

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Headquarters, 39th Engineer Battalion (Combat)  
Fort Devens, Massachusetts 01433

6 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned 39th Engineer Battalion  
(Combat), Period Ending 30 October 1972, RCS CS FOR-65 (R3)

THRU: Commander  
Fort Devens  
Fort Devens, MA 01433

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development  
Department of the Army  
Washington, D. C. 20310

1. Operations:

a. Field Training Exercise: The 39th Engineer Battalion (Combat) and attached 642nd Engineer Company (Light Equipment) deployed to the Fort Devens range training area for one week of concentrated field training during the period 7 - 11 Aug 72. The field training was preceded by one week of classroom instruction in military occupational specialties of engineer soldiers. The field training coupled with the classroom instruction served as a dynamic refresher to those enlisted men taking tests in engineer related military occupational specialties. On 16 October 1972, this unit again deployed to the Fort Devens range training area for a field training exercise in which great emphasis was placed on military bridging, demolitions, tactics, field fortifications and military roads and airfields. The training exercise was concluded on 20 October 1972.

b. Command Post Exercise: A Command Post exercise was conducted from 19 - 21 September 1972 to stress staff operations in a tactical environment. The entire headquarters was sent to the field to improve and refine specific procedures with higher headquarters. The exercise proved to be a valuable training tool.

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c. MOS and mission training and site support:

(1) Building Demolition: Using troop labor, this unit has demolished seven buildings on post (T-1612, T-62, T-961, T-1679, T-3563, T-4203, and B-84) and has demolished approximately 20 of a total of 70 buildings in the Old Hospital area.

(2) Site Construction and Improvement:

- (a) Painted Harvard-Devens Pool.
- (b) Built a shelter for the Golf Course carts.
- (c) Repaired KD range targets and assisted DC-E in placing wire on range.
- (d) Constructed a security fence for 10th Special Forces Group (Abn).
- (e) Erected several berms in Ammo Storage Area.
- (f) Waterproofed seven ammo bunkers and upgraded perimeter road in ammo dump.
- (g) Upgraded Willard Field bleachers and ball fields.
- (h) Installed security lighting in Battalion area.
- (i) Painted Beverage, Garden and Thrift Shops.
- (j) Constructed three playgrounds and two ballfields in housing areas.
- (k) Repaired picnic tables belonging to Special Services.
- (l) Repaired apronway of airfield.
- (m) Painted roofs on USAR maintenance facility.
- (n) Erected fence on D Range.
- (o) Installed Volleyball court and basketball areas on post for troops.
- (p) Rehabilitated HHC dayroom.
- (q) Removed foundation and repaired asphalt for Special Services.

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- (r) Designed and renovated Post Museum.
- (s) Repaired roofs of two ammo bunkers.
- (t) Installed new firing line on G Range.
- (u) Constructed parking area for NCO Open Mess.
- (v) Crusher Operation: Crushed and screened 1100 cubic yards of rock to be used on post in lieu of using DPAE funds.
- (3) Domestic Action:
  - (a) Constructed one cell for a sanitary fill in town of Ayer.
  - (b) Provided weekly equipment display and minor building repairs for Project Summertime.
  - (c) Provided equipment and operators for Nashua River Watershed Association (Project CURB) to clean up Nashua River banks from June to October 1972.
  - (d) Provided equipment and operators to Lawrence, MA, Neighborhood Youth Corps river cleanup from August through September 1972.
  - (e) Provided one Company for 3 weeks to town of Chelmsford, MA, to assist tornado damage cleanup.
  - (f) Provided one crane and operator for 30 days to Natick Laboratories for recovery of vehicle.
  - (g) Constructed two baseball fields and one basketball court in Ashby, MA.
  - (h) Provided three entrenching machines and nine operators to Wilkes-Barre, PA, for flood damage cleanup.
  - (i) Provided equipment and operators to remove civilian crane from Charles River in Newton, MA.
  - (j) Conducted reconnaissance of engineer projects in the towns of Shirley, MA, Hudson, MA, Lowell, MA, and Littleton, MA.
  - (k) Support, town of Hudson, MA, Phase I: Provided three dump trucks, one bulldozer, one grader and operators to construct a ballfield.

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(4) Camp Drum Support: Provided one line company from April to June; provided one platoon from June through October 30 and one Light Equipment company from 5 September through 30 October 1972. All units and personnel were in general site support. Significant mission accomplishments were:

- (a) Opening and clearing ranges and range roads.
- (b) Repair (and activation) of training sites.
- (c) Clearing of brush on several ranges.
- (d) Construction of new ranges.
- (e) Rehabilitation of roads and tank trails.

(5) Reserve Component Support:

(a) Coordinated mutual CPX for 181st Engineer Battalion (Combat) on 28 August 1972.

(b) Provided four each bucket loaders to 483rd Engineer Battalion (Construction) from 25 August to 28 August 1972.

(c) Provided two each bulldozers to 181st Engineer Battalion (Combat) from 14 July to 16 July 1972.

(d) Provided assistance in obtaining schools for CBR teams, projectionist and training aids for the 357th Civil Affairs Area.

(e) Provided staff assistance to the 268th Engineer Battalion (Construction) and equipment consisting of one each ditching machine, one each front loader, two each pneumatic compressor outfits, two each bulldozers, four each dump trucks, two each road graders, one each 16S mixer and two each pioneer tool outfits during that unit's annual training from 3 June through 17 June 1972.

(f) Provided water purification training from 7 October through 8 October to water purification personnel from 181st Engineer Battalion (Combat).

## 2. Lessons Learned:

a. Personnel: The majority of the enlisted personnel being assigned to this unit are Vietnam returnees who require individual re-training before they are successful in advanced training.

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b. Intelligence: In field exercises, failure of subordinate units to keep the battalion S-2 section advised on enemy contact emphasized how failure to render such reports can serve to conceal definite enemy operational patterns and can deprive a major headquarters of the opportunity of knowing the size force it is operating against.

c. Operations: During field training the lack of a complete reporting system caused undue delay in correct and timely information arriving at Battalion Headquarters. It was also noted that loading plans are not being followed causing wasted space and delay in loading.

d. Organization: The 642nd Engineer Company (Light Equipment), attached to the battalion, provides excellent support in the accomplishment of missions. Many projects assigned to this battalion could not be accomplished without the 642nd Engineer Company (Light Equipment).

e. Training:

(1) Field Training conducted for the benefit of the individual soldier also serves to improve the effectiveness of the participating command group and staff sections.

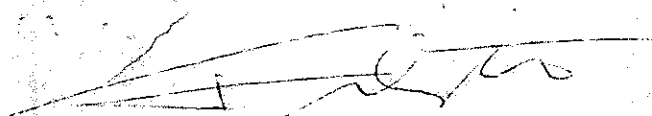
(2) As a Combat Engineer organization, the battalion has a definite need for training with floating equipage.

f. Logistics: None.

g. Commo:

(1) In the field this organization learned that the battery compartment of the AN/PRC-77 required a modification to prevent the build-up of gas in the battery compartment and its possible explosion.

(2) In the field it was also determined that a need exists for a separate telephone suffix to the C&CI (Communications-Electronics Operating Instructions).

  
FREDERICK E. BITTL  
LTC, CE  
Commander

