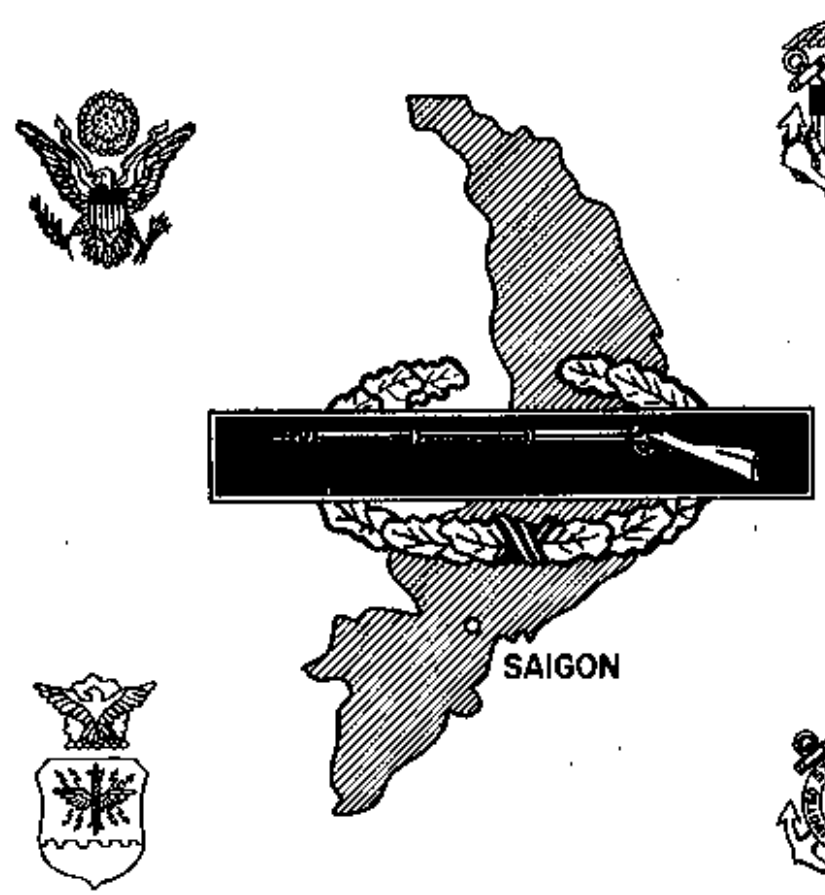
HANDBOOK
FOR US FORCES IN VIETNAM



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FOREWORD

The enemy we face in South Vietnam today, both regular and guerrilla forces, is challenging us with many old fighting techniques and a few new ones. We have shown that he can and will be defeated.

I have had summarized in this handbook certain basic techniques and procedures which have evolved out of several years of combat operations against this enemy. The guidance furnished in these pages, when followed, will increase the effectiveness of our forces and preclude a repetition of past mistakes.

The importance and value of the training given to each member of the Armed Forces prior to entering combat is demonstrated clearly in the results of every action. This handbook will supplement and focus that previous training. This handbook is not the last word. Each of us must continue to display imagination, resourcefulness, and ingenuity in our combat actions.

W. C. WESTMORELAND
General, United States Army
Commanding

HANDBOOK FOR U. S. FORCES IN VIETNAM

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CHAPTER 1

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM FORCES

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Vietnam (RVN) has been harassed by Communist-instigated guerrilla warfare throughout its existence. In order to meet this threat the government has committed a major portion of its human and material resources to defeating the Viet Cong. At the same time, it has attempted to provide its rural peoples with the economic and social benefits of development. Free World military and economic assistance programs are designed to support the efforts of the Vietnamese government and peoples toward both these objectives.

SECTION I. THE GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

1. General

Political power in the Government of Vietnam (GVN) is concentrated at the national level; most important decisions and major programs originate and are directed from Saigon. The Prime Minister is the government's operative head and is assisted in the development of policies by the heads of the various ministries. These policies, decisions, and programs are then passed to the lower echelons of the government -- province, district, village and hamlet -- for execution. Each of four corps commanders acts as the government representative in his Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ).

Not all instructions originating at the national level pass through the corps headquarters. Routine administrative instructions from the various ministers in Saigon normally go directly to the province chief, bypassing the corps and division headquarters, which are primarily concerned with tactical operations.

2. Divisions of Local Government

There are 43 provinces in the country. Below the province, the next subdivision of government is the district, which is similar to our county. Districts are divided into villages, with an average of 8-12 per district. Villages normally consist of 4-6 hamlets. Historically, the village has been the most important organization for local government, and even today it retains many essential legal and tax collecting functions.

SECTION II. THE ARMED FORCES

3. General

The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) consists of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF), the Vietnamese Navy (VNN), and the Regional and Popular Forces (RF and PF). Each of these elements has a specific role in the overall strategy for defeating the VC and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) main force units, the VC local force units, and the guerrillas.

4. Army of the Republic of Vietnam

a. ARVN, the Vietnamese regular army, is primarily an infantry force, consisting of 10 infantry divisions plus separate infantry, airborne, ranger and armor units. ARVN is normally committed against the VC/NVA main force units in search and destroy or clearing operations. When not employed in offensive operations, ARVN units are often committed to securing areas where civilian police or pacification teams are operating and defending key installations or supply and communication routes. ARVN operations are closely coordinated with the local GVN province officials to insure that they support the local efforts and do not endanger local government forces.

b. MACV advisory teams work with all ARVN forces, normally down to battalion level, but in certain instances even at company level. These advisors provide a ready point of contact in coordinating combined operations.

5. The Vietnamese Air Force

a. The Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) includes five tactical wings; each is organized differently and may include any number of fighter, helicopter, and transport squadrons. Fighter squadrons can engage designated targets with a combination of general purpose, fragmentation, concussion, incendiary, delayed action and fire (Napalm) bombs, rockets and 20mm cannon fire. The transport squadrons provide a capability for air dropping troops, equipment and supplies, flare drops for illumination of target areas in support of offensive air strikes and ground operations, and for air movement of troops, equipment, supplies and officials. The liaison squadrons are capable of performing forward

air control, visual reconnaissance and liaison operations. Helicopter squadrons, equipped with H-34 aircraft, furnish a limited capability for air movement of troops, equipment and supplies throughout RVN.

b. MACV advisors work with the VNAF at all echelons often accompanying them on missions. They provide a ready point of contact for liaison or coordination.

6. Vietnamese Navy and Marine Corps

a. The Vietnamese Navy (VNN) is primarily a defensive force, consisting of a small sea force for off shore counterinfiltration surveillance along the coast from the 17th parallel to the Cambodian border, a coastal force -- the junk fleet -- for patrolling of inshore coastal waterways, and a river force for inland waterway operations. The river force is organized into seven River Assault Groups (RAGs). Each RAG is capable of transporting by water a battalion of RVNAF and supporting them for 10-14 days.

b. The Vietnamese Marine Corps (VNMC) consists of one brigade. It normally forms part of the general reserve and is stationed in the Saigon area.

c. MACV advisors work with the VNN sea, coastal and river forces and with the VNMC units; they are a coordination contact for combined and joint operations.

7. Regional Forces (District Forces)

a. The Regional Forces (RF) are a nationally administered military force assigned to and under the operational control of the sector commander (province chief). The basic combat unit of the RF is the light infantry company, though in certain provinces there are also a number of RF mechanized platoons, intelligence platoons and squads, and river patrol companies.

b. Normally the RF unit is recruited locally, placed under the operational control of the sub-sector commander (district chief), and habitually employed in the same general area. The primary missions given to RF units are to secure key installations and communication routes, to protect the local government officials and key people loyal to the government, and to provide a sub-sector reserve for assisting village or hamlet defense forces under attack. When ARVN or Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF) units are operating in an area where RF are located, the RF can often contribute to the success of the operation through their detailed knowledge of the local terrain and people.

8. Popular Forces (Village Forces)

a. The Popular Forces (PF) are a nationally administered military force organized and operated at the village level and consisting of light infantry squads and platoons. The PF units are commanded by their own noncommissioned officer leaders who are responsible, through their village chiefs, to the district chiefs. PF members are full-time volunteers recruited within their native villages and hamlets to protect their own families and property. Though legally this force may be supplemented with draftees, its primary motivation stems from the fact its members are recruited from the villages and hamlets in which they are stationed and in which their families live.

b. Because of their small size, light arms, and limited training, the combat capability of PF units is restricted to local defensive and counterattack operations. The basic concept of employment is for village platoons

and hamlet squads to defend their own area with the inter-village platoons providing responsive reinforcement. Occasionally PF units may participate in operations with other forces. In such operations, which are normally undertaken to reinforce, support or relieve a village or hamlet under attack, the PF are employed to act as guides, lay ambushes, protect flanks, or provide a rear guard for the main body.

SUMMARY

The Vietnamese have paid heavily in their long struggle against the communist insurgents. Despite the costs, they retain their determination to be victorioue. We are assisting them in all their efforts -- militarily, economically, and politically -- wherever we can, in the field, with the rural peoples, and at the governmental and military headquarters. Success will ultimately depend on the effectivenees of our joint and combined programs and operations.

CHAPTER 2

THE VIET CONG

INTRODUCTION

The VC is well trained, organized, and equipped for his mission. He employs the tactics of the guerrilla because they suit his means. VC forces sometimes lack uniforms, but in most cases their weapons are modern and effective. If he is prepared to fight, or has good reason, he will stay and fight. But frequently when hit hard, he will break into small groups and melt away. On occasion he travels with his family and is not above using women and children to cover his withdrawal, leaving them to fend for themselves. He digs in well and uses concealed tunnels and bunkers extensively. He moves mostly at night and prefers to fight under cover of darkness. Normally he will not attack unless he has great superiority. The VC is smart but far from unbeatable -- even on his own ground.

SECTION I. MILITARY ORGANIZATION

1. General

a. The Viet Cong military organization is an integral part of the apparatus which controls all aspects of VC activity throughout the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). Each VC political headquarters at hamlet, village, district and

province levels includes a military component which exercises some control over Viet Cong military units assigned to its area of jurisdiction.

b. The Central Office, South Vietnam (COSVN) is the highest level VC headquarters in RVN. Under COSVN are six VC military regions. The Military Region is a political headquarters with a closely integrated military component which directs military operations of VC units subordinate to it. COSVN has overall responsibility for VC military operations in RVN and exercises direct control over certain units. At province and district levels, the VC political and military structure closely parallels that of the Government of South Vietnam, with some exceptions. For example, Long Dien and Dat Do Districts in Phouc Tuy Province are combined by the VC into Long Dat District. This organizational technique subordinates the military to the political and promotes unity of effort. VC organization is patterned after that used in North Vietnam.

2. Military Units

a. Military units are divided into three general categories: combat, combat support and militia. The combat units consist of three distinct types of military forces: North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units infiltrated into South Vietnam, VC main forces and VC local forces.

(1) During 1965 a number of NVA units were infiltrated into RVN and are presently integrated into the VC military structure. These units were encountered frequently during the latter half of 1965. Being regular army units, they revealed a greater tendency to stay and fight than the local VC forces have in the past. They are better armed, equipped and supplied than other units because of their more direct ties with North Vietnam.

(2) VC main forces are those units directly subordinate to COSVN or to the military regions in RVN. They may be found as regimental, battalion, separate company and platoon sized units. They are better trained and equipped than VC local forces. Their leadership consists of experienced and dedicated Communist personnel with long experience in guerrilla warfare.

(3) VC local forces are organized in units up to battalion size and are normally subordinate to an individual VC province or district. Their operational area is usually defined by territorial boundaries.

b. VC combat support forces comprise VC headquarters personnel and special combat support units such as communication, engineer, reconnaissance and food production elements which are not assigned to a particular VC combat unit.

c. VC militia are subdivided into three types of irregular forces: guerrilla, self-defense and secret self-defense.

(1) The most important militia forces are the full time local guerrilla units. They are used to harass friendly units, conduct assassinations, and other acts of terrorism and sabotage. However, they do participate in actions in conjunction with local or main forces when

the latter operate within their areas. They are used as guides, porters and rear guard riflemen in this supporting role.

(2) VC self-defense and secret self-defense forces are part time irregulars primarily responsible for local security and for providing early warning of approaching enemy forces. Such defense forces rarely exceed a squad size. The self-defense units are normally found in VC controlled areas while the secret self-defense units are found in contested or RVN controlled areas.

3. Organization for Combat

a. NVA forces operating in Vietnam set the pattern for the organizational structure of the VC main force regiments. A typical regiment consists of two to four rifle battalions and one so-called artillery battalion (figure 1). On occasion, artillery battalions have employed 70mm and 75mm howitzers against RVN forces.

b. Separate main force and local force battalions are similar in structure. Each has three or four rifle companies and a heavy weapons company (figure 2). Main force units are usually distinguished by newer model small arms and heavier caliber crew-served weapons than local forces. Companies of main or local force battalions may operate separately or in conjunction with local guerrillas.

c. VC companies consist of three rifle platoons and a weapons platoon (figure 3). Each rifle platoon has three rifle squads, which in turn are composed of

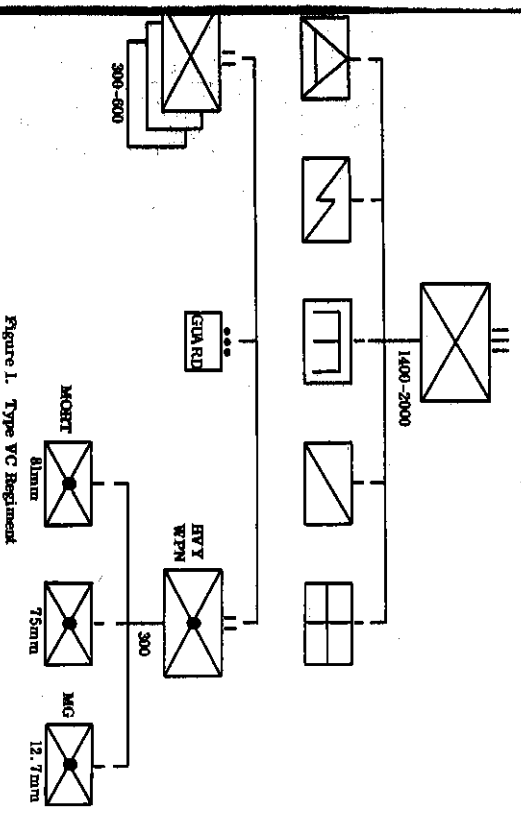


Figure 1. Typical VC Regiment

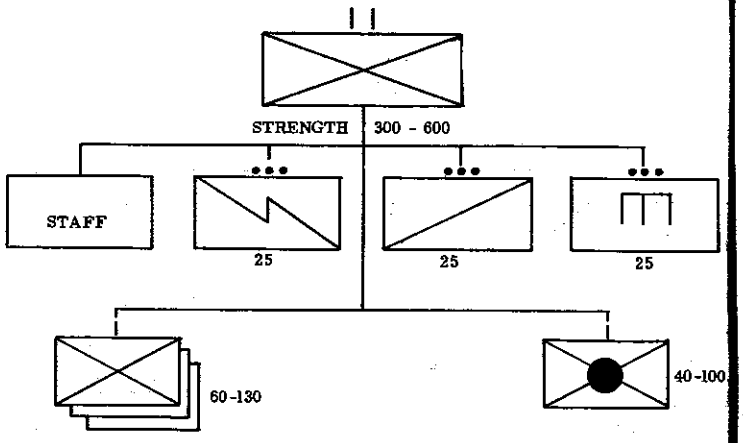


Figure 2. Type VC Battalion

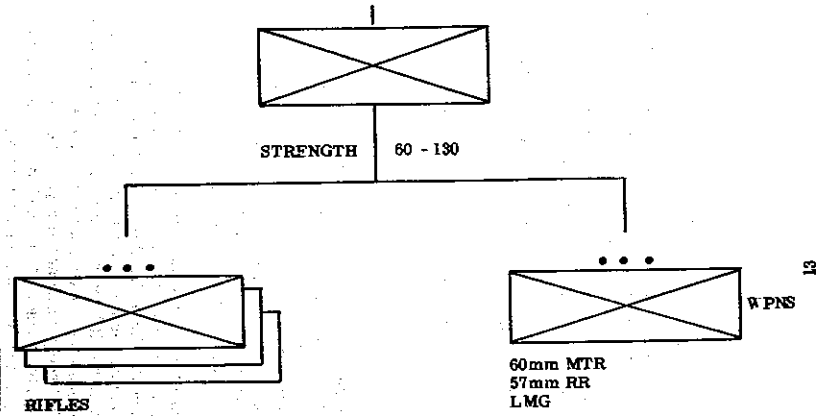


Figure 3. Type VC Company

three 3-man cells and a squad leader.

d. VC military units vary considerably in strength and equipment, depending on subordination, location, availability of food and recruits, and the degree of control exercised by the VC over the surrounding territory. Irregular units are usually encountered in platoon or squad strength, although special VC guerrilla operations may only require 2 to 5 man teams. The VC irregular units are characteristically flexible in organization.

SECTION II. METHODS OF OPERATION

4. General

a. The simple but effective code of the VC is "When the enemy advances, withdraw; when he defends, harass; when he is tired, attack; when he withdraws, pursue." VC tactics and techniques are simply embellishments on this theme. Emphasis is placed on speed, security, surprise and deception. The VC exhibit great skill in making the most of their enemy's weaknesses.

b. VC operations are planned in detail and are based upon careful reconnaissance and up-to-date intelligence. Detailed rehearsals, including the use of mock-ups, sandtables, and similar terrain prepare the troops for the mission, whether it be a raid, ambush, assassination or destruction mission. Once a plan is made and rehearsed, the VC seem reluctant to depart from it. They appear reluctant to attack units which have demonstrated skill in employing artillery and close air support. A certain inflexibility is apparent in some VC operations, but on other occasions, VC forces have shown themselves to be masters of improvisation.

c. The VC are very cautious and attempt to determine in detail the size, disposition and direction of movement of their opponent before engaging him. They would rather let an opportunity slip by than act hastily without proper intelligence and preparation. In one instance, a three-battalion VC ambush force permitted two 155mm howitzers and accompanying ammunition trucks to drive through the killing zone unmolested because the VC had not completed laying wire lines and checking communications. In another case, four US advisors in a jeep were allowed to pass through a company size ambush because the VC were waiting for a ten truck convoy which was five minutes behind the advisors. The VC ambushed the trucks, destroying several and causing a number of ARVN casualties.

5. Offensive Techniques

a. Ambushes.

(1) In keeping with their emphasis on surprise, VC use the ambush as one of their most effective offensive tactics. Units establishing ambushes have been known to remain in place for periods in excess of ten days. The normal practice is to ambush along roads, trails, streams and other natural routes of movement. Unpredictable or unexpected tactics such as establishing ambushes close to friendly forces, are revealed by the following two examples:

(a) The VC positioned a company size ambush force along a road less than one hundred meters from a friendly guard post manned by six personnel. Rather than attack the guard post, they ambushed a small convoy and inflicted eight casualties.

(b) Approximately 65 VC ambushed a military vehicle transporting troops on a stretch of fairly open road between two ARVN outposts less than a mile apart. Twelve of the sixteen personnel in the friendly force became casualties.

(2) VC planning for ambushes is comprehensive. Rehearsals are conducted and friendly force patterns are studied in detail. Baited traps are often used, such as attacks designed to lure reaction or reserve forces into prepared ambush positions. Advantage is taken of any laxness in security on the part of friendly forces, such as during meal breaks. Another favorite tactic is to feign retreat by one unit to draw the friendly force into an ambush by another unit. VC ambushes are usually short, violent actions followed by a rapid withdrawal. The VC have frequently ambushed units whose security was lax while returning from an operational area.

b. Raids.

(1) Raids are another favorite VC offensive tactic and are conducted by units from squad to regimental size. They are most often executed during the hours of darkness.

(2) Two basic types of VC raids have been observed. The "surprise" raid is the most common. Secrecy and speed are key considerations in this type of action since the VC raiding party may have less numerical strength than the defending force. The "power" raid is one in which the VC employ overwhelming strength and fire power in order to annihilate a defending unit. The time the raid begins is often a clue to its nature. Raids begun after 0200 hours are rarely power raids intended to overrun an outpost.

c. Harassing Operations. Harassment is one of the tenets of VC guerrilla warfare. Sniper fire is a form of harassment frequently used by the VC to frighten, confuse and mislead friendly forces. Personnel carrying automatic weapons and radios are often initial targets for VC sniper fire. Diversionary harassing attacks are used to draw friendly forces from vulnerable VC target areas. In other cases, what may appear to be harassment can have a totally different purpose. On one occasion, the VC fired 30 rounds of mortar fire at a small district outpost, none of which landed closer than 200 meters from the post. The mortar firing began at 1600 hours from a position approximately 2000 meters east of the outpost. Later in the evening a mortar attack on the same outpost was very successful, and all rounds landed on or near the outpost. The earlier fire, which appeared to be harassing in nature, was actually a registration.

d. Infiltration. The VC are experts at infiltration. Particularly important is their habit of infiltrating friendly positions during periods of reduced visibility and adverse weather, usually combining the infiltration with a feint or ruse. Objects of VC infiltration tactics are sabotage, assassination, demoralization of enemy troops and the collection of intelligence for future operations. Also significant is the technique of infiltrating agents disguised as friendly civilians.

6. Defensive Tactics

a. VC defensive tactics are centered around ways and means of escaping from ambushes, raids, meeting engagements, and surprise attacks. The VC make extensive use of rear guard personnel whose mission is to delay the pursuing friendly force until withdrawal of the VC main force is accomplished. Ambushes designed to slow friendly forces are also frequently employed. At other times, VC may evade capture by hiding or by blending in with the local populace.

b. Hiding places used by the VC are almost limitless, although underground locations appear to be the favorite. Underground means of hiding personnel and equipment range from simple "spider trap" holes to elaborate, reinforced rooms. From the surface these underground installations are most difficult, if not impossible, to detect (figure 4). Critical points are entrances and emergency exits, which are usually concealed in gardens, animal pens, under piles of straw, dung, etc. (figure 5), in or under structures (figure 6) and in river banks (figures 7 and 8).

c. Extensive and ingeniously constructed underground tunnel systems are one of the unique features of underground hiding places (figures 9 thru 13). Most are constructed in such a mannsr that they permit short term underground habitation. They are usually built in a zigzag, multilevel form with ventilation holes at various intervals. This type of construction may provide protection from grenades or discovery. When cornered underground by friendly forces, the VC will often eject a grenade from one of the holes and attempt to escape during the resulting shock and smoke.

CONCEALED TUNNEL ENTRANCES

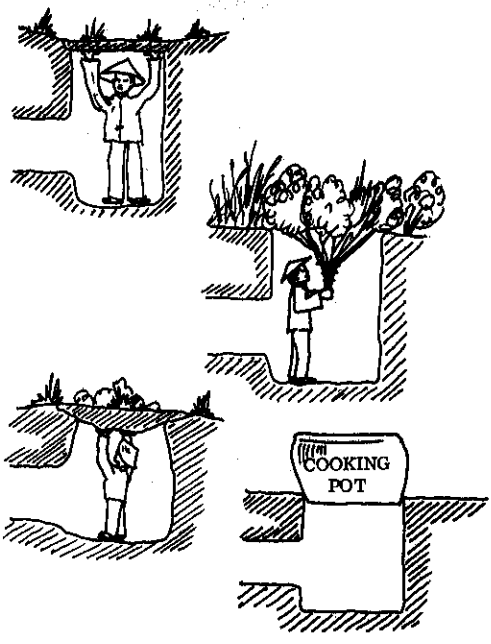
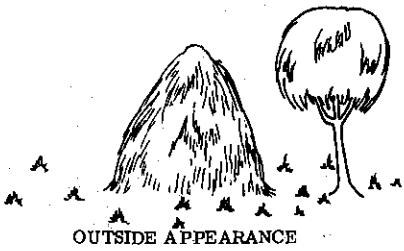


Figure 4

HAYSTACK USED FOR HIDING PLACE AND MEETING PLACE



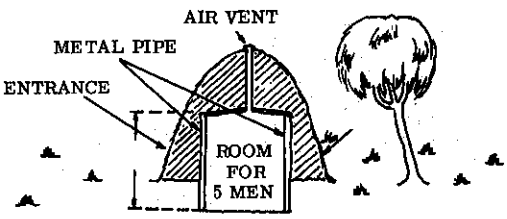


Figure 5

HIDING PLACES UNDER LOCAL HOMES

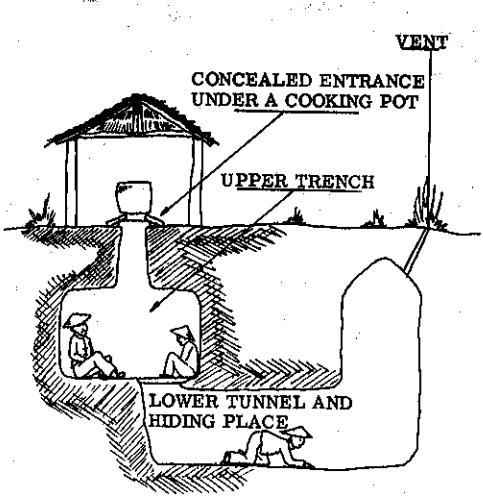


Figure 6

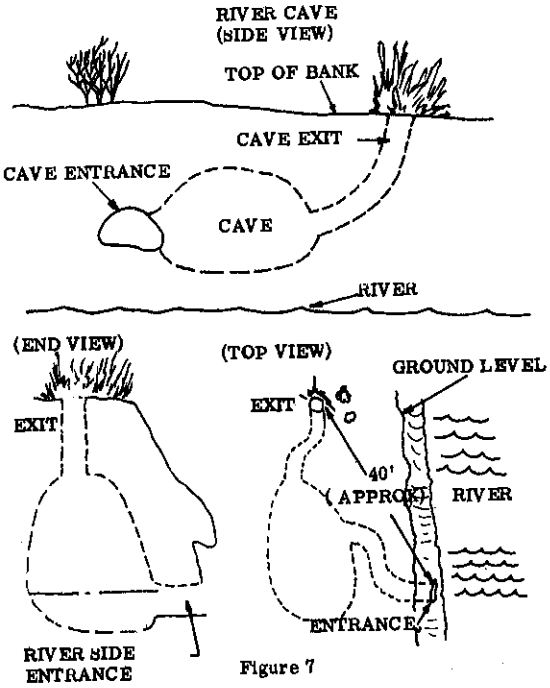
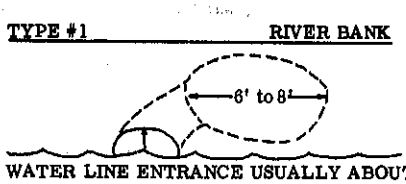


Figure 7

RIVER AREA POSITIONS



WATER LINE ENTRANCE USUALLY ABOUT 1 FOOT HIGH, CAMOUFLAGED WITH WATER PLANTS, ETC.

This type of cave usually has entrance from below water line to about 1 foot above. There is about a 2 foot approach leading to the main room which is circular and about 6 to 8 feet across. Can only be entered from the water.

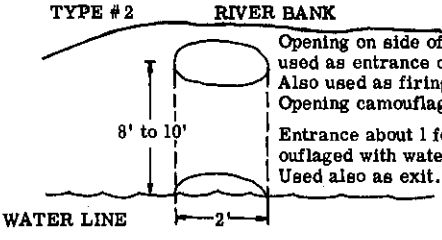
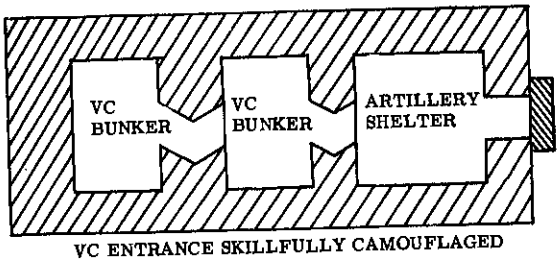


Figure 8

VC UNDERGROUND BUNKER



VC ENTRANCE SKILLFULLY CAMOUFLAGED

Bunker shown above was discovered in the vicinity of Da Nang during June/July 1965 by ARVN units.

It is a multi-bunker tunnel with angled connecting tunnels . Each bunker has space available for 3 or 4 men. The entrance to the VC bunker is built into the wall of the artillery shelter and skillfully camouflaged. A second bunker is concealed behind the first; each entrance in turn is camouflaged on the outside by local inhabitants.

Figure 9

GUERRILLA BASE

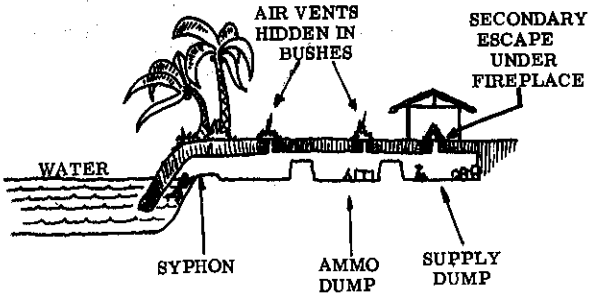
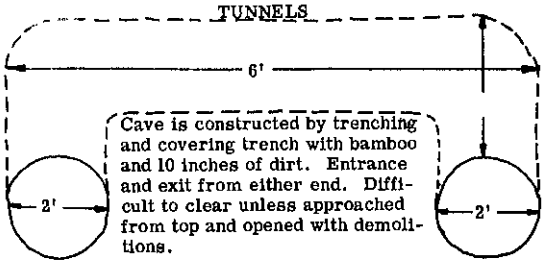
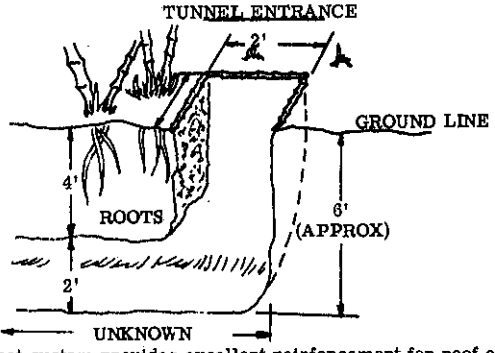


Figure 10





Root system provides excellent reinforcement for roof of cave.

Figure 11

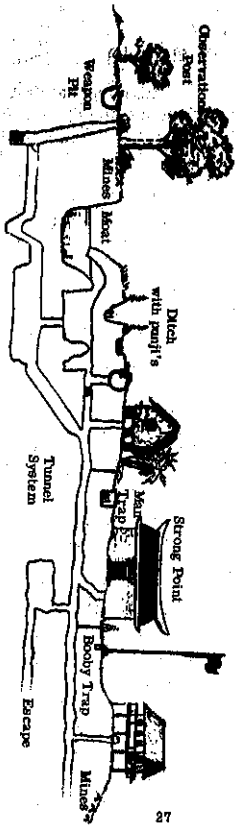
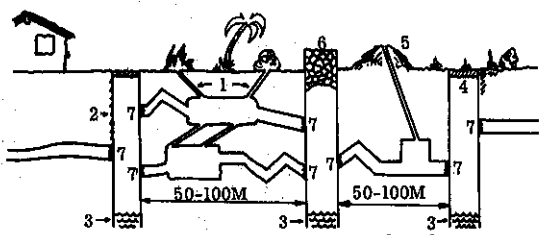


Figure 12 A Typical VC Fortified Village (Note Tunnel System)

WELL - TUNNEL COMPLEX -- BEN CAT AREA



1. AIR VENTS
2. NOTCHED DIRT STEPS
3. WATER
4. CAMOUFLAGED COVER
5. CAMOUFLAGED VENT HOLE
6. NORMAL WELL TOP
7. CAMOUFLAGED ENTRANCE COVERS

Well-Tunnel Complex above was discovered near Ben Cat in September 1965. It is a series of multi-bunker tunnels with angled connecting tunnels. Each bunker has space available for 15 to 20 men. The entrances to and exits from the VC bunkers are built into the walls of actual or simulated wells which are 20 to 30 meters deep. Access to these skillfully camouflaged entrances and exits is by way of notched dirt steps or by the use of long notched bamboo pole ladders. These wells also serve as deep pit man traps.

Figure 13

d. The VC prepare extensive defensive positions throughout their operational area. If surprised by friendly forces, they will, if possible, withdraw to a previously prepared position and defend until they can break out, most probably during the hours of darkness. VC positions are characterized by defense in depth, mutual support, overhead cover and maximum use of natural cover and concealment.

7. Special Techniques

a. General. Viet Cong tactics include many types of actions which are peculiar to unconventional warfare, such as assassinations and other acts of terrorism directed toward the RVN population. Subversion and sabotage may be directed toward military forces and installations as well as the civilian populace.

b. Booby Traps.

(1) Booby traps are favorite devices of the Viet Cong. Grenades, spike traps, poison arrows and a variety of other means are employed to harass, slow down, confuse and kill friendly forces. The forms of these weapons are limited only by the imagination of the designer (figures 14 thru 16).

(2) Grenades are commonly used as booby traps because they are light in weight, easy to carry and conceal, and readily adaptable. They are frequently put in trees or on fences and also along trails that friendly forces are expected to use, with trip wires strung across the pathway. Munitions, particularly artillery and mortar shells, have also been rigged for detonation as booby traps (figures 17 thru 23).

CARTRIDGE TRAP

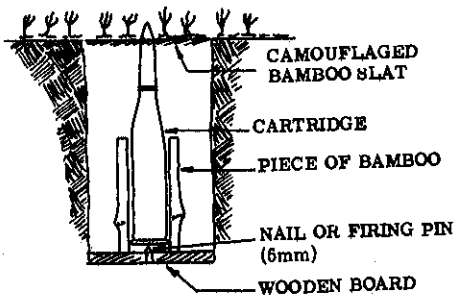


Figure 14

STEEL ARROW TRAP

STEEL ARROW TRAP READY FOR USE

Figure 15

"SORRY BOUT THAT"

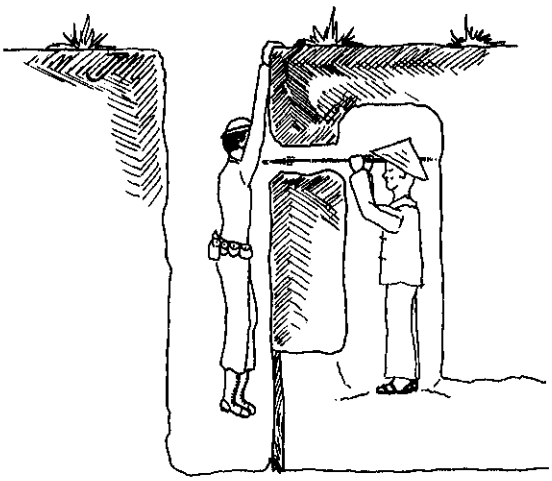
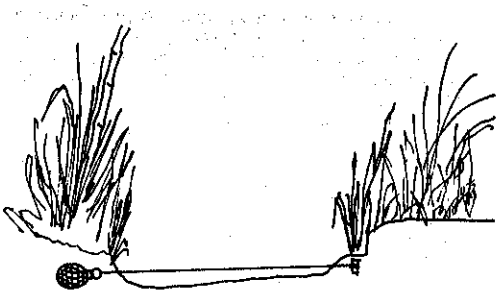


Figure 16

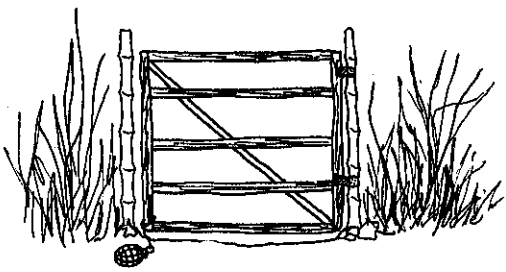
GRENADE ON TRAIL



The most common type of booby trap consists of a trip wire stretched across a trail, anchored to a small bush or tree and to a friction type fuze in the grenade. Most other booby traps are a variation on this basic idea.

Figure 17

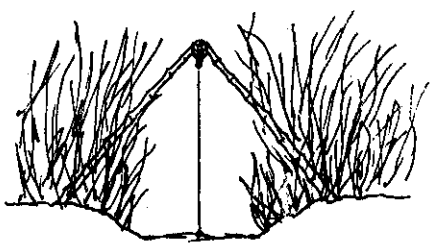
GRENADE AT GATE



In most cases the grenades are buried (shallow) under the gate. A short trip wire is attached to the gate so that when it is moved even slightly, the grenade is detonated. Pressure release fuzes have also been employed. If thers is heavy growth around ths gate, the grenades will generally be hidden in the growth.

Figure 18

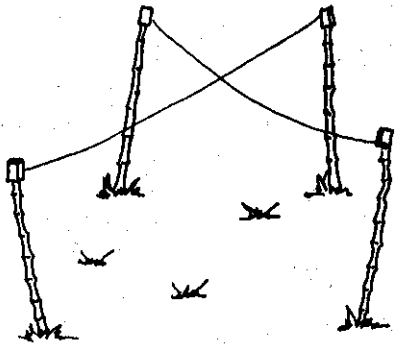
BAMBOO ARCH



Recently the VC have been making bamboo arches across trails. A grenade is secured at the top of the arch and the trip wire secured to the grenade. Any contact with trip wire will detonate the grenade. This is employed most effectively at night as a warning device. The location of the grenade achieves a large casualty radius. During the day the trip wire is loosened from the ground and wound around the bamboo arch to allow use of the trail to VC.

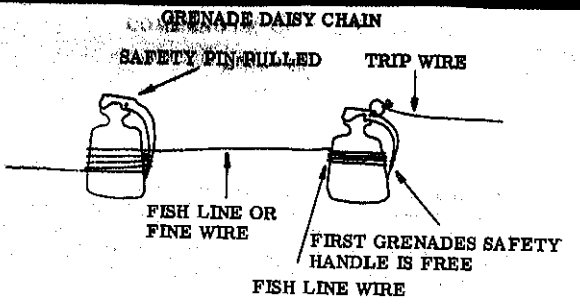
Figure 19

HELICOPTER TRAP



Grenades have been attached to large punji stakes in helicopter landing zones to provide booby traps for helicopters.

Figure 20



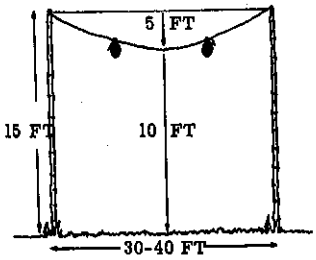
The daisy chain of grenades is made by first attaching a grenade to a tree or bush and tying it in such a manner that the handle is free to activate if the safety pin (which is attached to a trip wire) is pulled. Successive grenade handles are held under tension by a line from the preceding grenade. All grenades but the first one have their safety pins pulled.

When the trip wire to the first grenade is tripped, the safety pin is pulled and the safety handle flys off, allowing the grenade to detonate. As the grenade detonates, it releases the string to the next grenade allowing the handle to fly free, detonate and, in turn, release subsequent grenades in the line.

Placed along a trail this arrangement is very effective against closely spaced members of a patrol.

Figure 21

TANK BOOBY TRAP

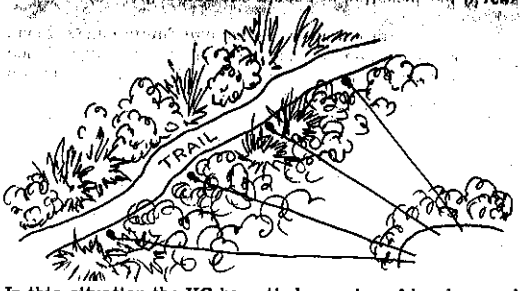


Above booby trap found by the 3rd Marine Div, 27 Sep 65, in I Corps. Consisted of two bamboo poles, 15 feet high, spaced 30-40 feet apart with barbed wire suspended between poles. Lowest part of wire is about 10 feet above ground. Two grenades are attached, evenly spaced to the wire.

A tank, or other vehicle, passing between the poles will strike the overhead wire and detonate the grenades. The grenades are placed at such a height as to cause injury to tank mounted infantry, or other vehicular mounted personnel. The booby traps will cause no damage to the tank itself.

Figure 22

COMMAND DETONATED GRENADES



In this situation the VC have tied a series of hand grenades to bushes, trees or in grass clumps along trails or avenues of approach to their position. The safety pins of the grenades are linked by fish cord or wire to an enemy position overlooking the site. When our patrols pass the enemy grenade ambush point the one or two man team, by pulling the string or wire, can detonate one or any number of grenades without warning.

Figure 23

(3) Spiked foot and man traps are common types of booby traps found throughout Vietnam. The spikes may be sharpened bamboo sticks, or they may be barbed wood or metal spikes emplaced in wooden, concrete or metal blocks. The spiked devices are placed in holes along routes of movement and carefully camouflaged to prevent detection or they can be placed on top of the ground (figures 24 thru 29).

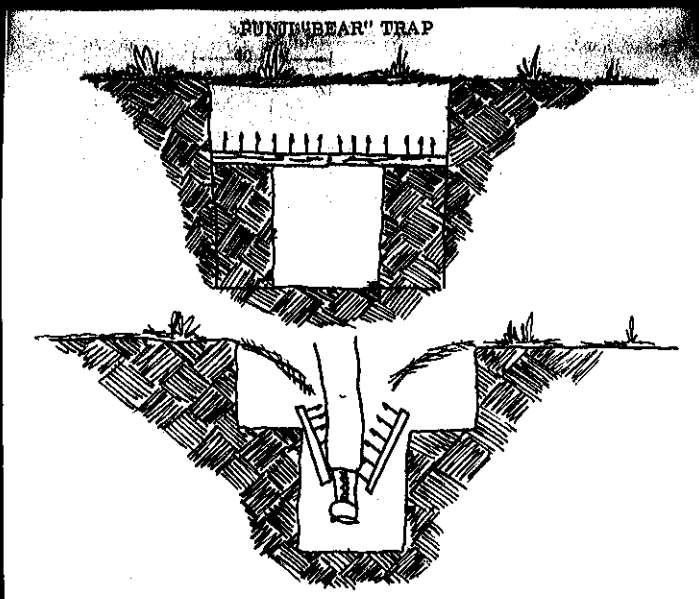
(4) The VC also employ crude but effective trip wire type devices along trails and paths which release arrows, bamboo whips and other swinging, barbed, club-type objects. Barbs are often dipped in poison to compound casualty effects (figures 30 and 31).

(5) Explosive pens and cigarette lighters have been put in obvious hiding places by the VC for the unsuspecting soldier to find.

c. Mines. (figures 32 thru 35).

(1) Antipersonnel and antitank mines are used extensively in VC operations. They may be of the crude homemade variety or similar to those in the US inventory. When AT mines are employed they are placed exclusively on roads and trails capable of carrying vehicular traffic. However, AP mines are employed on defensive terrain nearby so that personnel taking to the high ground to protect a disabled vehicle are then subjected to the AP mines and booby traps. AP mines are used to defend entrances to VC underground hiding places and along trails.

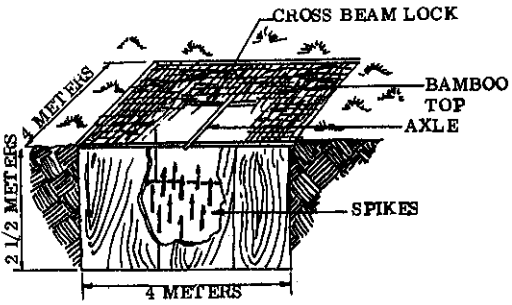
(2) AT mines are placed in hollowed-out places on bridges or in holes which have been dug in roads. In order



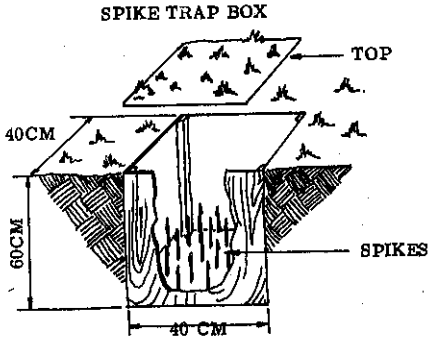
A man stepping into the punji pit hits two boards or steel plates with steel spikes affixed, the boards or plates then pivot, wounding the leg above the area protected by the boot.

Figure 24

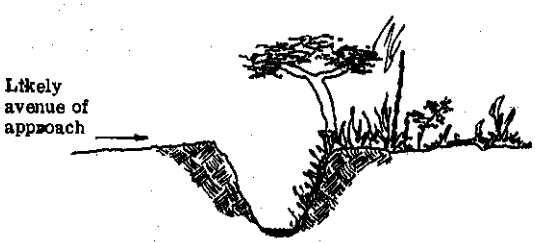
SPIKE TRAP PIT



SPIKE TRAP BOX



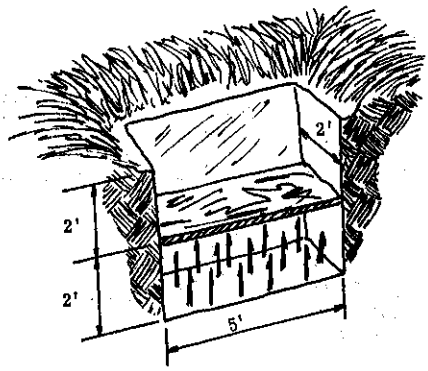
GULLEY TRAPS



Quite often short stakes are employed on banks of gullies and streams, in areas where it is likely that troops might jump from one bank to another. The stakes (2" to 3" long) are usually hidden in graes or other growth on the stream banks.

Figure 26

MAN TRAP



Schematic drawing of Man Trap (Prone shelter constructed with concealed punji stakes). All dimensions shown are approximate.

Figure 27

cut at the middle and
covered with mud

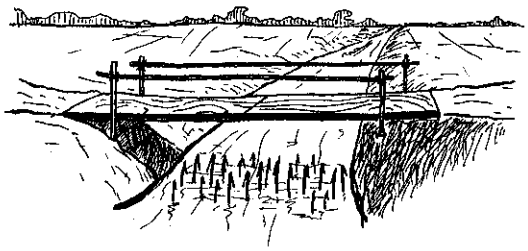
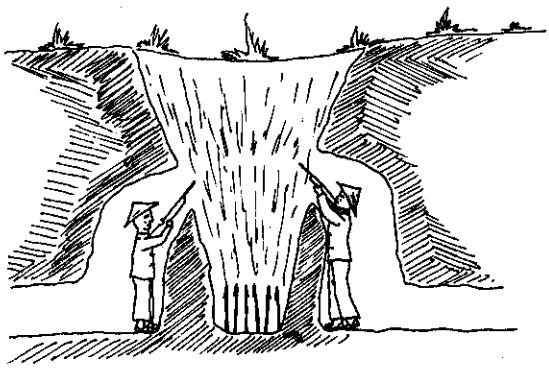
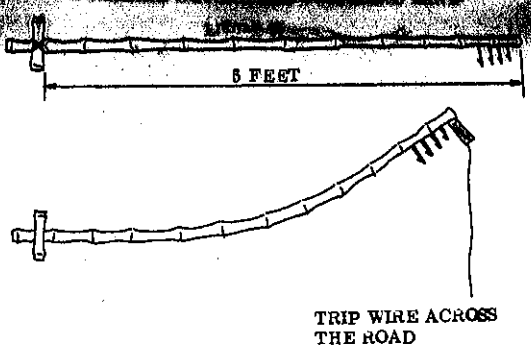


Figure 28

GUARDED AND SPIKED COMBAT TRENCHES





BARBED SPIKE PLATE

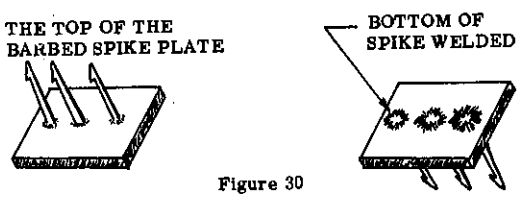


Figure 30

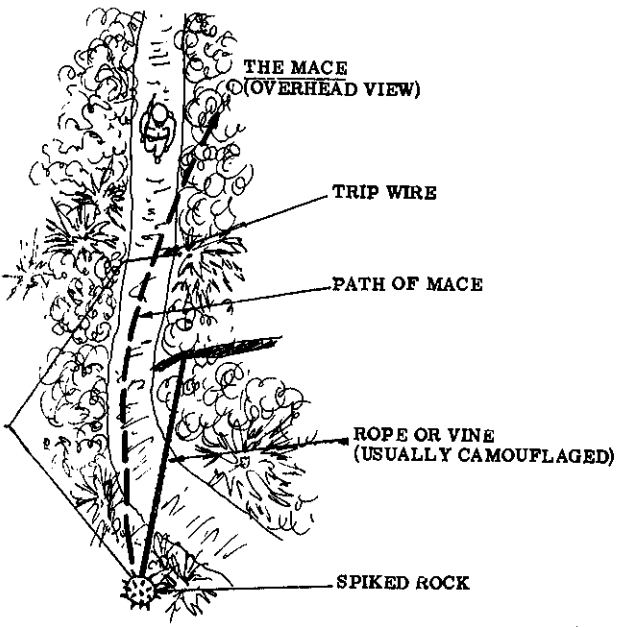


Figure 31

The VC use artillery projectiles and mortar rounds as overhead mines. The projectile or round is hung on the limbs of trees over a trail or likely route of approach, an electrical detonator is attached and wires are run to an over watching enemy position. When a patrol or other unit comes under the camouflaged round the VC detonate it using a battery power source.

Figure 32

MINED COMBAT TRENCH

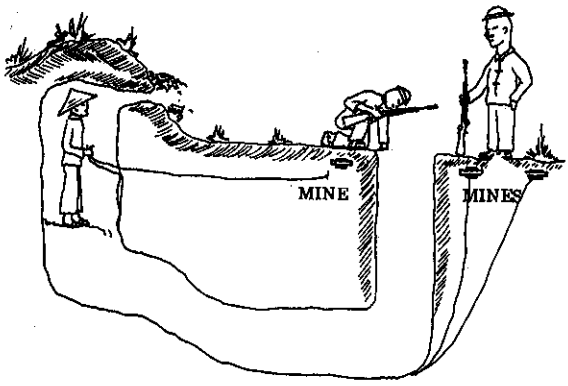
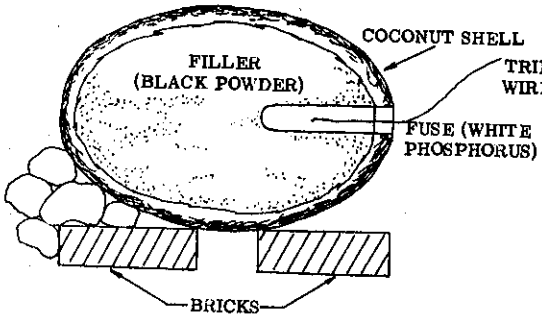


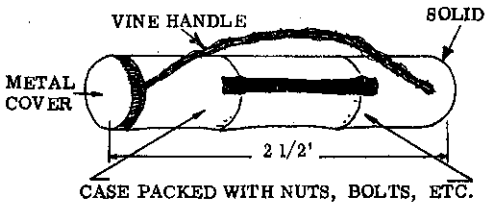
Figure 33



This mine is made from a hollowed out coconut filled with black powder. Using a friction type fuze this mine is employed in much the same manner as hand grenades. It is usually buried approximately six inches underground. It has been covered by rock and brick for missile effect. These mines have been used effectively near gates.

Figure 34

HOLLOW BAMBOO MINE



This mine is made from a large joint of bamboo. It is cleaned out and filled with plastic explosive or black powder. In addition to the explosive the section is also filled with nuts and bolts, rocks, nails and scrap metal or whatever material is available. Although usually detonated by a pull friction type fuze, other means can be readily substituted.

Figure 35

To make the hole difficult to discover, the VC may scatter dirt across the road for several hundred meters or dig several dummy holes for deception or for mine employment at a later date. Water buffalo dung is also used for camouflage. Shoulders along roads are often mined and occasionally the VC tunnel in from shoulders to plant electrically controlled mines directly in the center of the road. This latter practice permits "selective targeting" of vehicular traffic. On some occasions, the VC will bury firing wires to a location but will not emplace the mine. If friendly troops fail to discover the wires, the VC then emplace a mine to destroy the next target that appears.

SECTION III. WEAPONS

8. General

The present VC weapons inventory consists of a mixed grouping of French, US and Communist Bloc individual and crew-served weapons. The local manufacture of crudely made small arms has decreased since the early stages of the insurgency but some grenades, mines and other demolition devices are still being produced in RVN.

9. Small Arms

The individual weapon of the VC guerrilla is most likely to be a modern weapon. VC main force soldiers are often found to possess recently manufactured weapons. Some of these units are partially equipped with 7.62mm small arms which are CHICOM manufactured copies of weapons in the current Soviet Army inventory. Captured US carbines, M1s

and BARs are still found among Viet Cong local or main force units. Pistols are normally reserved for political and military cadre and serve as possible identifiers of these personnel.

10. Machine Guns

The VC have a wide variety of machine guns from several countries of origin. German 7.92mm WWII LMGs and Soviet and CHICOM 7.62mm light and heavy machine guns are the most common types. Some units are equipped with 12.7mm (.50 cal) heavy machine guns which are highly effective against low flying aircraft.

11. Recoilless Rifles and Mortars

The VC also employ recoilless rifles and mortars in heavy weapons support elements of infantry battalions, companies and platoons. CHICOM 57mm and 75mm recoilless rifles, plus those captured from the US, are available to the VC at the present time. Also used are locally manufactured rocket launchers and CHICOM copies of the Soviet RPG-2 grenade launcher. US 60mm, 81mm and CHICOM 82mm mortars are found throughout the VC units.

SUMMARY

The VC is an elusive and determined foe. He is well organized politically and militarily, and employs both conventional and guerrilla tactics. He is an expert in the arts of camouflage, deception and ambush. He is a hardy and ruthless fighter, but not an invincible one. He can and will be defeated.

CHAPTER 3

TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES

INTRODUCTION

The fundamentals of counterinsurgency tactics apply to operations in Vietnam. The diverse nature of the people and terrain must be considered when applying these tactics to combat operations. The tactics employed and techniques used are limited only by the commander's imagination. The tactics and techniques presented are lessons learned from actual combat operations against the Viet Cong.

SECTION I. WINNING AND MAINTAINING CIVILIAN SUPPORT

1. General

Winning and maintaining the friendship and cooperation of the Vietnamese civilians living within the operational area is an essential step in reducing the effectiveness of the local Viet Cong guerrillas -- they cannot operate effectively without civilian support. The two main aspects of our military presence which contribute toward good civil-military relations are the individual soldier's positive attitude in his dealings with local civilians, and the planned civic actions of military units.

2. Individual Behavior

The Viet Cong attempt to separate our soldiers from the

local civilians by showing that we are cruel, unthinking, and not concerned with the welfare of the local peoples. The VC can be defeated in these efforts by the strength and generosity we show in our daily life. The "Nine Rules" for the military man in Vietnam provide the guide for doing this. They are:

a. Remember we are guests here: We make no demands and seek no special treatment.

b. Join with the people: Understand their life, use phrases from their language and honor their customs and laws.

c. Treat women with politeness and respect.

d. Make friends among the soldiers and common people.

e. Always give the Vietnamese the right of way.

f. Be alert to security and ready to react with your military skill.

g. Do not attract attention by loud, rude or unusual behavior.

h. Avoid separating ourselves from the people by a display of wealth or privilege.

i. Above all else, we are members of the US military forces on a difficult mission, responsible for all our official and personal actions. Reflect honor upon ourselves and the United States of America.

3. Unit Activities

a. The Vietnamese appreciate the danger of battle areas, and will normally take such actions as are feasible to protect themselves and their property. Unit commanders at all echelons can assist in protecting them by advance planning and timely battlefield assistance. When losses occur, early and effective action should be taken to minimize suffering. Thoughtfulness and consideration in such times of crisis will gain the support of the Vietnamese.

b. When units are not involved in necessary military operations, their capability to assist in local civic action projects designed to improve the life of rural peoples should be exploited. Before beginning any specific projects, the unit commander should always contact the local MACV sector or sub-sector advisor and the local Vietnamese official -- district, village, or hamlet chief -- in order to determine how the unit can assist local plans and projects. In addition, an effort should be made to participate in joint civic action projects in which regular soldiers work side-by-side with local Regional and Popular Force soldiers. When additional guidance or supplies are required for particular projects the normal point of contact is the MACV sector or sub-sector advisor, who will then contact the appropriate GVN official or the US representative from the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) or the United States Operations Mission (USOM)

SECTION II. RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE

4. General

Before the VC can be destroyed, they must be located.

Once located, surveillance must be maintained over their movements and activities. This section outlines the means and techniques of reconnaissance and surveillance being employed in Vietnam.

5. Ground Reconnaissance and Surveillance

a. Ground agencies consist of observation posts, surveillance devices, and reconnaissance patrols. Short range radars, employed at two separate locations which permit target intersection, are a valuable source of data during periods of low visibility -- positions, estimated size, direction, and speed of movement of VC elements can thus be readily detected.

b. Vietnamese Special Forces employ "Delta Teams", squad-size long range reconnaissance units, with considerable success in VC controlled territory. Once committed to an operational area, the teams are capable of operating for approximately seven days without resupply. When the team develops a target, a quick-reacting airmobile force or tactical air strikes may be called in to attack and destroy the target. These operations have an adverse psychological effect on the VC because they demonstrate that RVN forces are capable of penetrating VC areas and destroying targets which were previously considered to be within VC safe havens.

6. Visual Air Surveillance

Visual air surveillance is conducted primarily from 01-type aircraft. Pilots and observers should be completely familiar with ground activity in their areas of responsibility in order that they can recognize any changes from normal patterns. Continuous surveillance missions day after day by the same observers accomplish the following:

a. Tend to restrict VC daylight movement to areas with dense vegetation.

b. Locate and report likely landing and drop zones in fast moving situations, for reaction force employment, and for emergency medical evacuation.

c. Provide information as to possible occupation of a hamlet by VC based on a change in the normal pattern of activity.

d. Become so commonplace that reconnaissance flights for airmobile operations or air strikes do not constitute warnings to the VC of impending actions.

7. Air Reconnaissance

a. Visual observation from the air is a rapid and effective means of locating and identifying VC activity such as construction of field fortifications and road cuts, and the appearance of new track and trail activity. Although visual reconnaissance may be restricted by poor flying weather and VC ground fire, observers can often provide information vital to successful attacks on VC units and fortifications.

b. Aerial photographs are a prime source of information on terrain and VC installations and activities. Detailed photo interpretation produces accurate intelligence and often discloses hidden VC installations or camps not visible to the air observer.

c. Side looking airborne radar (SLAR) and infrared

devices are air reconnaissance means which provide special information.

(1) SLAR, with its capability to detect moving targets and accurately determine their locations, has been valuable in the discovery of VC movement along the coast, canals, and rivers. In many instances, detection of a moving target has resulted in an immediate attack on a VC target.

(2) Airborne infrared detection devices are useful for detecting VC encampments and other activity at night. Because of the means by which the infrared detection is displayed, the information obtained usually must be correlated with maps and photographs to determine accurately the nature of the activity discovered. Fog, clouds, and rain reduce the effectiveness of infrared devices.

d. The information developed by SLAR, infrared visual reconnaissance and photo imagery is analyzed and correlated with other information at the MACV Intelligence Center. Intelligence of tactical value is passed by the most rapid means available, including aircraft, to appropriate organizations for necessary action.

SECTION III. PATROLS

8. General

a. Detailed and complete information on all aspects of patrolling is contained in appropriate service field manuals. Additional information peculiar to Vietnam is presented in this section to help US forces improve patrol capabilities. Several cautions are particularly applicable.

(1) Stay off roads, trails and dry creek beds; maintain dispersion.

(2) Prevent the VC from predicting the direction of movement by following a zig-zag course.

(3) Dead foliage may be old camouflage over a trap.

(4) Tied down brush may be a firing lane for an ambush site.

(5) Avoid moats around villages; they may hide punji traps or booby traps.

(6) Unoccupied huts may have booby traps hidden in the frame or in the roof thatch.

(7) Be cautious of all civilians.

(8) Be cautious in villages where no children are visible or where they are unfriendly.

(9) Do not set a pattern.

(10) Stay alert.

b. During training for and conduct of patrol operations include the following procedures as SOP.

(1) Simultaneous patrol activities by elements of a unit must be closely coordinated and contact maintained when in close proximity in order to save time, protect formations, and maintain security.

(2) Take advantage of inclement weather to conduct patrols; heavy rain will cover noise of ground movement.

(3) In the jungle, trails must be cut through the dense foliage and undergrowth. When practicing dispersion in movement under such conditions lateral contact is very difficult to maintain. Move in multiple columns for added security.

(4) Never return over the same route.

(5) When patrolling a road lined by heavy undergrowth and dense foliage, reconnaissance by observation should be supplemented by controlled reconnaissance fire.

(6) Use helicopter lift of patrols to expand a zone of operations or to get behind VC units, especially when the VC have concealed routes of withdrawal.

(7) Use stay behind patrols to ambush small groups of VC returning to an area after the departure of the main body of friendly forces.

9. Saturation Patrolling

a. During daylight one of the most successful tactics is saturation patrolling supported by a reaction force. The saturation of an area with squad size patrols allows maximum coverage and fully employs the leadership capabilities of small unit leaders. Saturation patrolling requires detailed planning by the company or higher echelon to coordinate completely all the patrols in an area. Since the VC will not normally engage a superior force, the smaller unit has a better chance of daylight contact with guerrillas. Patrol size will be determined largely by intelligence estimates of enemy strength, disposition and equipment, and by the terrain.

b. Conducting night patrols without prior coordination is dangerous. In certain areas, both Popular and Regional Forces may be patrolling and ambushing. Close liaison and coordination with local forces is imperative to preclude friendly units meeting in the dark and exchanging fire.

10. Sudden Engagements

Most encounters with the VC while on patrol are sudden meeting engagements. Reaction by the point must be immediate to deliver effective fire at the elusive VC, who has been trained to leap into the brush and slither away on his belly when encountered. Reaction by the remainder of the patrol must be rapid and violent. Immediately bring all available fires to bear on the VC element. Fire low; a ricochet is better than an overshot. After fire superiority is gained, vigorously attack to destroy him. Contact with the VC must be maintained. Pursuit of the VC immediately following an engagement must be aggressive.

11. Scout Dogs

A scout dog helps moving troops to reconnoiter routes and areas for the presence of humans. If a commander

makes full and skillful use of scout dogs, he may avoid a VC ambush.

a. Scout dogs rely on their keen sense of smell to detect scents which come from an upwind direction. When a dog is working in the harness, he will "alert" when he detects a human scent, usually by assuming a sitting position with body still, ears erect and nose aimed in the upwind direction. From the alert indication the handler shows the direction of the unknown person by arm signal to the tactical unit leader. The alerting distance varies according to conditions of wind, weather, terrain and vegetation. Along jungle trails the alert will often indicate a quarry along the trail because the slight winds in the jungle allow scents to drift along trails. Under favorable conditions scout dogs can alert on a noise.

b. Scout dogs can smell out a person or cache in a covered hole in the ground, or a person hiding underwater while breathing through a reed. They can assist sentries when a unit is at a halt.

c. Scout dog platoon leaders require a warning order to prepare for an operation and a briefing on the major facets of the plan. Failure to receive this information will hinder proper selection and preparation of teams and adequate provision for their logistic support.

d. Scout dogs should be used only when benefits may accrue from their use. For example, if the unit is to make a long foot march through safe areas prior to reaching the area of operation, scout dogs should not be employed until reaching the area of operations.

e. Benefit from scout dogs is greatest in small unit operations such as patrols and ambushes.

f. When troops are negotiating trails in jungle or other heavy vegetation, the dog team should be on the trail rather than in a flank security position.

g. On extended operations or in areas where negotiation of the terrain causes considerable physical exertion, dog teams should be used in pairs and alternated in the working position.

h. When operating in flooded rice paddies or similar terrain, dogs should be on the 25 foot leash rather than on the shorter 5 foot leash. Dogs normally can travel through mud without excessive difficulty but handlers tend to tire. A dog in good physical condition should be capable of six hours of work in paddies.

i. The dog's position in relation to the patrol or body of troops must be such that he uses the wind to the best advantage. When advancing with the wind a dog should be at the rear where he is of some benefit. In a crosswind the dog may walk on the upwind flank or at the head of the column. Handlers and advisors with the unit should emphasize these points to the tactical commander. A change in the direction of advance may require a repositioning of the dog in relation to the unit.

j. When the dog is working at the head of a column, on a flank, or quartering a field (crisscrossing it to obtain better area coverage) while the unit is halted, designated personnel should maintain visual contact with the dog and handler. A bodyguard should accompany each team operating in close proximity to the enemy.

k. Maximum benefit can be realized from the use of scout dogs by gearing the rate of advance of the unit to that of the dog.

l. Requiring a scout dog to close with the located enemy endangers the dog and handler; both of them are ill-equipped for the assault.

m. Scout dogs easily learn to travel in helicopters and fixed wing aircraft but usually require an initial period of familiarization before they are at ease in this strange environment. The familiarization should be accomplished prior to using the dog on an operation.

SECTION IV. COUNTERAMBUSH TACTICS

12. General

Since the VC make extensive use of ambushes, counterambush measures are a vital part of operations. Counterambush operations also afford opportunities to find the VC in a position where they can be fixed and destroyed.

13. Prevention of Ambushes

a. No part of Vietnam may be considered secure; therefore, precautionary measures must always be taken. The requirement for such precautions is typified by an action which occurred near Bien Hoa in October 1965. A US unit which already had numerous patrols and ambushes out a few thousand meters from its base camp dispatched another six man patrol after first light. The VC ambushed the patrol less than 1000 meters from its base, killing five and wounding the sixth.

b. When possible, move cross-country, avoiding roads, trails and dry creek beds. Although these terrain features afford ease and speed of movement, they offer the VC prime ambush sites and are usually under observation.

c. In moving through open or broken terrain security must be established in front, to the rear, and to the flanks of a moving column out to at least the maximum effective range of small arms fire. In the jungle security must, as a minimum, be out in front 200 meters and cover a front broad enough to prevent a linear ambush. The main body must be back far enough to maneuver once contact is made. Lack of security has been the most prominent factor contributing to successful VC ambushes.

d. Routes of march must receive a detailed reconnaissance from the air, by map and by small reconnaissance patrols. There are times, however, when a thorough reconnaissance cannot be completed because of lack of time or the size of the area. Air observation is valuable but is not a substitute for ground reconnaissance. A disciplined VC unit, in place and camouflaged, is not likely to be spotted from the air. In one case an experienced US pilot and observer searched an area for two hours without spotting a VC battalion hidden in waist-high grass and scattered coconut trees. Later in the day this force ambushed an ARVN battalion.

e. Security must be maintained at all times. During the return movement to home station after conducting an

operation, troops have a tendency to relax and become careless. On several occasions, the VC have allowed a unit to pass through unmolested on its way to the objective area, then ambushed the unit as it returned.

14. Reaction to Ambush

a. When caught in an ambush the friendly unit must immediately return the fire, gain and maintain fire superiority and vigorously assault the ambush force. Friendly troops must continue to fire, even after the VC cease, to prevent his recovering weapons and bodies and escaping. Once the ambush is overcome, the entire ambush site must be thoroughly searched and cleared. Figures 36 thru 38 depict examples of reactions in different ambush situations.

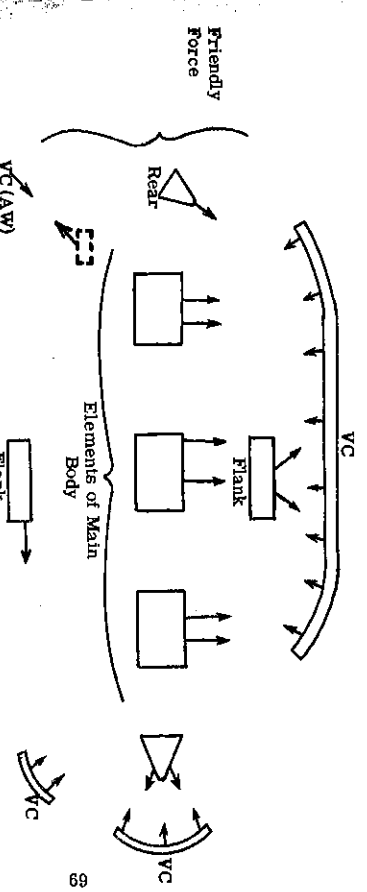
b. Troops moving through suspect areas should carry white phosphorus (WP) and offensive grenades and, when ambushed, immediately throw them towards the enemy. Coupled with casualty producing effects, the WP grenade provides a protective smoke screen.

15. Convoy Operations

a. Planning Considerations.

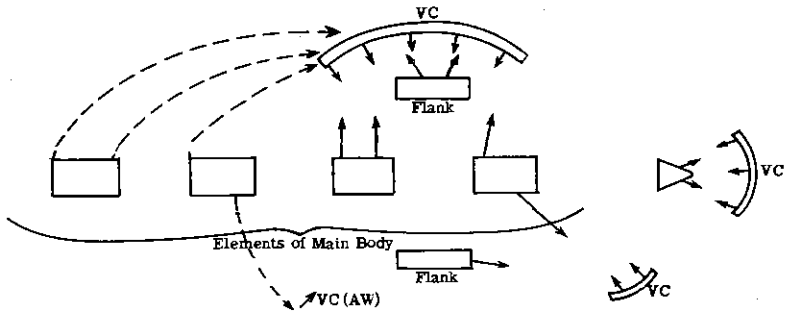
(1) No route is 100% secure. The VC can prepare an ambush anywhere.

(2) Representatives from the security and convoy elements, supporting artillery, and tactical air should participate in the planning.



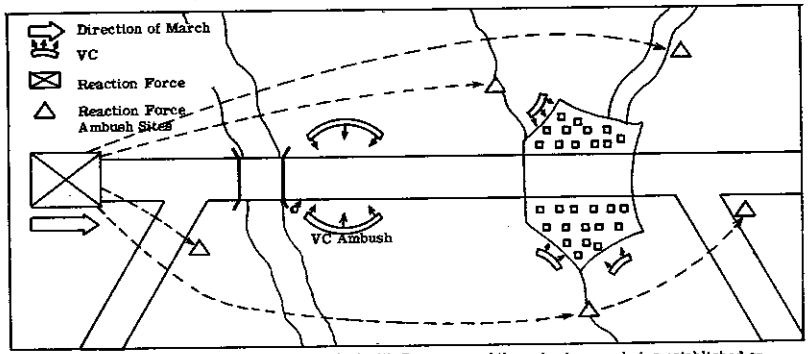
Units positioned entirely in the kill zone of an ambush should immediately return fire with organic weapons and in conjunction with WP grenades and supporting fires, assault the primary ambush force.

Figure 36. Entire Unit Caught in VC Ambush (Schematic)



When an ambush is activated with only a portion of a unit in the kill zone, that portion immediately returns fire while conducting immediate action to break out of the kill zone. Units not affected attack the flanks and rear of the main ambush position by assault and establish ambushes along the VC routes of withdrawal.

Figure 37. Portion of Friendly Unit Caught in VC Ambush (Schematic)



The VC force in this example is counterattacked with fire power while ambushes are being established on all possible avenues of withdrawal in order to obtain maximum VC casualties. Note that the VC have established an ambush along the main avenue of approach between the reaction force headquarters and the hamlet. By not moving directly to the hamlet, the reaction force avoids this common VC trap.

Figure 38. Reaction to VC Attack of Hamlet

(3) Effective communications are essential for successful convoy operations.

(4) Convoys of two or more serials should be commanded from a command and control (C&C) helicopter. This affords the commander the best means of control and communication and enables him to react quickly to all contingencies.

(5) Infantry forces are required as reaction forces or for convoy escort. These forces must maintain a capability for dismounted action off the road.

(6) The commander of the convoy and the command succession must be known by members of the convoy prior to its departure.

(7) Use of convoy route maps showing the enemy situation along routes in the area is a valuable aid in convoy planning.

(8) Air support is a necessity. The use of column cover provides a definite deterrent to ambush and makes instantaneous response possible when cover includes tactical air.

b. Preparation.

(1) Sandbag floor boards of all vehicles to lessen the effect of mines on personnel. Stack additional sandbags against the sides of trucks to provide protection from small arms fire.

(2) Remove all side panels from the troop carrier or cargo section of vehicles. Tail gates on all troop carriers should be let down. Consideration should be given to the removal of all doors of vehicles so equipped. If seats are used, place them in the center of the vehicle so that troops sit back-to-back and face outward. If no seats are used the troops should sit or lie in the bed of the truck and face outward. This provides coverage by fire for both sides of the roads.

(3) Brief and rehearse all personnel on their individual responsibilities and duties in the event of ambush.

(4) All vehicles should be equipped with tow ropes or chains.

(5) Place the slowest vehicles at the head of the convoy.

(6) Keep wide intervals between vehicles. If the VC are not able to find a large number of vehicles within the ambush site usually they will not spring it. In fact the larger the interval the safer the convoy as a whole will be.

(7) Wrecker and maintenance vehicles should follow all convoys.

16. Counterambush Checklist

AT ALL TIMES

Expect an ambush - stay alert.

Rehearse immediate action.

Do not set a pattern.

BEFORE MOVEMENT

Foot and Vehicular

Examine all intelligence data.

Request air cover.

Make detailed fire support plans.

Coordinate movement plan with all participating elements.

Reconnoiter routes.

Plan to take an artillery forward observer.

Vehicular

Sand bag vehicles.

Designate convoy command succession.

WHILE MOVING

Foot and Vehicular

Maintain communication with all elements

Maintain noise and light discipline.

Use point, flank and rear security.

Watch for mines and booby traps.

Foot

Vary formations.

Keep dispersed.

Move by bounds.

Keep off roads and trails.

Skirt open areas.

Vehicular

Keep convoy vehicles well spread out.

Maintain close and continuous contact with column cover.

IF THE ENEMY IS DISCOVERED

Use available firepower consistent with size of enemy force.

Call for reinforcements if required.

Flank him and attack.

Ambush his withdrawal.

Pursue.

SECTION V. AMBUSHES

17. General

a. Current service manuals provide sound and detailed guidance on the conduct of ambushes. Recent experience with ambushes in Vietnam reveals that, all too frequently, ambushes are well laid, properly planned and correctly positioned, but fail because of an error on the part of a single individual.

b. Selection of the site is only the first step in the development of a well organized ambush. Ambush leaders must be capable and be provided with the equipment necessary to successfully carry out their assigned mission. Squad leaders must be capable of calling in supporting arms, and be proficient in methods of blocking escape routes and utilizing booby traps, demolitions and punji traps.

18. Actions Prior to the Ambush

a. Make a detailed map study, including use of aerial photos whenever possible. Commit to memory the route and terrain -- particularly those features which will aid navigation. Confirm these terrain features as you pass over or near them.

b. A complete, detailed rehearsal of the ambush must be conducted to eliminate errors. Each member of the ambush party must thoroughly understand what he is to do.

c. Arrangements must be made for the employment of all available supporting fires.

d. Movement to the ambush site by concealed routes to avoid detection by the VC or VC sympathizers is essential. Contact with civilians must be avoided.

e. Blocking forces must be emplaced in conjunction with mines, booby traps and punji stakes along likely avenues of escape in order to inflict maximum casualties.

f. Repeated occupation of the same ambush site must be avoided. Using several sites in the same general area insures better coverage and more effective results.

19. Conduct of the Ambush

a. Maintain light and noise discipline in the ambush site. Do not permit smoking. Failure to adhere to these basic practices is frequently the cause of an unsuccessful ambush.

b. Stress the fact that the leader of the ambush is responsible for "springing" the ambush. "Springing" the ambush too early or too late leads to failure or to only partial success.

c. Use a definite, clearly recognizable signal to commence firing. Prearrange and rehearse all signals to be used. Keep signals simple. This eliminates confusion and avoids premature disclosure of the ambush.

d. Place a heavy and accurate volume of fire in the ambush area, completely covering the killing zone and escape routes.

e. Fire low to avoid overshooting the target.

f. Use all supporting fires such as artillery, mortars, tactical air and armed helicopter support.

g. Pursue by fire when the VC jump into the underbrush opposite the ambush party.

h. Quickly exploit and search the immediate area for casualties, weapons and documents.

20. Night Ambush

a. The night ambush deserves particular emphasis, since most VC operations are conducted at night. Ambushes during the hours of darkness are more difficult to control, but the lack of light or illumination adds to the security of the ambush party and the confusion of those being ambushed.

b. At night a small ambush party is generally more practical because of greater ease of control and decreased probability of detection. The size of the party will depend on factors such as the size of the unit to be ambushed and the estimated VC strength in the area. Some means of illuminating the ambush site after contact must be provided so that the area may be thoroughly searched. Pre-planned artillery and mortar concentrations, hand-held flares or illumination grenades can be used for this purpose.

21. Special Considerations

a. The Claymore (M18A1) antipersonnel mine has proved to be a highly effective ambush weapon in Vietnam.

b. "Stay behind" ambushes can be very successful, since the VC normally follow a unit when it leaves an operational area. Time permitting, these ambush patrols should be prepared to remain in the area for several days and use deception tactics to conceal their presence.

SECTION VI. AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS

22. General

a. A capability to execute airmobile operations effectively is one of the major tactical advantages possessed by FWMAF and RVNAF forces. By use of helicopters, well supported by artillery and fighters, commanders are able to achieve surprise shock action, to move sizeable forces quickly over obstacles or long distances, and to mass forces or reinforce a position quickly with fresh troops ready for combat. Though precise and detailed planning is absolutely necessary for an airmobile operation, its success depends ultimately on quick reaction and aggressive leadership at every echelon of command. There are four types of airmobile operations normally conducted in South Vietnam. They are:

(1) Airmobile assault.

(2) Eagle flights.

(3) Combat reconnaissance.

(4) Reinforcement.

23. Planning Considerations

a. The complex nature of airmobile operations in

RVN dictates that planning for the airmobile maneuver be accomplished in considerable detail. Participants in this planning should include representatives from:

(1) Maneuver and reserve elements.

(2) Artillery fire support.

(3) Close air support.

(4) Naval gunfire support (if required).

(5) Aviation units.

b. Timely and detailed weather, terrain and enemy intelligence information is essential to the successful conduct of airmobile operations.

c. Careful consideration should always be given to selection and use of multiple staging areas and landing zones, varied flight patterns, and alternate routes in order to keep losses to a minimum.

d. The range of supporting artillery is a limiting factor in heliborne operations. The advent of the Chinook will greatly alleviate this problem and permit deep penetrations of VC forces by infantry battalions supported by artillery batteries.

e. A well prepared SOP greatly reduces planning, loading and execution times.

24. Airmobile Assault

a. General

An airmobile assault is characterized by preplanned landing zones (LZ), a specific objective or series of objectives to be taken, a reserve element and the coordinated use of fire support elements (discussed later in chapter 4). The airmobile assault force is determined by the assigned mission.

b. Organization. An airmobile operation normally consists of the following elements:

(1) A command and control (C&C) element consisting of the aviation commander, the assault force commander, an air liaison officer and when possible the artillery commander, responsible for the command, control and coordination of the operation. This element will utilize the C&C aircraft with its special radio equipment, and during the operation will provide guidance for the location and selection of appropriate targets.

(2) Sufficient troop carriers (slicks) to lift the desired number of first phase assault forces. Sufficient medium helicopters to move artillery if the operational area is beyond supporting artillery range. Additional forces will normally be ferried into the combat area subsequently. See helicopters in figures 39 thru 44.

(3) An escort element composed of fighters and armed helicopters which provide reconnaissance and have the mission of protecting the flight of slicks into the LZ. They also provide protection by fire for the entire force. As the enemy antiaircraft capability increases the use of fighter escorts must also be increased for flak suppression.

(4) An airmobile assault division is augmented by USAF personnel who serve as Air Liaison/Forward Air Controllers to provide quick response air strikes.

Figure 39. UH-1B (Armed)

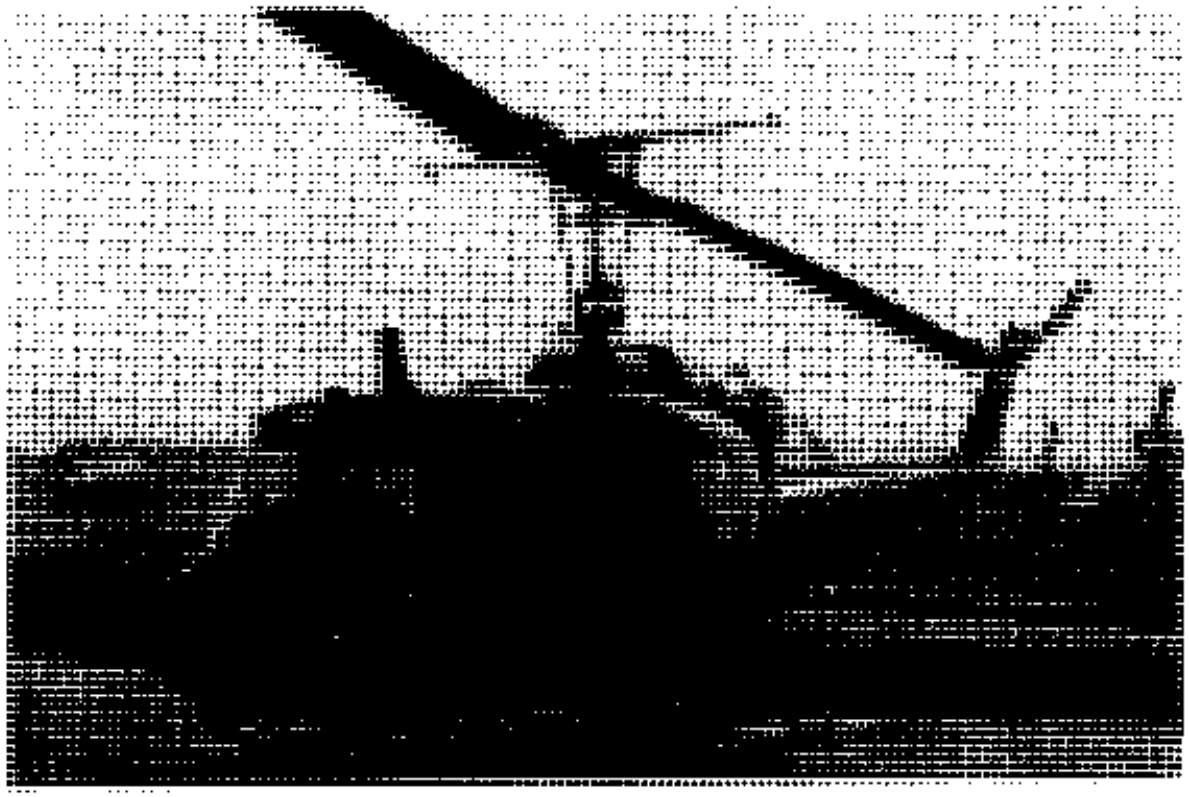


Figure 40A. UH-1B "Iroquois"

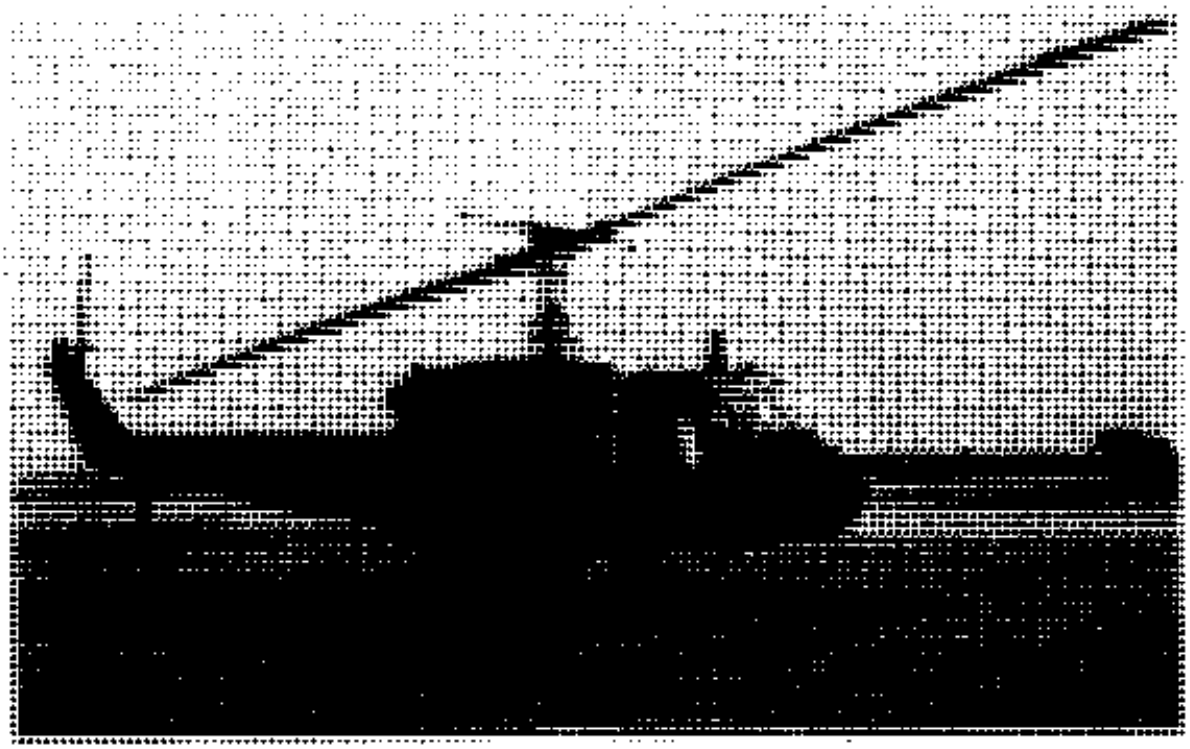


Figure 40B. UH-1D "Iroquois"

Figure 41. CH-37

Figure 42. CH-34 "Choctaw"

Figure 43. CH-47 "Chinook"

Figure 44. CH-54 "Flying Crane"

(4) Medical evacuation helicopters equipped and manned for the sole purpose of evacuating friendly casualties. This capability is obtained either from the assaulting unit's own resources or from higher headquarters.

(5) A maintenance aircraft crew to provide on-the-spot repairs for disabled aircraft. It is normally backed up by an H-37 evacuation aircraft at the staging area, which can also assist the MEDEVAC helicopter in the removal of casualties and downed crews.

(6) A fire support element, generally "on call", which is composed of an O-1F aircraft with radio relay capability, and a forward observer or forward air controller (FAC).

(7) Additional ground based fire support and combat manuever elements if they are available in the area.

(8) Radio communications equipment for operating the type communication network illustrated in figure 39.

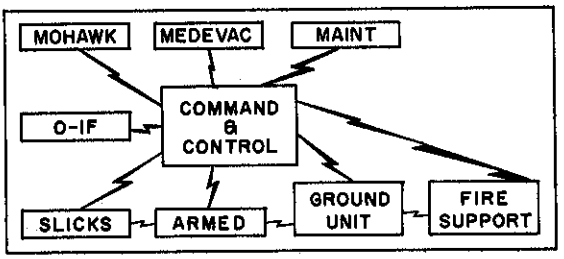


Figure 39. Type Radio Net for Airmobile Assault Force

c. Conduct of an Airmobile Assault.

(1) The airmobile assault begins with preparation of the landing zone by close air support and/or artillery fires. The armed helicopters arrive at the LZ just prior to termination of the preparation to assist the forward air controller (FAC) in evaluating the results and to help in determining whether additional strikes are needed. The assaulting infantry are loaded at staging fields or picked up in the battle area from a pickup zone (PZ). The troop lift helicopters are vectored to the LZ on command from the C&C aircraft or the armed helicopter leader. The armed helicopters coordinate strikes on the LZ with the FAC prior to the slicks' reaching the LZ. After the slicks receive the command to proceed to the LZ, the armed ships relay the following information to them:

(a) Final approach heading.

(b) Touchdown point (may be marked with smoke).

(c) Heading and route for departure from the LZ.

(d) Brief summary of condition of LZ, including enemy and friendly troop situations.

(e) Where suppressive and supporting fires will be delivered.

(f) Direction of attack or movement from LZ.

(2) The direction of attack is monitored by crew

chiefs in the slicks; they indicate the direction to the assault force by hand and arm signals just prior to touchdown.

(3) As the lead elements of the airmobile force approach the LZ, armed helicopters provide suppressive fire while the slicks are landing, unloading and departing the LZ. Artillery fire and air strikes may also be made simultaneously and in close proximity to each other. Flak suppression strikes may be required during the landing.

(4) The desired timing includes simultaneous touchdown and takeoff of all slicks with less than ten seconds on the LZ.

(5) As the first lift of helicopters departs from the LZ, armed helicopters, tactical air, or artillery can be used to support the ground force.

(6) The armed helicopters are also used for reconnaissance and surveillance.

(7) Troops initially employed in securing an LZ are highly vulnerable to VC attack, especially when the first troop lift is small because of a restricted LZ. Whether the first airmobile force is designated to provide security for the LZ or to assault an objective from the LZ, it should:

(a) Send out patrols to search the perimeter.

(b) Consolidate the remainder of the airmobile force into a strong point located off the LZ or objective.

(8) The reserve force commander must keep abreast of the operation so that his counterattack plans address the actual situation to which he may be committed.

(9) At the termination of the mission, troop extraction is completed in the following sequence:

(a) Ground unit secures the area.

(b) Armed ships assume security of the LZ as the ground unit moves into pickup formation.

(c) Slicks deploy to pickup formation prior to reaching the LZ.

(10) Fire support for the extraction is furnished by tactical aircraft, artillery and armed helicopters.

(11) Ambush of US airmobile forces by the VC is a constant threat. The enemy's capability to ambush possible LZs in force can be decreased by:

(a) Limiting and varying reconnaissance of LZs.

(b) Conducting tactical air strikes on the LZ followed by an artillery preparation.

(c) Utilizing alternate LZs.

(d) Deceiving the VC as to the actual location of the LZ by establishing a decoy LZ.