

Any pressure exerted by the VC upon the Camp thus compels II Corps Command at Pleiku to necessarily conduct relief operations. But therein lay the risks and the difficulties, because the only ground avenue of approach (a) to Pleime is Provincial route N° 5 which no longer deserves its name and has become as hazardous as a trail in the jungle for friendly displacement. It's perhaps enough to assume that since the terrain is disadvantageous for the rescuers then assuredly it favors the attackers and explains why the VC have selected Pleime and are convinced that it would be a success. Because their hope is also founded on the capabilities of the forces which have been allotted to Field Front :

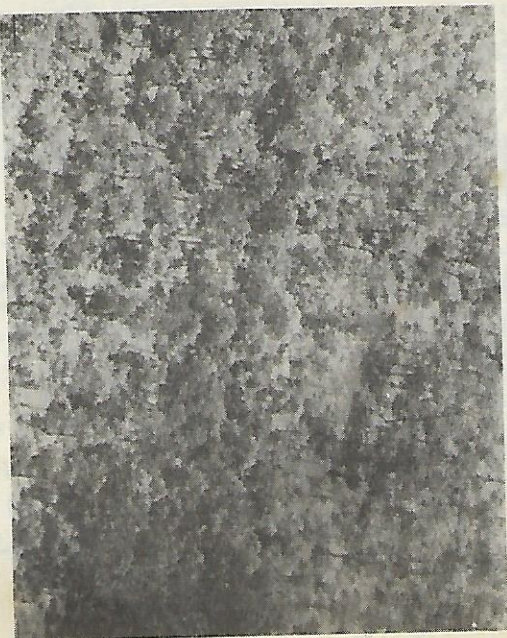
- The 32d, 33d and 66th Regiments infiltrated from North Vietnam
- The H-15 Main Force Battalion (local unit)
- One battalion of 120mm and 82mm Mortars.
- One battalion of 14.5mm Anti-Aircraft Machine guns.

Among these, the 32d is the more experienced, having been in South Vietnam since January. Already to its credit were numerous battalion and regimental attacks and ambushes which it had conducted in Kontum and in Pleiku provinces, such as Plei Kleng (March 65), Le Thanh (June 65) and Duc Co (August 65). Its experience in the Lure and Ambush tactics would be used accordingly. The 33d Regiment which

(a) The road linking Pleime to the District town of Phu Nhon as shown on maps has been out of use for a long time, since the surface has collapsed.



*The Elephant Grass
from Pleime to Chu Pong*



*The Jungle
from Pleime to Chu Pong*

had arrived in the South only recently still lacked in experience but would be ready since it just went through indoctrination in North Vietnam and firmly believed in the VC propaganda.

The plan consisted of three phases :

- 1) The 33d Regiment would surround Pleime and harass the defenders, exerting enough pressure to force II Corps to send a reaction force.
- 2) The 32d Regiment would ambush the relief column and destroy it.
- 3) Both Regiments would combine force to overrun and destroy the Camp itself.

As early as 19 September — one month before the attack — a thorough preparation down to the lowest level was carried out. Numerous exercises and rehearsals were conducted by each unit on maps and sand tables. Meanwhile, transportation companies assisted by forced local laborers were rushing to prestock rice and ammunition.

THE ATTACK

The two regiments left their bases at the foot of the Chu-Pong massif for their respective assembly areas on 15 October, as proved by the following lines in the diary of a VC officer from the 32d NVA Regiment :

« We depart for the Autumn Campaign on 15 October, the very day of the anniversary of comrade