

An Initial Summing-Up of the XXX Division’s Rear Service Support Work During the Counterattack in Self- Defense Against Vietnam

Upon orders, this division participated in the counterattack in self-defense on the Sino–Vietnamese border, which lasted twenty-four days from the time fighting broke out on February 20, 1979,¹ to the time of the pullback on March 12. The division victoriously accomplished the glorious combat mission assigned to it by the higher authorities.

In this operation outside China’s border, the battle zone was characterized by numerous mountains, dense forests, heavy mists, many rivers, deep ravines, and narrow roads. All these aspects of the battlefield created many difficulties for rear service support. In view of these characteristics, rear area command underwent a rigorous reorganization. Cooperation and coordination were enhanced, and tight controls were maintained over the central link—transportation. Various material resources were organized and readjusted, forward-and-rear echelons and relay support deployments were implemented, and such methods as combining forward deliveries with self-conducted shipments had to be implemented. The unit combined level-by-level forward deliveries with bypass forward deliveries, and combined requests for replenishment with self-supply of provisions and materials. Braving the grave dangers of sniping rifle fire and artillery fire, the entire complement of rear service personnel saw to it that supplies arrived wherever the troops marched and fought.

According to preliminary statistics, 299.1 tons of munitions, 381.4 tons of

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provisions, and 217.5 tons of other materials were transported to the front. Transported to the rear were XXX wounded personnel and XXX martyrs. Rush repairs were made on 96 light firearms (including machine guns) and 57 artillery pieces of various types. Minor repairs were made on 163 vehicles, and maintenance and servicing were conducted on 67 vehicles. Divisional aid stations performed emergency treatment on XXX wounded personnel and antishock treatment on XXX persons. The medical teams performed surgical procedures on 23 persons. A total of 5,575 vehicle sorties, which traveled a distance of 193,284 km, were conducted safely and without accidents. Not a single wounded person or martyr was lost, and no combat opportunities were forfeited because of the lack of provisions or munitions. The needs of front-line troops were basically assured, and timely forward deliveries were made of canned fruit, pineapples, pears, apples, and other cooling beverages. White liquor, raw ginger, chili peppers, brown sugar, and other provisions that protect against the cold were transported to the units. The entire work of rear service support was acclaimed by the officers and men, and all support tasks were completed during this operation. An initial summary is as follows.

A. Basic Circumstances

1. Rear Area Dispositions

The division regimental rear services elements were deployed as forward-and-rear echelons and from these positions carried out mobile support. The divisional rear services rear echelon was deployed at Man'e wu dui, its forward echelon was deployed at Zhuanwa chang, and, before the highway became accessible to traffic, a transportation transfer team and a mobile team of Army Hospital No. 3 were sent to and stationed at Long jin.

2. Combat Expenditures and Replenishments

1. *Munitions:* The division as a whole expended, in terms of multiples of base figures,² 2.5 handgun cartridges, 0.56 submachine pistol cartridges, 0.84 rifle cartridges, 0.625 heavy machine gun cartridges, 0.12 signal flares, 0.2 40-mm rocket projectiles, 0.33 60-mm mortar shells, 0.47 82-mm mortar shells, 0.91 100-mm³ mortar shells, 0.4 82-mm recoilless rifle projectiles, 0.8 hand grenades, 0.2 85-mm cannon projectiles, 4.42 122-mm howitzer shells, 0.8 107-mm rocket projectiles, and 1 130-mm rocket projectile. Resupply provided by higher authorities totaled 21,420 handgun cartridges, 868,200 rifle cartridges, 370,480 heavy machine gun cartridges, 1,464 40-mm rocket projectiles, 1,686 60-mm mortar

- shells, 6,933 82-mm mortar shells, 2,232 100-mm mortar shells, 2,274 82-mm recoilless rifle projectiles, 1,080 85-mm cannon shells, 9,843 122-mm howitzer shells, 2,266 107-mm rocket projectiles, and 1,799 130-mm rocket projectiles. Of captured [enemy] munitions, the troops used 57,380 cartridges of various types, 32 40-mm rocket projectiles, 1,249 82-mm mortar shells, and 120 hand grenades.
2. *Medical supplies:* The division as a whole expended four times the division basic load, 20 times the regimental basic load, and 16 times the battalion basic load respectively for field first-aid medical supplies. They also expended 5,000 first-aid kits. The higher authorities provided replenishments amounting to fourteen times the regimental basic load figure.
 3. *Provisions:* The unit expended and replenished 267,600 jin⁴ of rice, 21,000 jin of noodles, 156,996 jin of field rations, 44,500 jin of canned pork, 36,300 jin of canned vegetables, 700 jin of dehydrated vegetables, 11,300 jin of salted vegetables, 5,600 jin of sweet wild rice stems, 10,600 jin of rutabaga, 2,576 jin of hot pickled mustard tubers, 2,300 jin of tofu in spicy sauce, 2,330 jin of tofu powder, 10,000 jin of shelled peanuts, 7,700 jin of table salt, 7,000 jin of cooking oil, 5,200 jin of sugar, 54,400 jin of vegetables, 24,000 jin of fresh meat, 520 jin of solid-state soy sauce, 46,000 jin of fruit of various kinds, 4,600 bottles of soft drinks, 28,000 jin of canned fruit, 57,800 jin of ma liao [horse fodder], 11,950 cartons of cigarettes, and 15 tons of general merchandise and articles of daily use. Also expended were 42,000 jin of flour and about 6,000 cans of pineapple seized from the enemy.
 4. *Military supplies:* Twenty army-issue caps, 20 summer uniforms, 20 shirts, 30 4-jin cotton quilts, 312 rucksacks, 512 canteens, 536 raincoats, 312 backpack straps, 205 blankets, 200 hammocks, 553 knapsacks, 518 ration bags, 546 pairs of gaiters, 537 pairs of puttees, 63 stretchers, 218 belts, 502 mugs, 105 sets of collar and cap badges, 15 pairs of polyamide socks, 200 pieces of plastic sheeting, and 500 medium-size burlap bags.
 5. *Petroleum products and vehicle equipment:* The division as a whole expended 64,667 kg of gasoline, 2,254 kg of diesel oil, 1,947 kg of auxiliary oil (lubricating oils), and 4,789 pieces of vehicle equipment. The higher authorities provided supplements of 6,424 kg of gasoline, 340 kg of auxiliary oil, and 7,035 items of vehicle equipment.

3. *Human and Pack Animal Casualties*

[Omitted]⁵

4. Losses of Matériel During the Campaign

Eleven handguns, 90 semiautomatic rifles, 42 submachine guns, 11 squad machine guns, 5 heavy machine guns, 1 light flamethrower, 28 40-mm rocket launchers, 2 60-mm mortars, 1 82-mm recoilless rifle, five “flamethrower” nozzles, 10 20-liter flat cans, 288 army-issue caps, 518 suits of “65” summer uniforms, 1,532 shirts, 17 long underpants, one bed sheet, one mosquito net, 110 satchels, 195 canteens, 1,141 raincoats, 506 backpack straps, 125 blankets, 97 hammocks, 878 knapsacks, 772 ration bags, 1,117 pairs of gaiters, 125 pairs of puttees, 17 stretchers, 493 belts, 724 mugs, 725 sets of collar and cap badges, 108 pairs of polyamide socks, 14 pieces of plastic sheeting, 595 towels, 34 sets of sweat shirts and pants, 31 horse fodder bags, 66 canvas water buckets, 53 feed containers, 82 canvas horse troughs, 16 horse saddle or pack blankets, seven fodder choppers, 322 horse bridles, six horse saddles, eight pack saddles, eight sacks for horseshoe tools, 15 45 cm iron field cauldrons, 31 45 cm aluminum field cauldrons, 493 34 cm squad food basins, six oil drums, two iron pails, 1,055 medium-size gunny sacks, 27 cauldron-toting racks, and seven dual-use axes.

5. Captured Matériel

Two hundred and eight guided missiles, [sic] 70 weapons (including machine guns) of various types, five artillery pieces of various types, 17 40-mm rocket launchers, 15 accessories for rifles and guns, 84,627 cartridges of various types, 769 hand grenades, 143 steel ball shells, 72,317 artillery projectiles of various types, 530 signal flares, 1,559 land mines of various types, 4,125 kg of TNT, 120 igniter pellets, 1,533 artillery projectile fuses of various types, 30 82-mm artillery primer caps, 150 40-mm rocket launcher propulsion charges, one 2-watt radio transmitter, five telephone sets, two bicycles, 188 pieces of military material, 96 tons of paddy rice, 16,000 kg of gasoline, and 300 jin of grease.

B. A Few Methods

1. Seizing Opportunities to Do a Good Job of Prebattle Preparations

1. *Formulating the various rear service support plans:* After receiving their battle orders, they at once convened party committee meetings to conduct conscientious discussions, unify their thinking, and clarify their tasks on the basis of the operational mission and the leaders' decisions.

Deputy Division Commander Du personally convened and presided over meetings of leading cadres of all work departments and units. The various departments reported on the circumstances of prebattle preparations and anticipated scenarios, conducted extensive deliberations, and formulated the rear service's support plans. Subsequently, [the leadership] solicited a wide variety of views at meetings in which the leaders of each regiment and the heads of rear service sections and subsections took part. The results of these meetings guided their thinking and clarified and confirmed support principles and methods of operations. After this process, the division's rear service support plans were finally formulated.

2. *Rapidly carrying out all prebattle preparatory work:* In accordance with the army's rear service support directives, the division as a whole increased the basic load figures for its reserves of light weapon munitions and regimental artillery munitions by 0.25 and assembled staple and subsidiary foods sufficient for six days (three days each of uncooked and cooked food).
3. *Reshuffling personnel and defining the division of work:* Divisional and regimental rear services reshuffled their personnel in line with combat tasks. They sent three to five persons to take part in forward command work, obtained prompt information about leadership intentions, troop tasks, and munitions and material expenditures. They informed the rear area elements to provide timely support, and organized forward-and-rear echelons, mobile support teams, and trans-shipment teams. They also transferred mobile surgery teams (five persons) and firing-line ordnance repair teams (three persons) to reinforce the regiments that had been assigned to missions on the main axes of advance.

2. Using Multiple Means to Provide the Troops With Timely Support

Substantial expenditures of munitions and provisions during the fighting required urgent resupply. To this end, three combinations were implemented to furnish support.

1. *Requests for resupply combined with self-supplied provisions and materials.* In terms of support for the expenditure of provisions, apart from requesting replenishments from the higher authorities, the division supplied the needs of the front-line units by purchasing on their own such provisions as fruit, soft drinks, and cigarettes and promptly delivering these to the troops. For example, when the troops were feeling physically exhausted after a sustained diet of field rations, comrades of the XXX

Regiment's rear service section spent nights making sweet-and-salty steamed buns which they sent to the front-line positions. They peeled and bagged more than 1,200 jin of pineapples, delivered these into the hands of the front-line fighters, and made timely deliveries of raw ginger, brown sugar, white spirits, chili peppers, and garlic to help the troops dispel cold and avert illnesses. The troops were deeply touched when they received these things, declaring: "A basket of steamed buns, or a pineapple, reveal true sentiments. We will courageously fight the enemy to repay our rear area comrades for the profound friendship they have shown us."

2. *Forward deliveries combined with self-conducted shipments:* In the process of replenishing munitions and provisions, they dealt differently with different situations. Depending on the importance of the combat assignments, the amount of the replenishment, and the urgency of the resupply requested, they employed the method of combining deliveries with self-shipments with the emphasis on forward deliveries and using self-shipments as supplements. Division and regiments strengthened mutual liaison, together made arrangements for transportation, increased coordination between higher and lower levels, and raised the utilization rate of transportation facilities. This made up for insufficiencies in the means of transportation and at the same time focused their use on ensuring key sectors.
3. *Level-by-level forward deliveries were combined with bypass deliveries.* Depending on needs, they conducted bypass deliveries to provide direct support to front-line positions, reduce turnover, and gain time. For example, during the XXX Regiment's operations on February 23, large numbers of munitions were needed and time was pressing, so they organized militia and mules and horses to make deliveries directly to the front-line positions and ensure that the fighters did not lack munitions. Every unit also made versatile dispositions to replenish expenditures as these occurred. They arranged for supplies from within the same unit, negotiated acquisitions from neighboring units, or obtained supplies on the move. All units made full use of captured munitions and materials to resupply troops on the spot.

3. Narrowing the Scope of Rescue Operations and Providing Wounded Personnel With Timely First Aid

During assault operations, large numbers of wounded occurred over short periods of time and evacuations to the rear covered long distances. To provide timely treatment for wounded personnel, they deployed each level of medical

service as far forward as possible in light of actual circumstances, and reinforced each level. Battalion aid stations reinforced the companies assigned to the main axes of attack, regimental mobile teams reinforced the battalions, and divisional mobile surgical teams reinforced the regiments, while regimental and battalion aid stations constantly accompanied their own units to provide battlefield first aid. The division hospital was deployed as two echelons, one forward and one rear. The 52 persons of its No. 2 Department conducted first aid along the route of advance of the forward command, while the 56 personnel of the No. 3 Department set up shop with rear area command headquarters and sent out mobile teams to provide mobile medical support. Their experience demonstrated the feasibility of deploying the medical services forward to reinforce each successive level. This created conditions for prompt medical treatment and trans-shipment of wounded personnel and maintained the continuity of evacuation to the rear.

Secondly, attention was paid to the work done by sorting posts (triage stations) and to antishock measures. In the process of treating wounded personnel, they conducted life-saving and debridement surgery on gravely wounded personnel. Most of the battlefield injuries were caused by enemy artillery fire and such heavy infantry weapons as heavy anti-aircraft machine guns. The injuries were grave, and many of the wounded with serious, traumatic injuries were in hemorrhagic shock. For this reason they concentrated their efforts on combating shock and greatly lowered the death rate. Of the 49 wounded receiving treatments for shock at the division forward command aid post, 26 were in comas, 18 had no measurable blood pressure, 26 had lost all physiological reflexes, and no pulse could be detected in 13 of them. They used the method of large-needle pressurized transfusion to infuse normal saline solution and glucose electrolyte solution and, for a few of them, administered a final dose of plasma substitute or dextran. This produced outstanding results and an early revival rate as high as 100 percent.

4. Paying Close Attention to Transportation Links to Ensure Transportation to and from the Front

Operations in mountainous and forested regions underscored the contradiction between combat consumption and timely replenishments and made transportation to and from the front exceptionally onerous. They concentrated on the following aspects:

1. *Defining the key and the secondary, and the urgent and the less urgent, and ensuring transportation for the key and the urgent.* A principle for [transportation] utilization was to put the front lines before the rear areas,

put the main direction [of attack] before secondary directions, and give priority support to key locations. During forward deliveries, munitions and troops were given priority over provisions and materials, and during deliveries to the rear, wounded personnel and captives were given priority over materials and war trophies. Vehicles were organized into groups, a few of which were deployed forward to assume mobile tasks whenever needed while the majority were deployed toward the rear or retained within China on standby to respond to emergency needs.

During the blocking operations at Dai nai, three infantry regiments put in requests for resupply. Based on the combat tasks and circumstances of each regiment, the division assembled vehicles, militia, and pack animals and gave priority to supplying the XXX Regiment. They sent the munitions urgently needed by the troops directly to their front-line positions.

2. *Placing main emphasis on pack-animal transport and giving full play to motor vehicle transportation.* Because the highways were not open to traffic, the division and regiments relied mainly on manpower and pack animals for transportation. Therefore, it was absolutely necessary to make the maximum use of militia, horses, and mules. Meanwhile, engineering units and militia were organized to build hastily constructed army roads to enable motor transport to extend as far forward as possible and to give full play to motor vehicle transportation.

Drawing on the experience of the 1960 Sino–Burma Border War [sic], the XXX Regiment carefully planned the coordination of manpower, pack-animal, and motor vehicle transportation. They adopted the method of relay transportation, using motor vehicles where highways were available, mules and horses on small paths, and manpower where there were no roads. Special attention was paid to manpower and pack-animal transportation. The regiment's 100 army horses and 50 civilian pack animals were organized into unified horse caravans, and competent cadres were assigned to provide organization and leadership. This gave full play to the role of pack-animal transportation and provided strong support for transportation to and from the front lines.

Of the 1,634 militia members and 380 mules and horses that the division received from the higher authorities, they attached 308 militia and 50 horses to the XXX Regiment, 460 militia and 140 horses to the XXX Regiment, and 307 militia and 50 horses to the XXX Regiment to reinforce the various support services assigned to each regiment. They organized forward and rear motor vehicle echelons and relay transportation between the motor vehicles, militia and pack animals as

well as between the division and the regiments. The volume of transshipments was reduced during emergencies to save time, and they would send urgently needed munitions and provisions directly to the front-line positions.

3. *Enhancing battlefield vehicle management, and doing a good job of safety and preventing accidents.* In view of the characteristics of combat transportation in mountainous and forested areas and on the premise of fulfilling [transportation] tasks according to schedule, drivers were required to “refrain from seven ways of driving.” (1) Persist in driving at moderate speeds on good roads, and refrain from speeding. (2) Persist in driving carefully on poor and dangerous roads, and refrain from risky driving. (3) Persist in taking brief rests when tired or weary, and refrain from woozy driving. (4) Persist in checking vehicles and immediately repairing breakdowns, and refrain from make-do driving. (5) Persist in keeping cool and driving normally when breakdowns cause one to fall behind, and refrain from rush-rush driving. (6) Persist in driving under full power on steep, winding roads, and refrain from driving in neutral. (7) Persist in courteous driving and ceding the right of way when meeting oncoming vehicles, and refrain from rude driving.

All units mobilized the masses to dig shelters, camouflage vehicles, disperse parked vehicles, and take precautions against aircraft and artillery. Vehicle no. 724 of the division artillery regiment’s 3d Battalion was properly sheltered and camouflaged and sustained only a broken windshield when enemy shells fell and exploded next to it. Of the 529 divisional vehicles that took part in the operation, not one was damaged by enemy artillery attacks.

In view of the heavy transportation tasks assigned to the division motor vehicle company, the company’s party committee attached great importance to accident prevention. Activities to “observe discipline, care for vehicles, drive at moderate speeds, and drive safely” were initiated throughout the company, and the vehicles were regularly checked, maintained, and repaired. Drivers were briefed when setting out, received instructions for the road, and reported back after returning. All platoons had safety teams and all squads had safety personnel. A gratifying situation of “all persons paying attention to safety and all guarding against accidents” emerged. No accidents, big or little, occurred during the delivery of XXXX tons of various materials and XXX persons, and the safety of all persons and vehicles was ensured. Transportation tasks, to and from the front, assigned to all levels, were successfully completed.

C. Initial Understandings

In the course of training, they gained the following understandings about doing a good job of rear service support work for operations in mountainous and forested areas:

1. In-depth Ideological Education and Constantly Raising the Political Consciousness of Rear Service Personnel Is the Basis for Doing a Good Job of Rear Service Support Work

Prior to the operation, they conducted, in connection with the situation and their mission, universal education in the “three attitudes” [hatred, scorn and contempt for the enemy—Trans.] and education in tradition and revolutionary heroism. They held timely oath-taking rallies and initiated activities where challenges were issued and accepted, and where all participants made plans to render meritorious service and expressed their resolve to the party. These measures continuously stimulated a high degree of political consciousness among the rear service personnel, firmly established among all persons the determination to do everything for the front, and for the troops to gain victory as well as the revolutionary spirit of not fearing hardship or death. This training ensured the successful completion of all support tasks by the rear services elements.

2. Taking the Initiative in Knowing and Grasping the Situation Is the Most Important Condition for Implementing Timely and Accurate Support

Due to the complexity of the terrain, the intensity of the fighting, and the difficulties in communication and liaison, contact between the forward and rear commands was interrupted for nineteen hours after the fighting began. They promptly dispatched personnel to the front lines to obtain information about the circumstances and found out from militiamen coming back from delivering provisions to the front lines that the XXX and XXX regiments had been blocked by enemy forces at Zhou deng, that the fighting was intense, and that the troops were expending large amounts of ammunition. They quickly sent out forward support teams and organized militiamen and pack animals to deliver munitions to the front, carried out resupply immediately after reaching Long jin, and helped out neighboring units, and thereby ensured the smooth progress of the assault operations.

During the entire course of the operation, they constantly sent down people to acquire information, transmit written messages, and exchange

information. They debriefed militiamen and drivers delivering materials to and from the front on the situation, and placed special persons in charge of maintaining upward and downward wire and radio coordination. At the same time, they proactively acquired information. They saw to it that the situation always remained clear and that all support work proceeded in a timely and precise fashion. Experience taught them to understand that in circumstances where unimpeded communications and liaison cannot be maintained, diverse methods of obtaining information and knowing the circumstances must be employed if rear service support is to be conducted in a proactive, accurate, and timely manner.

3. Completion of All Tasks Is Better Ensured By Strengthening Leadership, Doing a Good Job of Interdepartmental Coordination, Mobilizing the Strengths of All Concerned, and Making the Maximum Use of Their Capabilities

1. *Unifying the leadership and organizing cooperation.* Every time a support task was to be conducted, Deputy Commander Du of the rear command and department leaders personally called together the relevant departments to organize cooperation, clarify the assignment, and put forward requirements. The strengths of diverse departments were unified and coordinated to closely focus on the central work of transportation. Personnel from various departments participated and provided mutual assistance and close coordination every time a [transportation control] point was established.
2. *Strengthening liaison and proactive coordination.* In addition to unifying and organizing coordination, all departments maintained constant liaison and proactive coordination among themselves. For example, the transportation department constantly took the initiative in contacting the ordnance, military supplies, and medical departments about tasks to be performed and to make prior transportation arrangements. They saw to it that all demands were met and their services were available whenever called upon.

4. Making Full Use of the Role of the Militia and Civilian Pack Animals That Took Part in Combat Was an Important Factor in Completing the Rear Service Support Tasks

Motor vehicle transportation was subject to substantial limitations during this operation. In view of this circumstance, they attached special importance to making use of the militia and their civilian pack animals that took part in the

action. The division regarded them as an important force in the completion of rear service support tasks, accorded them the same treatment as army units, showed them the same political concern, and gave them the same care in daily life. They enhanced their organization and leadership, and dispatched cadres with a strong sense of responsibility to lead them forward. Participating in combat with the division were 1,364 militia and 380 civilian horses. Each man covered a distance of over 300 km. They displayed great courage and played an important role in sending munitions and material to the front and bringing back wounded personnel and martyrs. To support the troops, they frequently marched day and night and made consecutive sorties, each person marching more than 25 km per day and setting out by day or by night the moment tasks were assigned. Some persevered in sending munitions to the front when running high fevers of 39 degrees (centigrade). Others, out of profound class sentiments, covered martyrs and wounded personnel with their own raincoats and jackets while they themselves spent nights in thin clothing. While delivering munitions to the front, Militiaman Shi Wenshun observed that some front-line troops had no drinking water. Disregarding his own safety and at the risk of his life, he went up close to the enemy's positions to snatch some water and, even after being wounded, persisted in taking the water back to the troops. Militiamen who participated in combat were highly acclaimed by the troops for their spirit of courage and tenacity, of not fearing difficulties or death, of being impervious to hardship and fatigue.

They learned from this experience that manpower and pack-animal transportation constitute an indispensable force for completing rear service support tasks during combat in mountainous and forested areas. It is therefore absolutely necessary to conscientiously grasp the administration of militiamen who take part in combat operations and pay attention to bringing their functions into play.

D. Problems

1. There was a lack of clear and explicit information exchanges between the front and rear areas. This was due to the inability to maintain unimpeded communication and liaison. As a result, [they] were unable to keep constantly apprised about front-line material shortages. This situation caused difficulties for rear area support work.
2. The mountainous and forested area of operation entailed large requirements for materials and urgent needs for supplies, and transportation support relied more on manpower and pack animals than on motor vehicles. However, only a limited number of militia and pack animals were attached to this division and transportation capabilities were insuf-

- ficient, causing serious strains in transportation to and from the front.
- (3) Rear area support tasks were complicated by the shortage of institutional personnel in the departments of combat support, ordnance, military supplies, and transportation as well as in the stretcher-bearer and support detachments. This, plus their lack of experience in their duties, poorly suited them to the contingency needs of combat.

Some of the statistics are not very accurate because the troops only returned to China on March 12, and the various units have not yet had time to do any summing up. This will have to wait for the submission of comprehensive reports after the troops have completed their summary.

Notes

1. The Chinese campaign began on February 17, 1979.
2. These figures appear to reflect the percentages of the unit's basic load of each type of munition that had to be replaced because it had been expended in combat.
3. This is probably a reference to 120-mm or 160-mm mortar shells. The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) did not have a 100-mm mortar in its inventory in 1979.
4. One jin equals .5 kilograms or 1.1 lbs.
5. This information was omitted in the original document.

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