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**15. SUMMARY:** (C-Apr 71) This report contains information obtained from an enemy document and concerns a report, undated and unsigned, classified ((VC)) Top Secret, which was sent from R ((possibly COSVN)) to all units. It is a report on a SVN Sapper Conference held by Headquarters, SVNLA during Oct 69. The report is divided into three main parts: 1) An analysis of the development and tactics of sapper forces since the General Offensive and Uprising, and their present shortcomings; 2) a discussion of the role, missions, requirements, and operating procedures of sapper forces in the future; and 3) principles for combat leadership of sapper forces.

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TOP SECRET ((VC Classification))

((Handwritten marginal note)): A2 Nam/Ba Kê ((sic)), ((End of marginal note)).

REPORT ON SVN SAPPER  
CONFERENCE HELD BY THE HEADQUARTERS, SVNLA, DURING OCT 69

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From: R ((possibly COSVN))

To: All units.

We must increase the development and combat activities of the sappers of three forces (main, local and guerrilla forces) throughout the three strategic areas to gain greater future successes.

(This conclusion is stated in the report on the SVN Sapper Conference held during Oct 69 and was endorsed by the Headquarters, SVNLA).

Dear Comrades,

Today, on behalf of the Headquarters, SVNLA, I wish to summarize the problems presented and discussed by the conference.

Part One:

New developments and tactics of sapper forces since our General Offensive and Uprising, and their present shortcomings.

Part Two:

Role, missions, requirements, and combat procedures of sapper forces in the future.

Part Three:

Principles for combat leadership by sapper forces.

Important Tasks:

Part One:

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6b-TL ((sic))

NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND TACTICS OF SAPPER FORCES  
SINCE OUR GENERAL OFFENSIVE AND UPRISING, AND THEIR SHORTCOMINGS

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1. As you know, since Mậu Thân ((1968)) Tết the SVN people's resistance against the American aggressors has turned to a new phase of General Offensive and Uprising. We launched repeated attacks against the enemy and obtained greater and more extensive successes. Therefore, the enemy had to abandon "two pincer" tactics and use "clear and hold" tactics in an attempt to shift to a defensive position throughout SVN. However, due to his increasing confusion and serious failures, the enemy was forced to stop bombing NVN unconditionally, come to the conference table in Paris, de-escalate the war, and begin to withdraw troops from SVN.

Armed Liberation forces ((in general)) and Sapper Units in particular contributed much to these successes. We overcame difficulties and were determined to implement our strategic plan. It consisted of launching spontaneous offensives against all enemy urban areas and rear bases, especially large cities such as Saigon and Huế. We shifted the war to the cities, annihilated enemy ring-leaders and disturbed the strategic enemy deployment. We destroyed a large number of enemy personnel, war facilities, and his reserve of strategic resources. This changed the balance of power between us and the enemy, increased our power and prestige on all battlefields, and undermined the US war of aggression.

Our military successes contributed to the development of the political struggle in coordination with the diplomatic struggle. As a result, our attacks became fiercer each day.

2. It is obvious that since the General Offensives and Uprisings were launched, the sapper branch has developed by leaps and bounds. Sapper ((units)) were developed among the three forces ((main, local and guerrilla forces)) throughout the three strategic areas and became one of the strong branches of our army. Sapper tactics represent the concept of defeating a large force with a small one. This helped us to increase our combat capability and expand the scale of combat activities by shifting from sporadic, independent, and coordinated attacks to strategic offensives throughout SVN during the Campaign. Within the past two years hundreds of sapper attacks have been launched against different targets. We frequently used a smaller force to attack a larger force and inflict heavy casualties on the enemy, while suffering small losses. On all battlefields, our strength was that we were able to conduct fierce attacks with sure success, and that the more we fought, the stronger we became and the greater our successes grew. At the conference, we studied only 17 typical battles. However, we could recognize the following characteristics of sapper forces on the battlefields from Military Region 6 southwards.

First tactic: Sapper and special action forces are qualified to attack any target on any battlefield throughout the three strategic areas. Despite the intensive enemy defense and fierce activities on the main battlefields, sapper forces were able to conduct attacks against the enemy defensive system, from the intercepting border line (consisting of Lovia, Bàu Cốc, Ba Chiêm, Bã Đen, etc ... ((sic))) to the intermediary line (consisting of Technique ((area within

An Lối Rubber Plantation)), Châu Thành, Dầu Tiếng, Đông Du, Bình Mỹ, etc... ((sic)). They were capable of attacking other targets ((such as the Gò Vấp

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bomb depot, the US Navy Quarter, the Biên Hòa Police Service, etc... ((sic)) which were deep in bordering areas and inner cities. This tactic demonstrated the great strategic potential of sapper forces during the present phase. In the future, we must increase sapper forces near all deep bases in the inner defensive area and develop sapper forces in cities.

Second tactic: Sapper forces operated throughout the three areas. Those of main and local forces were qualified to launch attacks against the main targets of the Campaign, in accordance with the plan of the great offensive phase directly commanded by the Headquarters, SVNLA. The sapper forces, SVNLA, were able to fight such important and large scale battles as Đông Du, Dầu Tiếng, and Chón Thành, which affected the development of the Campaign and the offensive phase. During the Autumn Campaign, they launched repeated attacks against large rear bases in a short time, and, in coordination with the armed forces, accomplished the main mission of the campaign by destroying the major enemy forces one by one. The sappers of division or regiment level attacked the secondary targets of the campaign. Sappers adopted the tactics of small and moderate attacks or coordinated with infantry and artillery forces to conduct repeated and continuous offensives. For example, sappers of the ((VC)) 1st Division attacked Ban Cỏ, Lovia, etc ... ((sic)) during the 1969 Autumn Campaign. They utilized the tactics by which a sapper battalion can attack several elements during one night and fight many battles during a campaign. In coordination with infantry forces and other branches, they frustrated the enemy inner defense plan used by the 1st Air Cavalry and Transportation Division ((sic)) on the border. On other battlefields, sapper forces coordinated to operate in local areas during the Campaign or ((activity)) phase. For example, sapper forces of Sub-Region 1 launched three attacks against Gò Vấp Bomb Depot during the 1969 Summer Campaign. Sapper forces of ((VC)) Military Region 6 attacked Đúc Trọng during the Summer Campaign. Sapper forces of ((VC)) Military Region 10 attacked Phước Long during the Spring Campaign. Sapper forces of ((VC)) Military Region 3 attacked Lô Te, etc .. ((sic)). Therefore, during the future campaign and climaxing phase, we should launch small and moderate attacks more frequently. If a sapper battalion wins several battles in a night and many battles during a campaign, the ((activity)) phase will boil with enthusiasm and yield greater successes.

Third tactic: During some large scale battles, many sapper units destroyed the major enemy elements. This demonstrated that sapper units of main and local forces had made new progress in techniques, tactics, organization, leadership, etc ... ((sic)). In the future, if we more thoroughly understand the concepts and principles of sapper tactics, train our troops on tactics and techniques, improve the skills of organization and command and coordination of branches etc ... ((sic)), we will be able to destroy all our targets completely.

Fourth tactic: Sapper units of the local forces are qualified to attack small province capitals, district seats and sub-sectors, annihilate the major enemy units and seriously deplete the others. They can help the people destroy strategic hamlets and seize limited control in Phước Long, Đúc Trọng Sub-Sector, etc... ((sic)). This generates a new capability for us. Coordination should be made between sapper forces in region, province, and district, and those in guerrilla forces, and between sapper forces and other forces such as the guerrilla, secret self-defense and special action forces, etc ... ((sic)).

Spontaneous attacks should be conducted against district seats, sub-sectors, province capitals, and Popular and Regional

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Force posts in the same areas to annihilate pacification personnel, tyrants, ringleaders and reactionaries. While conducting combat activities, we should motivate the people to rise up, destroy strategic hamlets, and break the ((RVN)) oppressive control; we should intensify enemy ((FWMAF)) and Military ((RVNAF)) proselyting activities. By so doing, we can overrun district seats and sub-sectors and liberate rural, lowland, and mountainous areas.

Fifth tactic: Underwater demolition sapper forces were able to penetrate the enemy defensive systems along large rivers and attack ships in harbors. For example, sappers of Đoàn 10 attacked ships on the Nhã Bê River. They also won large battles close to Saigon. Bèn LúC Bridge was destroyed by sapper ((forces of)) Sub-Region 3, etc... ((sic)). We should quickly develop the water demolition sapper ((forces)) on all battlefields, especially the main battlefields of the Mekong Delta. We should deploy ((sapper personnel)) along strategic rivers such as the Long Tau, Nhã Bê, and Mãng Thít Rivers, etc ... ((sic)) and local river axes. We will, thus, have the capability to destroy enemy ships on the rivers and his strategic reserves. In coordination with other tactics, we should cut off and seize control of important and strategic communication lines.

Sixth tactic: We were able to turn infantry units into sapper units in a short time or quickly train recruits on sapper tactics. The sapper unit of the 1st Division won battles such as Ban Cỏ and Lovia after receiving a 15 day ((tactical)) training course. The sapper unit of the newly activated 7th Division conducted large scale attacks against US tracked vehicles in Lóc Ninh; and the reconnaissance detachment of Doan ((Group)) 429 attacked the US Signal Center in Bà Đen, although it had only been trained on sapper tactics for a short time, etc ... ((sic)). These facts demonstrate the great capability of sappers units. We should strengthen and develop these sapper units among the three forces, especially those in local forces. We were able to train infantry troops and other branches on sapper tactics quickly and increase the combat efficiency of the infantry force.

The sapper branch made great progress and obtained remarkable achievements during the past phase. It accomplished its combat mission and was qualified to perform the tasks prescribed for the Campaign and the strategic plan issued by the Party. The main reason was that the sapper branch was given particular care by the Central Party Headquarters and Chairman HỒ, and the sound leadership by the SVNLA and Central Military Affairs Party Committee. Fully understanding the Party's military policy line and plan, cadre and soldiers of all branches bravely fought battles with the help of the people and in close coordination with the other armed forces. These factors resulted in the present development of the sapper branch. In other words, the Party relied on the people and its leadership experiences to activate the sapper branch and invent sapper tactics. It created many favorable conditions for the development of the sapper branch and sapper tactics. Therefore, the sapper branch should realize the source of its development.

3. Despite the above achievements and possibilities, sapper forces still have the following shortcomings:

Sapper forces were not widely developed in three forces, especially local and guerrilla forces. They did not operate on all battlefields, especially the battlefield of the Nam Bô Lowlands and in the cities.

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The development of specialized sapper forces, especially underwater demolition sapper forces, was not adequate. On all battlefields, sapper forces failed to attack large targets deep in the enemy defensive system. In some areas, sapper forces are not employed appropriately for their functions. While carrying out combat activities, they did not improve their capabilities. As a result, sapper forces were weak in some areas.

Sapper tactics were not widely applied throughout the three strategic areas, especially in the Nam Bô Lowlands and main battlefields from intermediary areas to inner cities. Therefore, we failed to destroy war facilities and the strategic enemy reserve of resources, or annihilate many of his high ranking officials, reactionary ringleaders, tyrants, and pacification personnel and deal a fierce blow to the strategic enemy plan.

Coordination was not made between large, moderate, and small attacks as required in the campaign strategy. Our troops rarely applied local and guerrilla force sapper tactics by using a small force to annihilate a large force or win a large battle.

Combat effectiveness of sapper forces at all levels, including SVN sapper forces, left much to be desired. Targets were not completely destroyed. ((Sapper)) units failed to attack several targets during a night or fight many battles during a campaign. Sapper forces did not coordinate with infantry forces and other branches, or weakly attacked enemy solid fortifications. As a result, attacks were not launched regularly and continuously, and sapper forces were not developed to the fullest extent.

Among the three forces, sapper cadre had poor capabilities. We neither provided regular training on sapper tactics for sapper, infantry forces, and other branches, nor attached importance to the reconnaissance task.

Sapper forces development was weak and limited on our battlefields. They accomplished the missions assigned by higher echelons, but failed to fulfill the combat requirements prescribed by the campaign strategy during ~~phases of the~~ General Offensive and Uprising. The basic reason was that we did not fully understand the Party's military policy and guidelines. The fact was proven by the following three points.

4. Reasons:

((First)): We did not properly evaluate the capabilities of the sapper forces or fully understand their role, missions, requirements, and operational methods during the General Offensive and Uprising.

((Second)): We did not thoroughly understand the basic concepts and principles of sapper tactics, or make the best use of them.

((Third)): We did not improve the sapper branch in all aspects, or make everyone from lower to higher levels understand the ((command)) channel, or provide guidance for all activities. The weak development of guerrilla warfare was one of the factors which limited the growth of the local movement at the lower levels.

In spite of these shortcomings, sapper forces had great capabilities. From the above

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possibilities, we drew the following conclusions:

We were able to conduct continuous attacks by applying sapper tactics.

Sapper forces were qualified to coordinate attacks with other branches in the campaign or launch independent sapper campaigns.

Sapper forces were able to attack all targets throughout the three strategic areas, on land or on the waterways.

Guerrilla warfare created favorable conditions for development of sapper attacks at the lower levels.

Part Two:

ROLE, MISSION, REQUIREMENTS, AND  
COMBAT PROCEDURES OF SAPPER ((FORCES)) IN THE FUTURE

I. ROLE OF SAPPER ((FORCES)) DURING THE PHASE OF THE GENERAL OFFENSIVE AND UPRISING:

1. Since Mậu Thân Tết((1968)), the enemy has shifted completely to the defensive and carried out the "clear and hold" strategy, the rural pacification plan, and the "Vietnamization" program as follows:

The enemy intensively defended cities, bases, and important communication routes on the battlefields, especially on the main battlefields. He also strengthened fortifications, destroyed terrain, and conducted fierce attacks against bordering and intermediary areas.

The enemy consolidated district towns and sub-sectors and developed military posts in rural areas, especially in the Nam Bộ Lowland areas. In coordination with pacification and sweep operations, the enemy developed the People's Self-Defense Force, encroached on our ((VC)) liberated areas, and occupied essential rural areas.

The enemy intensified the defense of concentration points and key positions along the border, and increased air, artillery, and Special Forces activities in an attempt to deplete our forces and prevent our attacks.

A number of bases were turned over to the Puppet Army. The Puppet forces replaced the US forces to hold defensive positions or to conduct sweep operations. This tactic was adopted to keep US personnel losses at a minimum.

In his defensive system, the enemy relied on strengths such as solid fortifications, large mobile forces, strong firepower, and fierce air and artillery support. However, the basic enemy weaknesses were that his troops' morale was low, his forces were widely dispersed, and his strategic deployment had many gaps which increased when expanded.

2. The increasing ineffectiveness of the strategic enemy defense system will adversely affect his defensive systems in rural and mountainous areas in the future.

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3. We have shifted to the new phase of strategic offensive by launching one attack wave after another throughout all three strategic areas and coordinating the climaxing phase with the ordinary phase. We are taking the initiative. However, our ((combat)) activities were unequally developed, guerrilla warfare was weakly developed, all forces were not adequately strengthened, and combat efficiency was unsatisfactory. Armed and political forces in the cities were not strong enough and our major forces confronted great difficulties in attacking deep into rear enemy areas, etc ... ((sic)). For these reasons, the military attacks were not launched strongly and continuously to meet the strategic requirements of the new phase.

4. The quick development of sapper forces and the proper application of sapper tactics on all battlefields of ~~the three strategic areas are two of the~~ strategic measures which had important significance. The strategic role of sapper forces has become more important each day for the following reasons:

a. The sapper branch has been used as both a combat and a strategic force. It implemented the strategic missions of the campaign and the military and political tasks assigned by the Party during the phase of the General Offensive and Uprising.

b. The sapper branch was newly activated and well trained. It performed the Party's military programs by fighting and defeating larger forces with smaller ones. It inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy while suffering small losses. It also helped to conduct fierce, long term strategic attacks.

c. Because of their outstanding characteristics, strong firepower, high combat efficiency, specialized techniques, and tactics, the sapper and special action branches were able to fight enemy forces throughout the three strategic areas and attack the strategic enemy defensive systems, especially in critical areas. They were qualified to conduct attacks against all defensive enemy fortifications and the areas where large ((VC)) infantry and artillery units met difficulties in combat or the small ones failed to use sapper tactics. These facts demonstrate that sapper tactics are one of the most effective tactics in the areas where the enemy conducts his "clear and hold" operations.

d. Sapper attacks launched in coordination with guerrilla activities enable us to destruct Regional and Popular Force posts and to annihilate pacification personnel, tyrants, and oppressive forces at the lower levels. They also create favorable conditions for the people to rise up and smash the enemy control, liberate rural areas, and frustrate the enemy pacification plan and Viet-~~namization~~ namization program.

II. FUTURE MISSIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE SAPPER BRANCH.

1. Common missions and requirements:

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Based on the enemy and friendly situation, and one of the military missions prescribed in COSVN Resolution 9, the sapper branch must:

Try to develop strengths, overcome weaknesses, increase the activation of sapper units among the three types of forces, and transform the sapper force into a well trained branch. It must adopt sapper tactics to launch continuous attacks in the three strategic areas and gain increasing success. During the great offensive phase and during regular activities, it must destroy or deplete much of the enemy potential (especially high ranking personnel), war facilities, and materiel depots, eliminate pacification personnel in the rural areas to frustrate the enemy "clear and hold" plan and pacification program. It will defeat the enemy in his attempt to Vietnamize the war. The other mission of the sapper branch is to coordinate action with various political and diplomatic struggles to gain greater future victories.

In order to understand the above mission, we must master the following six requirements:

a. Launch attacks against various US and Puppet key agencies in the cities, province capitals, and district seats in order to kill many high ranking enemy personnel and ringleaders, paralyze the enemy leadership, and instigate the people to rise up to create conditions for our military and political forces to attack the enemy rear.

b. Attack enemy military bases and storage facilities to destroy the enemy war facilities, fuel dumps, and all other reserve materials, thus causing difficulties for the strategic enemy logistical services.

c. Attack the key enemy positions, especially his command posts, logistical bases, and important elements, and combine with other armed forces to foil the enemy plan during each campaign or activity phase.

d. Attack district seats, sub-sectors, and posts manned by Regional and Popular Forces, and annihilate pacification personnel and tyrants, in coordination with the political struggle and military proselyting activities. Expand the liberated rural areas in lowland and mountainous areas to defeat the enemy pacification strategy in rural areas.

e. Launch attacks against important bridges and warships on rivers and in harbors. Cut strategic enemy communication lines and seize control of them for long periods.

f. While fighting, activate more sapper units among the three types of troops throughout the three strategic areas in order to increase attacks and gain great victories.

2. Combat missions and objectives to be attacked by each type of sapper forces.

We have three types of sapper forces: The sapper force subordinate to main force troops ((sapper units of various divisions and regiments, including independent regiments)); those that belong to the local forces (including sapper units of various regions, sub-regions, cities, province capitals, district seats and districts); and those of the guerrilla and secret self-defense guerrilla force.

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Depending on the nature of their activities, sapper forces can also be listed in three other categories: Mobile sappers; sappers in charge of district seats, ((enemy)) rear bases, and communication lines, and infra-structure sappers.

When assigning missions and objectives to each type of sapper, we must rely on the nature of activity, capability, organization, and the fighting ability of each ((sapper)) unit to determine its responsibility.

a. Sapper elements belonging to main force units:

Sapper units belonging to divisions and **regiments** are to destroy enemy command posts of regiment, brigade, and battalion levels. Attack the alternate enemy defensive concentration points, bases, objectives in the district seats, etc ... ((sic)). In some areas, they will also attack training centers, district seats, sub-sectors, posts defended by members of Regional and Popular Forces, and destroy pacification personnel and tyrants to support our armed forces and local force units to expand ((liberated)) areas.

b. District seat, base, and communication warfare sapper units.

Mobile sapper units of towns and cities must hold the area of operations to destroy high level enemy installations in inner-city areas, such as key agencies of the Puppet Army and Government, key US agencies, quarters, the embassy, training centers, technical centers, command posts, Regional Force Units, and police stations, etc ... ((sic)). We must coordinate activities to destroy the vital enemy forces and material facilities to create favorable conditions to annihilate tyrants ((GVN officials)), break the oppressive enemy control of the population, and gain control of low level installations. Sapper and mobile sapper units in towns and district seats are to destroy key objectives inside and outside of province capitals and district seats, such as organizations of the Puppet Army and Government at province and district levels. They are to annihilate pacification personnel and tyrants, coordinate activities with secret guerrilla and self-defense units to support the people's uprisings to destroy tyrants, break the oppressive enemy control of the population, and gain control of low level installations.

Sapper units assigned to hold the base areas are to maintain constant contact with enemy airports, storage facilities, and other military bases to destroy his war equipment, his strategic resources, and his vital forces. They must also coordinate with local force units to destroy pacification personnel, tyrants, break the oppressive enemy control of the population, and maintain a firm control of the springboard areas.

Sapper units in charge of communication lines are to destroy bridges on important strategic lines of communication. They must also attack boats, especially large ones moving on strategic waterways. Attacks should also be launched against enemy storage facilities which support the war of aggression.

c. Local sapper units:

Region and sub-region sapper units are to attack ((enemy)) military bases, storage facilities, objectives in province capitals, district seats, training centers, US and Puppet division, brigade, and regimental command posts, and concentrations of troops in the field. They must destroy bridges and attack warships moving on rivers within their areas of operations. They must also attack district seats, sub-sectors, Regional Force posts, destroy pacification personnel and tyrants, and coordinate with other armed forces to accomplish their military tasks in each area and activity phase.

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The province sapper units are to attack military bases in the province including airports, command posts, artillery positions, bridges, and boats on rivers, etc... ((sic)). They are to attack district towns, sub-sectors, posts of Regional and Popular Forces, kill tyrants and pacification personnel. In coordination with other armed forces, they will support the people to kill enemy tyrants, break the oppressive control, and expand liberated areas.

The district sapper units are in charge of attacking Regional and Popular Force posts, killing tyrants and pacification personnel etc... ((sic)); fulfilling the main role in sapper attacks conducted by guerrillas; and, in coordination with other armed forces, supporting the people's uprising to break the oppressive enemy control and expand our liberated areas.

d. The guerrilla sapper units are to attack posts, kill tyrants and pacification personnel, etc... ((sic)). In coordination with the guerrilla forces, they will support the people's uprising to destroy strategic hamlets, break the oppressive enemy control, and seize power. The rear sapper and guerrilla forces coordinate with other armed forces to defeat enemy sweep operations and move to the front to fight the enemy according to their capabilities.

III. GUIDELINES:

The sapper branch should fully understand the following combat guidelines during the General Offensive and Uprising:

1. Take the initiative to attack the enemy continuously during activity phases and during regular activities.
2. Use a small force to attack a larger enemy force and try to fight the enemy from a position of strength.
3. Maintain close coordination between the three types of forces and coordinate with various local armed forces throughout the three strategic areas.
4. Maintain close coordination with the political and military proselyting struggles.
5. Maintain close coordination during small, medium, large, and repeated attacks.
6. The performance of combat missions and the strengthening of forces must go together to expand the achievements gained.

Part 3:

I. COMBAT LEADERSHIP:

1. We must fully understand the principles of combat leadership for the sapper branch.

The sapper combat method is one of the best combat methods of our army. It allows us use a small but **skillful** force to defeat a large force. We launch surprise attacks and deep thrusts at gaps in the enemy defense and gain very great achievements. The sapper force is a particularly **skillful** force. It is in charge of fulfilling all strategic missions of every campaign. So, the sapper method and sapper force have the following characteristics:

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1. The sapper tactics can be applied by only one person against the enemy defensive force.
2. Use small forces to attack large forces. With a small number of well trained soldiers equipped with light and compact weapons, we can kill many enemy soldiers while sustaining few casualties.
3. Scatter our force to conduct separate and daring attacks. Attack strategically important and vulnerable enemy positions.
4. The sapper tactics are improved guerrilla tactics. Therefore, our three types of forces and the people can conduct sapper attacks. The sapper's method of attack has been widely disseminated among the people.

Following are some of the principle combat guidelines of the sapper branch:

1. Take the initiative to conduct continuous attacks against the enemy.

Use strong force and conduct sudden attacks against the enemy when he is weak and careless.

2. Use a small force to attack a large force. With our brave spirit, courage, resourcefulness, creative tactics, and well trained combat skills, we are able to defeat an enemy who is technically stronger than we.

3. Patiently stay close to the people, maintain contact with the enemy, and hold the area of activity to execute deep thrusts and attack the strategically important enemy positions and gaps.

4. Secretly penetrate enemy positions. Conduct surprise attacks from the inner perimeter and coordinate with outside forces to destroy the main objectives and paralyze the enemy. Fight independently and take the initiative.

5. Coordinate annihilating attacks with attacks against enemy inner defense perimeters. Kill as many enemy soldiers as possible and minimize our casualties.

6. Make full ((combat)) preparations and plan carefully to ensure success. Always take advantage of opportunities to attack the enemy.

7. Conduct isolated and combined attacks in close coordination with the three types of forces. Closely coordinate political struggles with military and troop proselyting activities.

8. Attack the enemy while strengthening our forces. The more we attack, the more successful we will be.

2. Operational procedures of sapper forces on the battlefields during attack phases and campaigns.

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The leadership of the sapper units must take the initiative and attack the enemy in the immediate future; conduct wide scale attacks throughout the three strategic areas, especially in the lowland battlefield of Nam Bo, fringe areas, and core city areas; launch repeated attacks against US and Puppet bases and storage facilities; increase attacks against posts and kill pacification personnel and tyrants, etc ... ((sic)). During climaxing activity phases, we should maintain our offensive position and intensify our military activities.

The guidance of sapper units on the battlefield is extremely important. It must be provided in a proper and flexible manner. Furthermore, operational procedures must be consistent with the characteristics and capabilities of each area.

Generally speaking, operational procedures of the sapper unit are to coordinate large and small attacks with medium, large, repeated, and continuous attacks. Conduct isolated attacks along with military and troop proselyting activities to support the people's movements.

The following tactics will be specifically adopted:

a. On the main battlefield:

Sapper units of independent E ((Regiment)) must emphasize small and medium attacks. If conditions permit, they should launch as many big attacks as possible during each phase. They should also coordinate the political struggle with ((enemy)) troop proselyting activities to support the sapper and guerrilla warfare movements in local areas.

Sapper units in sub-regions should conduct small and medium attacks. They should adopt the tactic of conducting small attacks to gain great victories and confuse the enemy.

They should conduct as many independent attacks as possible during each phase and during ((climaxing)) phases and normal phases to support district and village sapper activities and strengthen their forces.

District sapper units and village sapper guerrilla forces, especially sapper guerrilla forces in fringe areas, must emphasize small attacks. They should coordinate with village guerrilla activities to launch continuous attacks against the enemy, support the people to rise up and kill tyrants, disrupt the ((GVN)) administrative grip, and seize control of the population.

Sapper and special action units in the core city areas should conduct small attacks against the enemy to confuse him. They should attack as many objectives as possible during each phase. They should coordinate the attacks with sabotage activities during each phase and combine with guerrillas to support the people, break the ((GVN)) oppressive control, kill tyrants, and gain control.

Sapper units in various areas should regularly conduct military activities, initiate people's movements, patiently stay close to the people, and maintain close contact with the enemy. They should hold the area of activity to launch small, medium, and continuous attacks against enemy bases before conducting large and independent attacks in coordination with other army branches. During the campaigns of big raids against cities, they should develop sapper tactics on the main battlefields; launch small, medium, and large attacks against important enemy objectives, inflict heavy losses and seriously demoralize him to create favorable conditions for other armed forces to accomplish their missions.

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b. Lowland battlefields:

Sapper units of military regions and of a number of main force units must conduct small attacks ~~to confuse~~ the enemy. They should attack the enemy and step up the sapper movements in local areas.

They must use small attacks to gain great victories, as adopted by district sapper and guerrilla forces. They should also apply the sapper tactics adopted by province capitals and district seats of using each squad, cell, or person to coordinate with the guerrilla units at low levels ((hamlets and villages)). They should also conduct the three-pronged attack ((military, political, and troop proselyting)) to motivate the people, kill tyrants, break the oppressive enemy control, frustrate his pacification program, enlarge the ((liberated)) areas, and seize control of the population at low levels.

During combined campaigns, we should coordinate with sapper forces at various levels, especially district and village sapper forces, and consider province and region sapper units as the key forces to conduct raids against different areas and attack many objectives at once ((sic)). We should combine small, medium, and large attacks with repeated and continuous attacks in a fixed time to accomplish our mission.

c. In the mountainous battlefields:

Emphasize small and medium attacks. If conditions ~~permit~~, province and region sapper forces should conduct large combined attacks during the campaigns or activity phases launched by the local area.

We should use the methods to conduct small attacks as applied by province capital and district seat sapper forces and sappers and guerrillas operating in fringe areas, and coordinate guerrilla and secret guerrilla units with self-defense forces in order to step up the guerrilla movement in the enemy rear.

The basic problems in applying operational procedures are to attack the enemy on the battlefields, have a strong area of activity, hold important military and political objectives, fully understand the purpose and significance of campaign and activity phases, realize our own mission, rapidly make combat preparations, promptly consolidate troops after each battle, and be ready to receive new missions.

3. Comrade Tho made a complete report on sapper tactics, so I will only add a few necessary points here:

a. Strongest point of sapper tactics: When the enemy shifted to a strategic defense, his defensive position was vulnerable and his morale low. Therefore, no matter how he takes preventive measures against our sapper tactics, he cannot overcome the shortcomings and vulnerabilities in his defense system. I emphasize the following two basic shortcomings:

1. The outer defensive system is strong but the inner perimeter is loose. Enemy gaps increased with the depth of the defensive system, especially in core city areas, province capitals, and district seats. In the future, when the US troops withdraw, the defense systems in local, lowland, and mountainous areas will become weak and vulnerable. Guerrilla and

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local forces will have many favorable conditions to increase sapper attacks in enemy controlled areas such as the core city areas, fringe areas, province capitals, and district seats in rural areas.

2. In a large position, the enemy defense is protected by mobile forces and is forced into a blocking position. The enemy had many gaps because of his poor fighting spirit, subjectivism, and the poor combat capabilities of his troops and elements of his defense force. If we properly assess the situation in enemy controlled areas and know how to create favorable conditions to increase his vulnerabilities, our sapper units can launch continuous attacks against his large bases.

We must be aware of the enemy shortcomings to take appropriate measures to overcome him.

1. In enemy areas, there are a number of posts and fortifications which were constructed by the French ((during the Resistance)) and camps of ((GVN)) Special Forces located along the border with strong fortifications on the outer and inner perimeters. The enemy relied on these strong points, but his troops' morale weakened. If we properly reconnoiter the terrain, make careful combat preparations, study appropriate methods of attacking the inner perimeter, and destroy our main objectives at the very beginning, we can rapidly demoralize his troops and overrun his position.

2. Normally the enemy was in each key position, or coordinated his force in a blocking position with a concentration of force on the outside when the blocking force was attacked by our sappers. It can quickly recover its power and the outside force provides reinforcements rapidly. If we deal heavy blows to the enemy in key positions, adopt diversionary tactics and attack the enemy on the outside, or attack the inner and outer perimeters at the same time, we can destroy these enemy strong points.

3. In a big defensive system, the enemy usually sends his Special Forces or armored force outside to detect and intercept our troops. This caused us difficulties when we reconnoitered the terrain or approached his posts. But if we flexibly apply diversionary tactics, maintain absolute secrecy, use appropriate methods to approach the enemy, and maintain contact with him, we can overcome these difficulties.

The assessment of enemy strengths and ~~weaknesses must be~~ realistic, but we should not judge the enemy only by appearance. We must make an accurate estimation of his strength, understand his operating procedures, and find all his vulnerabilities.

Basic sapper tactics require bravery, resourcefulness, and creativeness. Sappers have coordinated between combat tactics and techniques, and relied on the development of people's warfare, the support of the people, and favorable terrain features. If we develop our strong points to the utmost degree and strive to increase enemy shortcomings, our sappers will be able to infiltrate and attack any objective. In some areas, we succeeded in conducting sapper attacks. However, many areas failed to accomplish their tasks.

b. We should fully understand sapper tactics and improve the combat capabilities of our cadre and sappers.

The purpose of sapper tactics is to use a small force to attack a large force and conduct surprise attacks against the perimeter of the enemy defense in order to paralyze him at the beginning of the attack and strongly develop our power to transform the enemy positions of absolute strength into our strong points.

Sapper tactics also help us kill many enemy soldiers and minimize our casualties. One sapper agent can eliminate dozens of enemy soldiers.

Drawing from some recent uses of sapper tactics, some methods of attack are:

First method: Develop the combat formation into "multiple arrows **outward**", like a blossom inside the enemy perimeter.

Second method: Coordinate the attack launched from the enemy inner perimeter and the attack launched from his outer perimeter.

Third method: ((Furtively infiltrate the enemy defensive area)) to conduct an attack against him from within the defense barrier.

We have still another method of attack commonly used by special action units camouflaged as people with ((RVN)) legal status. It ((the special action unit)) can approach to attack and then withdraw from an important objective. This method will not be discussed at this time.

The first method is better than the second. However, the principles of sapper tactics are followed by these two methods of attack ((sic)). The method of secretly penetrating ~~sensitive areas to lay mines~~ and then withdrawing, which has been used to attack storage facilities and boats, also follows the above principles. If we cannot execute deep thrusts due to special conditions caused by the enemy or by our poor tactical knowledge, we can still use the third method when we are certain of victory. Sapper units should not consider this a normal method, but a special one. They should not use the method of attack from the enemy outer perimeter. The other forces, from guerrillas to main forces, can practice this method by trying to penetrate the interior of an enemy base and then developing their combat formation to attack the enemy. The method of attack by firing artillery shells not from artillery tubes, but by burying the charge in a hole and then detonating it, is reserved for artillery units. Sapper units should not use this method.

You must know how to deploy a combat formation for sapper tactics. One spearhead element of a tactical combat formation can be composed of the following cells or units:

1. A penetrating or deep thrust cell or unit.
2. One or two cells or units defending the middle line.
3. A cell having the responsibility for removing all objectives before executing a deep thrust into the main target, and then defending the breach.

This is a perfect combat formation for each spearhead element.

It should be applied in accordance with the specific situation. In a small attack, only the first and third elements are used.

All cadre and soldiers should be trained in the ideology ((sic)), principles, and methods of operation of sapper tactics.

The principle of sapper tactics is "to use our small force to attack the enemy large force; to conduct aggressive and strong attacks against enemy vulnerabilities to exterminate him completely and scientifically."

The principles of sapper tactics are contained in the following main points:

1. Know all enemy methods of operations, his shortcomings, and vulnerabilities.
2. Use a small force to attack a large force; concentrate the main force in the main direction ((of attack)); and use a well trained force to attack the strategically important enemy points.

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3. Maintain secrecy and the surprise factor from beginning to end.
4. Conduct well prepared attacks to insure victory.
5. Conduct attacks quickly, aggressively, and according to the plans of attack to paralyze the enemy from the beginning and prevent him from recuperating.
6. Conduct deep thrusts and strong attacks against the enemy vulnerabilities to destroy him.

We should fully understand the following main points:

1. Penetrate the enemy inner perimeter to conduct surprise attacks against him in coordination with attacks against his outer perimeter by a strong unit.
2. Use many spearhead elements to conduct simultaneous attacks from various directions to destroy the enemy and paralyze him from the first moment.
3. Penetrate deeply to split the enemy force. Conduct a swift attack in coordination with a search operation to annihilate him.
4. Conduct containing and diversionary attacks.

You must train sapper cadre and soldiers in the following combat qualities:

Accuracy and completeness. This means that they must assess the enemy by audio and visual observations and actual touch ((sic)).

Aggressiveness, readiness, initiative, and resourcefulness.

Courage and coordination.

c. Command:

The attack against the enemy inner perimeter is the most important phase of attack. Therefore, the command of this attack phase should be strengthened. The commander of a spearhead element should be present with the deep thrust cell or the cell defending the middle line to control and lead them during combat. The assistant commander should be present on the outer perimeter to direct the cells responsible for opening and defending the breach,

and to solve all problems of the rear line. The same regulations should be observed when the attack is conducted by a battalion. There should be coordination between the force penetrating the enemy inner perimeter and the force operating on his outer perimeter, and between the command of the two forces. The commo-liaison between spearhead elements of the battalion ((participating in the attack)) should be properly handled. During large scale attacks conducted by two or more battalions, or in attacks conducted with other army branches, the command becomes more intricate. The fundamental requirement is to have good commo-liaison, and a command close to every spearhead element, especially those which operate in the main direction.

The command is also very important during the withdrawal phase. The plan of specific coordination should be worked out, and the in-place command should be increased ((sic)). Cadre of higher echelons should be present and close to each spearhead element so that they can help their members clear the battlefield, and evacuate wounded and dead soldiers.

d. Coordinated attacks by sapper and other army branches.

We have not made a report on these tactics because we have not had much experience with them. However,

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a sapper force is able to conduct attacks in coordination with infantry or artillery.

We must conduct coordinated attacks with other army branches in the immediate future. Only then can we increase our effectiveness and completely annihilate the enemy, control the battlefield, and destroy his large bases.

When conducting coordinated attacks with other army branches, sapper forces must apply their own tactics. Army branches must maintain secrecy and the surprise factor for the sapper forces. They must work out a coordination plan, meticulously prepare the coordinated attack, provide close leadership, and pay close attention to the signal and liaison tasks.

4. We should strive to train more of our forces in sapper techniques.

The sapper techniques not only serve our tactical purpose but, if perfected, and if the sappers know how to study their targets quickly, accurately, and sustain their attacks, can also be used successfully against any target. The sapper techniques consist of the techniques of disguise, cutting fences, penetration, and use of weapons, etc... ((sic)). The most important techniques are those concerning penetration and reconnaissance. The techniques of destroying bridges and attacking ships on the rivers are also extremely important. The concept of the sappers is closely connected with the maintenance of secrecy. If we fail to maintain secrecy, we will not be able to use sapper tactics.

While training our soldiers in sapper tactics, we should pay attention to the training of penetration techniques, especially penetration for reconnaissance missions. We should conduct training for cadre and soldiers to make them understand these tactics and work out appropriate plans to apply them. We should also improve their combat capabilities to destroy bridges and attack ships on the rivers, and widely disseminate these tactics to cadre and soldiers.

Along with tactical training, we should study the problem of providing equipment to our sapper forces in accordance with the current situation. We should equip them with explosive charges, shaped charge hand grenades, and bangalore torpedoes. Sappers must also be determined to seize enemy weapons to attack him during each battle.

In order to ensure the performance of the sapper task in the immediate future, we should improve our capabilities to conduct attacks in coordination with infantry and artillery. We should improve our combat capabilities to attack strategic bases, posts, and district seats, etc... ((sic)). We should study methods for each target, coordination of sapper forces with infantry and artillery, methods of attack and withdrawal, and the command of attacks against the inner perimeter. We should also study methods of attack from within the inner perimeter; how to hold an enemy base in deep areas; the use of forces; and the method of attacking posts and destroying pacification teams in rural areas.

## II ((sic)). LEADERSHIP

1. The development of sapper forces within the three types of forces, especially lower echelon sapper forces, is an urgent problem.

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We should transform sapper forces into strong combat units with a high degree of combat skills in order to accomplish combat and strategic missions in campaigns and during the General Offensive and Uprising phases.

While carrying out this mission, we should understand the following guidelines:

1. Emphasize increasing the quality and quantity of our forces in areas where we have favorable conditions.

2. We should develop sapper forces in the militia, guerrilla, and local main forces at the same time we develop sapper forces in SWN. We should develop sapper forces in the cities to hold enemy bases and attack communication lines. We must pay attention to the development of mobile sapper forces.

3. We should consider the improvement of political and ideological attitudes as one of our main tasks and pay attention to improving our tactical and technical skills.

4. Stress individual training and development of small detachments.

5. We should train our three types of forces and army branches in sapper tactics.

2. Specific requirements of each type of force:

a. Sapper forces of main force units.

We should reorganize and improve the combat efficiency of the sapper forces of regiments and divisions so that they can attack key targets during campaigns and accomplish their combat missions. A number of units ((unspecified)) should improve the method of motivating and organizing the people, disseminate the experiences gained in attacks on pacification teams, the killing of tyrants, and breaking of the enemy oppressive control to support local movements.

In conjunction with the strengthening of our available units in all fields, we should develop the sapper forces which are in charge of holding enemy bases and attacking communication lines and those which operate in the cities, province capitals, and district seats. In areas where conditions permit, we should pay attention to the development of our in-place forces, especially sapper forces at low levels ((hamlets and villages)) and wards, etc... ((sic)). We should activate sapper forces specialized in operations against enemy bases using the compartmentalization system. We should make a careful plan for the activation and carry it out quickly. We can use in-place forces with forces assigned from higher echelons to form a sapper forces system to hold enemy bases throughout the three areas ((mountains, lowlands and towns)). These units must be light, compact, well trained, and closely coordinated with each other.

In addition to reorganizing available units, the sapper forces in charge of attacking communication lines, bridges, and ships must rapidly develop their forces in areas of emphasis, and the Mekong Delta battlefields to hold strategic rivers, communication lines, and important bridges.

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c. Sapper unit subordinate to local forces:

Sapper units subordinate to local forces must emphasize strengthening forces, combat activities, and improvement of their capability. They must be qualified for attacks on enemy bases, depots, objectives located in the province capitals, district seats, and sub-sectors.

District sapper units must be sure that there are one to two "sapper" platoons in each district, as prescribed. The district sapper force must engage in both combat and training for the sapper force

of the guerrilla force to become a key element in the movement of attacking the enemy in local areas using sapper tactics.

d. The sapper units of the guerilla force: Sapper soldiers will be recruited from guerilla units in accordance with the development of the guerrilla force.

Ensure that there are from two sapper cells to one sapper squad in each village. Training in sapper techniques and tactics must be provided for them. Make sure that the sapper force is qualified to destroy posts defended by enemy Regional and Popular Forces and knows how to make weapons to attack the enemy.

In the future, if we develop the sapper force of the guerrilla units and train guerrillas in sapper tactics, the combat efficiency of militia and guerrilla forces will increase, the guerrilla force and its sapper force will become assault forces in local areas, and we will defeat the enemy rural pacification plan.

d. To intensify the adoption of sapper tactics, especially the training in sapper techniques of the three types of troops and military branches, is the responsibility not only of the infantry units and various military branches, but also of the sapper branch. Consequently, the sapper force command committees at all levels must have plans of instruction in sapper tactics.

By our determination, we will be sure to reach the requirements and have a strong sapper force in the three types of forces in the three strategic areas and stay close to the enemy and the critical objectives of the enemy on land and water. Infantry units and the military branches, will be trained in sapper tactics, the combat capability of the sapper branch in particular, and of our army in general.

3. To perform the task and fulfill the above requirements, the key problems are to strengthen the cadre of military branches, improve and develop training schools, conduct training courses for ((sic)) from higher echelons to the lowest echelons, and to encourage the study of ((sapper tactics)). The development of people's associations and the development of bases in stepping stone areas is also essential.

### III. PARTY, POLITICAL, AND IDEOLOGICAL TASKS:

1. In the future development of the sapper branch, the development of Party, ideological, and political tasks play a decisive role.

The Party, ideological, and political tasks of the sapper branch are:

Strive to train cadre and soldiers, develop the sapper branches into a well trained branch, and fulfill the requirements as prescribed by

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Chairman Ho:

Adoption of sapper tactics must be flexible.

Acquaintance must be made with ((combat)) techniques.

Morale must be stable.

Discipline must be strict.

Determination to win and destroy the enemy must be strong.

Be loyal to the Party and to the people.

Accomplish all missions and overcome any difficulties.

2. For successful performance of the above tasks we must:

a. Increase political indoctrination and provide ideological guidance. Provide training on basic political problems and information on the situation and mission in each new phase to make cadre and soldiers understand the policy and guidelines of the Party and the missions and requirements of the branch. On this basis, the ((sapper)) branch must be imbued with the concepts of defeating the enemy, being patient, and maintaining the determination to win overall victory.

b. Educate cadre and soldiers in the branches to understand the policy, tactical guidelines, principles, and combat plan of sappers. Instill absolute faith in sapper tactics among the sapper cadre and soldiers, so that sapper tactics will be properly adopted.

c. We must step up the establishment of "Four-Good-Quality" Party Chapters and the development of Party ((members)) in the branch. Increase training for Party members; strengthen ideological attitudes toward the classes; raise the vanguard role of the Party members and cadre; uphold the role of the leadership of the Party Chapters in strengthening forces and in combat.

d. We must develop the cadre in the branch, especially the sapper cadre in local areas and cadre of low level units, and meet the requirements for strengthening the force.

d. In addition to the above tasks, guidance should be provided for the implementation of the policy toward wounded and dead soldiers, and the security task. Stress the civilian proselyting tasks, especially the Party, political, and ideological tasks of local sapper forces and guerrillas.

3. Some problems to be emphasized in the performance of the political tasks of sappers in combat:

a. Make cadre and soldiers thoroughly understand the requirements of the campaign and of each attack; properly assess the enemy and friendly **situations**; fully understand the tactical principles and combat plans of the sapper units; heighten their determination during combat; and make them control themselves to eliminate confusion during combat, and **rightist** and passive attitudes.

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b. Emphasize the political tasks during sapper tactics especially during such important **phases** as reconnoitering the terrain, attacking inside the enemy areas, and withdrawing.

c. Political tasks in an attack using sapper tactics must be carefully and specifically prepared. Ideological difficulties in each phase, and difficulties in organization, combat exercises, and other weaknesses should be anticipated and solved to ensure better results from the attack.

d. The key factors of the political and ideological tasks during sapper attacks are to uphold the leadership of the Party Chapter, of each Party member and cadre, and the key role of Group members, to indoctrinate the people to be vigilant and responsible in the performance of the combat tasks of the unit.

#### IV. STRENGTHENING THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SAPPER BRANCH:

To perform the combat tasks and the development of force, the strengthening of leadership of the sapper branch is significant. Attention should be given to the following problems:

1. Make cadre and soldiers in the branch understand the great capability of the branch, the important strategic role of the branch in the General Uprising and Offensive phase, and the mission, requirements, and future activity plan. Make them enthusiastic in strengthening the branch and in the performance of tasks assigned by the Party.

2. Strengthen and perfect the command committees of the sapper forces at all levels, especially the Sapper Force Command Committee of the SVNLA and sapper force staffs of regions and sub-regions.

Determine the mission and responsibility of each level. We must improve our organization, collective leadership, and reporting procedures from higher to lower levels. Turn the sapper force command committees at all levels into effective staff agencies of the Party Committee and command committees at all levels.

3. Make the military Party committees and command committees at all levels realize the capabilities and the missions of the sapper force, and the main and secondary objectives to be attacked by the sapper force. Make them fully understand the guidelines, basic ideological problems, and strategic principles of the sapper force in order to make plans for proper use and development of the sapper force during each battle and campaign.

4. Increase the leadership of the Party committees at each level to develop the sapper branch. Make them fully understand the capabilities of the sapper forces. Develop the sapper force of the guerrilla forces.

There must be close coordination between the sapper force and the guerrilla warfare movement to defeat the enemy pacification plan and the Vietnamization plan.

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5. After the conference closes, the following tasks must be understood and implemented.

1. Stress the development of forces, especially the development of the sapper force in local areas and in the guerrilla forces.

2. Make cadre and soldiers fully understand the problems discussed at this conference, and the tactical principles and combat techniques adopted by the sapper force. Improve their knowledge of combat tactics and techniques. Strengthen command committees at all levels. Study and prepare plans to solve the great problems which were mentioned in the conference.

Dear Comrades,

Our conference of all military branches is very significant to the future development of the sapper force. We must make all military branches recognize the capability and the role of the sapper force during General Uprising and Offensive phases. They must understand the missions, guidelines, and tactical principles adopted by the sapper force, and the nature of the leadership task of the branch. Being provided with the sound and close leadership of the Central Military Affairs Party Committee, the warm support of the people, and the support of the other armed forces, the sapper branch will successfully accomplish its missions, obtain greater future achievements, develop the combat tactics adopted by the sapper force of our people and army, contribute to the development of the military art of our Party and the art of invincible people's warfare.

- - - - - END OF TRANSLATION - - - - -