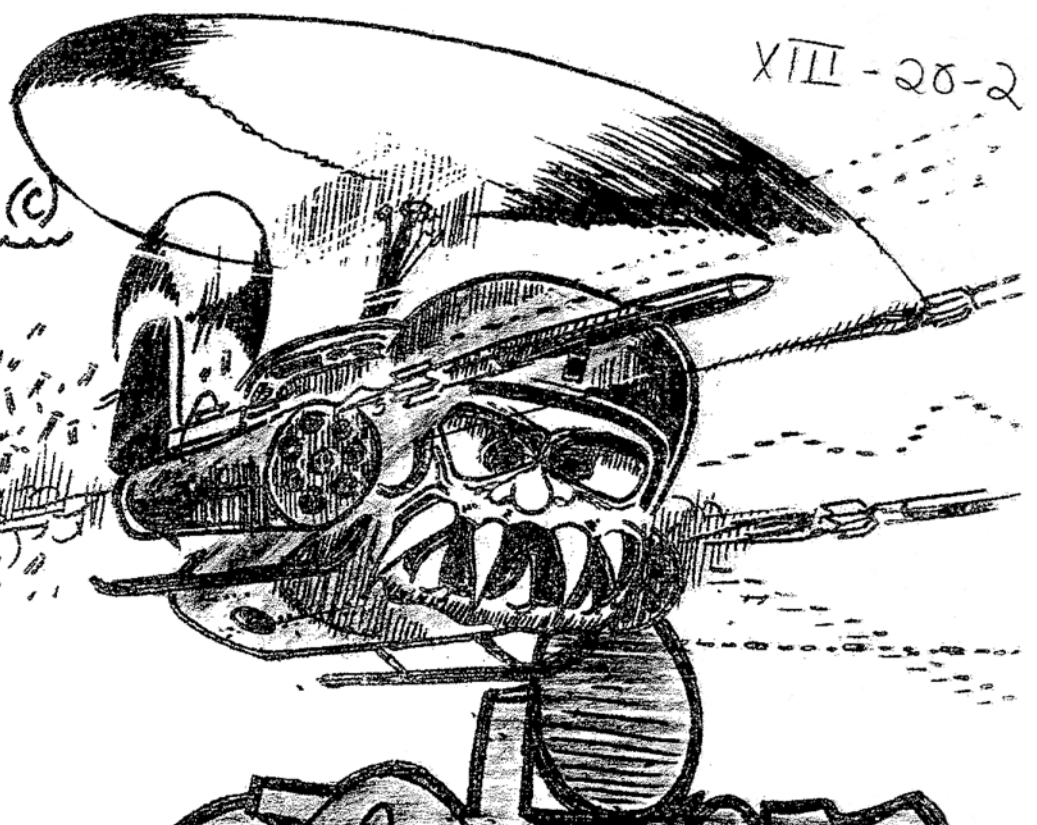


39TH ENGR. BN. (C)

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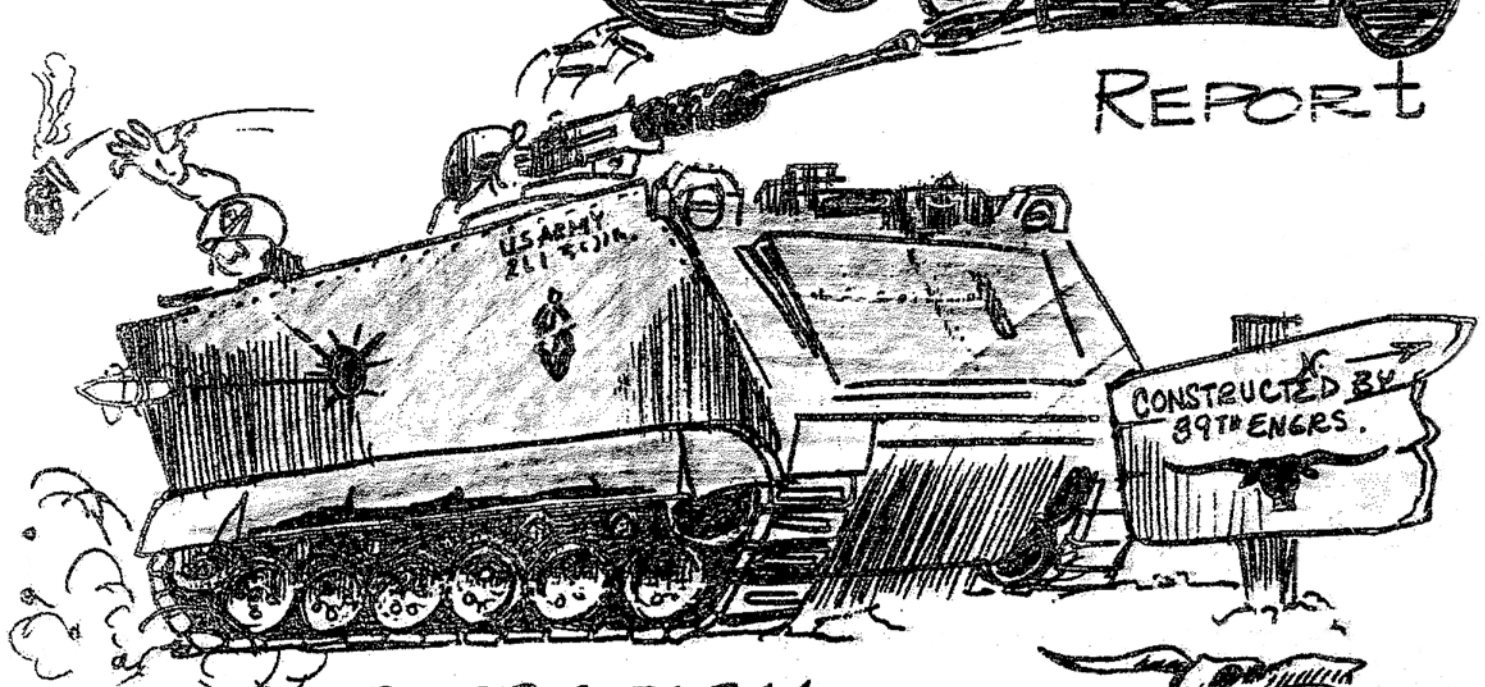


AFTER

ACTION

OPS-05-009

REPORT



= OPERATION =
BAKER MALHEUR I

RETURN TO
TRPS & MAT BRANCH

HEADQUARTERS
39TH ENGINEER BATTALION (COMBAT) (ARMY)
TASK FORCE OREGON
APO 96374

16 September 1967

SUBJECT: After Action Report of Operation Baker/Malheur I

TO: Commanding Officer
45th Engr Gp (Const)
ATTN: S-3
APO 96238

1. GENERAL:

- a. Name of Operation: Baker (2d Bde, 1st Cav Div), Malheur I, (TASK FORCE OREGON)
- b. Date of Operations: 10 April 67 - 31 May 67
- c. Location: DUC PHO, RVN
- d. Control Headquarters: 39th Engr Bn (C) (A)
- e. Reporting Officer: LTC Joseph F. Castro

2. ORGANIZATION:

- a. 39th Engr Bn (C) (A) (Headquarters Company, "A" Company, "D" Company)
- b. 554 Engineer Company (Float Bridge) (-)

3. SUPPORTING FORCES: None

4. MISSION: Battalion provides divisional engineer support to TASK FORCE OREGON; builds Class 50 road and bridges from landing beach inland to DUC PHO, and builds C-130 Airfield at DUC PHO capable of taking traffic on 15 May 67.

5. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS: 2d Bde; 1st Air Cav Division relieves Marine units in the DUC PHO area and conducts search & destroy operation in the DUC PHO area. 39th Engineer Bn relocates from TUY HOA, RVN with Headquarters Company, "A" Company, "D" Company and 4th Platoon of 554 Engr Company (FB) and conducts over the beach landing in vicinity of DUC PHO. "D" Company, 39th Engr Bn builds pioneer Class 50 road from landing Beach to

DUC PHO and then improves road to two-lane Class 50 all-weather road. "A" Company, 39th Engr Bn moves over beach road as soon as possible and builds C-130 Airfield at DUC PHO capable of taking C-130 traffic by 15 May 67. TASK FORCE OREGON tactical units (3d Bde, 25th Div) relieve units of 1st Cav Davison on 20 April 67 and conduct search & destroy operations in DUC PHO area. 1st Bde, 101st Airborne Division lands over the beach & conducts search & destroy operations west of DUC PHO (11 May 67). 39th Engr Bn provides Divisional Engineer support to TASK FORCE OREGON.

6. EXECUTION:

a. 10 - 12 April: Advance party of twenty (20) men with three (3) 1/4 ton trucks departed TUY HOA via three (3) lifts by C7A beginning 0900 hours. On 11 April 1967 two (2) recon teams of eight (8) men each were sent to recon two (2) proposed road sites to the beach. The recon team moving along present road centerline was pinned down three (3) times by snipers and automatic weapons fire from dense underbrush & trench systems. The platoon of 1st Cav providing security was reinforced by a 2d Platoon and air strikes to eliminate the problem. "D" Company, 39th Engr Bn landed on the beach at LZ GUADALCANAL on 12 April 67.

b. 13 - 15 April: On 13 April "D" Company conducted a reconnaissance of proposed road to DUC PHO selected by recon team on 11 April. On 14 April "D" Company began construction of a pioneer road westward from LZ GUADALCANAL to DUC PHO. By 1800 hours the road was completed on a pioneer basis to BS 838364. One (1) man was WIA by an anti-personnel mine set off by a dozer. On 14 April "A" Company, 4th platoon 554 Engr Co (FB), and elements of Headquarters Company debarked from LST at LZ GUADALCANAL. On 15 April "D" Company conducted mine sweep along pioneer road and found two (2) booby traps and two (2) mines one of which was a 500lb bomb hooked up to a pressure device. "D" Company then moved its CP location from LZ GUADALCANAL to BS 838364 and established a water point at its new location. At 1830 hours as the last element of "D" Company were moving to their new location, snipers, firing from three (3) different locations, wounded one (1) man. "D" Company returned fire and swept area with negative results. One (1) booby trapped mine, was blown in place at site of sniper fire.

c. 16 - 18 April: On 16 April "D" Company swept east from CP location on toward LZ GUADALCANAL to clear road from the beach to water point. "A" Company swept west along pioneer road from LZ GUADALCANAL until meeting the "D" Company mine sweep team. "D" Company located & destroyed one (1) booby trapped 105mm round. "A" Company detonated a pressure mine at BS 852373 while mine sweeping, resulting in two (2) KIA and two (2) WIA. At the same time enemy snipers fired approximately twenty (20) rounds. Fire was returned and road was cleared. "D" Company in conjunction with 4th Platoon, 554 Engr Co (FB) constructed 45' dry span at BS 838364, continued to improve the pioneer road from BS 860377 to BS 838364 and opened a borrow pit. "A" Company hauled fill to stabilize the beach sand at LZ GUADALCANAL and provide a road net on the beach to facilitate movement of vehicles & supplies. On 17 April "D" company was ambushed as they worked west on proposed road thru rice paddies toward DUC PHO (BS 835364).

Fire was returned and enemy routed. One (1) man WIA. "D" Company constructed pioneer road from BS 838364 to BS 833367, completed 38' span at BS 835363 with help from 4th Platoon, 554 Engr Co (FB), and continued clearing area along pioneer road and upgrading pioneer road. "A" Company continued work on beach interior roads. By 1200 hours the remaining elements of the 39th Engr Bn had closed in LZ GUADALCANAL. "D" Company, 39th Engr Bn linked up with elements of 8th Engr Bn working on road from LZ MONTEZUMA toward east. It appeared that pioneer road would be completed on 18 April through dry rice paddies. On 18 April heavy, unseasonable rains flooded all rice paddies and washed out road from BS 838364 to LZ MONTEZUMA at DUC PHO. All operation halted due to heavy rains except for mine sweeps by "A" Company & "D" Company.

d. 19 - 22 April: Company "A" continued to mine sweep west along road from LZ GUADALCANAL and to haul fill to stabilize interior roads on landing beach at LZ GUADALCANAL. Company "D" continued to mine sweep east and west from their CP location along pioneer road, and to upgrade road from BS 838364 to LZ GUADALCANAL. The road from BS 838364 to LZ MONTEZUMA was completed thru wet rice paddies on 22 April 67 and "A" Company plus elements of Headquarters Company closed into LZ MONTEZUMA from LZ GUADALCANAL. "D" Company, 39th Engr Bn continued to destroy caves and bunker complexes along pioneer road. On 20 April while destroying a complex, one (1) M60 machine gun and one (1) M14 rifle was found in a cave.

e. 23 - 25 April: A/39th began construction of the Airstrip on 24 April after arrival of the 290:s at LZ MONTEZUMA. On 23 April, before the initial cuts & fills were made, approximately twenty (20) graves and one (1) village to the north had to be relocated. All fill from cut area in the clear zone of the Airfield was utilized on the upgrading of the pioneer road. D/39th continued sweeping from BS 838364 to LZ GUADALCANAL and A/39th mine swept from LZ MONTEZUMA to BS 838364. 400 meters of perimeter fence was relocated at the north end of proposed strip and clear zones were cleared of debris.

f. 26 - 27 April: Mine sweeps covering this period remain the same with A/39th sweeping from LZ MONTEZUMA to BS 838364 and D/39th sweeping from BS 838364 to LZ GUADALCANAL. Remaining elements of HHC moved to LZ MONTEZUMA and on 26 April 67 the entire Battalion had closed at LZ MONTEZUMA. A/39th began a twenty (20) hour per day construction effort on the Airstrip with four (4) hours of scheduled maintenance. The 1st 600 feet of runway was brought to within six inches of final grade. D/39th continued to haul fill at an average of 130 loads per day to upgrade the pioneer road. On 27 April "D" Company completed pioneer road. Upgrading and widening of the road to two lanes would continue. Convoys were scheduled to take all traffic to include tanks twice daily.

g. 28 - 30 April: A/39th compacted 1300 feet of the northern end of the Airstrip and began final grade of the southern overrun. By 29 April, approximately 4,000 cubic yards of cut and fill had been completed. Through stations 1 - 38.

Airstrip was 18% complete with respect to the construction of the main runway of 3,800 feet. On 30 April 2,800 cubic yards of cut from station 6 was filled and compacted from 27+50 to station 38. "D" Company destroyed bunker complexes and continued upgrading of the Beach Road. Crude oil was also spread on road surface to settle dust.

h. 1 - 5 May: During this period of operation all nine sweep responsibilities remained the same. "A" Company began the final grading of the Airstrip from station 0 to station 6 and simultaneously cut and fill from station 6 to station 38. The area from station 6 to station 38 had to be sacrificed and recompacted to eliminate soft spots before the final grading and applications of RC3 could be applied. Removal of an existing 36" culvert was accomplished at station 18+50 and site prepared to accept three (3) 24" culverts. "D" Company continued hauling an average of 180 loads of fill daily to upgrade the Beach Road, and began a clearing operation for the arrival of the 101st Abn Div at BS 842367. They prepared abutments for twin timber trestle bridge at BS 838364 and also began a clearing operation for 101st Abn Div helipads. The 4th Bridge Platoon of the 554th Engr Co (FB) utilized their bridge trucks to begin hauling MX19 matting to Class IV yard at LZ MONTEZUMZA.

i. 6 - 10 May: A/39th applied 1,800 gallons of binder to CV2 strip during hours of darkness in order to maintain daytime traffic. They installed 390 feet of 24" culvert at station 18+50 and the backfill was compacted in 6" lifts. They continued clearing of South taxiway and final grading between stations 18 and 38. Soil binder and burlap was applied and MX19 was laid from station 15 South to end of runway. Heavy rains of 9 May delayed operations. On May 10th, 3,500 square yards of area was level and peneprimed for aircraft parking. "D" Company continued to haul fill for heliport at 101st Abn Div area, and the beach road. On 10 May "D" Company completed 101st heliport.

j. 11 - 15 May: A/39th continued work on Airstrip with operation being held up by occasional light sniper fire from North end of runway. They peneprimed Airstrip from station 15 to station 18 and continued to lay MX19 matting. On 12 May all fine grading of turn arounds had been completed. On 13 May A/39th laid burlap and repeneprimed Airstrip from 35 to 38. All MX19 matting was laid on runway to include turn around areas. (246,000 square feet) anchorage system on South end of strip was completed on 14 May and the anchorage system on North end of strip was completed. Approximately 3,000 cubic yards of fill was utilized in building up temporary parking space on the north west side of field and all anchorage and marking were completed. On 15 May at 1810 hours the first C-130 landed on the Airstrip to complete the official opening. "D" Company began preparation for building TASK FORGE OREGON CP and continued upgrading to Beach Road, by hauling fill to various potholes made by heavy traffic. Crude oil was sprayed on road surface to settle dust. A refueling pad for helicopters was also initiated at LZ GUADALCANAL. On 12 May at 1000 hours "C" Company closed into CHU LAI area.

k. 16 - 19 May: Although the Airfield was opened for traffic on the 15th of May, "A" Company continued to work on grading and ditching drainage areas and applying peneprime. They used two (2) squads for security on QL #1 reconnaissance North. On 16 May, D/39th completed GUADALCANAL Beach Road system. Began project of recovering blown Baily Bridge at BS 811368.

l. 20 - 23 May: A/39th continued to work on Airstrip taxiways, parking apron and drainage system. They began construction of forms for culverts under main runway and began construction of access road to QL #1. They began hauling fill for FSA Ammo Storage area. They completed final grading and placed 25,800 square feet of MX19 on taxiways. C/39th began hauling fill for the 163d Motor Pool and initiated dozer work on HHC Motor Pool. They began construction of one (1) 20' x 40' building. D/39th completed removal of Bailey bridge at BS 811368. They also initiated "Operation Rock" on 23 May by hiring 214 Local Nationals. The Nationals were paid according to the amount of rock produced. D/39th assumed the responsibility of providing supervision and security for the operation.

m. 24 - 26 May: A/39th continued to haul fill for FSA Ammo Storage area and access road to QL #1 and began construction of concrete headwalls on culverts under main Airstrip. Two (2) headwalls were completed on 25 May. They hauled M8A1 matting and prepared parking apron for laying matting. D/39th hauled fill for refueling heliport at GUADALCANAL. They began construction of a timber trestle bridge to prepare M4T6 dry span at BS 838364.

n. 27 - 31 May: A/39th continued watering, penepriming and laying burlap and M8A1 for the parking aprons of the Airstrip. They also continued hauling fill for the access road to QL #1. On 30 May the parking area was completed to include all anchorage systems. D/39th continued to secure and supervise "Operation Rock" producing an average of 60 cubic yards of rock a day. This average slowly increased as more nationals showed up daily for work. The abutments on the timber trestle bridge at BS 870364 were held up due to the lack of necessary material for the headwalls and cable clamps for the deadman. Fill was hauled from the borrow pit to the VIP Pad at the 101st Abn Div area and then peneprimed.

7. SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS:

a. The 39th Engr Bn relocates from TUY HOA with HHC, "A" Co, "D" Co, and the 4th Platoon of 554th Engr Co (FB) and conducts over the Beach landing near DUC PH0.

b. D/39th builds a pioneer Class 50 road to MOUTEZUMA and later upgraded the road to a two-way Class 50 all-weather road. They supplied mine sweep teams to sweep the pioneer road. They cleared and built heliports for 101st Abn Div CP area. They initiated "Operation Rock" which utilized indigenous labor to gather rock. They built refueling helipads at GUADALCANAL and heliport and maintenance area for 176th Avn Co.

c. HHC, "A" Company relocate to MONTEZUMA on 22 April upon completion of the pioneer road and set up CP locations. A/39th began clearing and survey of the Airfield and on 15 May officially opened the Airfield to C-130 Aircraft while continuing to work on taxiways, parking aprons, drainage, and anchorage systems. The Airstrip was 100% complete on 31 May 67.

d. The 4th Platoon of the 554th Engr Co (FB) remained at GUADALCANAL. They set up CP and bridge park at that location. They supplied D/39th with one (1) 45' M4T6 dry span, and one (1) 38'4" dry span to be placed at BS 838364 and BS 833367 respectively. They established Class IV yard at GUADALCANAL and hauled most of the Engineer items needed in the construction of the Airfield.

8. COMMUNICATIONS:

a. Communications with higher, lower and attached units by the Battalion NCS was accomplished with two (2) AN/VRC 46 radios and two (2) RC 292 antennas, one (1) 60' high and the other 40'. The net control stations of the organic line companies used AN/VRC 47 radio with an RC 292 antenna. Communications between company NCS and subordinate elements was accomplished by utilization of AN/VRC 46's mounted on 1/4 ton vehicles and the squad radios (AN/VRC 125).

b. During this period communication was generally satisfactory due to short distances between all elements.

9. SUPPORTING ELEMENTS:

a. During the period of this report all Class I, II, III, IV, V items were supplied by TASK FORCE GALLAGHER from LZ GUADALCANAL.

b. Problems that slowed construction effort was:

(1) Lack of lifting devices to load heavy material at TASK FORCE GALLAGHER.

(2) No supporting unit to maintain a Class II & IV yard which had to eventually be set up and maintained by Engineer elements.

(3) MX19 kits did not have "turndown adaptors"; therefore, field expedient anchorage systems had to be deployed which caused some delay in the work schedule.

(4) Maintenance support during this period was not satisfactory as there were no DS or GS maintenance units and replacement parts for engineer equipment was non-existent. Repair parts received from 45th Engr Group (Const) kept many pieces of equipment running but this was not the normal support channel.

(5) 273,300 square feet of MX19 was used on Airfield plus 172,100 square feet of M8A1 plus 3,234 barrels of RC-3 and 445,400 square feet of burlap.

10. CONCLUSION: This unit has successfully completed all assigned tasks during this period despite extremely short deadlines. All project specifications have been met and in most cases exceeded.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

RICHARD H. SCHALLENBERG
1LT, CE
Assistant Adjutant