

MILITARY AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC SECURITY

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FILE / SUBJ.  
DATE / SUB-CAT.  
7/73

GUIDELINES SET FORTH FOR MILITARY TACTICIANS

[ Article by Le Trong Tan: "Tactical Leadership in a Campaign":  
Hanoi, Tap Chi Quan Doi Nhan Dan, Vietnamese, No 7, July 1973,  
pp 1-11 ]

A campaign is a system of closely related battles which take place under a uniform plan and command which have the purpose of completing a specific campaign task or implementing a specific strategy in a given amount of time and space. The various battles in a campaign, which occur simultaneously or are interspersed with one another, are closely coordinated, one battle creates favorable conditions for another, and one battle develops upon the victory of the preceding battle. The victory of the campaign is the result of the victories of the various battles. The objective and task of the campaign can only be achieved by winning victory in the majority of the battles fought in the campaign, particularly in the battles of decisive significance and the key battles of the campaign.

In the overall situation of the campaign, each battle takes place under specific conditions with respect to the enemy, us, the terrain, and so forth. The enemy's forces, our forces, and the time and space of a battle are the battle's base and objective conditions. This base and these objective conditions encompass other factors of battles; however, how a battle will unfold and how it will end are dependent upon the subjective effort of the two sides involved in it. In this subjective effort, the art of organizing and commanding a battle plays a decisively important role; however, the determination of strategy in a campaign is also very important in insuring that the cadres commanding our battles can always establish their methods of attack correctly and promptly and command their units in such a way that they implement these methods of attack and win victory.

An advantageous campaign position and correct methods of attack are the prerequisites of the victory of tactics and victory in battle. On the other hand, continuous tactical and battle successes will result in the resounding and total victory of the campaign. Therefore, the determination of the tactics to be employed is a very important part and requirement of the art of the campaign.

Having a Full Knowledge of the Tactics of the Enemy and Their Development in the Course of the Campaign and a Full Knowledge of the Specific Combat Operations Under These Tactics

To correctly determine our tactics and defeat the tactics of the enemy, we must have a full knowledge of the enemy's tactics and their combat operations. In each offensive, counter-offensive, or defensive campaign, our forces must fight a specific enemy force at a given place and time. Accurately evaluating the comparison of forces between us and the enemy under these specific conditions within the area of the campaign not only provides a basis for organizing and carrying out the campaign, but also lays the foundation upon which we can accurately research the tactics of the enemy and find ways to defeat them.

To begin with, we must assess and understand the special characteristics, the strongpoints, and the weaknesses of the tactics of the enemy so that we can adopt measures for defeating them. In practically all of their tactics, the enemy relies primarily upon the firepower of his air force artillery, tanks, and armored vehicles. Sometimes, they launch attacks and hold battle positions with the firepower of their air force and artillery; ordinarily, the enemy's infantry slowly occupies an area, disperses, and takes advantage of our weaknesses in order to suddenly penetrate our defenses. The enemy's infantry has always been weak and if its firepower reinforcements are lost or limited, it becomes even weaker and is rarely able to effectively employ tactics to destroy us. Another very basic special characteristic of the enemy's tactics is that their morale is weak; before they are heavily attacked, they appear aggressive and act in a belligerent manner, but, after being dealt a very heavy blow, their weak fighting spirit becomes even more evident, their tactics reflect confusion and stagnation, they encounter difficulties coordinating their combat, and their operations are counter-productive and unorganized. Only by fully seeing the weaknesses in the tactics of the enemy and correctly evaluating the substance of their tactics, not merely their strong firepower and rapid mobility, can we take advantage of these weaknesses and take advantage of each minute, hour, and

day the enemy displays a weakness to annihilate them. For example, when the enemy is confused, we must attack immediately; when the enemy is preparing to withdraw, we must immediately launch determined, strong attacks, etc.

In addition to weaknesses, the tactics of the enemy include certain strengths. The strength they have in their firepower, particularly their air power and artillery, is the basic strength of the enemy for which we must adopt the necessary measures to defeat. For example, when on the defensive, the enemy will still make every effort to counter-attack us if we do not attack them strong enough. In addition, being pragmatists and with the great material-technical capabilities of the U.S., they change their combat operations and tactics very rapidly. Therefore, we must carefully study the objectives of our attacks during each period of time and at each place in order to accurately predict the tactics employed by the enemy in the campaign.

We must deeply study each form of the enemy's tactics. The realities of combat have shown that the enemy has very many tactics, however, they invariably employ several primary ones. These are the tactics the enemy concentrates each of their capabilities on successfully implementing in a vain attempt to achieve the objective of their operations, contend with our attacks (when they are on the defensive), or implement their intentions (when they are on the offensive). If their main tactic is defeated, it is possible to weaken the enemy's plan in the campaign and stagnate and obstruct them tactically and, sometimes, even strategically. By determining the appropriate method of attack and defeating each tactic of the enemy we can take long strides forward in developing the campaign in accordance with our plan and win a great victory.

We must study the various forms of tactics employed by the enemy in different campaigns and the tactics employed by the enemy in each individual battle. In the campaign, we must fully research the factors of the campaign which will have an effect upon the employment of the enemy's tactics. For example, how, in the various battles of the campaign, will the enemy increase their firepower and the means employed to launch surprise attacks and their mechanized equipment, and how will the operations of the enemy's other forces in the area of the campaign be coordinated? This method of research will provide us with a firm foundation upon which we can find ways to defeat each specific form of the enemy's tactics and, at the same time, limit the effect of the factors upon which the effective employment of these forms is based.

In a campaign, the enemy constantly changes their strategy in order to develop upon their strongpoints and overcome their weaknesses. If one of their tactics is defeated, they will change or supplement it. When conditions exist for developing a tactic, they make every effort to maintain and develop it and, at the same time, they actively look for the opposition's weaknesses in order to find ways to effectively deal with them. Therefore, our tactical leadership must very closely and accurately follow the development of the tactics of the enemy in the campaign in order to effectively find ways to defeat them and develop our tactics in an appropriate manner. The realities of combat have shown that the enemy is very clever in changing their tactics to deal with us. Only by observing each of their activities on the battlefield can we promptly and accurately determine their tactics.

### Correctly Establishing and Constantly Developing the Various Forms of Our Tactics

Only by thoroughly adhering to our concept of tactics is it possible to correctly establish the various forms of tactics to be employed in a campaign and possible for the forces participating in the campaign to take determined, creative, and flexible action in combat.

The combat in each campaign is directed by a specific guideline and pattern of thinking. This guideline and thinking determine the methods of attack employed in the campaign and provide guidance for resolving the various tactical problems which arise during it. Therefore, our tactical thinking must fully comply with the guideline and thinking directing our combat in the campaign.

Our tactical thinking fully embodies the spirit of determinedly attacking and thoroughly annihilating the enemy; takes full advantage of the absolute political and spiritual superiority of our cadres and soldiers, develops the combined fighting strength of the people's armed forces, closely coordinates the various forces, services, branches, and units and creates a strength which is greater than the enemy's at decisive places and times; resourcefully and creatively applies the various methods of attack and scales of warfare, employs the elements of secrecy and surprise to defeat the enemy in each situation, etc. On the basis of the comparison of forces between us and the enemy, the task of the campaign, the task of each battle and position, and so forth, our tactical leadership must correctly and creatively implement

our tactical thinking in each specific form of tactics and achieve the highest possible effectiveness in order to defeat the enemy in each situation.

The main points of our tactical thinking in combat in which there is coordination among the various branches can be summarized as follows:

Attacking and annihilating the enemy (systematically destroying whole units, capturing prisoners and weapons, occupying the battle positions of the enemy, and controlling the battlefield). To implement this concept, it is necessary to reconnoiter the enemy, correctly select targets and objectives, attack when the opportunity arises, make use of the elements of secrecy and surprise, tightly surround and strongly attack the enemy, rapidly and deeply penetrate their defenses, systematically divide and destroy large contingents, and then annihilate a large unit including its headquarters and support branches.

Unity and coordination and developing the combined strength of all forces and branches participating in the battle, primarily the strength of the infantry, tanks, and artillery on the offensive as well as in the defensive, while making full use of the power and fully developing the role played by the various other branches. This spirit must be fully expressed in battles for which there is much time to prepare as well as those for which there is little time, in battles at the start of campaigns as well as those in the course of the development of a campaign, and when favorable conditions exist as well as during times of difficulty; it must be expressed by establishing close coordination, by promptly re-establishing our coordination once it has been broken, by actively and effectively establishing coordination, by participating in combat in every situation, and by centralized, uniform, tight, and highly effective leadership.

The spirit of bravery and resourcefulness, knowing how to take full advantage of each opportunity, developing many methods of attack, launching many different forms of attacks on many different scales, launching many different types of coordinated attacks, closely coordinating spiritual strength and the material-technical base, and taking advantage of the favorable position of the people's war and the growth of each branch. If we only wait to launch large-scale coordinated attacks, we will miss the opportunity to attack.

To thoroughly implement our tactical thinking, our tactical leadership must correctly determine the various forms

of tactics which will meet the requirements of the tasks of the campaign and of each battle in the different types of campaigns.

In an offensive campaign, there are generally many inter-related forms of tactics. We must correctly establish these various forms of tactics: attacking enemy troops on the defensive in strong fortifications; attacking enemy troops on the defensive in rough (field) fortifications; attacking moving enemy troops; attacking enemy troops defending municipalities, cities, and towns; attacking enemy troops which are on the defensive and launching counter-attacks at the same time; ambushing withdrawing enemy troops, etc.

Some of the tactics employed in an offensive campaign are also employed in a counter-offensive campaign, however, there are other tactics in counter-offensive campaigns which we must carefully study. In a counter-offensive campaign, we generally have to attack the enemy when they are moving or defending themselves in rough (field) fortifications. There are many cases in which we must block the enemy in front of key positions in order to make it possible for us to launch a counter-offensive and an offensive and surround the enemy with our campaign (and, as a result, tactically put them on the defensive). The fundamental method of attack of the enemy is to conduct operations along highways and coordinate their infantry troops with their tanks and armored vehicles. We must attack, surround, and destroy the main forces of the enemy. In addition, we must attack enemy troops landing in the vicinity from the air; there are also times when it is necessary to attack enemy troops which have landed from the air near the rear of our combat formation. When the combat area borders the sea or encompasses rivers and streams, we must develop methods for attacking enemy troops landing from the sea or rivers.

In a defensive campaign, we must, in order to achieve the objective of defending ourselves, first of all establish battle positions with strong fortifications, steadfastly maintain these positions with all of the forces at our disposal, and deploy and utilize all of the types of firepower on the various echelons as effectively as possible. We must actively launch counter-assaults and counter-attacks when possible and when the necessary preparations have been made. We must continuously launch small and medium sized attacks against the flank and rear of the enemy; we must attack enemy troops landing from the air in our vicinity, attack enemy troops landing from the sea or rivers, etc. In a defensive campaign, we must defeat the tactic of the enemy of

assembling tanks and armored vehicles and coordinating them with infantry troops to launch strong attacks or use dispersed tank and armored vehicle forces to reinforce infantry troops encroaching on our defensive positions.

In order to defeat the tactics and combat operations of the enemy, we must have many forms of tactics which we can employ in an offensive campaign, a counter-offensive campaign, and a defensive campaign, however, from the point of view of the special characteristics, the contents, and the requirements of our methods of attack, there is only a number of fundamental forms of tactics, all of which have very general contents. Consequently, we must research and develop tactics which we can apply in the various types of campaigns, however, it is also necessary to use a number of the most basic tactics for the training of cadres and soldiers. When researching and studying these tactics, cadres and soldiers must study them in a fundamental, systematic manner and achieve a certain level of proficiency in them and, in the process of fighting, the commander must apply them in a creative and flexible manner on the basis of our specific situation and the enemy's.

In combat, our various tactics are not applied singly or one at a time, rather, they are closely coordinated with one another or applied in succession; sometimes, we shift from one tactic to another and, at other times, we shift from offensive tactics to defensive or counter-offensive tactics. The simultaneous or coordinated use of these various forms of tactics is becoming more and more widespread in combat. And, in a campaign, rather than use only a few tactics over and over again, we generally develop very many rich forms of tactics.

On the basis of the forces and the laws of operation of the enemy and after correctly establishing the forms of tactics, we must establish the forces, weapons, and technical materials which will be used and the principles of operation and scale of combat for each tactic. Each tactic which is established and applied in specific battles must heighten the fighting strength of the various branches and units participating in a campaign, such as the infantry, artillery, tanks, air defense forces, engineers, sappers, and so forth, as much as possible. With respect to the main force units participating in a campaign, each tactic must employ the mode of inter-branch combat coordination as effectively as possible under specific conditions. There are also cases when the surprise method of attack can be used by the forces of units once an opportunity has arisen or a weakness of the enemy has been detected.

The overall situation of a campaign is constantly developing. The enemy is constantly changing the tactics they employ to contend with us. Our tactical leadership must constantly develop the various forms of our tactics in a suitable manner. Each tactic can only be employed effectively when appropriate conditions exist. When these specific conditions change, it is absolutely necessary to make changes in the employment of tactics or develop new and more effective tactics. This is a very important factor in winning victory in battles, particularly key battles, and developing the campaign in the way intended by us.

The development of tactics and the creation of new and highly effective ones must always be based on the situation, task, and requirements of the development of the campaign during each period of time, on the changes in the operations and tactics of the enemy, and so forth. But, of greatest importance is promptly meeting the requirements of the main task of the campaign during each stage of its development. If the campaign necessitates action to smash and annihilate enemy troops in large groups of bases, our tactical leadership must provide the methods needed to attack these groups of large bases. Or, if, when the enemy is withdrawing, the campaign necessitates action to systematically annihilate large enemy units and prevent them from escaping, our tactical leadership must develop highly effective tactics whereby we can surround and attack the withdrawing enemy troops, and so forth. This requires a very great effort on the part of the campaign command to assess the combat situation and the status of the combat task, observe the enemy, promptly draw experience from battles, and boldly create and quickly detect new factors which develop in the course of heavy combat with the enemy.

### Concentrating on Successfully Directing Key Battles

The practical leadership of the campaign command must be correct, specific, and detailed and must not be superficial or general in nature. This requirement primarily involves correctly assessing and analyzing the enemy's tactics and combat activities (enemy units, their size and quality, their command, their methods of organizing a defense and offense, and their deployment), their major forces, the primary activities, the laws governing their operations during the day and at night, etc. Assessing our situation is another major problem faced by the commander. He must make objective and comprehensive evaluations when we first go into combat as well as in the course of its development; he must provide detailed instructions in the method of attack, how to organize

forces, and how to solve problems which, although small, greatly affect the outcome of battles. He must realize that it is very important to have the superiority of forces when employing a tactic, however, it is more important to insure that the organization of these forces results in the full employment of their strength at the right place and time and toward the right objective as this is the only way a firm victory can be won.

A campaign is the combination of many battles in many different directions; these battles play different roles and have different effects, however, they all make a certain contribution to the development and conclusion of the campaign. The general requirement is that of winning victory in every battle. Therefore, the campaign command must give an appropriate amount of attention to battles depending upon their role and effect in the campaign. It is possible that a few battles in a campaign will fail to meet this requirement; in such cases, we must rapidly draw the necessary conclusions concerning these battles in order to promptly guide other battles, particularly major ones, and win resounding victories.

In a campaign, combat coordination among the various branches and coordination among the various branches in battles are widespread and take place on many different scales. It is necessary to guide these battles by applying rich and creative tactics in order to fully develop the combined fighting strength of the various branches, services, forces, and units; at the same time, attention must be given to guiding the independent battles fought by the infantry, artillery, air defense troops, sappers, etc. Each opportunity to attack a specific combat objective requires, depending upon the level of the unit accepting the task, the necessary detailed and concrete guidance. Sometimes, it is necessary to delve into such matters as breaching defenses, holding positions, organizing a defense, and so forth if these are considered the key problems of a battle, problems with which units need help in order to insure victory.

It is necessary to concentrate on successfully directing key battles. The number of key battles is not large, however, the victory of these battles creates favorable conditions for opening a campaign, stepping up its development, successfully carrying out the primary missions of each stage of the campaign, and concluding the campaign in a resounding manner with great victories which exceed our initial predictions. Key battles generally take place where there are tests of strength between our major forces and those of the enemy, at places which are the focal points of the enemy's major tactic, and places which are the most important links in the campaign.

Once we have correctly determined which battles will be the key battles, we must begin directing the preparations for and the conduct of each battle, the most important aspect of which is providing very detailed instructions concerning the preparations to be made and the method of attack to be employed, and adopt many positive and comprehensive measures for insuring the success of battles. In particular, the campaign command must actively create the opportunities needed for our key battles to unfold in the manner intended by us.

On the basis of our combat plans and the nature and objective of a battle, the campaign command must establish suitable guidelines and tactics, decide matters which must be fully understood when applying tactics, including matters pertaining to the organization of forces, the deployment of firepower, the targets on which efforts must be concentrated, etc. Each of the key battles in an offensive, counter-offensive, or defensive campaign has its own special characteristics and specific conditions and requirements and no two battles are alike. Therefore, leadership must be extremely flexible and creative and must not be mechanical. It is necessary to assess the situation and regularly help lower echelons correctly deal with complex tactical situations.

Correct tactical leadership is an indispensable prerequisite and cannot be given light attention. But, whether or not this correct leadership leads to good results on the battlefield is dependent upon the tactical proficiency of troops, their ability to apply tactics, and the leadership ability of cadres. Troops must be well versed in many forms of tactics and be skilled in applying these tactics in continuous combat and rapidly shifting from one tactic to another. Therefore, the various forces and branches participating in a campaign, primarily the main force troops and the various technical branches, must receive comprehensive basic training so that they can skillfully apply many different forms of tactics under conditions in which the enemy situation, our situation, the terrain, or the weather are changing and in complex tactical situations. Our tactical thinking must be thoroughly understood in order to create a high degree of unanimity within the army, primarily among the cadres on the various echelons.

All basic units must be good units. All echelons must know the tactics of inter-branch coordination, be skilled in the tactics of their own branch and echelon, know the tactics of the echelon above them, and know those of related branches; they must not only have a full knowledge of principles and guidelines, but must also be able to implement them in every situation.

In the course of combat, the campaign command must create favorable conditions for the implementation of tactics by the lower echelon. Therefore, tactical leadership cannot stop at tactical thinking and the contents and forms of tactics, but must direct the establishment of the material, technical, transportation, and other conditions needed for the implementation of tactics, particularly when a tactic has developed, when troops have to fight under difficult conditions far from the rear, separated from large formations, deep within enemy territory, and so forth. This leadership must be based on the immediate mission and succeeding missions of the unit, the specific circumstances of combat, an estimation of the enemy's defensive capabilities. etc. It is necessary to be concerned with everything from making battlefield preparations, insuring mobility, and reconnoitering the enemy to the organization of forces, troop strength, cadre strength, ammunition, equipment, grain, and medicines. Plans must be adopted for establishing corridors to insure the prompt delivery of supplies regardless of the situation.

No matter how close our supervision of campaigns is, it is impossible to predict every possible development. Regardless of how thorough our material preparations are, it is difficult to meet every need. To overcome this situation, it is necessary, together with heightening the responsibility of the campaign command, for units to heighten their initiative, make a very great effort in the areas of applying tactics and insuring the success of tactics, quickly detect changes in the activities and tactics of the enemy, promptly gain experience, develop many good methods of attack, and, at the same time, rapidly strengthen themselves, stabilize their organization, and resolve every problem by themselves without relying on or waiting for their superiors.

In a campaign, our troops and cadres constantly encounter new tactical problems which must be correctly and promptly solved. As the mission of the campaign becomes more important, the nature of the campaign becomes more complex, and the development of the campaign becomes more rapid, many new problems arise. Therefore, the ability of our cadres to command must be strong and the organizational and operational ability of our troops must be high. Tactical requirements must be met before the campaign, however, there must also be close supervision throughout the entire campaign. Consequently, in the process of conducting a campaign, the campaign command must adopt very positive and determined measures with closely supervised contents and methods for implementing them in order to supplement and urgently improve the tactical qualifications and the campaign art of the cadres on all echelons and the fighting ability of troops in order to successfully complete the campaign's mission.

## MILITARY AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC SECURITY

### NEED FOR CONVENTIONAL REAR SERVICE ACTIVITIES OUTLINED

Article by Luong Nhan: "Rear Service Activities in an Offensive Campaign"; Hanoi, Tap Chi Quan Doi Nhan Dan, Vietnamese, No 7, July 1973, pp 12-20

Our offensive campaigns generally mobilize many forces and branches and both the breadth and depth of campaigns are extensive. The length of campaigns is long, their rate of development is high, and it is necessary to have a high degree of perseverance and be able to fight continuously.

In such offensive campaigns, the rear service must provide a very large supply of materials and equipment and constantly strengthen and supplement material forces at a rapid rate and with high quality. When carried out well, rear service activities are an important contribution to imbuing the campaign with great power and creating a position from which it can overwhelm and surprise the enemy. It becomes one of the major requirements of the leadership and command of the campaign and a common task of the forces participating in the campaign.

#### 1. Full and Urgent Preparations

Full and urgent rear service preparations assist the campaign not only by making it possible to launch the campaign in the manner intended by us, but also by making it possible for the campaign to develop favorably, step up the offensive, and increase our combat efficiency.

Full rear service preparations primarily involve the good preparation of materials and equipment. The forces participating in a campaign are large, there are many large units of combat infantry troops, there are many different types