

17 NOVEMBER

1. OPERATIONS SUMMARY:

For the first time in the Vietnamese conflict, Strategic Air strikes were to be used in direct support of the ground scheme of maneuver. The strikes of the past two days had been in a supporting role, but today the ground forces would be moving in direct relation to the impending strike.

Accordingly, both battalions still occupying the landing zone, 2/5 Cav and 2/7 Cav, moved off with a mission to sweep to the north, with the 2/5 Cav inclining slightly to the east and heading for COLUMBUS. The 2/7 Cav, which was minus its B company and a platoon of its A company, but reinforced by A 1/5 Cav, was to follow the 2/5 Cav long enough to put a 3,000 meter safety margin between it and the B-52 target area, then was to sweep to the west and northwest toward a map location that appeared it would make a possible landing zone. The map location (YA945043) was named ALBANY.

The 2/5 Cav closed at COLUMBUS at 1140 hours without incident.

The 2/7th Cav was about to undergo its ordeal by fire. The battalion set out behind the 2/5 with A company 2/7 in the lead, utilizing the battalion Recon platoon in lieu of its own missing platoon; followed by C company, D company, CP group. At the rear of the battalion column was A 1/5 Cav. (See Inclosure 25 for route of march and formations)

After clearing the 3,000 meter limit, the battalion swung westerly and made its way through the dense jungle toward ALBANY. About 300-500 meters short of its objective area, the lead element captured two prisoners without any resistance. As the lead element passed through the clearing that was to become ALBANY, it began receiving extremely heavy fire from its left and right front and from its right flank. Initial surprise had gone to the enemy, but the troops of the battalion reacted quickly and courageously. The fight quickly became a general melee as each individual fought his personal battle.

The brunt of the flanking move by the N-V-A was borne by C and D companies, and in some cases the enemy thrust penetrated through the ranks of the column. D company and part of the headquarters element began moving to the east to link up with the lead elements of A 1/5 Cav, which also had taken heavy enemy fire. Remnants of C company, along with the battalion command group, fought their way westward to the clearing where A company and Recon platoon were making their stands. (Inclosure 26)

Initially, the inability to precisely locate individual units in the battle precluded the use of supporting artillery and tactical air. It was an infantryman's battle for several hours. By mid-afternoon the pieces were sorted out and heavy supporting fires began falling in among N-V-A elements still pressing the attack. The first strikes in were by aerial artillery, followed by a tactical air napalm run, which broke up a N-V-A company-sized attack that was just forming against the westward edge of the forward perimeter.

By 1825 hours the fire around the clearing had slackened to the point where it could be used as a landing zone to bring in B 2/7 Cav from CAMP HOLLOWAY, where it had been placed on alert as soon as word of the fight reached brigade headquarters.

Although the enemy kept pressure on both perimeters during the night, he did not try heavy assaults against the positions as he had earlier at X-RAY. Illumination by Air Force flare ships and a continuous ring of artillery shells and tactical air strikes kept the enemy at bay and allowed units from both perimeters to make repeated forays out from the positions to bring back friendly casualties. At approximately 2200 hours, B 1/5 Cav marched overland from COLUMBUS and linked up with the eastern perimeter, giving it needed reinforcement. It was decided that the units should not try to fight their way further in the darkness and the two perimeters were maintained for the night. (Inclosure 27)

There was no activity of any type at either COLUMBUS or FALCON.

2. TASK ORGANIZATION

3D BRIGADE
No Change

DIVISION
No Change

3. INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY:

The 8th Battalion, 66th Regiment was on the move and had reached a point in the jungle, just east of the IA DRANG (YA8404) during the morning. The column had halted, dug in hasty positions and generally was in a relaxed posture (some soldiers were eating their noon rice) when outposts brought word that a large American column was headed directly toward them. The battalion commander had little choice but to organize hasty positions and prepare for a meeting engagement at close quarters in the dense jungle. In some cases his machine guns had to be fired from unprotected positions and many soldiers were thrust into battle still wearing their heavy forage packs.

When the fight came it was marked by its bitter intensity; first of the hand-to-hand conflict, and later by the sheer weight of the US artillery, aerial rocket and tactical air strikes. By nightfall only a handful of the original force remained organized in a combat posture. If this battalion had been destined for an assault on an artillery position, it would never reach the attack position.

Meanwhile, the other battalions of the 66th and 33d Regiments, depleted by the vicious combat of the past four days, began their gradual movement toward the northwest and the Cambodian sanctuary. Due west, over CHU PONG would have been faster, but the daily B-52 strikes had brought death and terror to the N-V-A forces and there was no alternative but to skirt the base of the mountain.

Those troops still remaining in the now-deserted X-RAY area suddenly learned of the reason for the exodus of the Cavalry. A B-52 strike had been called in virtually on top of the old positions.

The artillery base at COLUMBUS was still considered a target for N-V-A and Main Force VIET CONG elements in the IA DRANG valley, and these units steadily moved toward that objective.

4. ACTIVITIES STATISTICS:

FRIENDLY LOSSES
KIA 151*

WIA 121

MIA 4

*Includes those who later died of wounds inflicted on this date, and those originally carried MIA and now changed to KIA

ENEMY LOSSES
KIA-403(BC) 100(Est)

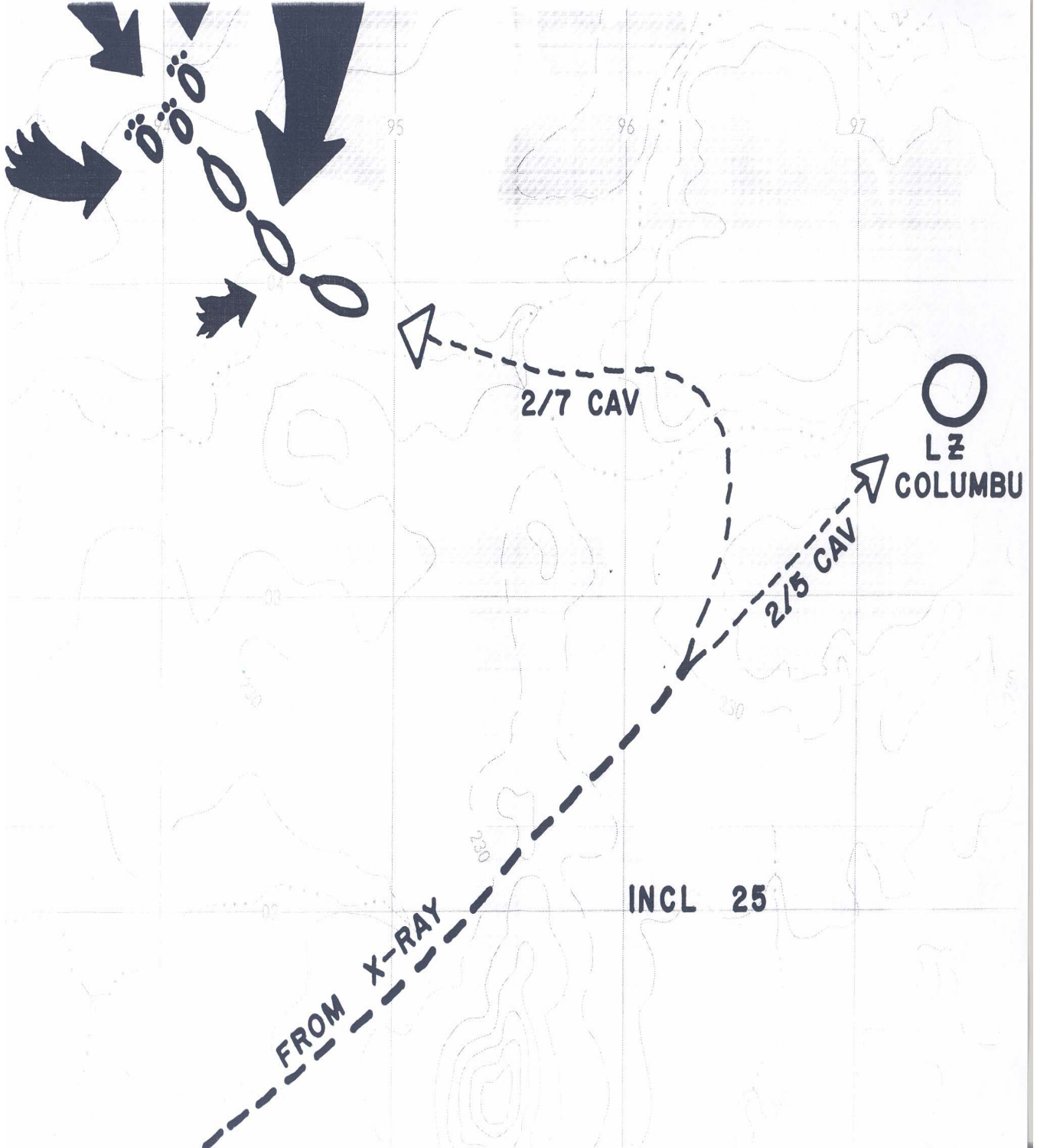
WIA-No estimates made

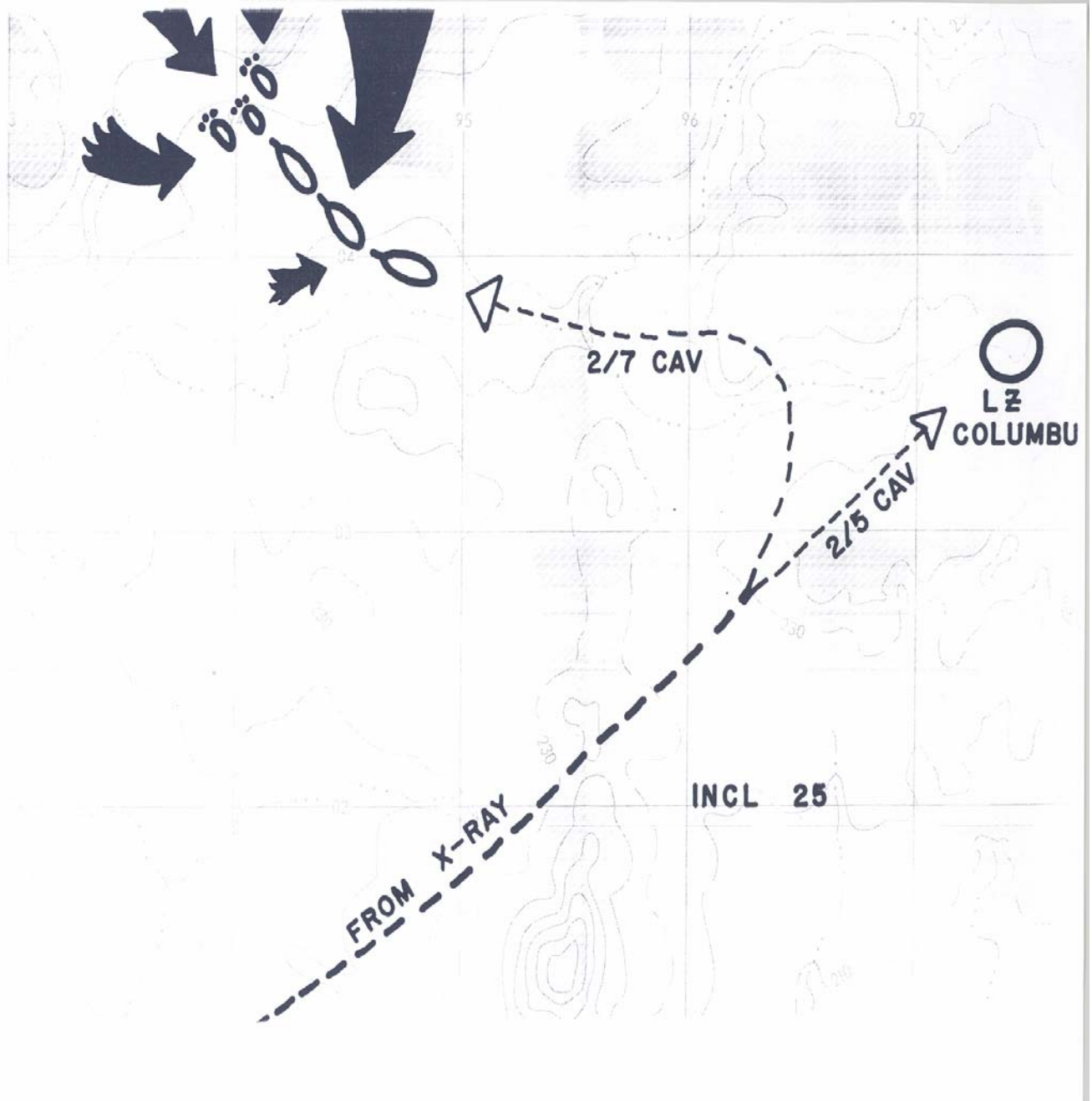
WPNS AND EQUIP EVACUATED:

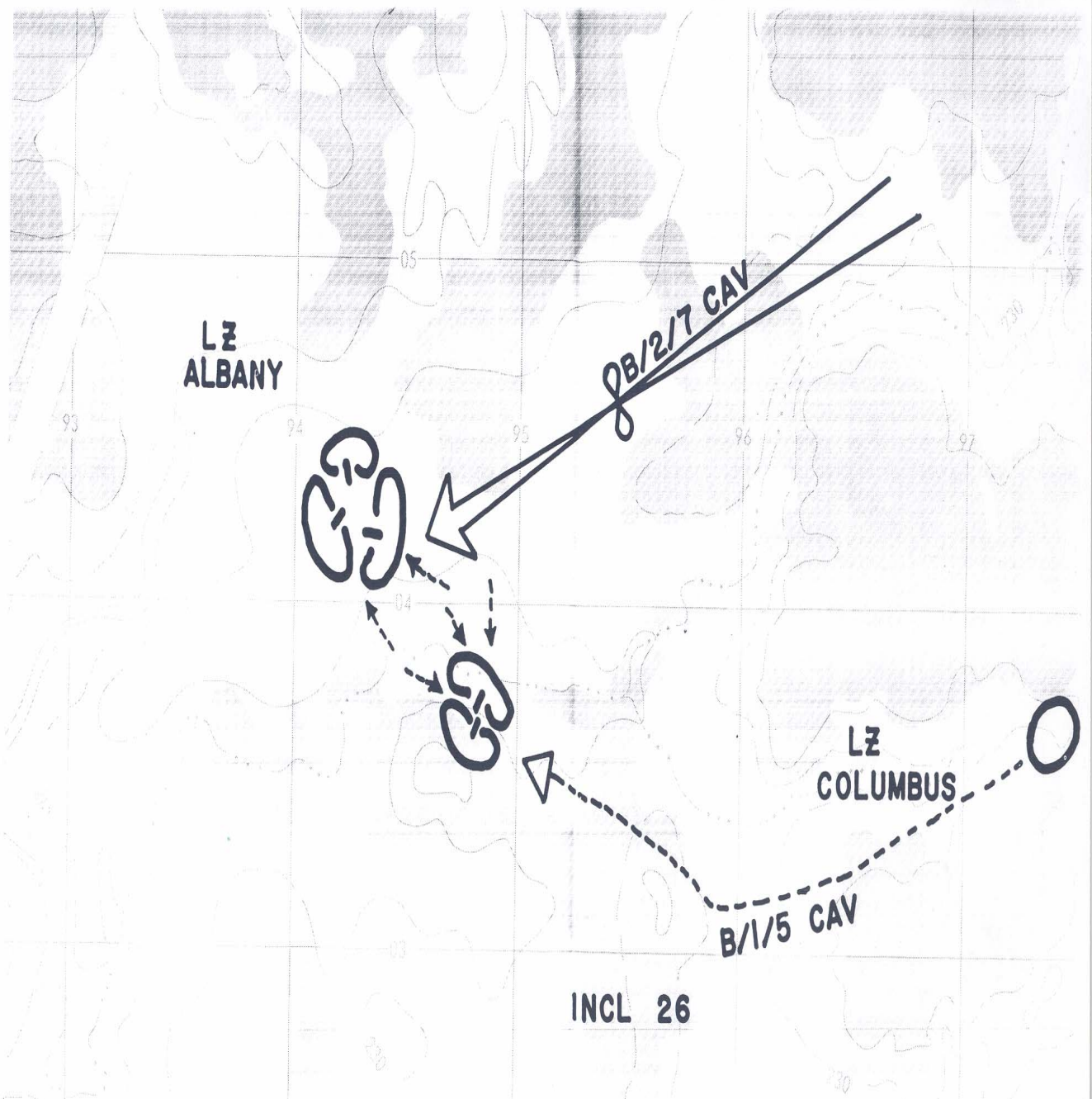
Assault rifles/carbines 112
Light machine guns 33
Heavy machine guns 3
82mm Mortar tubes 4
Mortar Tripods 5
Rocket Launchers 4
Mortar sights 2
Mortar fuzes (Cases) 3
Packs, w/equip 21
Rice & medical supplies

WPNS AND EQUIP DESTROYED

Assault rifles/carbines 100
Light Machine Guns 6
Rocket launchers 4
82mm mortars 2
Rocket launcher ammo (cases) 3







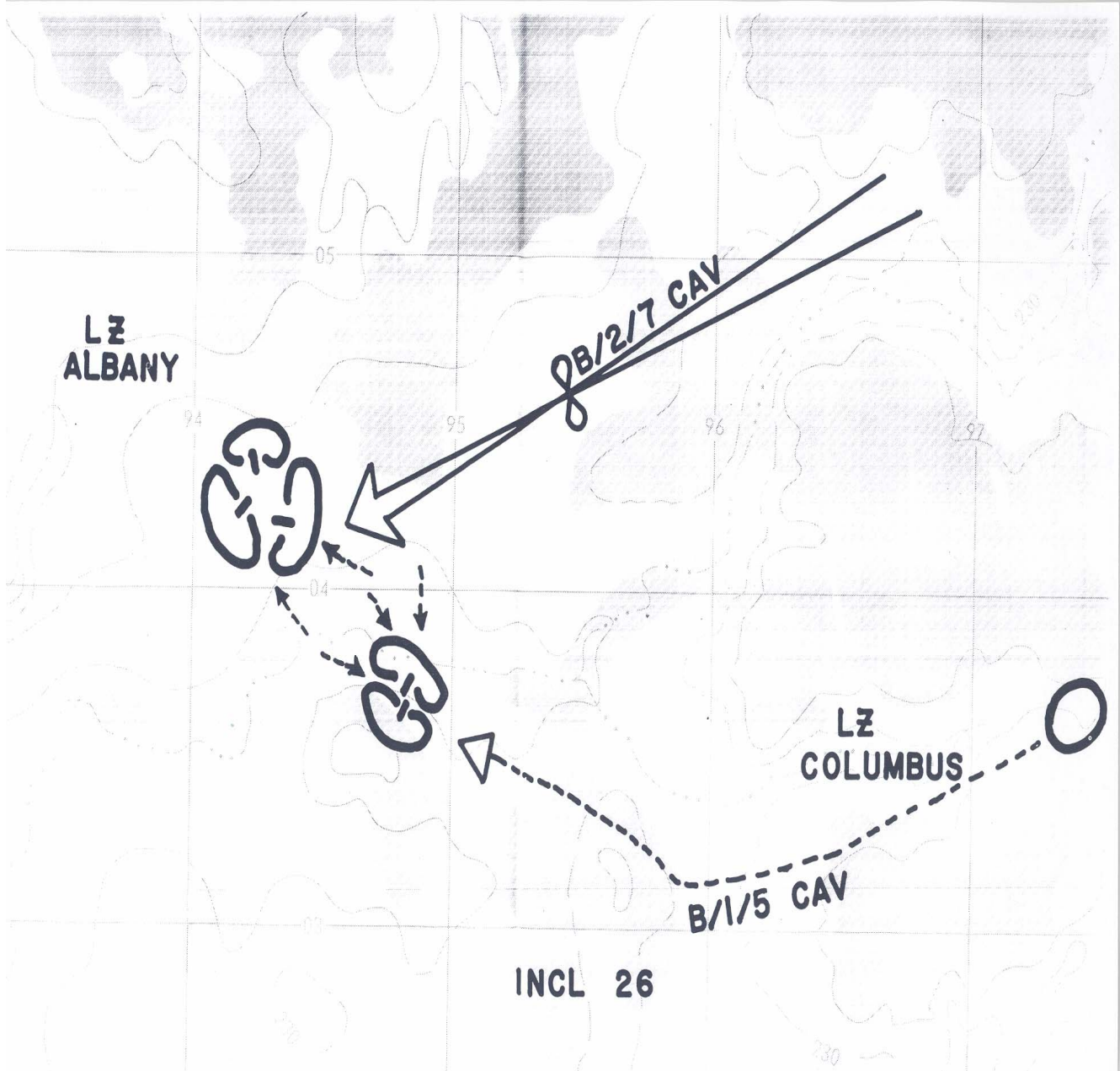
LZ
ALBANY

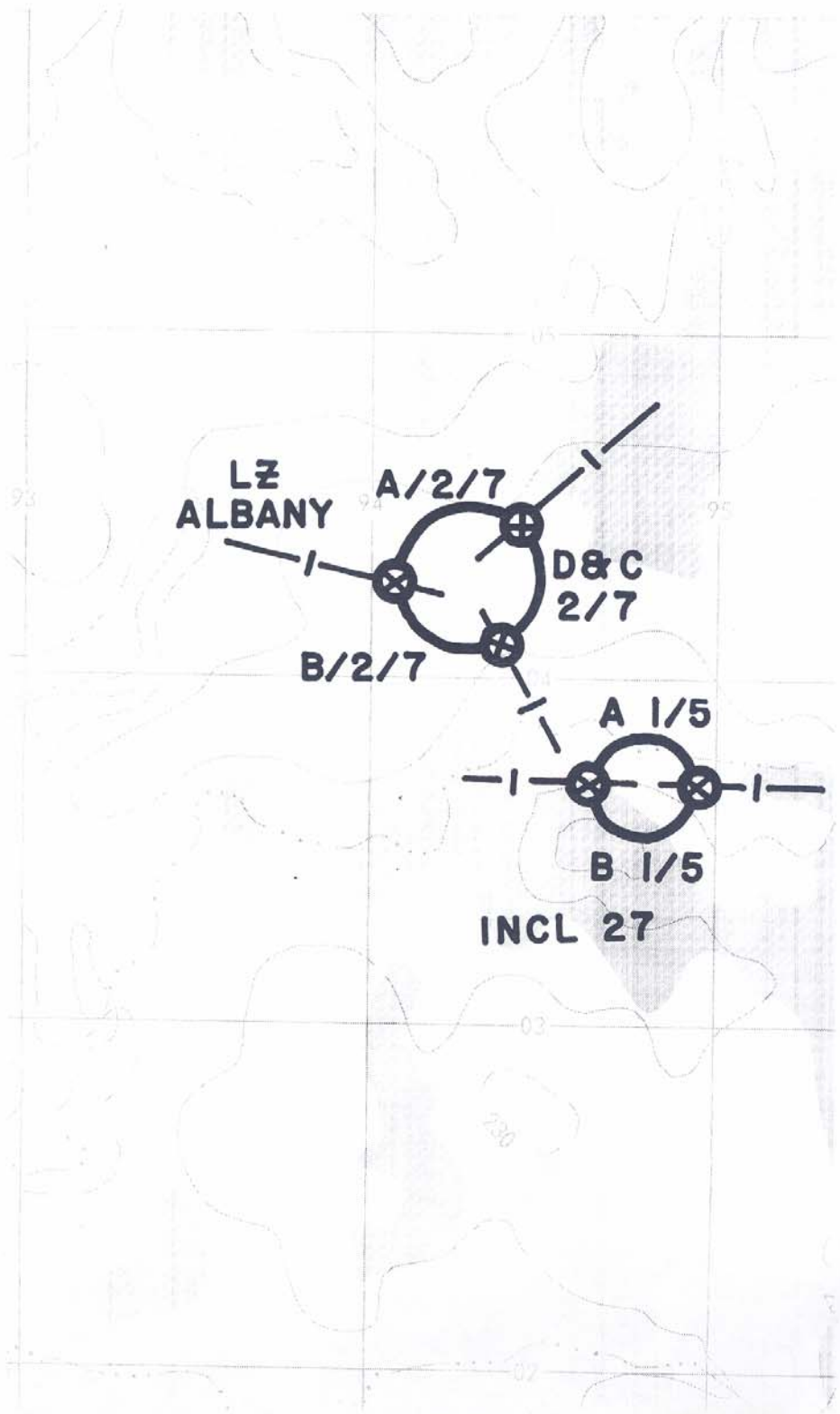
QB/2/7 CAV

LZ
COLUMBUS

B/1/5 CAV

INCL 26





LZ
ALBANY

A/2/7

D&C
2/7

B/2/7

A 1/5

B 1/5

INCL 27