

43D INFANTRY PLATOON (SCOUT DOG)
9TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO San Francisco 96370

9 June 1969

AVIE-43

SUBJECT: Scout Dogs and Booby Traps in the Delta

Commanding Officer
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ATTN: AVIA-DD
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One of the primary utilizations of scout dogs in the Delta is to counteract booby traps because 1) it is a serious problem that G-2 will use any measure to discover and they know dogs are trained to find booby traps, and 2) because of the heavily populated nature of the Delta our use as an anti-personnel device is greatly diminished and our mission orientation is turned toward booby traps. In reality our main success is in the very unflattering statistic of personnel alerts that are avoided rather than checked out because the populace in the woodline could easily be friendly and to check it out could easily result in a booby trap incident.

To give a portrait of booby traps on the delta, these statistics are from a confidential 9th Division report on booby traps encountered by the Division in the month of April. 758 booby traps were found in April and 528 were neutralized. Scout dogs are credited with finding 1% (6). This can be explained by the fact that between the two platoons we only pull about 240 out of over 2000 missions by the Division. Many times dogs were with elements that encountered booby traps but were not on point because of wind direction or the unit leaders directives. Booby traps are employed by the VC to interdict US troop movement or to defend VC positions or resting places. They were found equally as frequently on dikes, trails, and on jungle growth. It is expected that the percentage on dikes and trails will increase in the wet season because the peasants will be working in the paddies and movement will be far more greatly channeled. 2/3 were found on the ground, with most of the rest submerged. Three quarters were trip-wired grenades, mostly Chicom, and almost none were covered by fire, to include some of the command detonated mines. Most of the casualties resulted from bunching up by the troops.

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PLATOON (SCOUT DOG)
INFANTRY DIVISION
San Francisco 96370

43AD
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No clear picture of our dogs performance against booby traps can be presented. Their few successes have been equally on trip-wire devices and plain grenades with the handle braced until jostled. In training the dogs have no trouble picking up either trip wires or pressure release devices. In the field they have triggered or permitted their handlers to trigger both type devices, with far less casualties than the number of incidents. I have had no one shot in seven months, and none in the unit in close to a year. Of my wounded, two tripped the device, two were wounded and one killed by command detonated mines ~~ambushments~~ and five were wounded by devices that were tripped by others, two of which at least the handlers were at fault in not finding the device. Incidents have occurred equally in paddies and on thick trails. The following conclusions, however, can be drawn from experience.

1) Scent alerts are inadequate to protect a dog team from booby traps, particularly because more often than not the wind is from the wrong direction.

2) Dogs are grossly inadequate in finding devices on canal banks; they are too distracted by the idea of crossing the water, drinking it, or from fear of it.

3) A dog who is good on finding booby traps will probably have greater success in the wet season when their locations become more frequently on trails and dikes, if of course, the wind is right and it isn't raining heavily.

4) A dog who can alert on the device itself by sight recognition or sixth sense will do far better than one dependent on scent. Sound from a trip wire of course depends on the wind and if vines are used the possibility of finding the device reverts to some other technique of alert.

5) A dog that works too fast is a danger to his handler unless he concentrates intently.

6) Any dog who is not too aggressive (chases animals or bites innocent Vietnamese, Tiger Scouts, etc.) can be taught to work off leash (20 to 30 meters in front of the handler) to give the handler an added advantage in case the dog trips something. For an aggressive dog a 25 ft. leash or a cut down version, say 12 ft., could help. Also, many dogs, if not heavily trained in basic obedience, will not concentrate as well as they are capable when worked off leash. They need a long leash till their concentration can be assured off leash.

7) The best dogs on discipline and in the ability of their handler to control them, are the best concentrators and invariably find more booby traps. The handler who spends the most time with his dog on obedience and is strictest while working the dog in training will find more booby traps and last longer.

8) The best way not to become a casualty is always be conscious of the movement of the troops you are with. Don't bunch up when they do. If they gather around the squad leader when stopped, or around you at a canal or bridge move off until you are less vulnerable to their errors. If you are not on point, stay at least 20 meters behind the point man and don't let your dog interfere with his efforts to find booby traps; it's his life out in front.

9) In training, ~~always~~ have the dog encounter decoys before he comes

to the booby traps, because he will be much more interested and concentrating more after finding a decoy. However, this pattern cannot be used continuously, or the dog will associate the two in the wrong order (expect personnel first always and then miss a booby trap while searching for personnel).

KARL K. LUNKENHEIMER
1LT, Infantry
Commanding

Commanding General
9th Inf Div
APO 96370

Commanding Officer
43d Inf Plat (Sct Dog)
APO 96370

MAY		22		16		24		28		22		24
		1	1			1		1		1		1
	3	1				3		2				
	48		86		9		3					0
		0			Blocking Force 7: Night Cap 1						154	
					168							
			2		2							
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During the month the unit reached it's all time high strength in personnel and teams but one wounded, one DEROS, one extension leave, and one dog who quit working cut into our operational strength and things returned to normal. Operations are beginning to be limited due to excessive rain. The 2/39th Infantry has a new S-3 who has yet to be properly informed on the use of scout dogs. When he is briefed, there will be more operations with the 2/39th Infantry. The average daily missions breakdown was one team 6/31st Inf, one team 4/39th Inf, and two teams 2/39th Inf.

SP/4 Leonard Smith was seriously wounded by a command detonated claymore and is in Japan. His dog Brutus was killed. He was not on point because the wind direction wrong, but was walking second. SP/4 Geller was in the hospital at Cam Rahn Bay from wounds received in April. He will be transferred from this unit,

KARL E. LUNGERHILLER 1LT INF

MICHAEL P. JOHNSON CPL I

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12/10/60