

Operation Federal

19 February — 24 March 1969

In February 1969 it was again decided by the commander of II Field Force to deploy elements of the 1st Australian Task Force in the area of Long Binh-Bien Hoa as part of the defence against the expected Tet offensive.

It was anticipated the enemy would move several regiments into the area to launch rocket, mortar and, possibly, ground attacks against the two complexes.

4RAR/NZ(Anzac)Bn was to be deployed into AO Belconnen, east of Long Binh, with 9RAR in an AO to the north.

The Anzac battalion was to be responsible for an area from the railway line, which ran parallel to Route One, south to the Song La Buong River, which marked the northern extremity of the Thai Army's area of responsibility.

It was considered the main threat to 4RAR/NZ(Anzac) Bn was from the east and would involve elements of the 5th VC Division, or, more specifically, the 33rd VC Regiment. Initial contact could also be expected with sapper and reconnaissance elements before the VC attempted to fire their 107mm and 122mm rockets at Long Binh and Bien Hoa.

D Company and 104 Field Battery moved by road and the remaining companies flew from Operation Goodwood on the morning of February 19 and started immediately on the construction of heavily-fortified positions.

V Company was furthest north, alongside the railway line and about 400 metres from Route One, with B Com-

pany to the south and W Company alongside the river. D Company, battalion headquarters and 104 Field Battery occupied FSPB Betty, which was to the rear of the companies — between them and Long Binh.

There was little sign of enemy movement in V and B companies' areas, but W Company came upon several well-used tracks by the river. On February 23 W Company had three small contacts with enemy groups up to six strong. That night the company position was attacked by an estimated enemy company. For the second time W Company was supported by Spooky and eventually the enemy withdrew, leaving among the dead their battalion commander who had been killed early in the attack.

Evidence found on bodies identified them as belonging to a reconnaissance element of 525 Engineer Battalion, whose task it had been to breach the defences of Long Binh. This was the biggest contact of the operation.

There was sporadic minor contact involving the other companies, most occurring on rocket sites which were being ambushed. Each company spent a night further east in AO Belconnen hoping to pick up VC who persisted in using the area.

The battalion was relieved by 9RAR on March 24 after 33 days in the area.

The results from the operation were good, although this time the enemy had managed to fire rockets at the bases from within the battalion's AO.

RESULTS — Own troops: Six wounded.
Enemy: 26 killed, 12 wounded,
four captured.

OPERATION FEDERAL

AO Balconnen

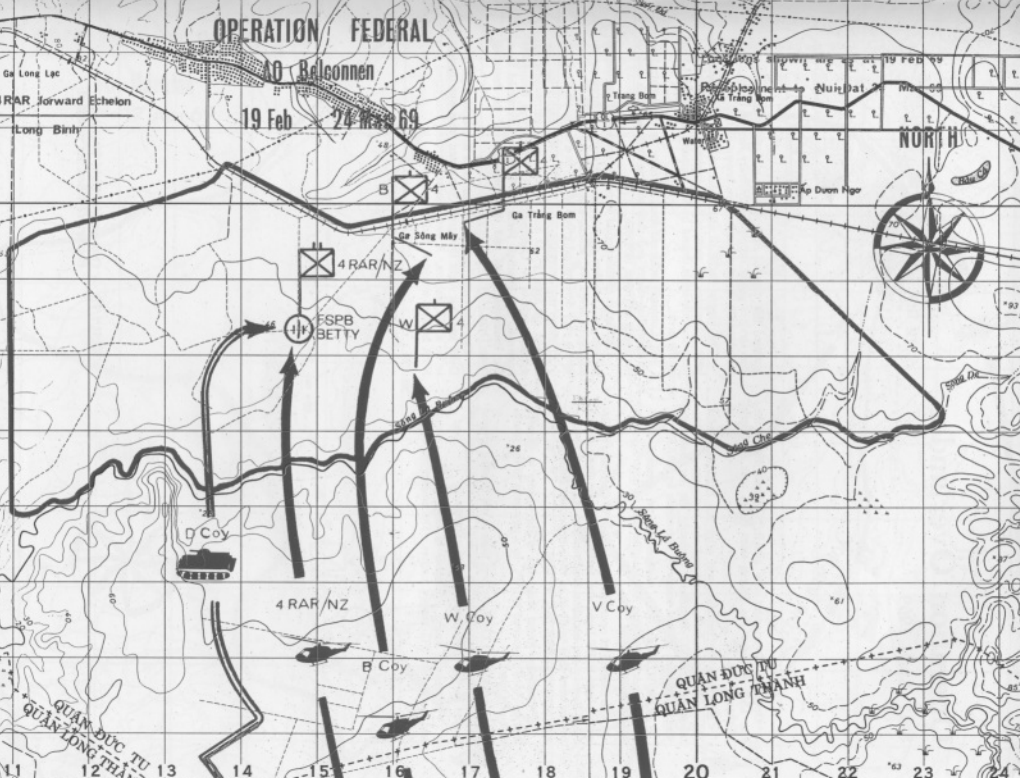
19 Feb 24 Mar 69

Ga Long Lạc
4RAR Forward Echelon
Long Binh

NORTH VIETNAM

19 Feb 69
19 Feb 69
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Ap Duan Ngo



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