

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, FIELD FORCE VIETNAM
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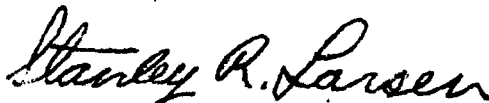
17 December 1965

SUBJECT: Tactical Tips

TO: SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. As an assist to all unit commanders the attached list of tactical tips has been developed for use in operations against the VC.

2. While the points brought out may not solve all problems in the field, if more attention is paid to what can be done by the unit commander on the ground, our successes will be stimulated in every direction.



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TACTICAL TIPS

1. Intelligence. Must be timely, reliable, and detailed. Stress importance of who, what, when, where, how many to troops for reporting. Speed is essential in acting on intelligence.
2. Operations Planning. Plan for an adequate force for the task to be accomplished. Both maneuver and fire support elements of sufficient strength are required for any operation. Provide an adequate reserve. Missions of subordinate units must contribute to the overall force mission. The initial force employed must be large enough to accomplish all phases of the operations.
3. Coordination. All interested and participating agencies must be knowledgeable of an operation and the extent of their mission. Problem areas must be resolved prior to the start of an operation.
4. Communications. An effective system of communications, to include radio, wire, audio, and visual is vital to the success of an operation. Communication with all elements of a force is required. Without communications there is no control. Multiple means of communication is desirable.
5. Fire Support. All available combat support means must be given maximum utilization. Special attention must be directed to fire support planning. The VC will take advantage of any discernable inadequacy in fire support efforts.
6. Artillery Support Planning. Plan artillery support for all operations. Observers on the ground with units must be supplemented by airborne observers. All elements to be supported must have the fire plan, call signs and frequencies, and current authentication system. Artillery must not be relied on as a substitute for organic weapons and maneuver forces. Plan support for all deployed units, especially when an enemy ambush attempt is anticipated. Fire support coordination must begin at the lowest level. Use "Flack Suppression" fire against VC ground fire directed at friendly aircraft.
7. Combat Reconnaissance Operations. Deception must be employed when conducting aerial reconnaissance. Overfly other areas as well as the objective area. Air reconnaissance is not a substitute for ground reconnaissance. Combat reconnaissance using small, highly trained units are effective against squad or smaller sized units in suspect areas. and are capable of collecting accurate and up to date information. Generally it is comprised of 20 to 24 men armed with lightweight automatic weapons. It is not capable of conducting sustained operations and should complete its task on the ground in 15 minutes or less.

8. Landing Zones. Select primary and alternate LZs. Repeated reconnaissance of primary landing zones may give the VC a premature advantage and allow time to plan, prepare, and execute an ambush at the critical time and place. As many leaders as possible should be on the initial flights to minimize flights required.

9. Terrain. Utilize the terrain. Take advantage of cover and concealment for deploying troops. Stay off trails, roads, and stream beds. When defending, select positions affording fields of fire and observation, or which will canalize the enemy in approaching the friendly position.

10. Maneuver. Maintain mobility and flexibility of maneuver. The situation may dictate changes. Unwarranted deviation from the plan will result in a lack of sufficient force at the point of decision. Control of forces must be maintained at all times.

11. Attacks. Use fire and maneuver; advance under cover of supporting fires. The assault must be violently executed. Momentum of the attack must be maintained.

12. Saturation Patrolling. Conduct saturation patrolling in areas under control of the VC to locate him. Area saturation tactics deny the VC free access to all areas within the area of operation. Conduct frequent and persistent night operations. Patrolling simultaneously on many axes in a large area results in a greater number of meeting engagements with the VC. Perform concurrent Psy War/Civic Action missions.

13. Search and Destroy Missions. Search and destroy missions require employment of flexible control measures such as zones of action and phase lines. The objective must be to gain and maintain contact with and destroy the enemy. Units should orient on the enemy, not on terrain objectives.

14. Eagle Flights. In addition to normal methods of employment, an eagle force can be used to reinforce air strikes by landing immediately following completion of an airstrike to engage surviving elements of an enemy force.

15. Ambushes. Conduct ambush operations at night as well as during daylight. Conduct a detailed rehearsal prior to occupying the position. Each individual must thoroughly understand his task. Move to the ambush site by concealed routes, or move after dark. Spring the ambush quickly and violently; pursue escaping VC with fire.

16. Night Operations. Conduct frequent operations during darkness. Stay behind patrols and ambushes operating at night hinder VC movement.

Plan artillery fires on known and suspected VC assembly areas and routes of movement. Plan aerial infrared photography and airborne radar surveillance over suspect areas.

17. Prevention of Ambushes. A unit moving tactically from one point to another can not move both rapidly and maintain proper security at the same time. The commander must decide which he wants. Of the choices it should be only the exception when the situation demands rapidity of movement at the price of security. All around security on the move. Security elements must be posted to the front, on both flanks, and to the rear. Security elements must check every area within small arms range of the main force. A communications system must be provided. Assume that no area outside a perimeter or compound is secure. (See Par 6)

18. Counterambush. Reaction to ambushes must be swift and violent in nature employing automatic weapons and grenades, and rapid assault of the ambush position. Each unit must have a counter ambush plan understood by all. Personnel must be constantly alert and ready to fight. Weapons must be in the soldiers' hands. Sights must be set. Impedimenta must not be suspended from weapons. Plan and use artillery support.

19. Artillery Positions. VC operational plans take into account range and locations as well as battery response time. Frequent changes of position will add to the effectiveness of artillery and the disruption of VC plans. "Hip shoots" add surprise to artillery target area coverage.

20. Defense. Plan for all around defense. Do not disclose automatic weapons positions by firing during sporadic sniper fire. Use ambush patrols and early warning devices to cover avenues of approach into the perimeter. Be especially alert during periods of limited visibility.

21. Night Halls. Halt on the most defensible terrain available. Establish a night perimeter which means an all around defense. Dispose automatic weapons and grenade launchers to cover avenues of approach to the perimeter. Set out trip flares and anti-personnel mines. Schedule periodic illumination of the areas outside the perimeter.

22. Marking Ground Locations. Colored smoke should not be used to establish ground locations for pilot identification unless contact with the enemy has been made. Use colored panels when the situation permits. In thick jungle the aircraft can fly a criss-cross pattern over the jungle area and be given a radio signal when directly overhead.

23. Convoy. No route is 100% safe. Convoy protection depends upon common sense measures for security. Convoy operations must be thoroughly coordinated to include intelligence, communications, air and artillery support, route security forces, and alert reaction forces. One agency

should be responsible for all coordination. Air cover (AIRCAP) reduces the likelihood of ambush.

24. Medical Evacuation. Casualty evacuation must be expedited. Insure that the evacuation system for civilians, ARVN, and Free World personnel is understood by all medical personnel.

25. Command and Control. Brigades and Regimental operations will be conducted under the personal control of the commander. An Airborne Command Post will be made available for use in all Regimental and Brigade sized operations and may also be made available to battalion commanders when their companies are operating separately over extended distances.

26. Counter Sniper Actions. Commanders moving units through thick jungle areas will employ reconnaissance by fire plus artillery and air strikes to disrupt enemy forces occupying defensive or ambush positions and to dislodge snipers from trees.

27. Air Cap. Commanders will call for Air Cap over all operations other than routine clearing and small unit actions in the vicinity of base camps. This applies equally to armed helicopters which will be rotated over units in action.