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HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM
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AVHGC-DST

12 August 1967

SUBJECT: USARV War Dog Program

TO: SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Evaluation of the performance of USARV war dog units over the past few months has produced some lessons worthy of consideration by all commanders who employ these units - either scout dog platoons or combat tracker teams. Accordingly, selected portions of our evaluation of war dog units has been reproduced for your information and guidance and attached as an inclosure to this letter.

2. When properly employed, war dog units add significantly to the combat potential of any unit and provide a capability that cannot be gained by other means. By making available to all commanders this summary of lessons from war dog unit employment, it is hoped that our overall utilization of this important resource can be improved.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

1 Incl
as

ROBERT C. TABER
Brigadier General, USA
Chief of Staff

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HEADQUARTERS
U.S. ARMY VIETNAM

COMBAT LESSONS BULLETIN

NUMBER 17

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USE OF WAR DOGS

The primary purpose of this Combat Lessons Bulletin is to portray the proper utilization of war dogs in the counterinsurgency environment in Vietnam. Since many successes and failures encountered can be traced back to the training, care, health and housekeeping of the dogs when not on actual operations, considerable discussion will be devoted to details of these aspects of the general subject.

1. Characteristics of Military Dogs:

a. Scout Dogs: A scout dog team consists of one scout dog and one scout dog handler. The dog handler team is trained together and assigned and given missions as an inseparable pair. Scout dogs are trained to detect personnel, trip wires, booby traps, mines to a certain extent, weapons, ammunition, equipment, fortifications, tunnels, and other objects foreign to the area. When alerting on personnel the handler gives the direction of the alert and estimates distance and numbers. Under ideal conditions a scout dog can detect personnel up to 1000 meters, especially when large numbers, ten or more, are present. However, the distance is reduced by hot dry weather, rain, vegetation and rough terrain. In dense jungle, the distance may be reduced to 50 feet or less. Scout dogs are also taught to alert on sounds and by sight. Scout dogs should be completely silent when on operations and in the kennel area. Scout dogs are not trained to attack, although some will if allowed. Personnel other than the handler should not feed, pet or otherwise disturb a scout dog. Scout dogs are not trained to track or follow a trail.

b. Tracker Dogs: Tracker dogs are trained to follow the track of a single person. They are trained, assigned, and work with a single handler. If a group of individuals is being followed, the dog should

follow one of the group. He must not change tracks while tracking. Trackers are worked with a harness and a 25-foot leash. The fresher the track the easier it is to follow. With good terrain and weather conditions, the tracker dog can follow a track from 24 to 72 hours old. Best results are obtained when tracker dogs are worked with visual trackers as part of a Combat Tracker Team.

2. Training:

a. The initial training provides the basic principles of dog training, care and operations. Accordingly, training must be at the unit level. Approximately six months of continuous training at the unit level is required to train a scout dog team in long-range detection, pinpointing direction and accurately estimating numbers, and distance of personnel and specifically what the dog is alerting on. All training should be organized and supervised by a responsible leader in the unit. Higher headquarters should insure that training is conducted and observe the training.

b. Scout dogs should receive detection training in personnel detection, booby trap training, search training, and other specialized training necessary to accomplish the mission in the area of operations. Obedience training should be continuous. Scout dogs should be trained to work off leash when necessary. Training should be conducted daily when scout dogs are in rear areas and at least weekly when on operations.

3. Physical Conditioning: Experience in Vietnam shows that dogs can be conditioned to heat and strenuous exercise in the same manner as men. In Vietnam, properly trained scout dogs have been conditioned to extreme heat and long marches over rugged terrain. If the dogs become too tired to scout, they should be put in a choke chain and moved to the rear. An overnight rest usually refreshes the dog for another day's work. Water must be provided. Often the scout dog handler must carry twice as much water as other troops in order to provide for his dog. Dogs that cannot keep up with combat troops must be given a vigorous physical conditioning program. The obstacle course is helpful, but endurance can only be obtained by sustained forced marches of a minimum of 10 to 15 miles. The program should continue until the dogs are in as good a condition as the men and are capable of sustained operations for at least 14 days. The dog must be healthy to respond properly to physical training.

4. Working Scout Dogs With Infantry Units: Scout dogs are worked in a harness. When not scouting, the harness is removed and a choke chain collar is used. The dog learns by association that when the scout harness is put on he works or searches for the things he has been trained to detect.

When a scout dog is worked for a long period of time, he becomes tired and loses interest or quits working. The handler can usually determine if his dog is working. Before the dog falters, a choke chain is put on and the dog moved to the rear and rested. With two dogs, one working and one resting, continuous coverage is usually obtained.

5. Health, Sanitation, and First Aid: In order for a military dog to perform satisfactorily, he must be in good health. Heartworms, hookworms, round worms, tapeworms, and screwworms can easily become a major problem.

a. Heartworms are spread by mosquitoes similar to malaria. The worm develops in the heart and matures in about 4 to 6 months, producing microfilaria in the blood stream. The microfilaria are infectious and are detected by a blood test. Dogs should be checked regularly for heartworms. Heavy infestations may be incapacitating or fatal.

b. Hookworms are intestinal parasites that suck blood. Heavy infestation causes anemia and loss of strength.

c. Roundworms and tapeworms are intestinal parasites that consume food in the intestine and may cause malnutrition. Stool samples should be taken monthly from all dogs and checked for evidence of intestinal parasites. Monthly treatment may be necessary, since dogs normally will become reinfected when working in the field.

d. Screwworms are caused by flies depositing eggs in open wounds or scratches which bleed. Screwworms also occur on skin and hair that is continuously wet. Screwworms are controlled by treating wounds with medicine that kills worms and repels flies. Wounds should not go untreated. Unit medics can provide human medicine to prevent the infestation of screwworms from becoming worse until the dog can be evacuated.

e. Various skin diseases affect dogs as they do men. A dog is very similar to a human physiologically and except for worms, a common treatment can be used for man and dogs, to include antibiotic salve for skin infection, insect repellent, and first aid measures. Dogs should be groomed and closely checked daily by the handler. This is an important measure and should be strictly enforced. After working in swampy areas, dogs should be washed with water and a mild disinfectant, if possible. Dogs should be dipped regularly to control ticks and other external parasites.

6. Kennels: Military dogs must be kenneled where they can get off the ground and be completely dry. In field locations, where kennels are not available, wooden platforms must be constructed to get the dogs off the ground. If dogs stay on the ground, they are more susceptible to screwworms and other parasites. When possible, permanent kennels with concrete floors should be provided. A minimum of 50 sq ft per dog is required. When on tactical operations, the dog handler will usually tie his dog to him at night and share his shelter with his dog.

7. Dog Food: Dog food must be provided for scout dogs attached to infantry units. C-rations are not satisfactory as food for scout dogs. The dog handler will usually carry a 3 to 5-day supply of dog food with him initially when he is committed.

8. Lessons Learned: The following are examples of operations by scout dog teams and combat tracker teams:

On 2 April 1967, Combat Tracker Team No 1 was called on by the 4th Bn, 9th Inf, 25th Inf Div after an ambush patrol had made contact. The track was 8 hours old when the CTT arrived. The visual trackers followed the track through populated areas for about 1000 meters to a village. A search of the village resulted in 23 detainees and revealed 3 VC's, one of whom was found hiding in a storage shed.

On 19 June 1967, Combat Tracker Team No 8 was called by "A" 1/7th Cav, 1st Cav Div to investigate tracks leading from caves. The CTT came under sniper fire as they landed by helicopter. After reaching the support platoon, the platoon came under fire. The CTT followed approximately 8 VC's leaving the area. The visual trackers tracked for a short distance when heavy rain washed out all footprints. After about 1000 meters, the dogs picked up the smell of the VC. The CTT came under fire while moving back to the support platoon. CTT called artillery in on enemy position.

On 3 May 1967, when a friendly ambush was hit by a large enemy force, Combat Tracker Team No 1 was called by the 1st Bn, 27th Inf. The track was 3½ hours old and made by 50 to 60 men. Visual trackers found a track which the tracker dog followed for 4000 meters through populated areas. The VC were tracked to a boat landing where they apparently left in a sampan. Then the dog tracked two men, apparently boat guards, about 700 meters to a village where the track was lost.

On 23 June 1967, Combat Tracker Team No 6 was called by an element of the 9th Div to follow an enemy track. The CTT was supported by two squads from the aerial rifle platoon. The track was 12 hours old made

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by an estimated enemy battalion. The visual trackers identified the track and the dog followed for about 500 meters to an enemy base camp. Evasive tactics included walking along a rocky stream bed. The base camp included a school, tools, clothing, ammo and bunkers. Artillery was called in on the base camp after the team withdrew.

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On 9 August 1966, Pfc Barejko and Scout Dog Vikki 2X84 of the 38th Scout dog platoon were on a search and destroy mission near Bao Cap when Scout Dog Vikki alerted on a booby trap from a distance of three meters. Results: one booby trap destroyed.

On 29 August 1966, SSG Kontkowski and Scout Dog Kelly 1X69 of the 38th Scout dog platoon were on a combat assault near Cu Chi. The company made contact, and the scout dog team moved to the rear. While following the rifle company, Kelly alerted on a secret cache that had been missed by the company. Results: 3 weapons, 3 grenades and VC plans for disrupting the coming elections were captured.

On 12 November 1966, Pfc Voorhees and Scout Dog Satan 4A16 of the 39th Scout dog platoon were on a search and destroy mission when Satan alerted on a claymore at 30 meters. Result: one claymore was captured.

On 14 January 1967, SP4 Peters and Scout Dog Prince 5A07 of the 39th Scout dog platoon were on a search and destroy operation in the Iron Triangle when Prince alerted on a tunnel at 30 meters. Results: 100 lbs of rice, 4 radio sets, 2400 blasting caps, 160 lbs of explosives, 40 antitank mines and medical supplies were captured.

On 9 February 1967, Pfc Orrego and Scout Dog Fritz 8X78 were on a search and destroy mission when Fritz alerted on several caves. Results: 3500 lbs of new uniforms and raw fabric, 5000 lbs of food, 1 bolt action rifle, 1 AK47, 1 BAR, 1 M1 rifle, 2 cases of butterfly bombs, 3 hutches with personal effects and 6 heavy-duty sewing machines were captured.

On 28 February 1967, SP4 Quada and Scout Dog King 22X4 of the 48th Scout dog platoon were on a search and destroy mission near XT 164978 when King alerted on enemy personnel at 125 meters. Result: documents, food, hospital supplies captured and 12 VC KIA.

On 4 January 1967, SSG Cecil and Scout Dog Sam 3A44 of the 38th Scout dog platoon were on an ambush patrol when Sam alerted on a VC patrol at 25 meters. Result: 4 VC KIA, 4 VCC, and 3 VCS captured.

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On 9 April 1967, SP4 McClellan and Scout Dog Achates 06X2 of the 44th Scout dog platoon were on a search and destroy operation when Achates alerted two different times at 200 meters and 300 meters. Results: the enemy detonated 3 claymores and 3 VC's were killed.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



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