and reached YS480674 and came under fire from the rounds passing over 11 Pl. Approx 20 rounds 82mm mortar fell on the RIGHT flank of Coy HQ Area, and I immediately moved 12 Pl and Coy HQ to the LEFT (NORTH EAST) to GR482674 out of the mortared area. The MFC gave a Mortrep bearing of 2300 mils and the info was passed back by the FO. The mortar ceased to fire after CB, but fired again into the same area later, from mortar positions to the EAST.

11 Pl reported that they were almost surrounded, suffering heavy casualties, could not extract themselves, and almost out of ammunition. Artillery fire continued to support them, with the FO talking to the Pl Sgt after the Pl Comd was killed. Regrettably, there was some confusion as to exact location of enemy and own troops, and initially fire support was not close, but in fact did untold damage to the enemy in depth.

Pl Comd 10 Pl stated he was not under fire and could possibly get into 11 Pl to support their withdrawal. I ordered 10 Pl to attack from the NORTH. 10 Pl were observed advancing and then a large volume of fire broke out in their area and radio contact was lost. At about this time 11 Pl radio also went out, after reports that VC were all around them.

I then ordered 12 Pl and Coy HQ to move forward in an attempt to get closer to 11 Pl to fight them back. 12 Pl moved SOUTH EAST followed by CHQ. At this time 10 Pl communications were restored when second operator reached them. 10 Pl stated they had casualties and were attacked from the high ground to the NORTH (YS448675). 10 Pl had, in fact, got to within 100 metres of 11 Pl before being stopped by SA and mortar fire, and then infantry attack. I ordered 10 Pl to withdraw as their wounded were now arriving back to Coy HQ. (Sketch No 3).

By now, 12 Pl had moved off to the SOUTH EAST and it was impossible to move CHQ with the 10 Pl wounded. I organised the security of the Company Aid Post area and put 10 Pl on the ground as they arrived back.

12 Pl reached a position at YS483673, about 150 metres behind 11 Pl, and then came under heavy fire and subsequently attacked from the area of the house at YS481672, and also from the NORTH EAST (Sketch 4).

At the same time enemy attacked the Coy defended area from the EAST, and were moving in and out of 12 Pl's RIGHT flank, Coy HQ engaged enemy in area YS480673. Artillery fire support continued. HMG and MMG was received into the Coy area all the time from area YS485674. (Sketch 5)

The strike aircraft arranged by 6 RAR arrived, but apparently could not see the area because of the low cloud and heavy rain. (I had requested Napalm from YS486669 to YS487674). Coloured smoke was thrown, but did not get up through the canopy, and I could not get communications with the FAC. (The aircraft then dropped bombs to the NORTH EAST).

The ammunition resupply helicopters (2) arrived as previously requested and dropped the ammunition through the trees "right into the CSM's lap". This position was in a small clearing, and indicated by coloured smoke.

By this time, and with the visual assistance of the coloured smoke thrown for the strike, 11 Pl survivors had fought their way back to 12 Pl and 12 Pl withdrew back to the Coy area. I gave quick orders for the defence of this area. The time was about 1815 hrs and for the next hour the enemy kept up a continuous volume of fire into the area from HMG and MMG to the EAST, and a fantastic amount of LMG and SA fire from the SOUTH EAST. He attacked, in succession from the SOUTH EAST (the main thrust), the EAST NORTH EAST, and SOUTH. (Sketch 6)

Artillery fire continued throughout and was extremely effective. The FO had fire around the EAST, SOUTH EAST, and SOUTH of the Coy perimeter area, at times some rounds fell in the Coy area (but only one WIA from Arty) - but keeping the enemy from closing in. 4 KIA were received from enemy SA fire during the attacks on the final Coy area.

The enemy attacks continued until the APC Tp with A Coy arrived at 1910 hrs, and even as the APC'S came into the Coy area the enemy was still attacking from the NORTH EAST. However, they soon disengaged and withdrew EAST.

The Coy was also joined at this time by the B Coy HQ with one platoon which I placed covering the WEST approach. CO 6RAR had arrived with A Coy and took command.

During the next 5 hrs the Coy regrouped, loaded the wounded on APC'S and moved back, securing the LZ at YS473675 with a circle of 9 APC'S. The 7 DUSTOFF helicopters arrived in quick succession from 2359 hrs and the last casualties were evacuated by 0034 hrs 19 Aug 66.

The Coy was then joined by A Coy and B Coy, and the force remained in this area under command CO 6 RAR until the APC assault at 0900 hrs.

8. DESCRIPTION OF TERRAIN

a. 5 year old rubber plantation with some undergrowth in places. Mainly clean. Visibility was about 150 metres but fell to 100 metres when the heavy rain started about 1730 hrs.

b. The area to the NORTH was thick scrub.

c. The Coy area was on a gradual slope, the final position being a reverse slope position, facing SOUTH EAST.

ENEMY

9. TACTICS

The enemy was undoubtedly warned of our presence by the contact with his screen or standing patrol. Although he had one line of fire trenches, these were probably dug after the battle started. He appeared to be static when contacted.

10. His immediate reaction was to hold 11 Pl down with fire from a fire base at GR 475672. He then sent out (to the SOUTH WEST) about a Coy or two Coy force which then virtually surrounded the platoon with about 6 groups of 20 - 25 VC (Sketch 7).

11. The group at A remained local fire base and other groups gave cross fire, whilst other groups moved forward, e.g., groups A, B and D fired, C, E, and F moved forward, then groups A, C and E fired, while B, D and F moved forward. This process without voice or obvious signals, was obviously the result of a lot of training and rehearsal. It could have been on a timed programme.

12. When 10 pl attacked the VC on the LEFT flank of 11 Pl: (Sketch 8) the enemy held 10 Pl with fire from the main fire base to the EAST, (X) and at least one Coy attacked from the LEFT (Y), coming down off the spur at GR485675. The enemy also fired light and medium mortar onto 10 and 11 Pl areas. He also moved another large force (Z) in an attempt to outflank 11 Pl. This force was met by 12 Pl, as 10 Pl withdrew, force (Y) then went through into the LEFT flank of 12 Pl, but was successfully engaged by Artillery and small arms fire from the Coy area. (Sketch 9).

13. When 11 and 12 Pls withdrew, there was a slight lull, as he regrouped, but then the enemy attacked in force, mainly from the SOUTH EAST, but also from the EAST, NORTH EAST and SOUTH, and these attacks continued, supported by heavy HMG and MMG fire from the NORTH EAST. (Sketch 10)

14 Artillery and small arms fire kept those attacks back, but large numbers of enemy could be seen moving WEST, obviously trying to encircle the position. However this force was cut by the APC Tp as it arrived from the SOUTH. B Coy reported VC to the immediate WEST of our area as they arrived. This smaller group fled NORTH EAST. (Sketch 11)

15. It is now understood that the enemy force was 275 Regiment plus one NVA battalion and D445 Mobile Force Bn with an artillery Battalion (6 Bn); advancing 3 up and one in reserve. The contact apparently took place in the centre of the enemy front, and he tried to envelop, mainly from the SOUTHERN flank. The dispersion and movement of 10, 11 and 12 Pls, coupled with the Artillery support probably caused him some doubts as to the size of our force, and looking back on the action, it was fortunate, although to the detriment of 11 Pl, that the Coy was dispersed. I feel that if the enemy had been able to locate the limits of a smaller area, he may have been able to surround and overrun the area with his superior numbers.

16. DRESS, WEAPONS and EQUIPMENT

The enemy force was extremely well equipped. Clothing was a mixture of green, khaki, black and grey. Webbing and packs were well made and plentiful. He camouflaged the back of his body and his headdress (jungle hats). Ho Chi Minh sandals were the main footwear, and these during the contact, were tucked into webbing or carried in the hand. One dead VC had a pair of sandals and two 60mm mortar bombs in one hand, and a mortar bipod in the other. Every man had a shelter, hammock, rice tin, spirit lamp, "housewife", cleaning gear, oil bottle and personal items.

17. Whistles and bugles were carried and used for signals. The enemy laid line as he moved forward (D10 cable on large wooden spools)

18. The enemy was extremely well armed. Almost every man carried an automatic AK or SKS rifle. All had at least 2-3 grenades, some "grenadiers" carried haversacks with 10-12 grenades of varying types. Personal ammunition was up to 250 rounds, mainly in magazines. In addition to personal weapons, a large number of MG (Metal) magazines for LMG, 60mm mortar bombs, rockets and 57mm RCL rounds were carried. Members of crew-served weapon teams did not always have personal weapons, but carried a large amount of weapon ammunition. Refer to para 25 for types of weapons.

19. ENEMY CASUALTIES

245 KIA (BC)  
150 KIA (Poss)  
500 WIA (Poss)  
3 VCC (WIA)

20. Enemy casualties in the immediate Coy area were caused by small arms fire (50%) and Artillery fire (50%). Enemy casualties were found in the areas of the action shown at Sketch 12. Other casualties were found to the EAST and SOUTH EAST.

21. FRIENDLY CASUALTIES

D Coy casualties were:

17 KIA  
19 WIA



22. Other casualties were:

3 WIA (APC Tp - 1, later died of wounds)  
(B Coy - 1)  
(A Coy - 1)

23. Own KIA were caused by small arms fire, mainly head wounds; death instantaneous. WIA were caused mainly by SA fire, and by mortar shrapnel. One WIA was caused by own artillery called in close by Coy Comd. 3 shock cases were also evacuated.

24. AMMUNITION EXPENDITURE (APPROXIMATE)

a. Artillery 2500 rds 105 How  
500 rds 155 How

b. Infantry 3500 rds 7.63mm (SLR)  
5000 rds 7.62mm link (MG)  
1500 rds 5.56mm (M16)  
300 rds 9mm (OMC)  
10 rds 40mm (M79)

Clammore mines and M26 grenades were carried but NOT used.

c. A Coy, B Coy and APC Tp also fired some small quantities.

25. DOCUMENTS AND WEAPONS

a. DOCUMENTS

Handed to IO 6RAR.

26. WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION

a. D Coy Area

33 7.62mm AK Aslt Rifles.  
5 7.62mm SKS Rifles.  
7 7.62mm RPD LMG  
1 .30 cal M1 Carbine.  
1 7.62mm PP Sh M1941 SMG ('BURP'Gun).  
1 7.62mm SGH HMG on wheels mounted with shield.  
1 .30 cal M1 'Garand' Rifle.  
1 57mm RR Type 30 with modified 'Bren' LMG tripod.  
4 Rocket Launchers RPG - 2.

b. APC Tp Contact Area

57mm RR Type 30 with telescopic sight and 'Bren' tripod.  
.30 cal Browning LMG (BAR).  
.45 Thompson M141 SMG.  
.30 cal M1 Carbine.

c. Ammunition (Approx)

3700 rds 7.62mm M 1943 rifle (AK, SKS)  
2700 rds 7.62mm SOVIET 1943 link (RPD)  
1900 rds 7.62mm M1908 SOVIET link (MMG)  
100 rds 12.7 Link (HMG)  
1000 rds 7.92 Link (MG-34)  
120 rds .45 cal (THOMPSON)  
1000 rds .30 cal (M1 CARBINE)  
7 M26 US Grenades.  
300 Misc Hand grenades.  
1 Pineapple grenade.  
22 rds 57mm RR  
28 rds Rocket RPG-2  
40 rds 60mm Mor (US & Chicom)

d. Magazines

- 26 Drum Magazines (RPD LMG)
- 105 AK rifle curved magazines
- 12 BAR Mags.
- 4 Thompson magazines.
- 2 "Snail-type" SPANDAU MG-34 Magazines
- Mixed ammunition liners (Metal)

LESSONS LEARNT

27. WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION

a. MG M60

- (1) Failed in the extreme conditions of mud, dirt and wet. There were no mechanical failures, but the ammunition could not be kept clean. The ammunition pouch issued with the M60 is useless, as it shrinks, and folds in, stopping the feed. Further, it is not convenient to undo a corroded zip to place in a belt. All belts should be in light metal magazines, carried in a canvas bag which can be slung. With the present system it is impossible to prevent the belts dragging in the mud. It should be noted that all enemy LMG ammo is in cylindrical metal magazines, and their LMGs remained firing. It is recommended that action be taken to produce a metal "SPANDAU, MG-34, Snail Type" magazine for use with the MG M60, which is really only a development of the MG-34.
- (2) M60 ammunition containing 1 in 5 1960 tracer failed on every tracer round. Gun fired 4 rounds then stopped, etc.

b. 7.62mm SLR

- (1) This was the outstanding weapon of the action, with only 2 broken firing pins.
- (2) 60 rounds in magazines is not sufficient. It is not possible to refill magazines with respect to time, mud and rain, and the AUSTRALIAN L1A1 rifle does not have the charger-loading capacity of the original FN rifle. Therefore, all ammunition should be in magazines. I recommend that:-
  - (a) The scale of magazines be increased from 3 to 8, on the man, with -
  - (b) A percentage (50%) of 1st line reserve for resupply should be loaded in magazines.
  - (c) Consideration be given to the modification of the SLR to bring back the charger re-loading capacity.
  - (d) Disposable plastic magazines be procured.

c. 9mm OMC

At ranges in excess of 25 meters the OMC was not effective. Without tracer indication in the poor light, this weapon was poor. It is recommended that all OMC be replaced with SLR or M16.

d. M16 Rifle

This weapon performed well, but a number of "expanded case" stoppages occurred, and these could not be cleared without cleaning rods, not yet issued to the scale of 1 per weapon. Procurement and issue action required. .../7

e. Tracer

Tracer ammunition was invaluable. The Coy policy of the initial 5 rounds rifle and 25 rds MG, followed by normal 1 in 5 tracer proved successful in the poor conditions of visibility and lack of back-ground to show the fall of shot. I recommend that even more tracer be used. Although small arms accuracy has been questioned, there is no doubt that 50% of the dead around the Coy area were killed by SA fire, and the use of tracer was a main factor.

f. Integral Coy Support Weapons

(1) When out of own mortar range, it is essential to have mortar fire power to fill in the gaps between Artillery corrections, and in areas that Artillery fire cannot be brought to bear immediately. A 60mm mortar could have played havoc in these areas, and is a requirement for Coy fire support.

(2) CARL GUSTAV

Although not yet available, the Coy Carl Gustav firing HE could have been used at ranges of 100-150 metres along rows of rubber trees.

(3) As an exponent of the old system of MMG and Medium Mortar Section attached to rifle coys, I feel that consideration should be given to the revival of this system. The M60 is not a MMG or GPMG as originally intended. The weapon required as an MMG within an Infantry Battalion is the 7.62mm MAG 58 GPMG currently used in MALAYSIA.

(4) The Support Section of a rifle Coy in this theatre should have access to:-

MG M60  
85mm CARL GUSTAV (or TE)  
GPMG 58  
60mm Mortar.

These weapons to be carried as and when required by the operation for use in the base defended area, and to be available on OPDEM during operations if not carried.

28. There is a need for an "instant pressure-pack" type of marker 11 on to indicate own position to aircraft. Coloured smoke did not go up through the rubber-tree canopy. The carbide gas type ballon is not suitable because of the preparation time required.

29. COMMUNICATIONS

- a. Voice level and rate of speech must be controlled. I found that I could not understand many messages, and I was probably an offender in this regard.
- b. There is a requirement for headphones and throat microphones to be available in the CES of the radio for use in similar situations where external noise interferes with the transmission and reception.

MISCELLANEOUS POINTS

30. The Coy did not dig in. An attempt was made, but because of the time factor this never really got under way. Fortunately, very few enemy mortar bombs landed in the final Coy position, and the curve of the ground gave some protection from SA fire, although the HMG and MG were firing down into the position. However this fire was area covering fire and obviously not observed fire.

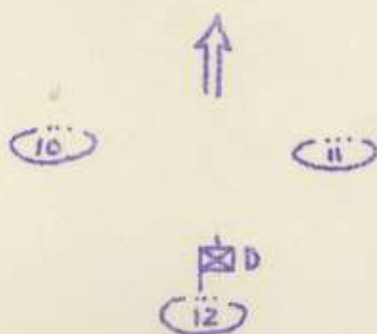
CO's COMMENTS

1. D Coy's feat was a very fine company action and the company conducted itself throughout the battle with calmness, determination, bravery and professional skill. By their efforts they were instrumental in turning what could easily have been a decisive defeat into a magnificent victory. The supporting artillery, decisive as it was and the relief by A Coy and the APC Troop, life saving as events proved them to be detracts nothing from D Coy's very commendable performance.
2. Despite the long time that elapsed until the wounded were evacuated by a DUSTOFF helicopter, the circumstances of the situation were such that it was quite impracticable to have effected earlier evacuation. The night was pitch black with NIL visibility at ground level and all operations connected with the regrouping of D Coy, the evacuation of the wounded and the withdrawal from the battle area had to be conducted in an environment of minimum light and noise, with the ever-present threat of enemy attack.
3. I agree generally with the "lessons learnt" observations by OC D Coy. The matter of weapons and ammunition deficiencies is being investigated independently now by a committee comprising the rifle company commanders; it is intended to forward prior recommendations for improvement in this field soon.
4. I agree that, despite this action, steel helmets are not a requirement for operations of this nature - The dubious protection they give is out weighed by their encumbrance and the decreased hearing capability they give to the wearer.

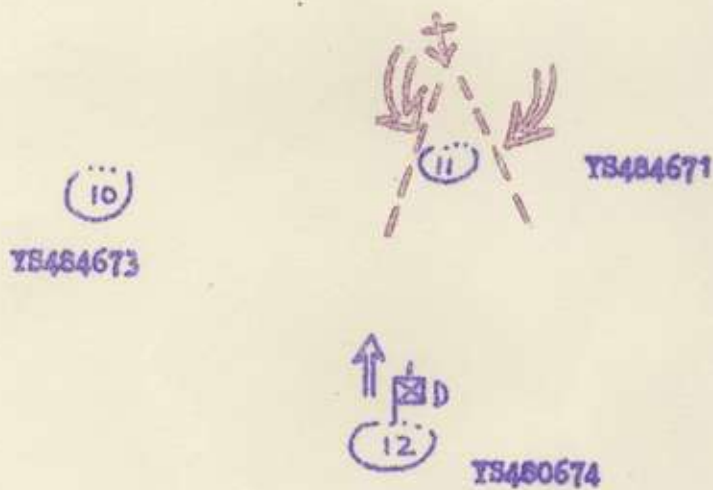
(C.M. Townsend)  
Lt Col  
CO 6RAR

D COY AFTER ACTION REPORT

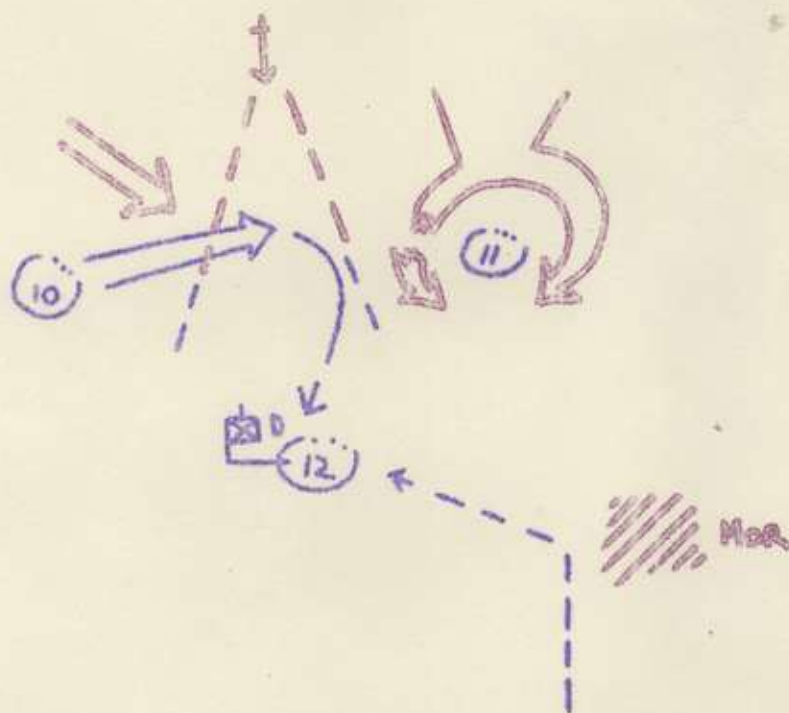
SKETCH 1



SKETCH 2

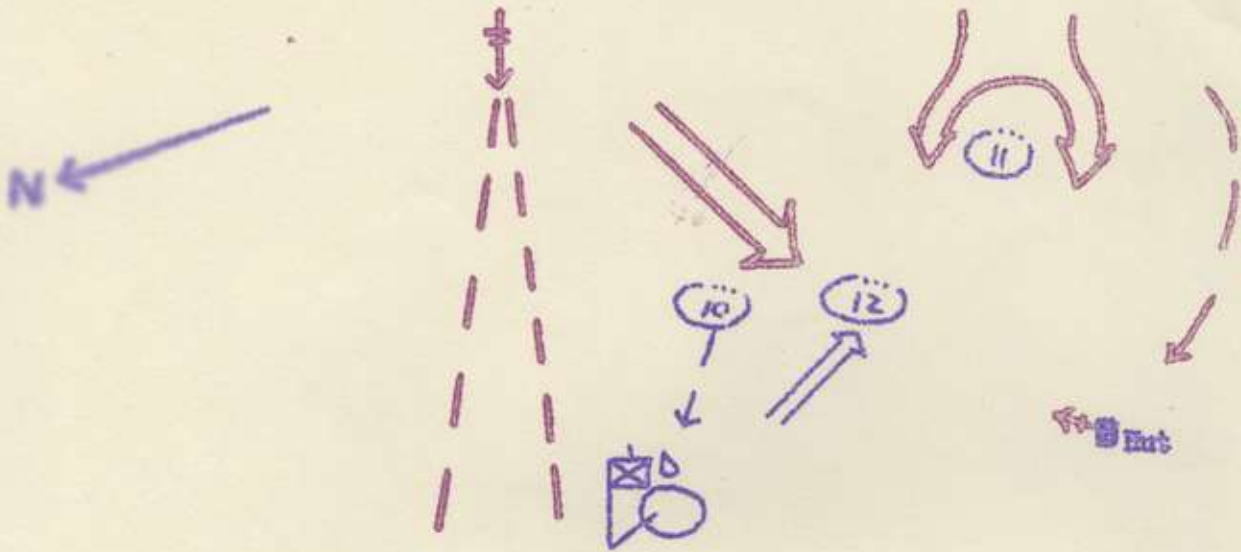


SKETCH 3

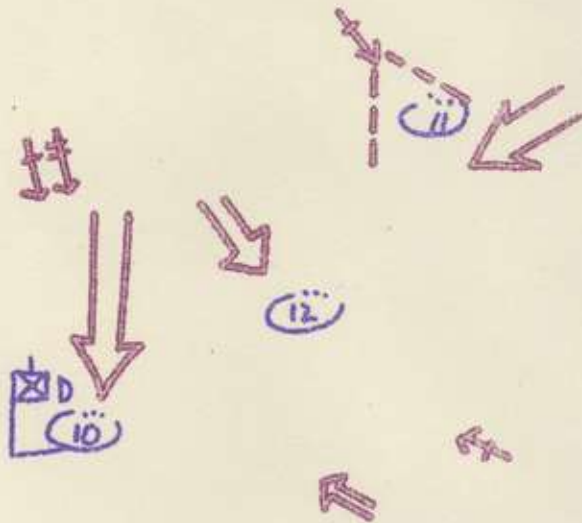


D COY AFTER ACTION REPORT

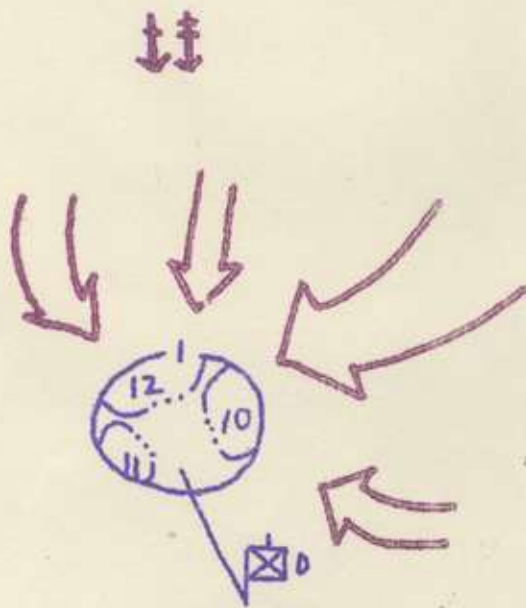
SKETCH 4



SKETCH 5



SKETCH 6

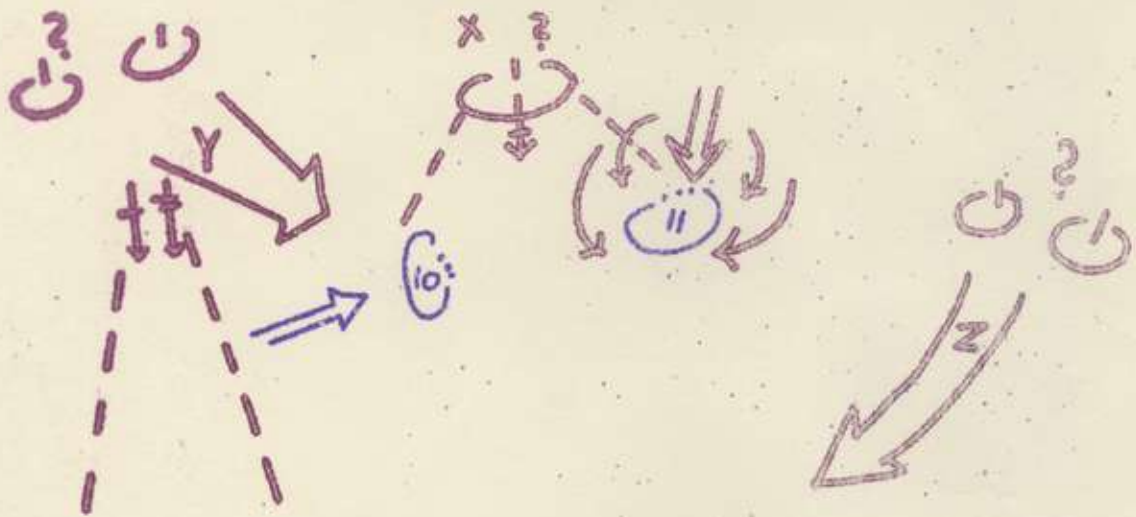


D COY AFTER ACTION REPORT

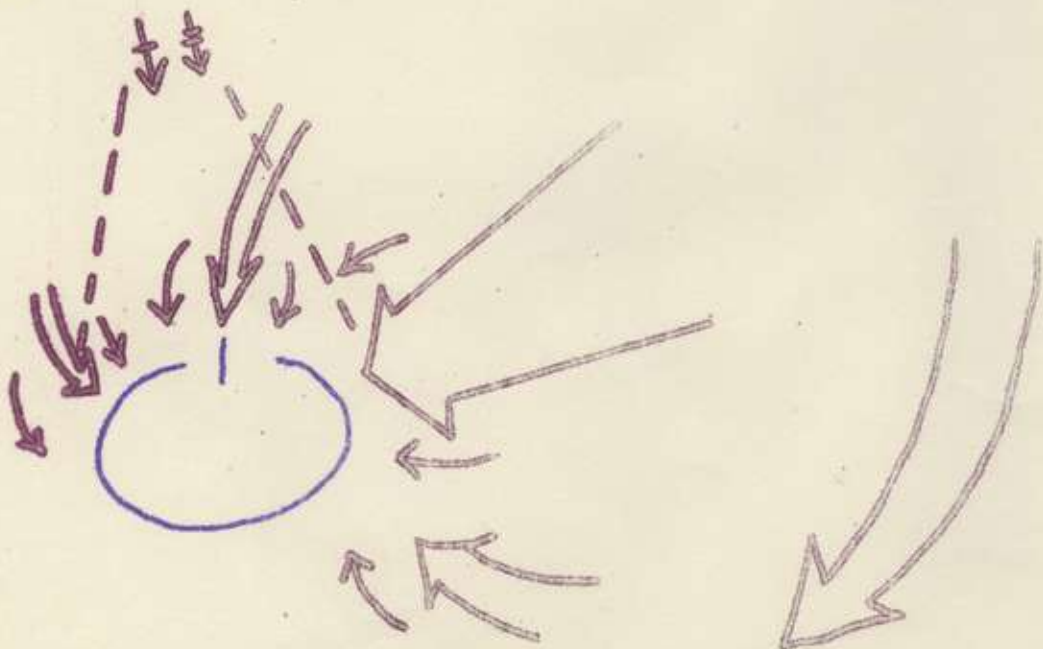
SKETCH 7



SKETCH 8

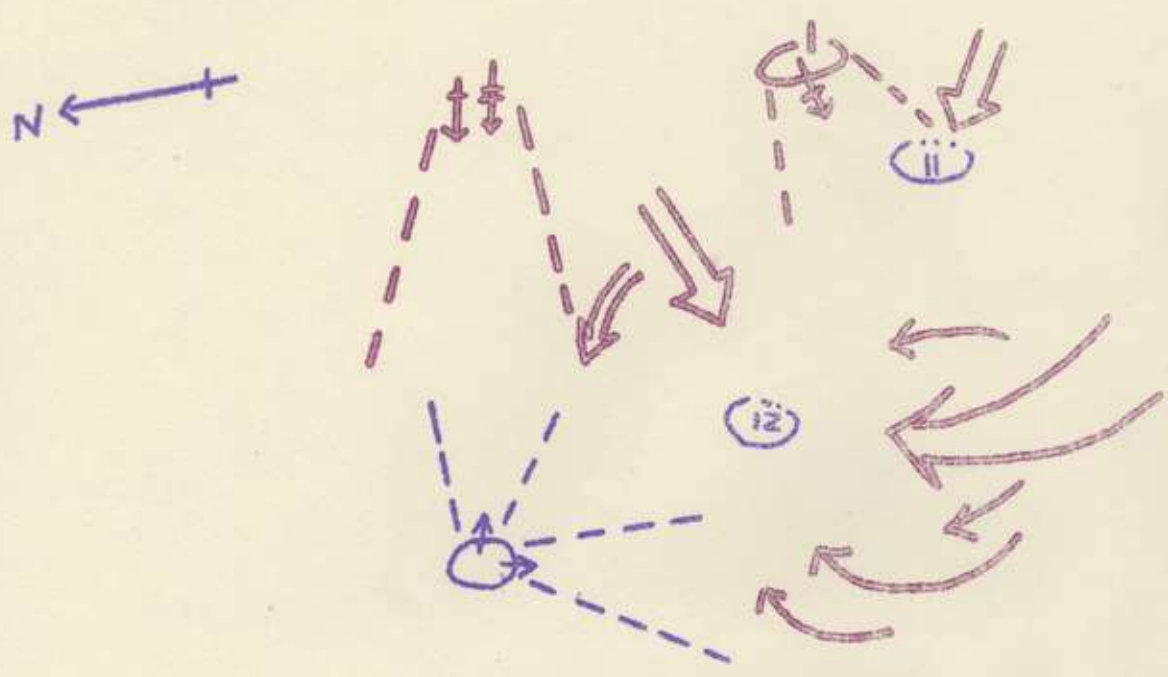


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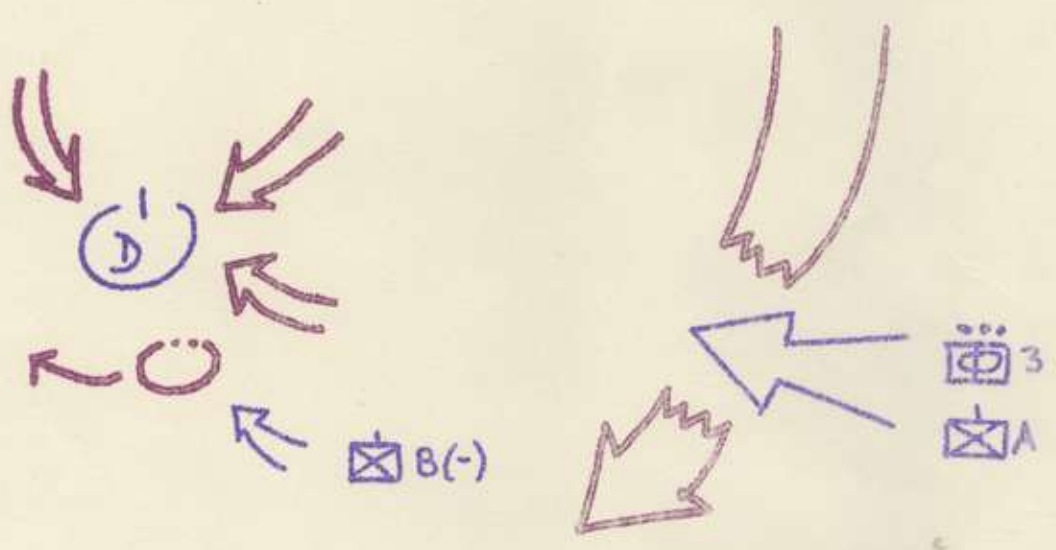


D COY AFTER ACTION REPORT

SKETCH 9



SKETCH 11

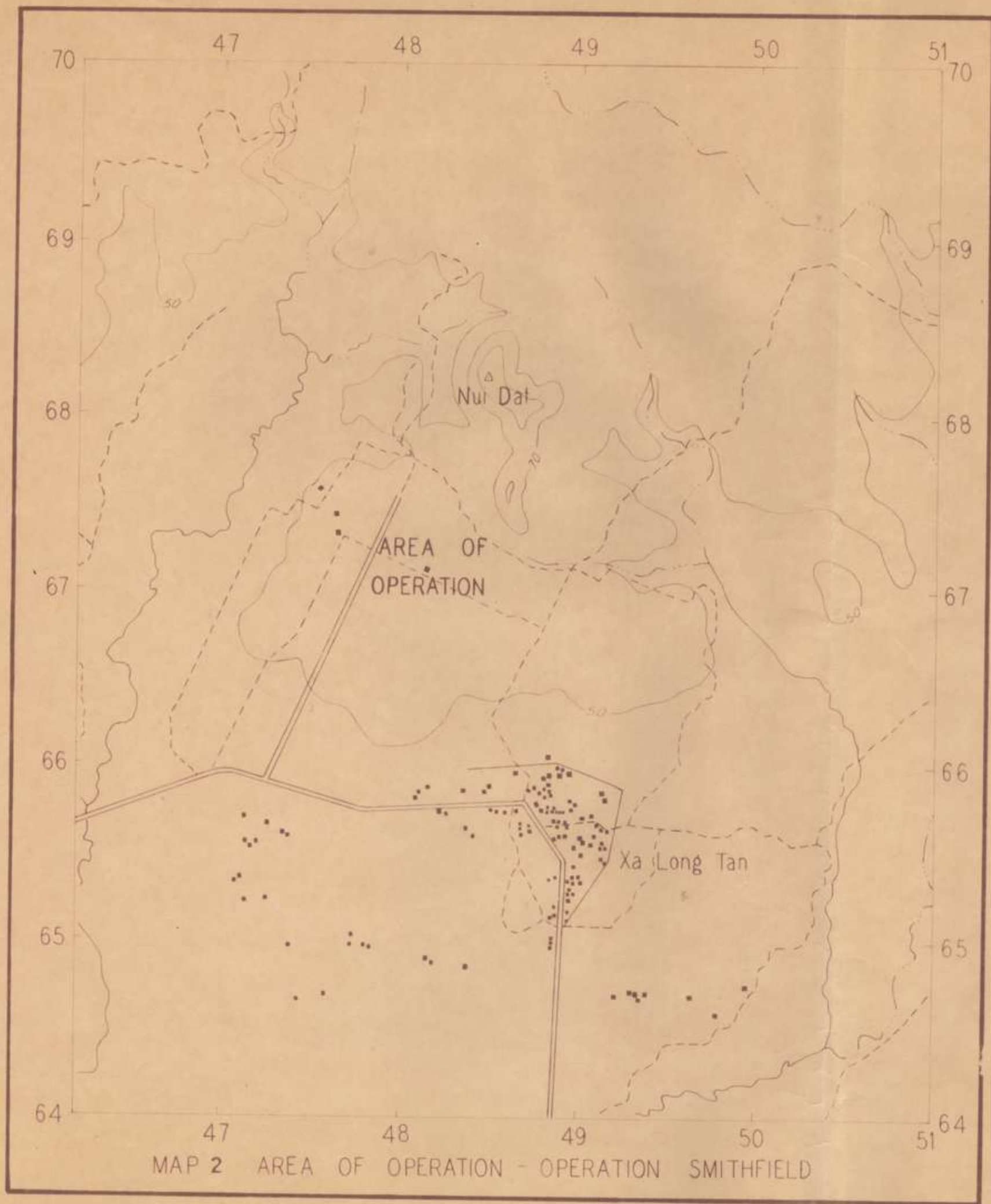


SKETCH 12









MAP 2 AREA OF OPERATION - OPERATION SMITHFIELD

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12 D

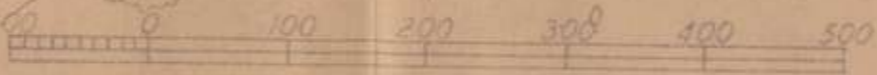
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D 6RAR

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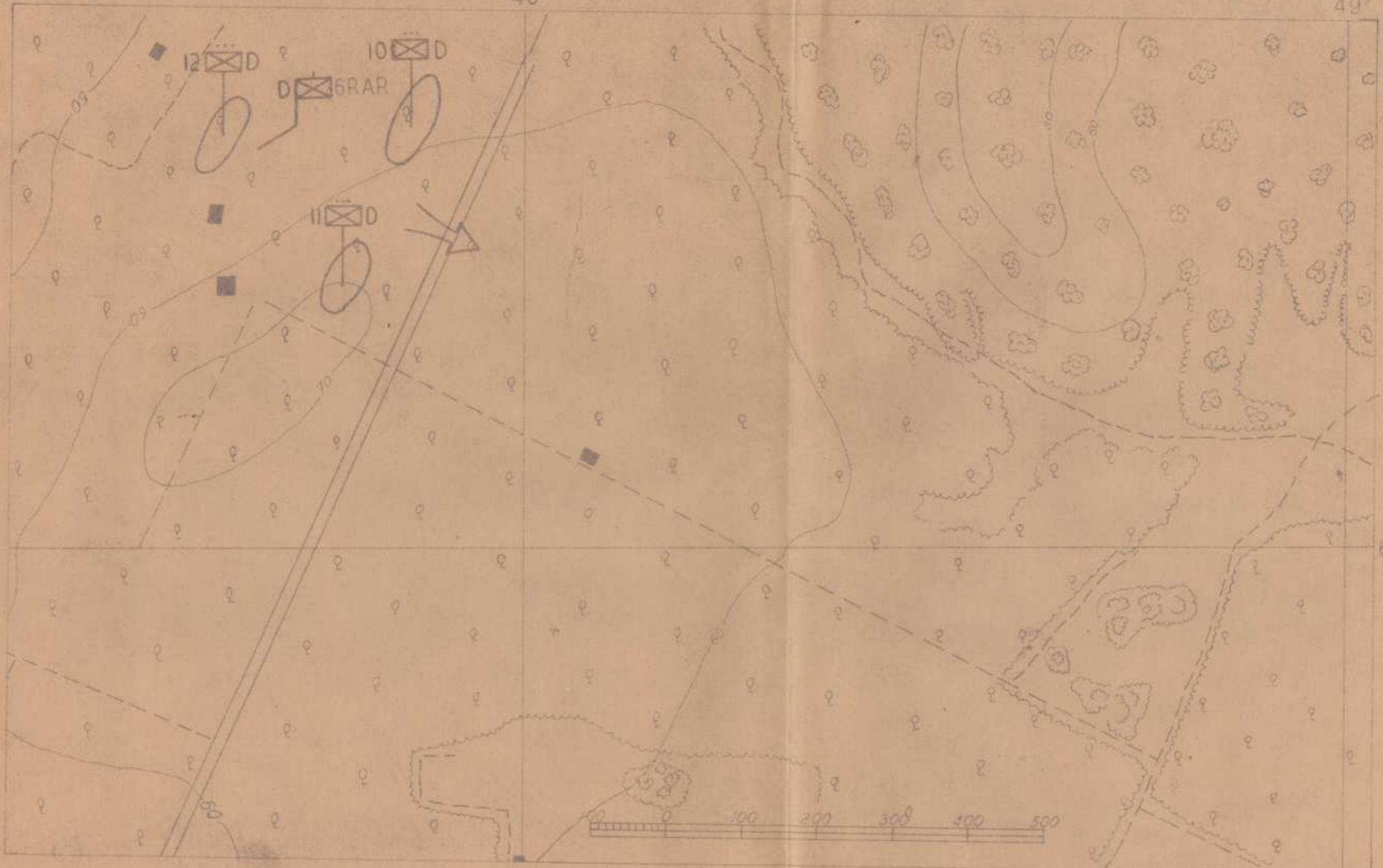


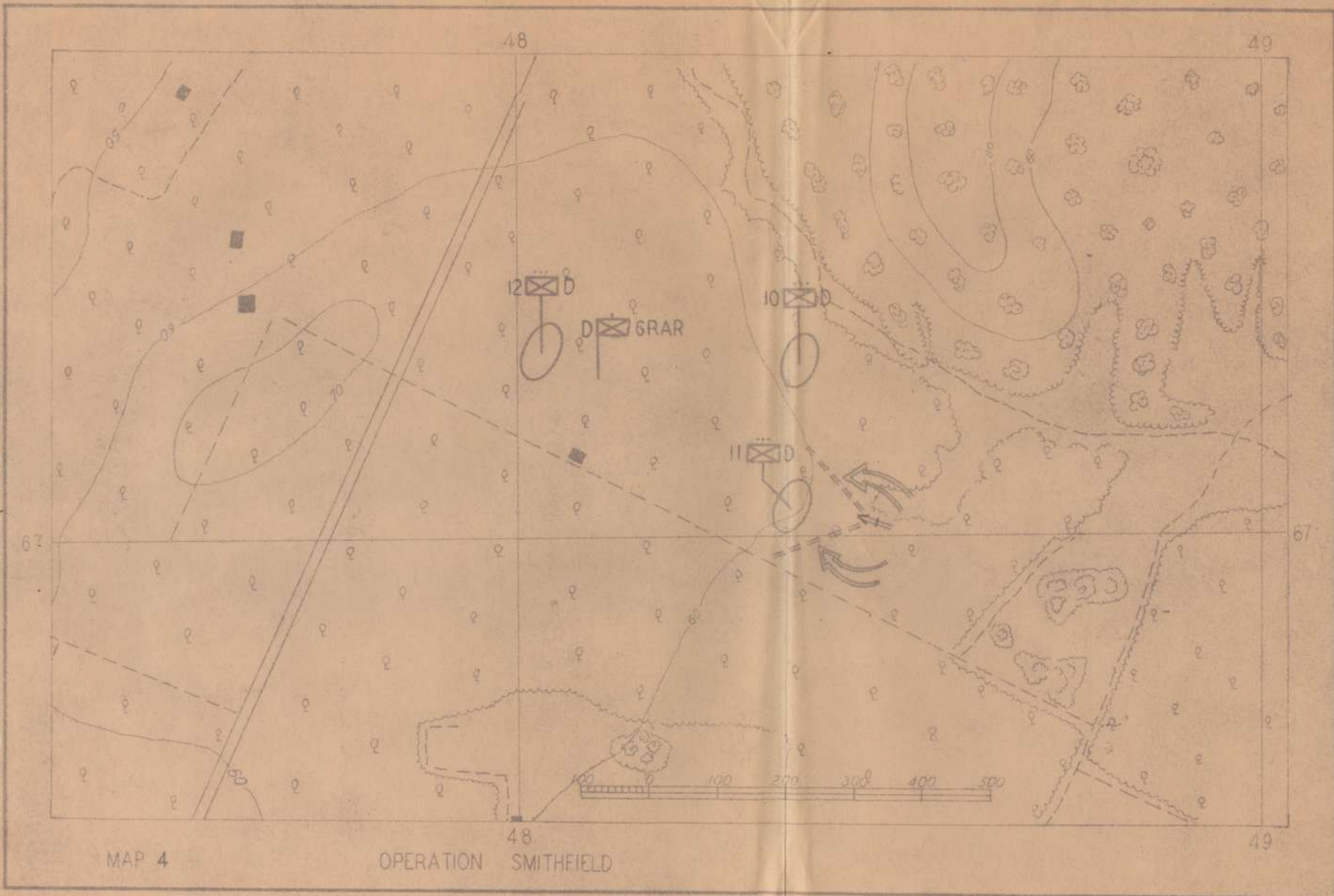
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MAP 3

OPERATION SMITHFIELD



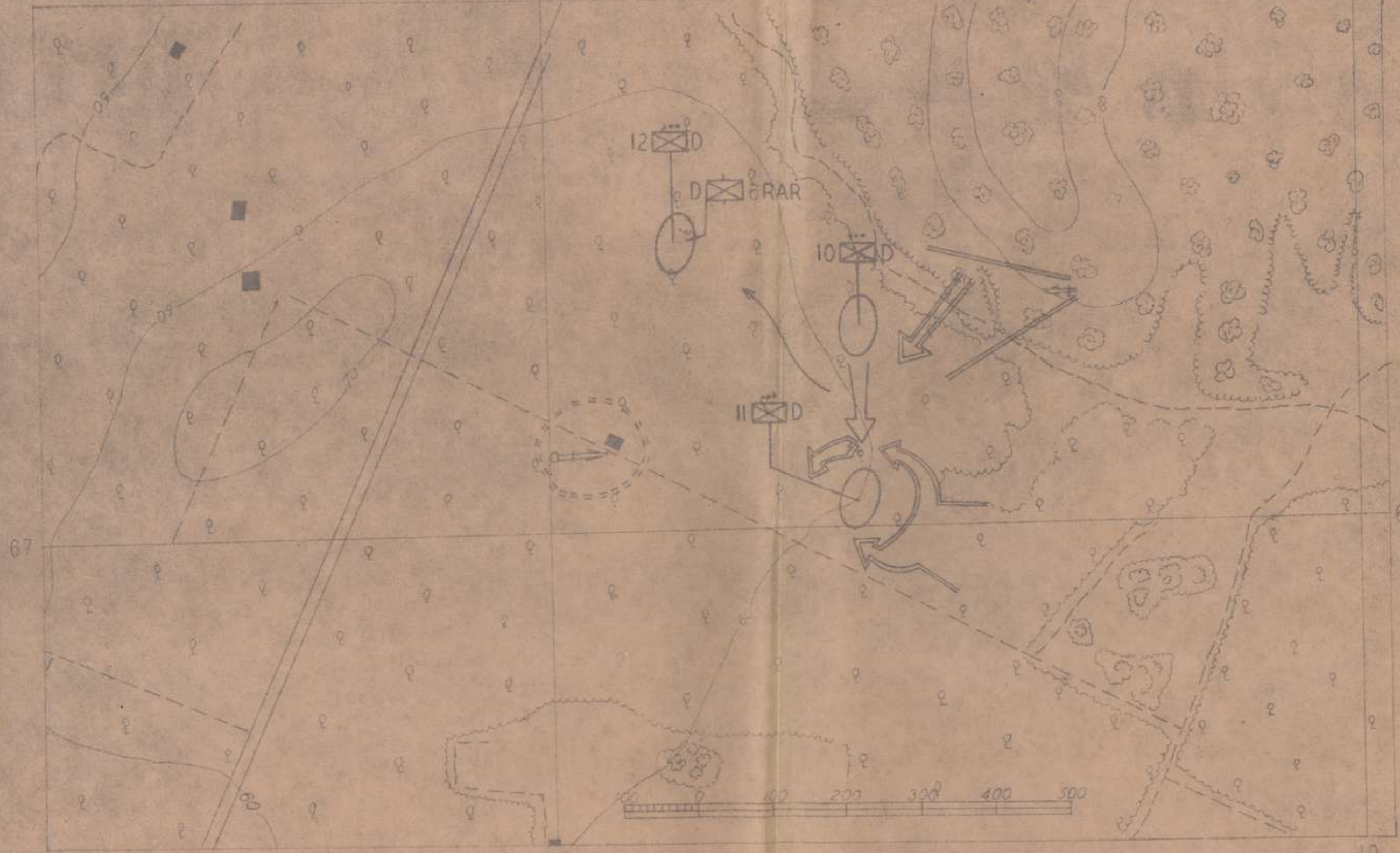


MAP 4

OPERATION SMITHFIELD

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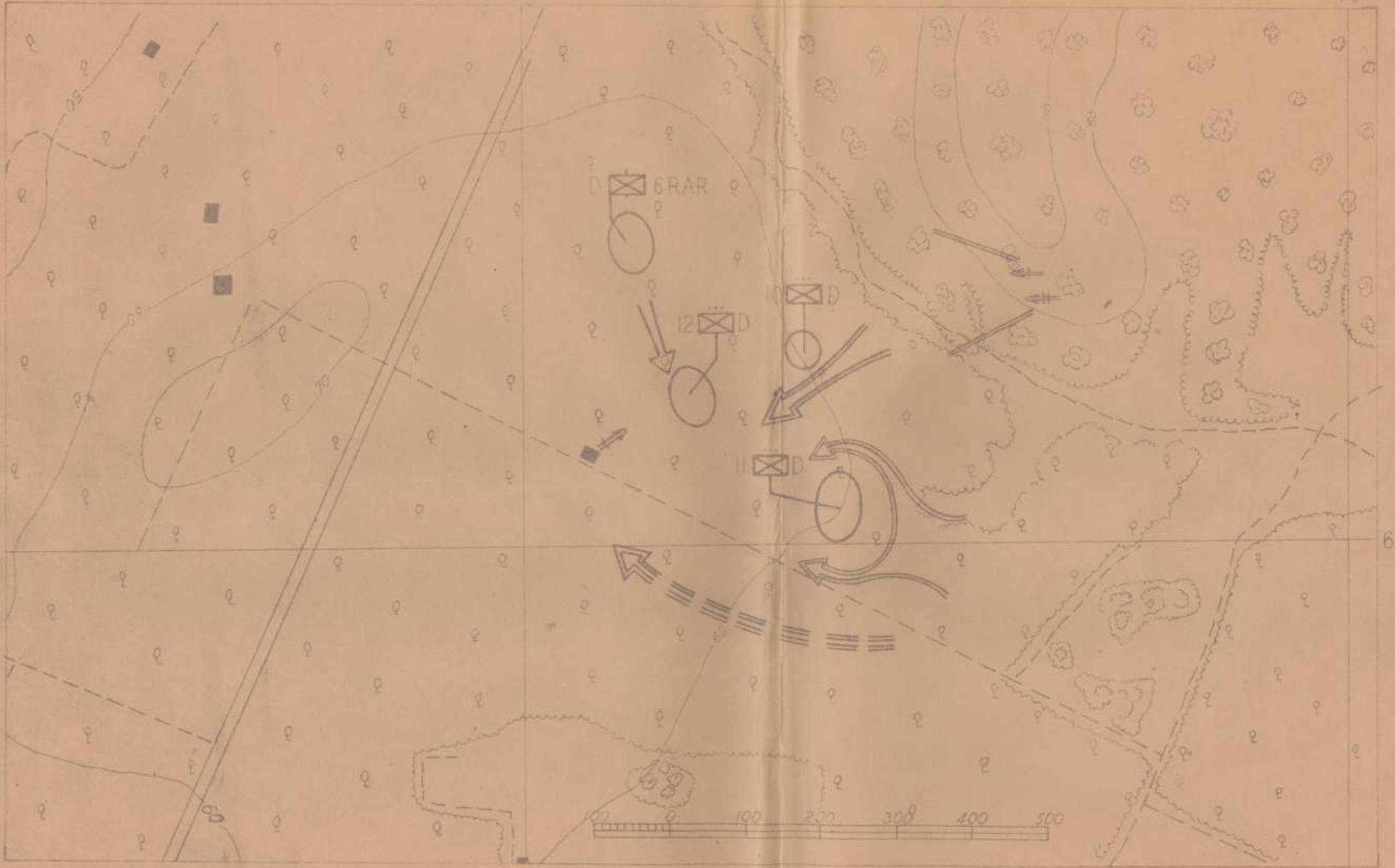
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MAP 5

OPERATION SMITHFIELD

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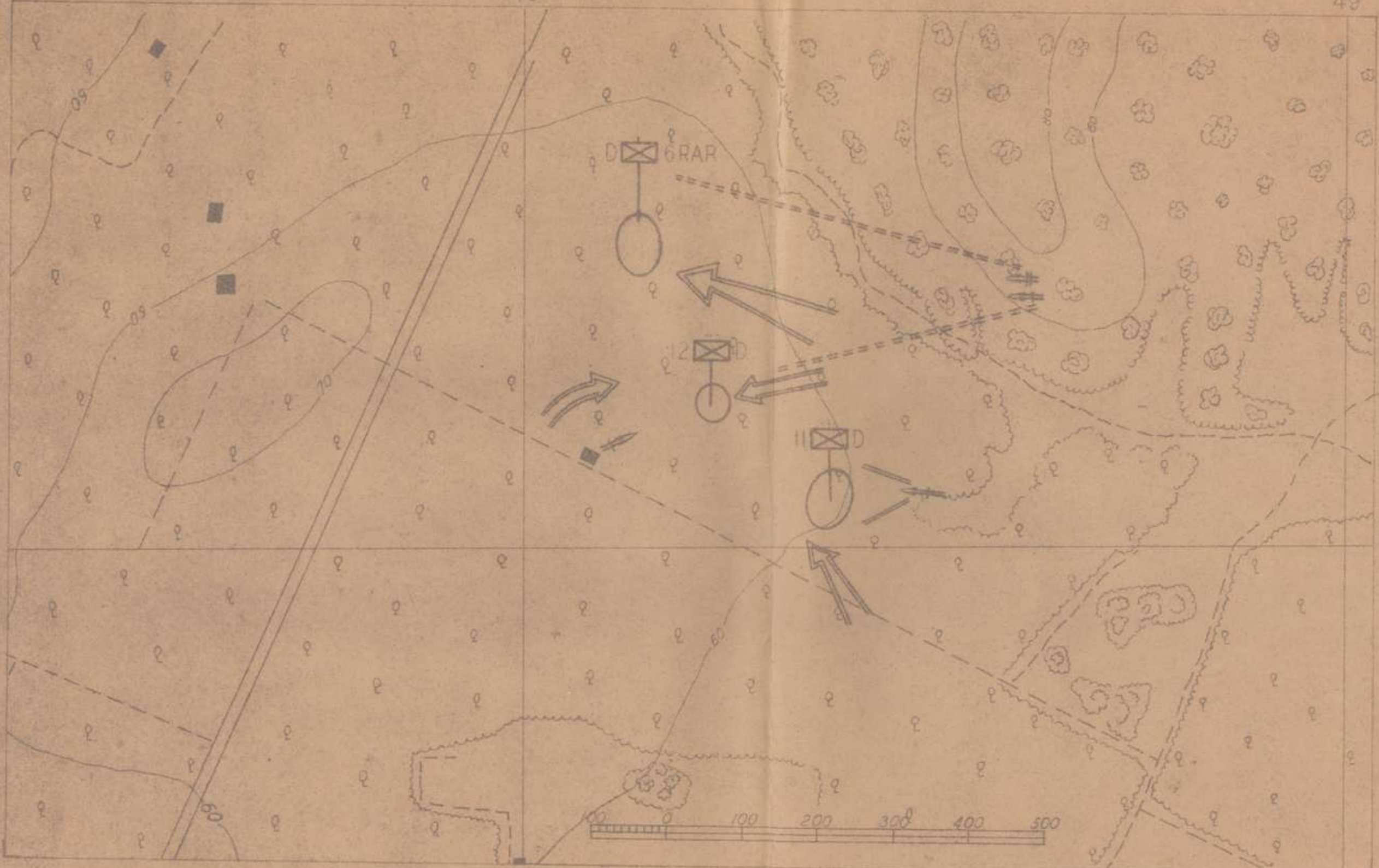
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MAP 6

OPERATION SMITHFIELD

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MAP 7

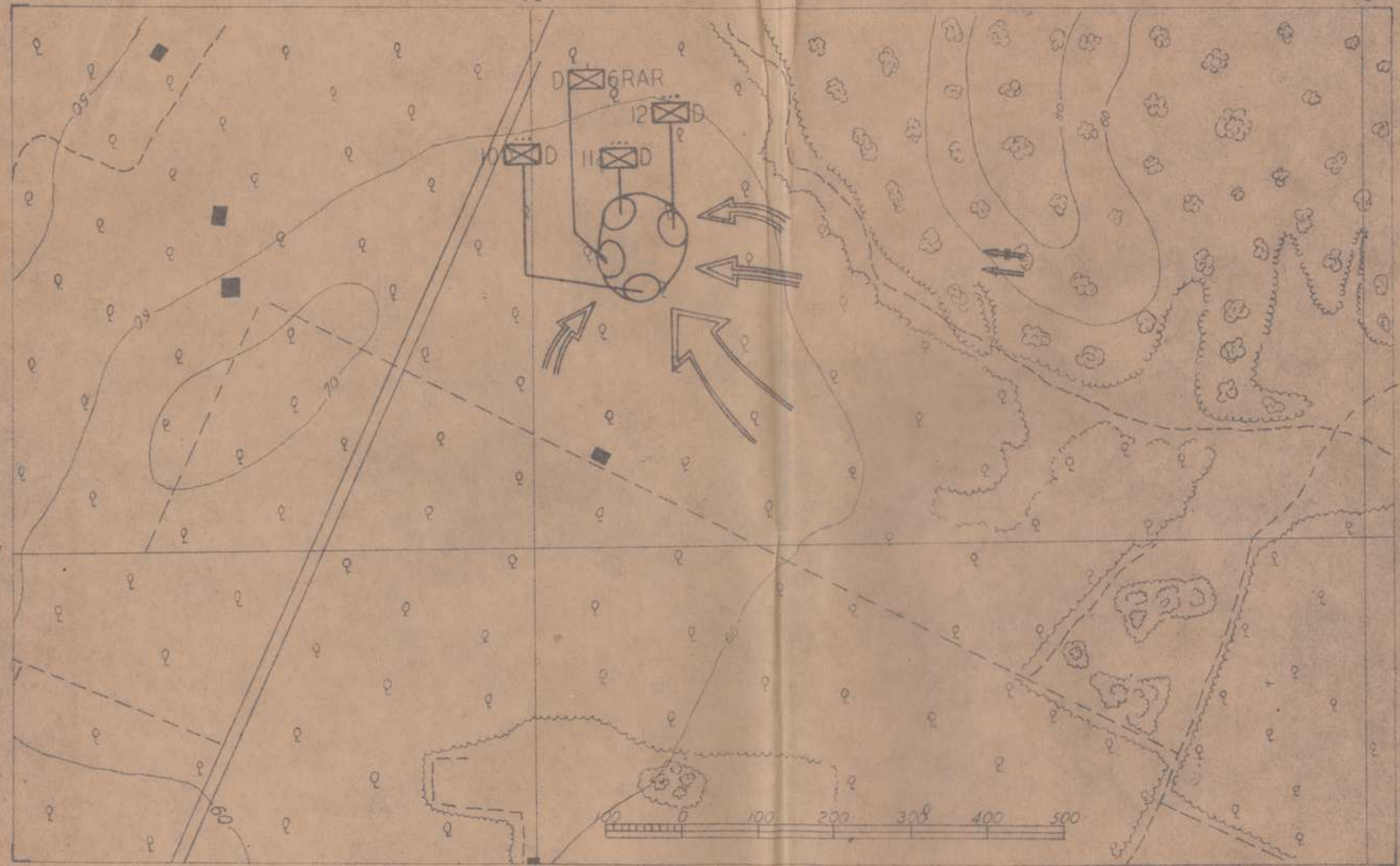
OPERATION SMITHFIELD

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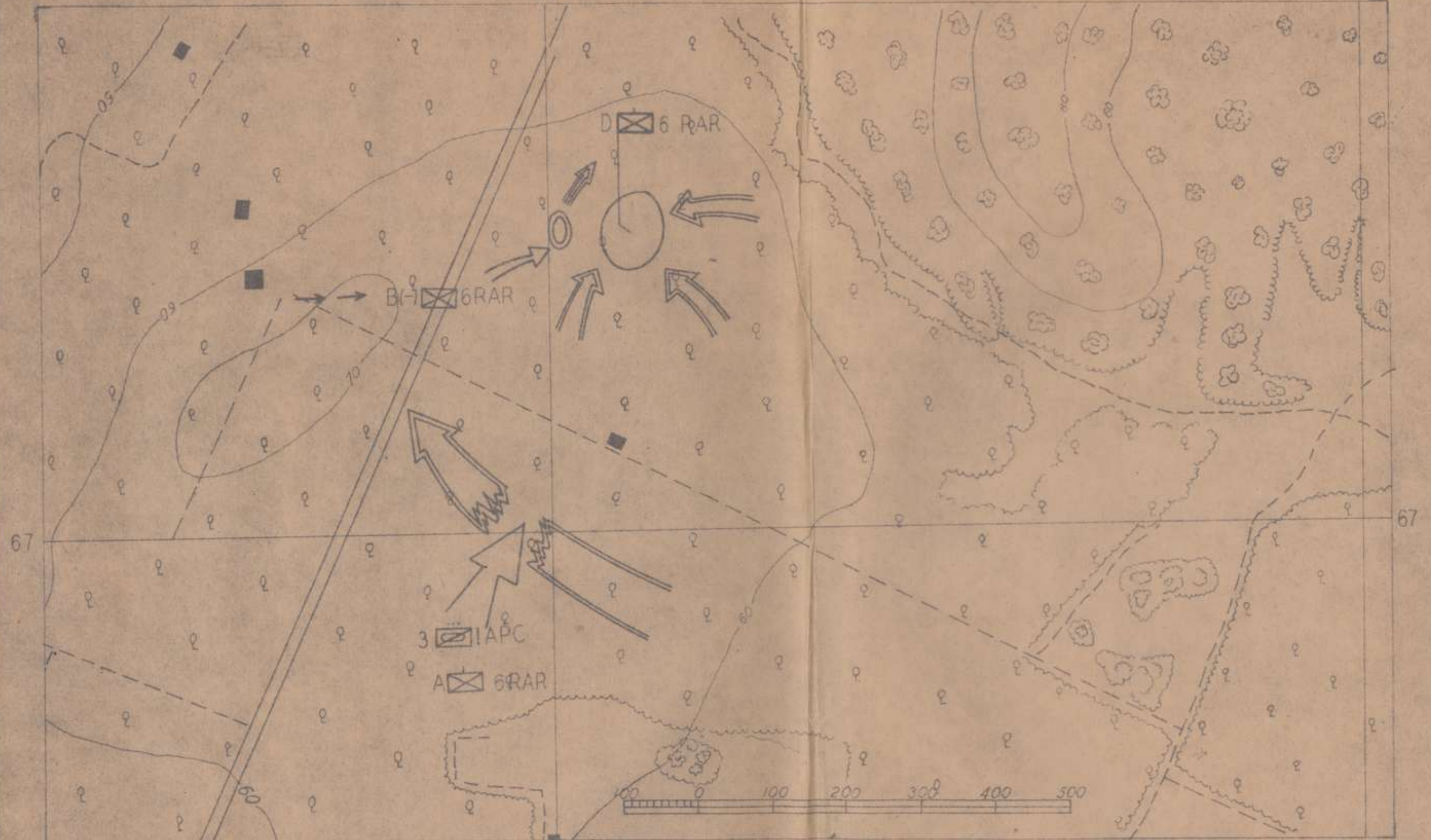
MAP 8

OPERATION SMITHFIELD



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MAP 9

OPERATION SMITHFIELD

2 AM  
AP AN PHU

22 Nov 66

PATROL REPORT

FIGHTING

To 504649

Ref (Maps) PICTO LONG TAN

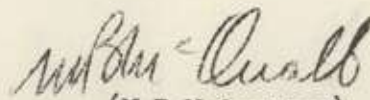
1. 22
2. Search for recent en activity in area and engage en found.
3. 201300 hrs.
4. 201800 hrs.
5. From 498660 to 505660 to 504649 to 499651 return to 498660.
6. Primary jungle, patches of bamboo to creek. Large trees and good going on E of creek, some bamboo, paddy fields then primary jungle and banana plantations on return leg.
7. The SUOI MON has several irrigation channels running off it and it is difficult to follow the actual creek itself. The huts at 504649 and 499651 are wrecked.
8. See Installation Report.
9. NIL.
10. Good.
11. NIL.
12. NIL.
13. NIL.



(L. O'Dea)

2Lt

B Coy 5 RAR



(M. B. McQualter)

Maj

OC B Coy

DISTR

CP 1

INT SEC 2

BCY 2

5 RAR  
AP AN PHU

22 Nov 66

INSTALLATION REPORT No 1

1. By 55077 2Lt L.O'Dea.
3. Type Channel at 506655 at 1430 hrs 20 Nov 66.
4. Area Covered Approx 200 metres long, 6 - 4 feet deep and 3 feet wide. Channel ran NS and had a small log footbridge crossing it.
5. Def Layout
  - a. NO
  - i. Approx 1 - 2 years.
  - j. Yes. Approx 25 metres from SUOI MON.
  - k. NO
6. Misc There were indications that a small party had been along the channel, probably within the last fortnight.

INSTALLATION REPORT No 2

1. By 55077 2Lt L.O'Dea.
3. Type Semi-circular wpn pit at 504651 at 1550 hrs 20 Nov 66. Approx 20 metres SOUTH there is a fire place construction and two small bush timber tables.
4. Area Covered Approx 100 yds X 20 yds.
5. Def Layout
  - a. One pit, 8ft long X 5ft deep X 18 inches wide.
  - c. NO
  - e. One wpn pit.
  - f. Fire place and tables indicate probably a pl size force had been in area.
  - g. N
  - h. Three man or crew served wpn.
  - i. Wpn pit abot 1 week old, other instl 2 - 3 weeks old.
  - j. Yes. WEST side of SUOI MON approx 15 metres from water.
  - k. None found.
  - l. Nil.
6. Misc Recent foot prints in mud nearby made by at least 2 persons wearing sandals made of vehicle tyres. There is a well defined foot track running NORTH SOUTH beside SUOI MON. A rice box was found 100 metres SOUTH. The box was 6' X 4' X 3'. It contained about 3 bags of rice which had been burnt.