

EXTRACTED FROM:

# OPERATIONS REPORT LESSONS LEARNED REPORT 1-68

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## SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED

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SECTION V

MILITARY DOGS

1. ITEM: Employment of scout dog teams. (660509)

DISCUSSION: The 173d Airborne Brigade reported their scout dog teams as valuable assets. The following is based on their experiences.

a. General. The mission of a scout dog team is to support a tactical element by detecting and giving silent warning of any foreign presence. Accordingly, scout dog teams are frequently attached to a unit or patrol for a specific mission or period of time.

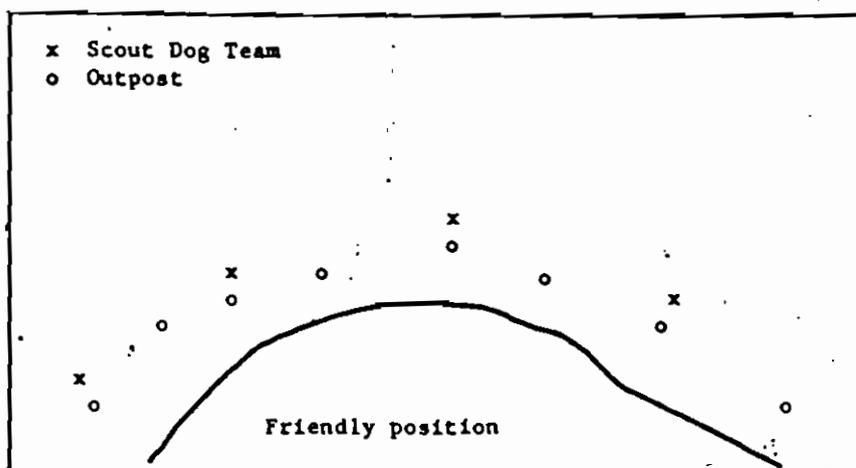


A SCOUT DOG TEAM

b. Considerations. Personnel of a tactical element employing scout dog teams for the first time should be oriented as to their capabilities and limitations. This can be accomplished by joining the scout dog teams with the supported elements as early as possible. The handlers can then contribute to the planning by advising on the proper employment of their teams. This procedure also permits the supported troops to become familiar with scout dog operations and permits the dog to become familiar with their scents. Experience indicates that familiarity contributes to better results. Thus, whenever possible, the same scout dog teams should be employed with the same tactical elements. It is important that the handler attends all debriefings so he can determine the results of the team's contributions as well as suggest ways to improve future operations.

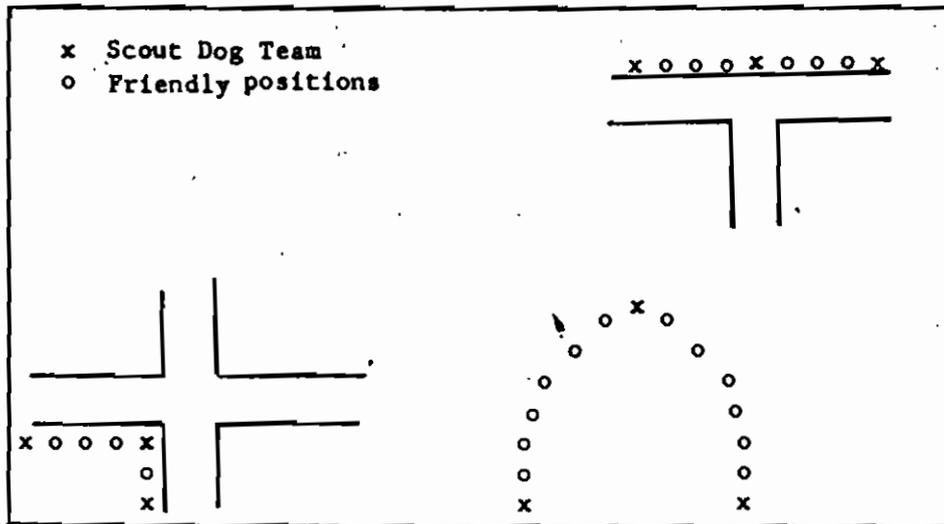
c. Scout dog team location in a patrol. Normally, the best position for the scout dog team is at the point. It can be used to detect and locate hostile positions for purposes of avoiding or gaining contact. The team precedes the patrol or screening element, keeping generally on the assigned direction of movement. Once the dog alerts, the handler should signal the patrol to halt. The patrol leader moves up to the handler on the side opposite the dog to receive information. If contact is to be made, the handler normally remains in place and falls in on the rear of the patrol as it passes his position. If the patrol leader desires to avoid contact, the scout dog team maneuvers left and right, if necessary to obtain a more definitive fix. At times when the wind is from the patrol's rear, it may be desirable to have the scout dog team follow in lieu of leading.

d. Scout dog teams employed in support of outposts and ambush patrols. Scout dog teams employed in support of an outpost or listening post should be placed far enough in front of the main outpost line to reduce distractions to the dog, yet close enough so that contact can be maintained at all times.



SCOUT DOG TEAMS IN SUPPORT OF OUTPOSTS

When the dog gives silent warning of hostile presence, the team should immediately withdraw to the rear of the outpost line so that they do not mask friendly fires. In this regard the handler should always have a prearranged route of withdrawal before going on outpost. The procedures for withdrawal and stationing of scout dog teams on an ambush patrol are the same as for outpost action. If the sector to be covered is too wide for one dog to screen effectively, then scout dogs should also be posted at each end of the formation.



SCOUT DOG TEAMS IN SUPPORT OF AMBUSH PATROLS

e. Scout dog employment in search of a hamlet. Experience shows that scout dogs used within a hamlet may become confused and lose all interest in their work unless the inhabitants are removed and placed down wind. The scout dog team should then be employed to:

(1) Check all houses to discover if any of the enemy are hidden between double walls or in houses.

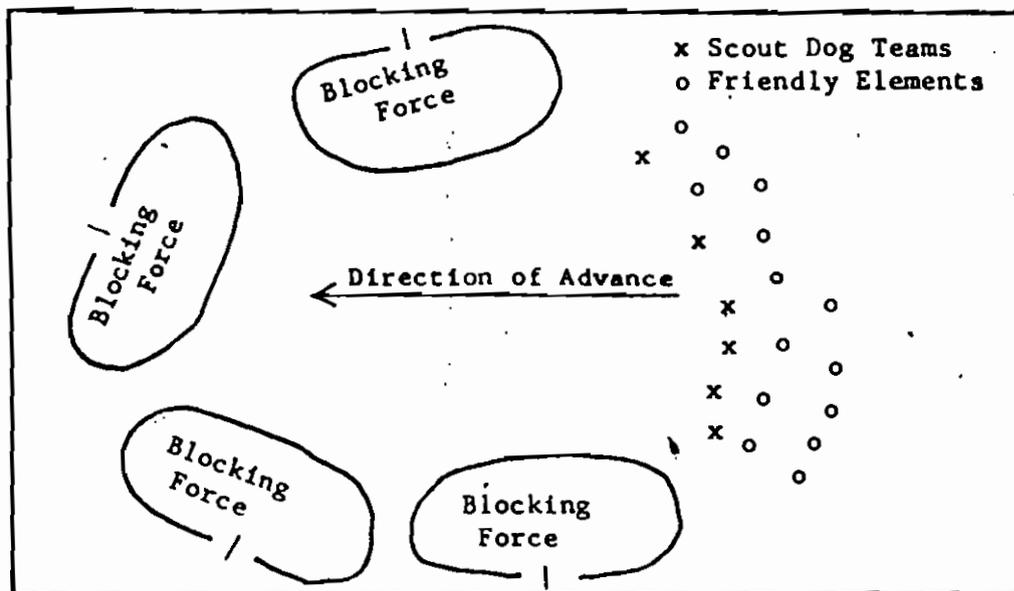
(2) Check surrounding areas for location of underground hideouts or caches of weapons and ammunition.

(3) Check along canals, rice paddies, rivers or lakes for hideouts under banks.

(4) Check carefully around pig pens, cattle pens, water buffalo pens and haystacks, as they are frequently used as hiding places.

f. Scout dog teams employed in search and destroy operations. Scout dog teams can be employed with either or both the blocking and searching elements. At all times, a specific individual should be

assigned the mission of protecting the handler and dog. The reason for this is that when a scout dog is following a scent, the handler needs both hands to control him.



A METHOD OF EMPLOYING SCOUT DOGS IN  
SEARCH AND DESTROY OPERATIONS

OBSERVATION: Scout dog teams, when properly trained, employed and supported, are valuable assets. All infantry personnel should be familiar with the capabilities and limitations of scout dog teams. During operations a specific individual must be assigned the task of protecting the scout dog team. The same scout dog teams and tactical elements should be employed together whenever possible as familiarity leads to better results.

2. ITEM: Use of scout dog teams. (670221) (670235)

DISCUSSION: Scout dog teams employed on several occasions with ambush and reconnaissance patrols traveled with the point man during movement and were strategically placed during ambushes. The use of these teams resulted in the detection of Viet Cong and, in some instances, Viet Cong positions which otherwise would have probably escaped detection.

OBSERVATION: Scout dog teams when properly trained and employed frequently provide valuable assistance in locating Viet Cong and Viet Cong hiding places.

3. ITEM: Characteristics, training, care and employment of military dogs. (T674275)

DISCUSSION:

a. Characteristics of military dogs.

(1) Scout dogs. The dog and his handler are 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 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.

(2) Tracker dogs. Tracker dogs are trained to follow the track of a single person. They are trained by, assigned to 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.

b. Training.

(1) 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.

(2) Scout dogs should receive training in detection of personnel, booby traps, in searching, and 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.

c. 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.

d. 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.

e. 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.

(1) 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.

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

(3) 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.

(4) 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.

(5) 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.

f. 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. 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 square feet 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.

g. 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 when he is initially committed.

OBSERVATION: Considerable experience has been gained with war dogs in the counterinsurgency environment of Vietnam. This experience shows that many successes and failures with war dogs can be traced to the training, care, health and housekeeping of the dogs when not in actual operations.