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AMERICAL Reg 525-4

HEADQUARTERS
AMERICAL DIVISION
APO San Francisco 96374

REGULATION
NUMBER 525-4

16 March 1968

COMBAT OPERATIONS

Rules of Engagement (U)

1. (U) PURPOSE. This regulation establishes criteria for employment of firepower in support of combat operations within the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and is applicable to all fires regardless of delivery means.
2. (U) SCOPE. This regulation is applicable to all combat and combat support units assigned, attached or in support of the Americal Division.
3. (U) DEFINITIONS.
 - a. Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR). A land area in which responsibility/authority is specifically assigned to the commander of the area for conduct of tactical operations. The commander of the TAOR is responsible for control and coordination of all activities within its boundary, less those activities specifically retained under division or higher headquarters control.
 - b. Area of Operations (AO). A land area in which US/FMAF units may conduct tactical operations after receiving approval from the ICTZ commander. The commander of the AO is responsible for coordination and control of all activities within its boundary. An AO is transitory in nature. There is no intention of remaining in the area once the prescribed mission has been accomplished.
 - c. Specified Strike Zone (SSZ). An area used by VC/NVA which contains no population nor distinctively marked hospitals or religiously or politically significant structures. A SSZ is designated by the ICTZ commander on request thru command channels and constitutes prior political clearance; however, the conduct of fire must be in accordance with the established rules of engagement.
 - d. Free Fire Zone (FFZ). An area designated by the responsible political authority (District/Province Chief) in which political clearance has been granted for the period specified. Military clearance and compliance with the established rules of engagement are required.
 - e. No-Fire Zone (NFZ). An area established by the ICTZ commander in which no supporting arms fire will be delivered under any circumstances.

CONFIDENTIAL

587

DOWNGRADED AT 3 YR
INTERVALS; DECLASSIFIED
AFTER 12 YRS
DOD DIR 5200.10

EXHIBIT D-5

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Religious establishments, friendly population or other politically significant objects are normally found within these areas. No-Fire Zones may be located within AO's and may or may not have friendly forces located within them. Designation of a No-Fire Zone does not preclude maneuver by ground forces through the area if prior military and political clearance has been obtained. With the exception of the use of supporting fires, rules of engagement for ground maneuver units as established herein apply while inside a NFZ.

f. Observed Fire. Employment of fire support under the direct observation and control of an artillery forward/air observer, FAC or other competent individual.

g. Unobserved Fire. Employment of fire support with no observer capable of adjusting or determining the effect or accuracy of the fire.

h. In Contact. A unit is considered "in contact" when it is engaged with an enemy force. Sniper fire or mortar fire is not considered "in contact" unless such fire interferes with the scheme of maneuver or is inflicting casualties or damage to friendly forces. The tactical unit commander is responsible for making the "in contact" determination.

i. Political Clearance. Approval to fire by the appropriate political authority, normally the District or Province Chief. This clearance may be obtained through US Artillery liaison teams assigned to district and province headquarters.

j. Military Clearance. Approval to fire by the military commander of the area of operations (AO). Necessary to insure that friendly military personnel are not brought under fire.

4. (C) GENERAL. a. The use of unnecessary force resulting in non-combatant casualties and property loss will embitter the population and make the long term goal of pacification more difficult and costly.

b. The VC/NVA exploit incidents of non-combatant casualties and destruction of property RVNAF/US/FWMAF to foster resentment and to alienate the people against the Government.

c. The circumstances of the conflict call for restraint not normally required of soldiers on the battlefield. Commanders must strike a balance between the force necessary to accomplish the mission, with due regard to the safety of their commands, and the importance attached to minimizing non-combatant casualties. This requires the highest order of leadership and judgement.

d. An unusual requirement is placed on junior leaders to carry out sensitive combat operations, often in an environment where large numbers

of civilians are present. The determination of right and wrong in the heat of battle requires a keen, swift, and decisive analysis of all contributing factors and must be based on a thorough understanding of the legal and moral principles involved.

e. A written set of rules cannot be provided that will apply to every situation. Therefore, the final decision on engagement will be at the discretion of the senior tactical commander present who must consider the mission and the situation as well as his responsibility to minimize both friendly and non-combatant casualties and destruction of private and public property. In cases where doubt exists concerning application of firepower, the commander will request guidance from higher headquarters. If the commander cannot contact higher headquarters or time does not permit contacting higher headquarters, the commander will take the action he deems appropriate and notify higher headquarters of his decision and subsequent actions as soon as possible.

f. Nothing shall infringe on the inherent right of a commander to exercise self-defense. The commander may take immediate action against an attacking force with all means available; however, every possible safeguard short of endangering life will be used to avoid non-combatant casualties and the destruction of private property. Firepower will be brought to bear on enemy in populated areas only to the extent required to accomplish an assigned mission.

5. (C) CONDUCT OF FIRE. a. Individual and crew served weapons:

(1) Pistols, rifles, grenade launchers, hand grenades, claymores, machine guns, and recoilless rifles may be employed by commanders under the conditions indicated below:

(a) Against targets that are observed and positively identified as enemy.

(b) Against point targets from which fire is being received. (Indiscriminate fire into populated areas is prohibited.)

(c) Against suspected enemy locations when non-combatants would not be endangered.

(2) Personnel positively identified as enemy who demonstrate an intent to surrender should not be engaged by fire.

b. Indirect fire support weapons (artillery, mortars and naval gunfire):

(1) Unobserved fire may be directed against all target areas located within specified strike zones (SSZ's) and free fire zones (FFZ's) and provided clearance is granted by the military commander in whose AO the SSZ or FFZ lies.

CONFIDENTIAL

AMERICAL Reg 525-4

(2) Uninhabited areas outside SSZ's and FPZ's:

(a) When IN CONTACT, fire may be directed against VC/NVA forces at the request of a US/FWMAF unit. This situation is considered observed fire even though an artillery air/forward observer may not be the requestor.

(b) When NOT IN CONTACT, observed fire may be directed against targets of opportunity which are clearly identified as hostile, without political and military clearance.

(c) When NOT IN CONTACT with VC/NVA forces, unobserved fires may be directed at hostile targets and target areas, only after political and military clearance is obtained.

(d) Political and military clearance is required before directing either observed or unobserved fire on targets not clearly identified as hostile.

(3) Inhabited areas (Occupied groups of dwellings):

(a) The following conditions must be met in each instance before artillery, mortar, or naval gunfire is directed against enemy targets in inhabited areas.

1. Political and military clearance must be obtained.

2. An observer (FO, AO, FAC) must be on station to direct the fire.

3. Inhabitants must be warned in advance by leaflets and/or loudspeaker systems or by other appropriate means that artillery, mortars, and/or naval gunfire will be directed against enemy targets in the hamlet or village. The one exception is that prior warning is not required when the attack by fire is in conjunction with a ground assault by friendly forces and the ground commander determines that prior warning of inhabitants would jeopardize mission accomplishment.

(b) The employment of any ordnance which would cause intentional burning of dwellings will be avoided, unless absolutely necessary in the accomplishment of the commander's mission.

(c) Village and hamlet defensive fires will be executed when requested by GVN/RVNAF authority if such fires do not interfere with or materially reduce support of other friendly operations.

CONFIDENTIAL

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AMERICAL Reg 525-4

(d) Artillery air observers will be briefed on areas containing friendly or potentially friendly population, and will comply with rules of engagement listed in para 5a(3).

(e) Unobserved naval gunfire will be employed only when observed fire is not possible because of geography, weather, or lack of trained observer. Unobserved naval gunfire should not be undertaken in close proximity to friendly forces or areas known to be inhabited by non-combatants.

c. Aircraft Delivery Systems:

(1) Forward Air Controllers (FAC) and armed helicopter commanders will be briefed on locations of friendly and potentially friendly populated areas. Strikes will not be executed where identification of friendly elements is in doubt. FAC's and helicopter commanders will reconnoiter the strike area for friendly personnel and non-combatants prior to strike execution.

(2) All close air support missions that involve airstrikes not controlled by radar will be controlled by a FAC. As a portion of the FAC's target briefing to the strike pilots, he will include the location of the nearest friendly elements.

(3) Close air support missions that involve strikes on hamlets or villages must be controlled by a FAC. If the attack on a hamlet or village is deemed necessary and is executed in conjunction with a ground operation involving movement of ground forces through the area, the attack may be without warning; however, appropriate political and military clearance is required. If the attack on a village or hamlet is not in conjunction with any immediate ground operation, the inhabitants must be warned by leaflets and/or loudspeaker system prior to strike execution and must be given adequate time to evacuate the area.

(4) If an armed helicopter operation involves non-combatants, such as in an occupied hamlet or village, political and military clearance must be obtained unless the situation clearly presents an immediate threat to the lives of the crew.

(5) All aircraft receiving ground fire from friendly or potentially friendly populated areas will return the fire only when:

- (a) The sources of fire can be visually identified.
- (b) The strike or fire can be positively oriented against the source.
- (c) The fire is of such intensity that counter action is required.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

AMERICAL Reg 525-4

6. (C) RULES GOVERNING DESTRUCTION OF DWELLINGS BY GROUND FORCES.

a. As a general rule, civilian dwellings or private property, including livestock, will not be destroyed except as an unavoidable consequence of combat actions.

b. The destruction of dwellings and livestock of noncombatants as a denial measure is to be left to GVN authorities or RVNAF units.

c. If US personnel are receiving fire from a house, the fire will be returned even though destruction of the house results. Destruction of structures in areas used as VC base camps, or those obviously built by the VC to fight from, is authorized.

7. (C) INDIRECT FIRE SUPPORT WEAPONS CLEARANCE PROCEDURES. In addition to the previously mentioned restrictions and rules of engagement, the following clearance procedures are established for all artillery, mortar, and naval gunfire:

a. Military clearance will be obtained from the RVNAF/US/FWMAF unit in whose TAOR/AO the target is located. The appropriate liaison team or FSE will be contacted for this clearance.

b. Any indirect fires planned within 500 meters of an adjacent TAOR/AO will be coordinated with the corresponding commander.

c. SAV-A-PLANE date for all indirect fire missions must be submitted to FSE or AWCC in accordance with TAB B (Safeguarding Aircraft from Artillery Fires) to Appendix 4 (Fire Support Coordination) to Annex A (Operations) to Americal Division Field SOP.

8. (C) PREVENTION OF MUTUAL INTERFERENCE ON INLAND AND COASTAL WATERWAYS.

a. The increase of the FWMAF in the Market Time (Coastal waters of RVN) areas require that the following measures be implemented to prevent incidents in which friendly watercraft are attacked by small arms, aircraft, mortars and/or artillery.

b. Watercraft on coastal waterways are not to be attacked unless one of the following conditions is satisfied:

(1) The watercraft is firing on friendly forces. The responsible Coastal Surveillance Center/TOC will be notified as soon as the situation permits.

(2) The watercraft is conducting hostile maneuvers or other actions and coordination has been effected with the responsible Coastal Surveillance Center.

CONFIDENTIAL

AMERICAL Reg 525-4

(3) The watercraft has been certified as nonfriendly by the Coastal Surveillance Center.

c. Clearance from the Coastal Surveillance Center, Da Nang, can be obtained through Coastal Division 12, Chu Lai (Tel: SHELLBACK 115/217 or FM; OXCLIFF 37.50 MC).

d. Watercraft on inland waterways are not to be attacked without prior political and military clearance. Clearances are a function of the color coding of all inland waterways as either BLUE (civilian traffic restricted during established curfew hours) or RED (civilian traffic restricted 24 hours per day) and are the responsibility of the ground commander in whose AO the waterway is located.

(1) Boats moving in unrestricted waters may be challenged at any time, but will not be destroyed unless positively identified as hostile watercraft.

(2) Boats moving at any time in 24 hour restricted waters, that are not properly lighted and boats moving after the established curfew in any inland waterway may be engaged and destroyed without the benefit of a challenge. If the situation permits, all boats should be challenged.

9. (U) IMPLEMENTATION. Implementing instructions and SOPs will be developed by major subordinate commanders to provide for control, coordination, and clearance of fires.

10. (U) REFERENCES. a. USMACV Directive (C) 95-4, Aviation - US Air Operations in RVN (U), dtd 28 June 1966 with change 1 dtd 14 February 1967.

b. USMACV Directive (C) 525-3, Combat Operations - Minimizing Noncombatant Casualties (U), dtd 14 October 1966.

c. USMACV Directive (C) 525-9, Combat Operations - Control, Disposition, and Safeguarding of Vietnamese Property, Captured Material and Food Supplies (U), dtd 10 April 1967.

d. USMACV Directive (C) 525-18, Combat Operations - Conduct of Artillery - Mortar and Naval Gunfire (U), dtd 21 January 1968.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

AMERICAL Reg 525-4

e. III MAF Force Order (C) P03121.5, SOP for Ground and Air Operations (U), dtd 10 November 1967.

(AVDF-GC)

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