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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HQ, 11th Infantry Brigade, Americal Division  
APO San Francisco 96217

AVDF-BAIN

22 October 1970

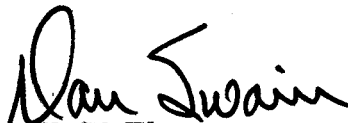
SUBJECT: QUARTERLY REPORT-LESSONS LEARNED

SUBJECT: ON CALL AIRCRAFT FOR S2 (U)

a. (C) Observation: On many occasions tactical units in the field capture enemy personnel and/or documents which can not be evacuated because of lack of aircraft assets. Enemy contact is short with units breaking off the engagement as soon as possible leaving the battle field with no trace of units mission or routes of withdrawal.

b. (U) Evaluation: Because of lack of intelligence unit commanders can not effectively find, fix, or finish the enemy.

c. (C) Recommendation: That Brigade S2's have priority on air craft assets when it is felt that the rapid evacuation of detained personnel and/or documents would provide intelligence needed by the ground commander to make sound decisions in accomplishing his mission.

  
DAN SWAIN  
MAJOR, Infantry  
S2

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Declassified after 12 years

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Headquarters, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry  
11th Infantry Brigade, Americal Division  
APO San Francisco 96217

AVDF-BA-XX-OP

18 October 1970

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned (ORLL)

Commanding Officer  
11th Infantry Brigade  
ATTN: AVDF-BAOP  
APO 96217

1. References:

- a. Letter dated 6 October 1970, your headquarters subject as above.
- b. Americal Division Regulation 525-15 dated 8 April 1968, subject as above.

2. In compliance with the above references, the following Quarterly Operational Report - Lessons Learned (ORLL) is submitted for period from 1 August to 31 October 1970.

3. Intelligence: Utilization of Black List

a. Observation: US units operating in populated areas seldom know in advance where to look for specific VC and VCI who have already been identified on the black list and intelligence reports.

b. Evaluation: Current black list and similar identification files are used primarily to identify personnel already detained by US Forces rather than as a source of proposed targets within a given area

c. Recommendation: That black lists and other sources be utilized to create lists of known VC and VCI in a given area and that such lists, with as much detail as possible, be issued to units working these areas.

4. Organization: Restructure of Battalion Surveillance Section.

a. OBSERVATION: The current organization of the battalion surveillance section makes it unresponsive to the needs of the maneuver companies and to the intelligence community.

b. EVALUATION: The battalion has modified its Table of Organization

18 October 1970

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned (ORLL)

by augmenting the surveillance section with PPS-5's and Night Observation Devices (NOD), thereby forming a surveillance platoon. This platoon was placed under the Administrative and Logistical control of the E Co Commander, but made operationally responsive to the S-2. The additional radar units and NOD's were obtained from Artillery Fire Support Bases. These bases are located on prominent terrain features overlooking the coastal lowlands and within the battalions AO. Through mutual agreement, the Artillery Commanders have consented to sharing their surveillance equipment with the battalion. To date, this organizational change has increased the battalions ability to monitor and react to enemy movement; In addition, it has given the intelligence community an increased awareness of enemy intentions.

c. RECOMMENDATION: That other units be made aware of this restructure and the obvious advantages it offers.

5. Operations: "Hole Huntin"

a. OBSERVATION: Almost every day an element of this battalion sights and chases a suspect only to loose him. This baffling disappearing act causes us no end of frustration and concern as we accept that we must someday face that enemy again.

b. EVALUATION: Coordination with a former member of 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry produced a concise study entitled "Hole Huntin". This study concerned itself with the elusive enemy operating in an area just north of Duc Pho. Each page of the study describes a different technique used by the enemy to avoid detection. It emphasizes deliberate search techniques using visual indicators explained in the study. The immediate impact of this historical update was to increase the battalions awareness of certain household indicators that frequently point to enemy presence. The near future impact resulted in the detection of previously bypassed enemy hiding places and the elimination of 23 VC since 1 October 1970.

c. RECOMMENDATION: The attached copy of "Hole Huntin" be disseminated to interested Commands for their evaluation.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

*Thomas W. Krueger Jr.*  
THOMAS W. KRUEGER JR.  
1 IE, Infantry  
Adjutant

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Headquarters, 11th Infantry Brigade, Americal Division  
APO San Francisco 96217

AVDF-BAOP

31 October 1970

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned - 11th Infantry Brigade,  
Period Ending 31 October 1970, RCS CSFOR-65 (R4)

Commanding General  
Americal Division  
ATTN: AVDF-HL  
APO SF 96374

SECTION I: OPERATIONS:  
SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES

On 11 September 1970 Col. John L. Insani assumed command of the Brigade from Col. Kendrick B. Barlow.

SECTION II - LESSONS LEARNED:  
COMMANDER'S OBSERVATIONS, EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Personnel	See Inclosure 1
B. Operations	See Inclosure 2
C. Training	None
D. Intelligence	See Inclosure 3
E. Logistics	None
F. Organization	See Inclosure 4

FOR THE COMMANDER:

- 4 Incl  
1. Personnel  
2. Operations  
3. Intelligence  
4. Organization

JAMES D. DAVIDSON  
CPT INF  
Adjutant

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## LESSONS LEARNED

### COMMANDER'S OBSERVATIONS, EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### PERSONNEL

SUBJECT: Profiles (U)

a. Observation: Frequently battalions of this unit have received replacements who cannot be used in their PMOS due to a permanent or recurring profile.

b. Evaluation: Replacements with a PMOS of 11B or 91B who are on profile when they arrive at battalion level are an administrative burden. A soldier was assigned to the 3d Battalion, 1st Infantry on 12 August 1970 with a temporary profile on his ears. His PMOS is 11B. Upon reevaluation every 30 days, his profile is renewed for an additional 30 days. Division Headquarters does not get a true picture of the battalion strength which affects future replacements and, the soldier cannot be used in the position for which he was trained and assigned.

c. Recommendation: Soldiers with permanent or recurring profiles should not be assigned to battalion level.

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## LESSONS LEARNED

### COMMANDER'S OBSERVATIONS, EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### OPERATIONS

1. (C) SUBJECT: VC use of smoke grenade fuses.

a. Observation: The VC are removing fuses and percussion caps from used smoke grenades and reusing the assembly as a fuse for their own booby traps.

b. Evaluation: At least 15 booby traps recently found and destroyed by the 3d Battalion 1st Infantry have been fused with M201A1 fuse assemblies from U.S. smoke grenades. On 10 October the battalion's reconnaissance platoon captured a box of tools which appeared to be used for making booby traps. It contained 10 M201A1 fuse assemblies and 10 blasting caps which could be fitted on the smoke grenade fuse.

c. Recommendation: The M201A1 fuse assembly for the smoke grenade be replaced by a device which is consumed or destroyed when the grenade has been used. This has been submitted through channels. All units should remove the M201A1 fuse from used smoke grenades. These devices should either be destroyed or turned in to prevent their use by the VC.

2. (C) SUBJECT: "Hole Huntin"

a. Observation: Frequently elements of this unit have sighted and chased a suspected enemy only to loose him. This baffling disappearing act causes subordinate units no end of frustration and concern as it is realized that these evaders must someday be faced again.

b. Evaluation: Coordination with a former member of 2d Battalion, 35th Infantry produced a concise study entitled "Hole Huntin". This study concerned itself with the elusive enemy operating just north of Duc Pho.

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LESSONS LEARNED (CONT)

The study describes the different techniques used by the enemy to avoid detection. The review of "Hole Huntin" by 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry increased the units awareness of enemy indicators and directly contributed to the elimination of 23 VC in a one month period.

c. Recommendation: The attached copy of "Hole Huntin", Appendix 1 to Incl 2, be disseminated to interested Commands for their evaluation.

3. (C) SUBJECT: The Mini-CA.

a. Observation: In many areas of this unit's AO, enemy forces operate exclusively in small groups. A rapid reaction to timely intelligence reports of small targets is essential in interdicting and destroying the enemy in a guerilla warfare environment.

b. Evaluation: The 4th Battalion, 21st Infantry has developed a technique known as the Mini-CA. It consists of one or two lift ships, one set of gunships and a LOH for Command and Control when available. The maneuver force normally includes a member of the S-2 Section, Vietnamese agents, and one or two infantrymen for security. A reaction force is always designated and standing by at a PZ. Because surprise is essential to the success of the operation, artillery preps and over flights are avoided in the objective area. Once the targeted VC or VCI have been captured the team is extracted. This technique has proven very successful in disrupting enemy planning and coordination meetings as well as ferreting out VCI.

c. Recommendation: That the Mini-CA be disseminated to interested Commands and that it be used in areas where the enemy habitually operates in small groups.

Incl (cont)

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"HOLE HUNTIN"

by  
MAJ BEN G. GROSEY

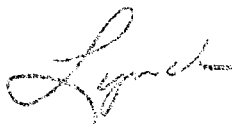


DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Headquarters 1st Bn, 20th Infantry  
11th Infantry Bde, Americal Division  
APO San Francisco 96217

FORWARD:

Almost every day an element of this Battalion sights and chases a suspect only to suddenly lose him. This baffling disappearing act causes us no end of frustration and concern as we accept that we must someday face that enemy again.

The paper you are about to read provides the answer to our frustrations and the end to the VC in this area if we can master the art of "Hole Hunting". It is written specifically about our area of operations. The record books attest to the success the author and his battalion had in eliminating the enemy in Mo Duc and Duc Pho. Our challenge is clear-- read and re-read the paper, stimulate curiosity, try and then try again to use the techniques presented until we at last find Charlie in his not so safe hole.

  
LYNCH  
LTC

Distribution: A\*

## HOLE HUNTIN by MAJ BEN G. CROSBY

The 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, "The Cacti Blue" is proud to submit this combat experience for the benefit of Infantrymen throughout Vietnam. These successful techniques were applied by this battalion during July and August of 1967 in an area of operations just north of Duc Pho, Vietnam.

The history of our "HOLE HUNTIN" really began back in May 67 when the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry as a part of the 3rd Brigade Task Force, 25th Infantry Division operating in the Duc Pho area of the coastal plain, soundly defeated the 60th V.C. Battalion in open combat. Unfortunately for the U.S. Forces in this area, this battle ended the organized resistance of enemy units and since then only isolated small contacts have developed. Soon after that somewhere in the enemy's higher level a decision was made to concentrate their efforts on "anti-sweep" operations. Anti-sweep operations consist of inflicting a few casualties at relatively long range and disappearing without making close contact. This tactic was implemented by the V.C. about the middle of June and employed very successfully against this battalion for several weeks. We countered this enemy move with the ambushes in which one rifle company would divide into ten ambushes that operated without resupply or any assistance for three days. The ambush was partially successful and we killed some V.C. and captured some weapons. During the three day ambush program it became apparent that the enemy was not moving as we swept through these areas. Obviously we were walking right over him.

Our break came on 10 July 67, when Captain Larry Hicks, A Company CO, captured an NVA soldier in one of our most troublesome spots. The NVA was slightly wounded by an M-79 fragment and scared stiff. Unfortunately for his comrades he led us to our first hole. When he pointed the tunnel out to me, I couldn't believe my eyes. I could see only a small pile of leaves next to a bamboo clump. I thought surely this "Charlie" was only stalling for time, but then I studied the pile. Slowly I began to see the slight outlines of a small square about eighteen inches on a side. I noticed a small depression around the edges of this square look-as windblown as nature herself could make it. Larry looked at it and exclaimed, "I'll be damned". There it was. Now plain as day, we could see the outlines of the square in the pile of leaves. One of Larry's soldiers raked back the leaves exposing a wooden door of the same dimensions and the first "hole reduction team" went to work with their M-16's. We killed two from that hole and soon found another that also contained two enemy. Before the day was out "A" Company killed eight, capture one and had five weapons to its credit, all within an area measuring 250 meters by 250 meters. The next day was equally successful in an area adjacent to that of the previous days contact. LTC Tiller, the Battalion Commander, took the other company commanders and platoon leaders over to the area where Larry Hicks was having a field day. They carefully studied the holes and the area, admiring "A" company's rising body and weapons count. The battalion went to work. The race was on. Ever since then, the

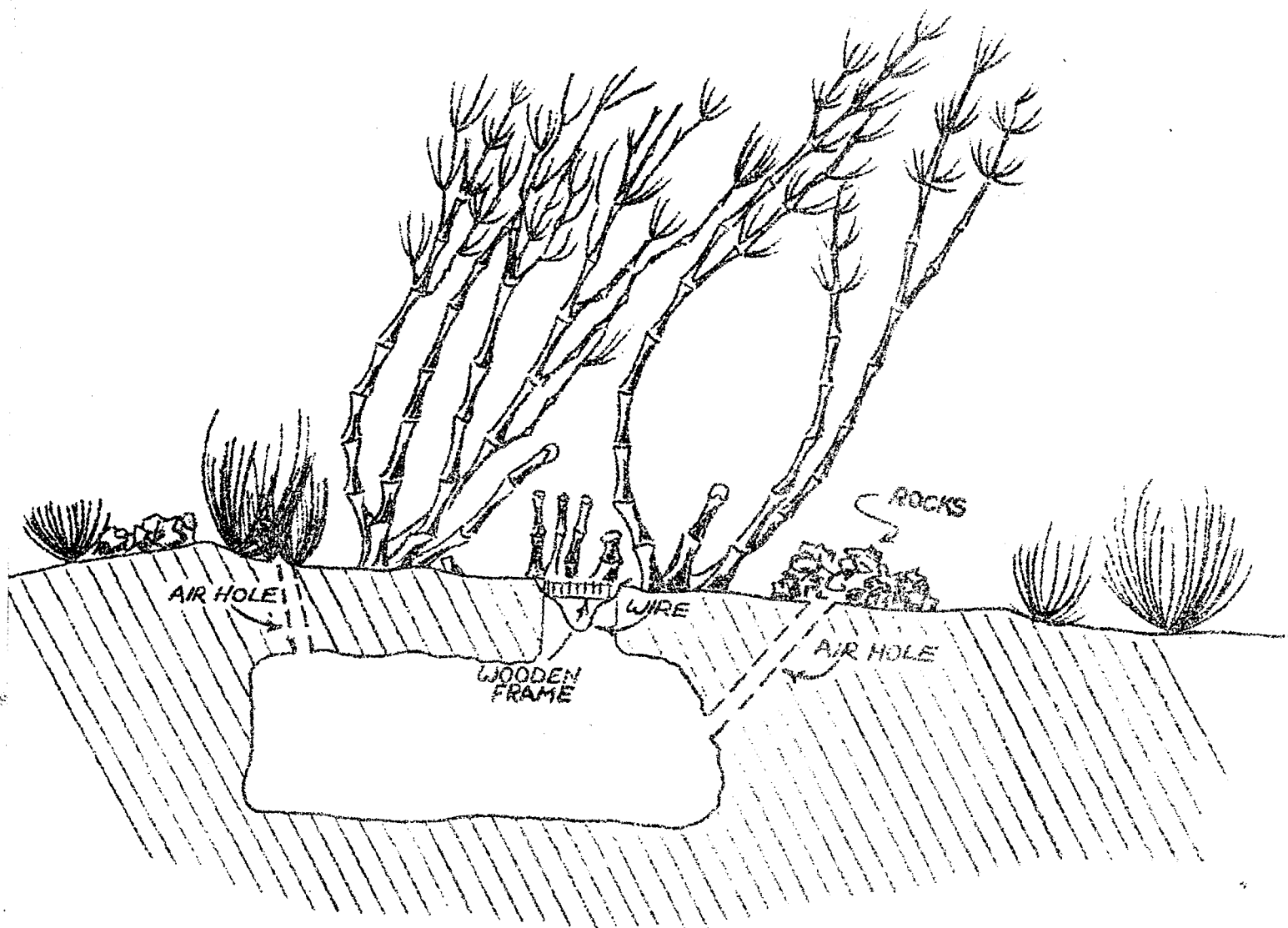


FIGURE 1

battalion has been digging out "Charlies" at a fantastic rate, and it soon became obvious that a need existed for a detailed study of the types of holes and techniques used in their reduction.

We have found that there are three main types of holes and these are classified more by their location, than by their construction. By far the most common is the "under bamboo" hole shown in sketch #1. This hole is easily and quickly camouflaged, characteristic of all the holes found in the Duc Pho-Mo Duc area of Vietnam. The entrance to the holes differ widely as do the techniques of camouflage. Most of the entrances are located within the edge of a bamboo clump or just outside the edge. The hole cover or trap door contains the camouflage material. Some have pieces of cut bamboo affixed to the door itself. The edges of the door fit snugly into the entrance. One type is illustrated in the accompanying photographs. Many other entrances are covered only by the door which is camouflaged by spreading leaves, rocks, and other materials over the top. Another characteristic common to all these small tunnels is the air hole which is normally made from a hollow piece of bamboo three to four inches in diameter inserted into the tunnel and camouflaged on the surface.

The air hole is the only tell tale indicator of the second type hole, the "beach hole". The beach hole differs from the bamboo hole in that it is made in the sand and normally constructed from cut timbers. It does not depend upon the bamboo roots to add rigidity to the roof. Naturally, the entrance to a beach hole is impossible to locate as it is often buried under a foot of loose sand; however, it can be detected by finding the breathing tubes. Some air holes are a continuation of the bamboo frames that make up the local fisherman's "lean to". Other air holes can be exposed by pulling up the cacti plants that grow along the sand dunes on the beach. The enemy has been clever in hiding these breathing tubes and we must be just as clever in locating them. See sketch #2.

The third type of tunnel, the least common, is the "water entrance" type. This tunnel may be located near a small stream or beside an old bomb crater that has filled with water. Normally these holes have no lid and depend on the natural growth along the stream bank to hide the entrance. Sometimes the entrance is completely submerged, but not always. A typical such tunnel is depicted in sketch #3.

No matter what type of hole you face, the slogan "find 'em - fix 'em fight 'em and finish 'em" is as true as the day it was first promulgated; however, many units fail to put the sequence in proper order. During several of our own operations we fix ed and fought only to learn that we had nothing to finish. The unmatched success of this battalion lies primarily with finding the enemy through the deliberate search technique before we attempt to fix or fight. The one true indicator of success is the actual number of enemy killed or capture and the number of weapons seized. During the period of 10 July - 10 August, this battalion killed

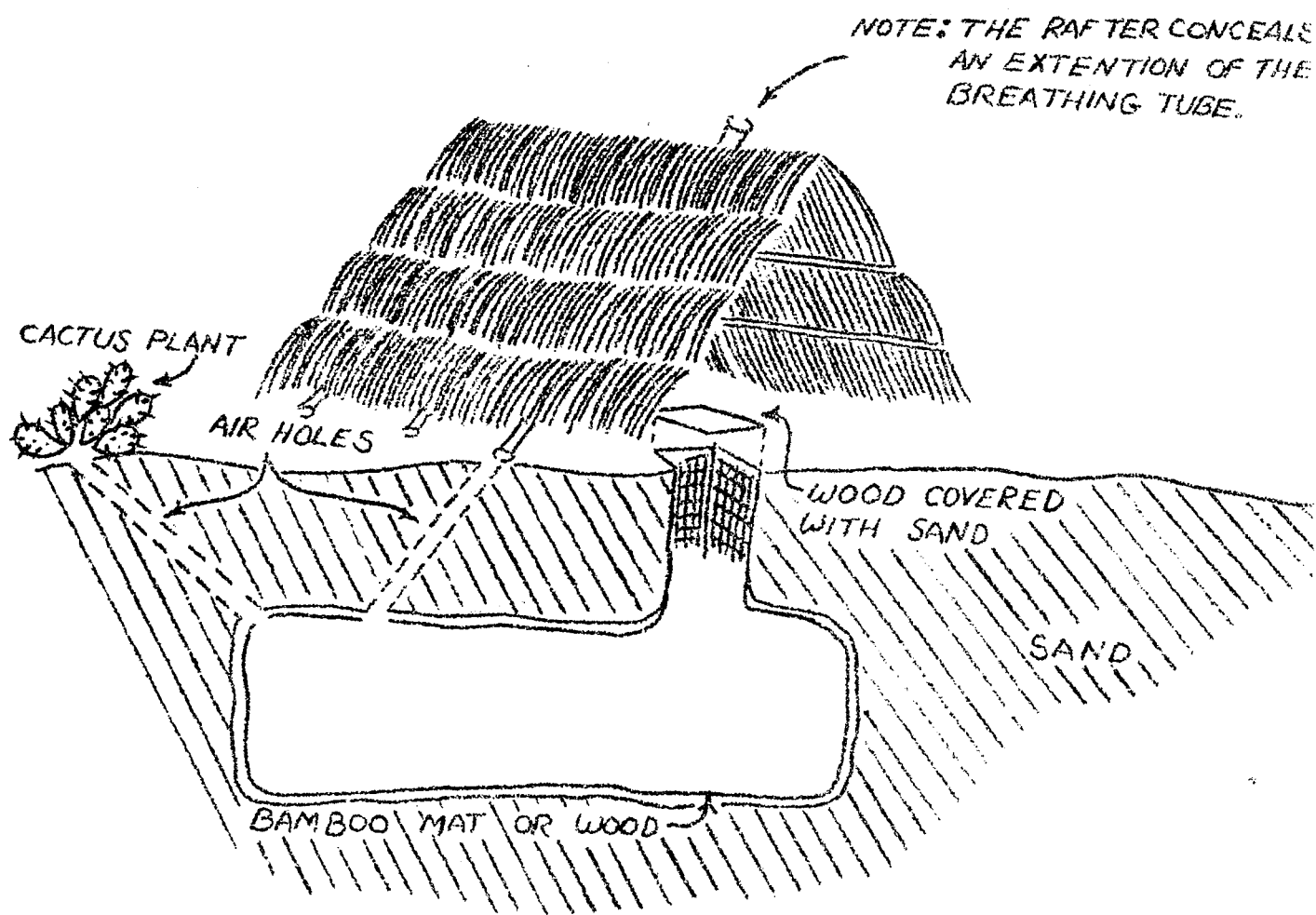


FIGURE 2

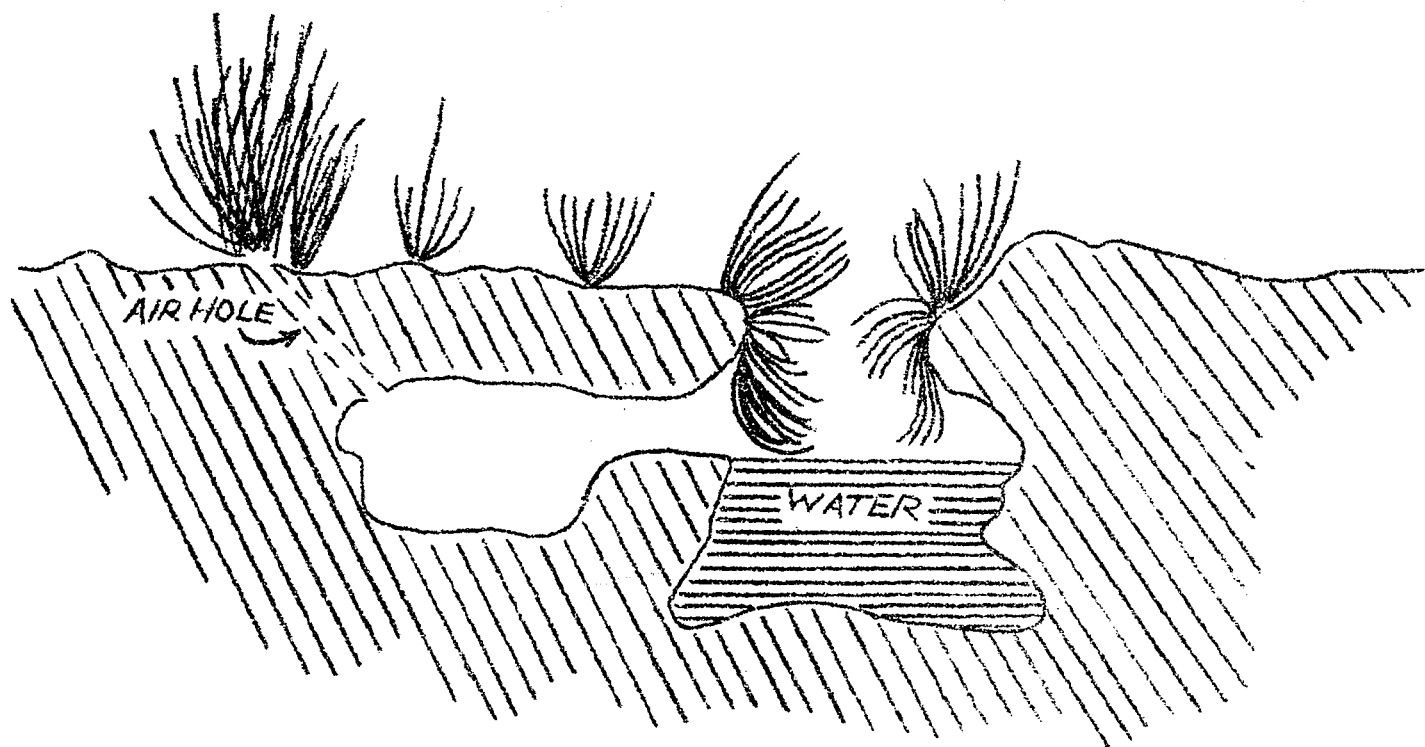


FIGURE 3

386 enemy, captured 77 POW's and seized 158 weapons while suffering only 12 U.S. soldiers killed in action. The high kill ratio and large number of weapons captured have been a result of locating the enemy within his hiding place. Once the enemy is located, the job is relatively simple as the enemy has fixed himself by choosing a small tunnel in which to hide. The enemy, dependent only on his expertise at passive camouflage has no choice but to be killed or captured as defense of a small hole against an American rifle squad is a difficult if not impossible task. The key to a successful search is the application of common sense to the situation here in Vietnam. We assign a rifle company a small search area, never larger than a 1000 meter grid square. These small areas are picked based on intelligence or past actions. The company then painstakingly searches every square meter of the area. There is no time limit to complete the task. We have been able to capitalize on the natural curiosity of the American soldier in developing our techniques of deliberate search. Naturally, the first and foremost technique is the art of locating the hole. There are several indications that should prove to be helpful in locating these holes. Visual indicators often disclose the general area of the hole but not its precise locations. Worn places on the bamboo that the enemy has used as handholds are good visual indicators. Another indicator is a small trail, much like a game trail, through the brush into a bamboo clump. Easily seen, although not a sure sign, is cut bamboo as shown in several of the photographs. Frequently, the V.C. dig their holes under these partially harvested bamboo clumps. A good visual indicator, but difficult to detect is a slight depression in or around the bamboo clump. This depression is often the location of a trap door. The depression collects leaves and trash and aids in the camouflage of the hole entrance. The surest of all visual indicators is the ever present air hole. Once located these bamboo breathing-tubes will always reveal the tunnel below. Visual indicators are by the best indicators, but they are not the only ones. A lone individual, especially a female, signals that the V.C. are not far away. She places the finishing touches of camouflage around the hole. Fresh cooked food with no one attending the pot is a sure sign the V.C. departed in haste or are hidden nearby. The V.C., being lazy and not very good soldiers, often dispose of human waste near their hole. Fresh human feces can point out an unwary enemy.

All of these indicators are good; however, in each different area of Vietnam they may vary. Experience will tell you what the indicators are within your area. Once the individual soldier achieves success at locating the enemy he will almost be able to "smell them". There is a certain sixth sense about locating the enemy, but more often than not it is knowing where to look and what to look for. The indicators are what to look for. The places to look are in the corners of hedgerows, in the corners of villages and in the corners of trails or trenches. The enemy often hides in these corners as he can see from them while not being seen. Additionally, hiding in a corner allows the party who puts the finishing touches on the camouflage to escape undetected. The enemy is aware of the danger in establishing a pattern; however, he must have a location that provides him with observation as well as concealment so look for an

O.P. that allows him to move into or out of the area undetected

The technique of deliberate search that we have successfully employed centers around the rifle squad. The squad divides into a security team and a search team. Naturally the curious go to the search team while the less curious provide the security. Needless to say, these positions must be rotated after a period of time as the thorns in the bamboo clumps wreak havoc on hands, arms and uniforms. Each platoon assigns the squad a search area and they in turn start a systematic search along the hedgerows and bamboo clumps. Meanwhile the security element moves toward the limits of each search area. Once a hole is discovered, the security element surrounds the area while the searchers clear away enough brush to allow the comparative large American soldier to operate within this confined space. Then hole reduction begins.

Reduction of the hole is a simple four step process beginning with a soldier firing one or two magazines from his M-16 into the trap door. This has a tendency to discourage enemy grenadiers from getting too close to the door. After getting their attention with a magazine or two, various American and Vietnamese expressions are shouted into the hole exhorting the enemy to come out or be killed. Some times he will give up without a fight, saving us not only the effort of killing him, but of excavating the tunnel for documents and weapons. When all else fails and the "Hard Corps Charlie" remains within his self-created tomb a few strategically placed grenades normally reduce both the tunnel and "Charlie" to rubble leaving only the messy task of digging out the remains. Frequently the M-16 will open a hole large enough to allow insertion of a grenade. If not, a grenade is placed on top of the trap door or the door removed from a distance with a rope. This minimizes the effect of any attached booby trap. Sometimes an air hole is enlarged and a grenade pushed through it. This is particularly effective against stubborn V.C. who hide behind a grenade baffle. The last step is the insertion of a tunnel rat to insure that all weapons and documents have been recovered as well as all enemy killed or captured. The hole must be thoroughly searched as the enemy has small compartments built into his holes to hide weapons and ammo. Obviously, it is far better to capture the V.C. as he can frequently lead you to another hole containing items of interest but in any event, capture will save you the time wasted digging out the holes for weapons and documents. After the hole has been searched we destroy it with explosives if it was not already destroyed in the four step process. A caution to remember is that the enemy's defense is to toss out a grenade when everyone is standing around the hole and attempt to escape from another exit of the tunnel. Many of these holes have two entrances so naturally the best defense against the grenade tosser is dispersion of our forces and alert security men who fire into the hole before the grenade or "Charlie" comes out.



It is apparent that the success of the operation depends entirely on the success of the searchers. Accordingly, your best men should be used first. As soon as your unit finds success in "Hole Huntin" everyone will desire to be a searcher. But as success usually is, it is short lived and frequently the units enthusiasm dwindles to a low ebb. Many a bleeding hand of a lieutenant has finally located a hole that rekindled the desires of his searchers and the race was on to locate the next hole. The operation will only be successful if the officers and noncommissioned officers lead the way in the search for holes and maintain in the searchers an enthusiastic approach to the mission.

The results of a successful search operation can be amazing. During our search of an area near Duc Pho, Vietnam, we uncovered two companies commanders, the S3, the XO and a first sergeant from the 97th V.C. Battalion. Further to the north, we killed the XO of 1st Co, CO of 3rd Co and the battalion CO of the 38th V.C. Battalion. In still different areas, the village chief, the district finance chief, and several other members of the infrastructure were literally unearthed from their hiding places. Of more than 350 enemy we have killed in the last month, a substantial number have been either members of the infrastructure or cadre of these V.C. units. These losses hurt the enemy doubly. Many of the weapons seized have been crew served, including machine guns, recoilless rifles, and rocket launchers. As a result of our operations the enemy in our A.O. has two serious staff problems: First, determining what course of action is open to him to counter the deliberate search, and second, obtaining and keeping a staff to study the problem.

Deliberate search techniques are easily taught and quickly learned. The emphasis is of course placed on where to look for the enemy, a location that provides him with observation, cover and concealment and a route of escape. Then the soldier learns what to look for, the indicators, a game trail, worn and cut bamboo, and air hole, human feces, a depression, fresh food, a lone individual. All trigger a mental alert in the curious American soldier that the enemy is not far away. The four step reduction process provides a simple means of effectively combating the enemy with minimum friendly casualties. This type of "on the scene" training was presented to selected members of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, a part of Task Force Oregon, by the 2nd Battalion 35th Infantry. In a matter of only two weeks, the 196th had located over 300 of these holes. The success of their operation was a result of good leadership and a knowledge of these "Hole Huntin" techniques.

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LESSONS LEARNED

## COMMANDER'S OBSERVATIONS, EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### INTELLIGENCE:

#### 1. (C) SUBJECT: Utilization of Black List.

a. Observation: U.S. units operating in populated areas seldom know in advance where to look for specific VC and VCI who have already been identified on the black list and intelligence reports.

b. Evaluation: Current black list and similar identification files are used primarily to identify personnel already detained by U.S. forces rather than as a source of proposed targets within a given area.

c. Recommendation: That black lists and other sources be utilized to create lists of known VC and VCI in a given area and that such lists, with as much detail as possible, be issued to units working these areas.

#### 2. (C) SUBJECT: On Call Aircraft for S-2.

a. Observation: On many occasions tactical units in the field capture enemy personnel and/or documents which cannot be immediately evacuated because of lack of aircraft assets.

b. Evaluation: Because enemy contacts are usually of short duration, and the enemy is highly successful in evading, it is imperative that unit commanders have immediate access to perishable information. By reducing the time lag of evaluating information unit commanders can be more successful in re-establishing contact with enemy forces. Without a quick intelligence reaction, unit commanders cannot effectively find, fix and finish the enemy after the initial contact has been made.

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LESSONS LEARNED (CONT)

c. Recommendation: That Brigade S-2's have priority on aircraft assets when it is felt that the rapid evacuation of detained personnel and/or documents would provide intelligence needed by the ground commander to make sound decisions in accomplishing his mission.

Incl 3 (cont)

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## LESSONS LEARNED

### COMMANDER'S OBSERVATIONS, EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### ORGANIZATION

SUBJECT: Restructure of Battalion Surveillance Section.

a. (C) Observation: The current organization of the battalion surveillance section makes it unresponsive to the needs of the maneuver companies and to the intelligence community.

b. (C) Evaluation: The 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry has modified its Table of Organization by augmenting the surveillance section with PPS-5's and Night Observation Devices (NOD), thereby forming a surveillance platoon. This platoon was placed under the Administrative and Logistical control of the E Co Commander, but made operationally responsive to the S-2. The additional radar units and NOD's were obtained from Artillery Fire Support Bases. These bases are located on prominent terrain features overlooking the coastal lowlands and within the battalions AO. Through mutual agreement, the Artillery Commanders have consented to sharing their surveillance equipment with the battalion. To date, this organizational change has increased the battalions ability to monitor and react to enemy movement; In addition, it has given the intelligence community an increased awareness of enemy intentions.

c. (U) Recommendation: That other units be made aware of this restructure and the obvious advantages it offers.

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