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MEMORANDUM

January 15, 1963

TO: Commanding General, Military Assistance Advisory Group
Vietnam

ATTENTION: Chief, OMT Division, USABEC

FROM: Assistant Director, Rural Affairs, USOM

SUBJECT: "Lessons Learned" Series

I have just read, and commended to the attention of all my people, the very informative publication "Lessons Learned - Number 25" issued on 17 December. It contains much information which should be known to personnel of this office, most of whom are in the field and very frequently in the hamlets which the Vietcong will seek to infiltrate.

Judging from this issue in the "Lessons Learned" series, the preceding issues must also have contained, and future issues will contain, additional material which should be known to us. Accordingly, I would appreciate it if you could add this office to your distribution list for two copies of each future "Lessons Learned." Further, if copies of past issues are still available, I would appreciate receiving, if possible, two copies of each.

A member of my staff with experience in other independent countries in village search and screening operations, has offered a few comments, which are enclosed for any interest they may have.

A. C. Phillips

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Comments on "Lessons Learned - Number 25"

In many ways one of the best treatments of the subject which I have seen. Especially commendable - should be underlined - is emphasis placed, in statement of the problem, on the fact that: "At all times the requirement to ultimately separate the people from the VC is and induce them to support the local government must dominate every action." For your consideration, I would like to submit some comments on alternative procedures which have elsewhere proven desirable.

1. Re para 5,d (1) and h, -- line of encirclement remains in place until joined by withdrawing assault units:

a. Since it is usually desirable that a cordon initially enclose as large an area as possible, all troops (except perhaps a part of the assault force) can well join the encircling force, which gradually closes in until the remaining elements of assault force are "squeezed out," at which time they can proceed with their normal mission.

b. After a Recon Team has passed through a village (and the assault force has been squeezed out of cordon) instead of maintaining a fully manned line of encirclement, it is desirable that units (squad) assemble in individual positions, with good visibility to adjoining units. As organized squads, rather than individuals in a thin line, they can more effectively counter any Vietcong attempt to break out by force, while still observing and countering by fire, any exfiltration efforts.

2. Re actions of Reconnaissance, Search, and CC (Civilian Control) Teams:

a. Believe it desirable that villagers be told at the beginning of the operation to stay in their houses, and that this be repeated by the leading elements of the assault forces as they pass through the village. Succeeding elements should secure, and send to the CCT, any adults then found away from their homes. Advantages:

(1) Probability of presence of Vietcong will be signalled by any reluctance of residents to remain in their proximity.

(2) Facilitates identifying residents against household occupancy placards, etc.

(3) Likelihood of VC passing unnoticed among civilians is reduced.

b. Part of the CCT's should accompany Search Teams, checking and interrogate house occupants while search of premises is being conducted. Advantages:

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(1) As above, plus possibility of betrayal, by facial expressions or gestures, of proximity of searchers to hidden objects.

(2) Certificate of non-theft or willful damage (an extremely important item) can be obtained on the spot by the searchers.

c. After each house is searched and occupants found where questioned, they should be moved as appropriate, either to an area where the CCF is conducting further interrogations, or to an area where civic action and paywar personnel are conducting explanations of government actions, etc.

d. Concerning interrogation, it is extremely important that each adult be questioned for at least a few minutes, out of sight or hearing of any except government personnel. This affords an invaluable opportunity for securely contacting or developing informants, and permits employment of various obvious devices either to conceal the identities of those who give information, or to cast suspicion of "squealing" on those who could, but refuse to give assistance.

e. Re body search (Ingl. 4 to M. 25): Very desirable this be limited to selected individuals when there is some reason to suspect. Further, search of women by men, even medics, should be considered inadmissible, and prohibited. In rare instances where it is impossible to provide female searchers, and interrogation alone will not suffice, female suspects should be kept segregated until a female searcher can be procured.

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