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Headquarters II Field Force Vietnam Artillery
Office of the Commanding General

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE GENERAL STAFF

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TO Chief of Staff

DATE 6 May 1966

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CMT _____

The attached copy of a report on activities in 111 CJZ is not classified, but is most sensitive. The author was my boss at one time, and permitted me to make a copy when we determined where 11 FORCEU would be located.

The author of the paper was Senior Advisor in 111 CJZ from 1 Jan 62 - 15 Feb 63.

His opinions led to conflict with General Taylor and Mr. McNamara, and he has now retired.

Whether you agree with his opinions or not, this is a most interesting document.

yes it is
Thanks

[Signature]
GRANGER
Maj GS

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1. GENERAL:

a. This report is based on my experiences in Vietnam during the period 1 January 1962 - 15 February 1963. Although I had the opportunity to visit a number of areas and activities in the I and II Corps Tactical Zones shortly after my arrival in Vietnam, my experience was limited almost exclusively to the III Corps Tactical Zone as it was constituted prior to the organization of the IV Corps in December 1962. Therefore I have made no attempt to analyze the situation in the other corps zones, nor do I feel that my opinions and recommendations are applicable to the other corps.

b. I am aware of the fact that my experiences in Vietnam have not been sufficiently extensive to enable me to draw indisputable conclusions, or to fully understand many of the problems within the area of my responsibility. However, I have taken the liberty of expressing my opinions on numerous subjects without qualification, although I am aware that they would not be accepted as hard and fast facts by all. I have formed my opinions largely from personal observations, and from extensive discussions with my Division, Regimental, Battalion and Sector Advisors, and it is believed that the vast majority of the experienced field advisors of the former III Corps and of the IV Corps fully support the viewpoints reflected in this report.

c. Tremendous progress has been made in virtually all areas of training, operations, logistics, civic action programs and in the fields of leadership and command since 1 January 1962, and such progress has been documented in other reports such as the report which was recently prepared for General Wheeler (see Inclosure 1). For this reason, reports of improvements and progress have not been included in this paper. Instead, this report is a presentation of conclusions

I have drawn concerning the characteristics of the Viet Cong, the characteristics of the rural people who support the Viet Cong willingly or unwillingly, the major weaknesses in military leadership in the Vietnamese Armed Forces and the major weaknesses in the planning and execution of military operations which I believe must be fully understood by all U.S. personnel who are concerned in any manner with Vietnam.

2. FUNDAMENTAL GUIDELINES:

a. Virtually all of the more comprehensive studies, estimates of the situation, and special reports on the situation in Vietnam for the past two years or more contain many similar statements which are generally accepted as sound conclusions or as unquestionable facts, but are frequently overlooked and not applied by some of those who are advising, assisting, supporting and working with the GVN armed forces, or who are developing concepts for: organizational structures, weapons and equipment requirements, programs of instruction, operational and tactical principles, utilization of supporting services and arms, means for developing intelligence, civic action campaigns and other related requirements.

b. With the realization that most of the following statements can be found in one form or another in numerous publications, it is believed that these and other well documented facts must be fully understood and constantly repeated, publicized, applied, and utilized by all advisory and policy making agencies in developing doctrine, concepts, proposals, recommendations, plans, programs, objectives, and statements of requirements for human and material resources, for the overall counter-insurgency campaign in Vietnam.

(1) The Viet Cong:

(a) Where are the VC:

1. The VC live almost exclusively with the rural people in the huts of the hamlets, either in a permanent, semi-permanent, or transient status.

2. Some VC bases, training areas, supply points, way stations, communications center, and headquarters are located in the jungle areas of the 5th Division area. However, even in this area it is believed that the great majority of the VC live with the residents of the rural hamlets.

3. Some VC bases, training areas, supply points, way stations, arms manufacturing facilities, ammunition stores, headquarters and communications centers are located in the thinly populated, mangrove and water-palm swamps of the coastal strips of the Ca Mau peninsula; in similar bands of heavy vegetation along the eastern coast of the delta area from Vung Tau to the Ca Mau peninsula; in the sparsely settled area of the Plaine des Jonc along the Cambodian Border; and to a limited extent in the jungles and caves on the slopes of the Seven Mountains.

(b) How Do the VC Win Support of the People:

1. The VC are characterized by their unceasing propoganda and their fanatical belief in their cause. The VC exploit to the uttermost any dissatisfaction or hostility which may be created in the hearts of the people by any policy, act or incident which can be remotely attributed to the GVN officials or military forces.

2. The VC make every effort to identify themselves as saviors of the people. They share the grinding poverty of the peasant and assist him in his endless toil by carrying back-breaking loads and struggling with the plow in the muck of the paddies. The VC learn the aspirations and grievances of the people and shrewdly develop slogans and claims which promise to give the people the things they desire, as well as to right their wrongs.

3. The VC frequently create a Robin Hood-like image for themselves by separating the peasant farmer from his landlord and from the government tax collector, and while the VC tax the peasants themselves, the amount taken is considerably less than his rent and normal tax would have been.

(c) How Do The VC Control Anti-Communists and Neutrals:

1. If the VC are not successful in winning the willing support of the people, allegiance is gained and maintained by staging sadistic and nauseating atrocities against hamlet or village officials, or against other residents if there is the faintest hint of suspicion that such individuals may endanger the VC. As a result, many of the people become obsessed with the feeling that the VC are aware of every gesture, every word, every step and every act.

2. Normally the VC do not harm the people even in the anti-communist and neutral areas. Instead they exert every effort to win their hearts, create an image of being benefactors, protectors, champions against injustice, and the vanguard of a great liberating movement.

(d) How Are The VC Supported:

The VC must receive support, either willingly or through force, from the inhabitants of the hamlets since they are dependent of the population for intelligence, security, recruits, shelter, medical assistance, supplies, equipment, labor for destruction of roads and bridges, and for sampans and ox carts for certain transportation needs. Frequently the VC pay for materials and food taken from the people.

(e) How Can VC Be Identified:

1. Normally the VC blend with the population, carry out the tasks of the typical villager and farmer, wear the same type of clothing, and become indistinguishable from the remainder of the population unless they are caught with weapons, equipment, documents or propoganda material. When not in use, weapons and equipment are skillfully hidden.

2. The presence of propoganda material, pictures of VC officials and other VC documents within a hamlet does not necessarily indicate the residents are pro-VC. Such material is distributed to the residents by the VC with threats of retaliation if such material is destroyed.

3. Many VC units wear uniforms when they wish to create the impression that they have gained control over GVN forces and have sufficient strength to operate openly. Uniforms are worn primarily by the well organized regular VC forces, however more and more uniforms are being worn by regional and local VC personnel. Uniforms may be black, blue, light khaki, or grey-green in color. Some individuals may only have a VC "helmet", others may have nothing but an old cartridge belt, others may have partial uniforms, but in all cases the VC appear to take great pride in possessing some type of military equipment. A light, home made, wicker or straw framed, paper covered, shallow, pith-helmet-shaped headgear is widely used by the VC whether they have other items of uniform, equipment or not.

4. The VC manufacture numerous items of equipment and material in the hamlets in which they live, such as weapons, ammunition, mines, grenades, spikes for man traps, trap frames, electrical firing devices, uniforms and propoganda material. The VC can be caught while manufacturing such items or with such items in their possession by surprise raids; however, with only a few minutes warning the more valuable items will be skillfully hidden, and the VC will assume the role of the friendly villager, vanish into the nearby water in the dense vegetation, or withdraw under the cover of the dense tropical growth to other hiding places.

5. The VC utilize covered routes for movements in daylight and are rarely ever observed crossing large open areas. Occasionally, VC moving by sampans can be identified by their helmets when surprised by aerial observers flying at tree top levels. Great care must be taken in making "positive" VC identifications from the air since numerous friendly forces dress in ordinary peasant garb or in non-descript uniforms, such as the SDC, the village youth groups, "fighting workmen", and other para-military units.

6. Frequently the VC will attempt to escape across small open areas when heliborne assaults are conducted against their bases in such a manner as to preclude other means of escape. However, great caution must again be taken in "positively" identifying running individuals as VC, since many innocent men, women and children are terror-stricken when such raids occur. Frequently the VC force the friendly villagers to accompany them in their attempts to escape.

(f) How Can A VC Stronghold Be Identified:

1. Hamlets which are utilized by the VC for bases, staging areas, headquarters, supply points, communications centers, for the manufacture of materiel, and for the production of propoganda material can often be identified or located with considerable accuracy by visible evidence, such as: the destruction of roads, the destruction of bridges, and barricades in

the waterways in the vicinity of the hamlet. Such evidence is clearly visible to aerial observers at altitudes of 2,000 feet and higher. Closer examination at "tree-top" level frequently reveals anti-helicopter stakes, foxholes under the canopy of the outer edge of tree lines which border the hamlet, wilted camouflage over spike pits, and occasionally protective fences adjacent to hamlets being used for important VC activities. Hamlets used for important VC activities and for hideouts are almost invariably located along or astride a water course with the characteristic bands of tropical growth along the banks which can be used as a covered route of approach or for withdrawals.

2. Confirmation of suspected VC locations and well supported evidence of other VC bases and strongholds can also be provided by continuously plotting all reports of VC movements and VC initiated incidents on small scale maps, using simplified, specially designed symbols to indicate the location of VC raids, ambushes, propoganda activities, acts of sabotage, road and bridge destruction, blocks in waterways, acts of arson, individual assassinations, employment of harrassing fire, firing at aircraft, reported routes of movement, routes of approach and withdrawal before and after raids, location of new concentrations of sampans, presence of significant numbers of new graves and other such factors. Such information is then analyzed in terms of time factors; presence or absence of covered routes for movements; presence or absence of trails, roads and waterways; location, size and configuration of hamlets; frequency of incidents within localities; quantity of information received from local residents; attitude of local residents; and the magnitude of enemy activities.

(g) How Can New VC Concentrations Be Detected:

1. The presence or movement of large VC forces into a new area can often be detected by a number of observations, such as the absence of activity in nearby fields when people are busy at work in the fields in other adjoining areas; sudden discontinuance of traffic on roads and canals in an area; movements of large numbers of women, children and old people in one direction from a hamlet while carrying large bundles and other possessions; the absence of people at the market place during the normal busy period; large numbers of vehicles stopped in line along a highway; unusual assembly of people in a hamlet; the presence of an unusual number of sampans in an area which are often submerged, camouflaged or under the shadows of trees bordering the water-course and the movement of large numbers of ox-carts in the rubber plantation and jungle areas.

2. Other indicators of the movement of VC into an area are: discontinuance of radio communications; failure of officials to keep appointments; failure of farmers and merchants to make normal deliveries of fruit, vegetables, poultry, fish and other produce; sudden tight-lipped attitude of inhabitants.

(h) What Routes Do The VC Use For Movement:

The VC normally use existing roads, foot paths, trails,

canals, rivers and other waterways which are utilized by the inhabitants of the area. They do not move across country through difficult swamps, jungles or muck unless forced to do so. However, in staging a surprise raid or attack, the VC do not hesitate to wade, swim or crawl through exceptionally difficult areas, in order to reach the most favorable positions for their assault. Since the VC generally move on the normal land and water routes, concealed observers should be able to detect the bulk of the VC movements from selected points along these routes without the necessity to place observers throughout the entire countryside.

(i) What Are The Characteristics of VC Strongholds:

1. In the Jungle Areas of the 5th Division Tactical Area:

The jungle covered areas of this zone begin in the flatlands of the north edge of the delta, gradually forming a more extensive and more complete blanket as the ground rises to the north and east, finally smothering virtually the entire surface of the earth in the hills and mountains. The jungle is broken by a number of large rubber plantations and some natural clearings of marshy flats in the valleys which range in size from a few square yards to some that are several miles in length and up to a mile or more in width. The road net is extremely limited and consists primarily of two national highways with lateral roads leading to the provincial "capitals" and the headquarters of the rubber plantations. Rivers and smaller streams form swift, deep currents in the mountains and hills but become more placid and meandering as they flow into the heavily jungled flatlands. Many of the streams in the flat jungle covered area are not visible from the air because of the overlap of the trees on the banks. Several VC training areas, supply points, way stations, communications centers and headquarters are located along the invisible streams of this area. Foot paths and ox-cart trails, well concealed under the canopy of the jungle link such VC installations with points along the roads and highways. VC installations of this type are usually equipped with thatched roof shelters, dug-outs with heavy overhead protection formed with logs and earth, stores of rice and salt in weather proof huts, and in some cases crude bleachers for use in training. Some VC way stations supply points and communication centers are located under the heavy canopy of the jungle around the perimeter of small clearings, where such clearings are on their principal routes of travel, and where the clearing can be used for growing rice, sweet potatoes, manioc and other food crops, and where there is a source of water. Escape routes are always provided by concealed paths leading into the depths of the jungle. Such VC installations are characterized by the presence of food crops in a clearing with no visible evidence of huts or structures of any type in the vicinity, and normally such installations are miles from the nearest road.

2. In The Delta and Lower Portion Of The 5th Division Area:

As has been emphasized before, the great majority of the VC live with the inhabitants of the rural hamlets, either on a permanent, semi-permanent or transient basis. Such hamlets vary in size and configuration from a cluster of 4 or 5 huts to numerous hamlets which are 8 to 10 miles in

length consisting of a single line of huts spaced at regular or irregular intervals along each bank of a straight or winding water course. Virtually all of the hamlets used by the VC have certain common characteristics regardless of size. Almost invariably such hamlets are built along the banks of water courses which have sufficient depth to accommodate sampans or larger boats at high or low tide. Hamlets utilized by the VC also have heavy bands of tropical vegetation along the banks of the water course which vary in width from 15 to 20 meters up to a thousand meters or more, but usually no more than 75 to 150 meters. This vegetation usually consists of bananas, coconuts, mangoes, papayas and numerous other tropical fruit trees as well as dense growths of huge fronds called water palms, which are used for constructing the roofs and walls of huts. Much of this lush vegetation is surrounded by or growing in water and offers almost perfect concealment for the VC who frequently submerge themselves under the cover of the heavy foliage to escape detection. Movement along the foot paths of the hamlets is especially difficult for a heavy laden soldier. This is due to the fact that large ditches are cut into the banks of the water course between each of the huts to provide water for irrigation, fish ponds and for other uses. These ditches vary in width from two to as much as ten meters, and frequently are several feet deep, with two to four feet of muck at the bottom. These ditches are spanned by single small logs or bamboo poles which are used as foot bridges for the paths along the banks of the main water course. Many of these flimsy bridges have no hand rails at all, and if one is provided it is usually far too weak to support a man's weight. As a result, muddy boots on the round log or pole frequently cause the soldier to fall into the water or muck of the ditch. Hamlets which are occupied by the VC for extended periods are protected in a number of ways which vary from skimpy to very extensive systems. Camouflaged pits with sharp bamboo spikes along the sides and in the bottom are frequently placed along the paths from the rice paddies into the hamlet as well as along the paths on the banks of the water course. Mines and booby traps may be placed along such paths and are frequently connected to vines which serve as trip wires. Foxholes may be dug around such hamlets and are placed at the outer edge of the wood lines to cover the adjacent rice paddies. Such foxholes are always within a few feet of the edge of the wood line in order to provide acceptable visibility and fields of fire. In areas where the water level permits, camouflaged pits and tunnels are dug to provide means for concealment or escape. In virtually all instances, pits are provided in or near each hut for protection against artillery fire and air strikes.

(j) How Do The VC React To Attacks By GVN Forces:

The VC employ observation and listening posts and require designated residents of the hamlets to serve as sentinels to give warnings of indications of GVN attacks, as well as to keep posted on movements of GVN forces. Normally as early as it is determined that an area is likely to be raided or attacked by GVN forces which greatly outnumber the VC, or have a great advantage in firepower, the VC hide all weapons and equipment and assume the role of the friendly farmer or villager, or the VC move out of the area along covered routes or under cover of darkness. For this reason, large ponderous forces have virtually no chance for success in attempting to find and

destroy the VC, or to "clear" an area which has been infiltrated by the VC. The establishment of a base of operations or a field command post gives the VC a clear indication that operations are to be conducted within an area. Prepositioning of fuel and supplies, relocation of boats and trucks, shifts in troop locations, assembly of officials at provincial offices, increases in the number of aircraft over an area for photo and reconnaissance missions, movement of artillery and mortars, and increased movement of supplies also provide the VC with early evidence of probable operations. For these reasons it is imperative that every possible measure be taken to achieve total surprise in staging raids and attacks against VC strongholds and hideouts, as well as the greatest degree of deception.

(k) When Will The VC Stand and Fight:

When a high degree of surprise is achieved in raiding or attacking a VC stronghold, the VC will employ local guerrillas or a portion of their regular forces to cover the withdrawal of the main force and to permit removal of valuable equipment. If the covered routes of escape are blocked the VC may assault the blocking force in order to open the route for escape. If the VC force has considerable strength, and covered routes of escape are blocked, the VC may elect to defend the area until a withdrawal can be made under cover of darkness. If the VC do not have sufficient strength to fight a delaying action or to temporarily defend their stronghold, and if covered routes of approach are blocked, the VC may elect to withdraw across open areas rather than be defeated or captured.

(l) What Do The VC Attack:

Normally the VC stage their attacks in order to secure weapons and equipment, to destroy GVN forces and materiel, and to discredit the government of Vietnam. As a result, they do not normally attack hamlets or intentionally injure the residents of an area, except in assassinations of village officials and individuals believed to be treasonable to the VC cause.

(m) How Do The VC Stage Attacks:

Most VC attacks are staged against small posts, district offices, and other small installations. The VC have sufficient forces in virtually all areas to permit the organization of an attacking unit which can overwhelm the GVN forces which occupy the post or installation to be attacked. The VC exploit the tendency of occupants of small posts to become complacent and careless about security when they are not harrassed or attacked for long periods of time. As a result, the VC usually move under cover of darkness or along covered routes in daylight, silently creep up to the walls of the post or fort, create panic by a sudden, violent assault accompanied by a shower of incendiary and high explosive grenades, the use of mines and demolition charges, a volley of small arms fire, and the occasional use of recoilless rifles. Usually such attacks are extremely well planned, rehearsed and refined to the last detail.

Frequently a part or all of the defenders are caught asleep and have no opportunity to occupy their positions or to call for assistance. Such attacks are often completed in a matter of moments, the VC scoop up all weapons, ammunition, radios and equipment and quickly withdraw along preselected escape routes. The VC almost universally place ambush parties astride the route or routes that GVN reinforcements will likely use if dispatched to aid the post under attack.

(n) How Do The VC Stage Ambushes:

VC ambushes are designed to completely annihilate the ambushed party in the first devastating volley of fire if at all possible. VC ambushes against convoys of vehicles on roads are planned in great detail. Electrically detonated mines are employed frequently with the control switch being placed from 200 to 400 meter from the road. Mines may be specially manufactured or may be artillery shells or other high explosive munitions. Such mines may be placed in the shoulder of the road or in a tunnel under the center of the road, but in either case great care is taken to prepare the installation in such a manner that it is virtually undetectable. An aiming stake may be placed in alignment with a road sign or mileage marker to assist the firer in determining the exact moment to detonate the mine. Riflemen and automatic weapons gunners are positioned very close to the road to insure that every shot will count. In one instance the VC employed a hundred or more men within 2 to 6 feet from the edge of the road where their only concealment was in chest high grass. In other cases where devastating ambushes were staged, the VC with small arms were positioned no more than 25 to 50 yards from the road. Again the VC plan such ambushes to permit the entire action to be accomplished in a matter of moments and always in close proximity to a covered route of withdrawal. Ambushes against single vehicles are often staged by local guerrillas with or without the use of mines.

(2) Characteristics of the Vietnamese People in the Rural Areas:

(a) Approximately 6,000,000 people live in approximately 6,000 hamlets in the delta area of South Vietnam. These are largely, rice farmers, fisherman, laborers, river workers, makers of charcoal, local craftsmen, small shopkeepers and other people of extremely meager means who live in straw thatched huts perched on tiny platforms of mud and dirt along the banks of the thousands of miles of canals and natural waterways. The vast majority of these people are illiterate and have little or no knowledge of the world beyond the range of their vision. Their wants are very simple- to own a hut of their own, to own an extra change of clothing, to own a few simple items of furniture, to own a few pots and pans, to have a water buffalo of their own, to own enough land to produce food for his family and enough surplus to procure the necessities that he can't produce himself, to have enough tools to permit him to till his land, to own his own sampan and other such items to provide a bare existence. Food is plentiful in the delta area since two crops of rice can be produced during the year in much of the region; coconuts, bananas, and other tropical fruits are available throughout the year; fish and shrimp can be found in all canals, rivers and other bodies of water; edible water birds are plentiful throughout the area; and the majority of the farmers have limited numbers of pigs and chickens.

(b) The rural people have little knowledge or interest in political matters or government functions. Their primary interest is to be permitted to retain what they have and to be left alone. It is difficult for them to understand the necessity of having to leave their fields and to wait for lengthy periods in order to prepare official records, secure permits, or to take care of other administrative matters at village, district and province offices. It is also difficult for them to understand the necessity to pay taxes. The VC find it easy to convince the peasant that such practices are unjust.

(c) The peasant is child-like in his thinking. He does not appreciate regional or national improvements. Unless he is the personal recipient of goods, supplies, land, services, or other types of aid to make his life easier or to provide a better standard of living, he does not appreciate community aid.

(d) Many of the rural people do not care who rules the country, since they feel the peasant's life has been about the same under all regimes, and is not likely to change under future governments.

(e) Most of the rural people readily conform to the demands of the VC since they fear the penalties of the VC much more than they fear the penalties for not conforming to GVN laws and directives.

(f) Although the great majority of these people have little or no knowledge of the causes of diseases, most of them know that drugs are in existence which will cure their ills. Medical services are almost non-existent in many areas and any one who can provide medical treatment is in great demand.

(3) Characteristics of Vietnamese Military Leaders:

(a) Most of the senior officers of the Vietnamese Armed Forces are intelligent men but could not be remotely compared with U.S. Officers of equal rank in terms of: education, environment, experience, motivation, professional knowledge, professional ability, dedication to duty and other such qualities. This condition is perfectly understandable and is the principal reason for the U.S. Advisory effort in Vietnam. However, the Vietnamese senior officers are extremely sensitive and proud and go to great lengths to convey the impression that the GVN officers can learn nothing from the U.S. Officers. In fact some of them flatly say that the U.S. Officers could profit greatly by understudying them.

(b) In spite of his reluctant acceptance of U.S. advice, support and assistance, the average senior Vietnamese officer, at his present state of development could not begin to cope with the manifold complexities of a large, integrated military and territorial command without the assistance of U.S. Advisors.

(c) Some of the Major weaknesses in the Senior Vietnamese officers are as follows:

1. Insistence of the higher commanders and the JGS to develop the general concepts and schemes of maneuver for small-scale task force operations

when such individuals have almost a complete lack of knowledge of: small unit tactics, techniques for the employment of weapons and equipment, capabilities of men and equipment, lack of appreciation of time and space factors, lack of knowledge of the terrain, lack of up-to-date intelligence, lack of knowledge of the loyalty of the residents in the area, and other such vital factors which should govern the design of plans for combat operations.

2. In most instances when Corps and higher commanders develop the concepts for operations, the U.S. Advisors are given no opportunity to influence their design. Instead, the overall concepts for the plan are usually developed by a group of wholly unqualified senior Vietnamese officers whose main efforts are devoted toward creating an atmosphere depicting master military strategists at work.

3. Concepts for operations which are developed by Corps and higher commanders are usually so incredibly bad that most could be used as horrible examples in studies of tactics. Most are vast, grandiose schemes, based on wildly imaginative ideas, which could produce nothing more than a splashy show of force in an area.

4. An examination of the concepts developed by Corps and higher commanders consistently reveals the fact that the primary thought behind the plan was to design the operation to prevent friendly losses.

5. The originators of such plans are usually exceptionally vain, thin skinned and scornfully reject suggestions for modifications or different concepts. As a result, the U.S. Advisors are usually faced with the hopeless problem of accepting the plan as it is and then doing everything within their power to refine the plan; see that coordination is effected on vital matters; arrange for helicopters, air-cover, POL, medical evacuation, literally all types of support, try to establish reasonable time schedules, insure that communications are established, try to get the troops moving on time, and to produce results in spite of the lack of logic in the basic plan.

6. The concepts for plans originated by Corps and higher commanders are influenced by many conditions beneath the surface such as: secret directives from top government officials, a climate of distrust caused by VC infiltration in GVN agencies and organizations, unwillingness to delegate authority, in-balances between the political positions of senior officers, desire to only ease the pressure for a while, the continued feeling that the VC are invincible, the knowledge that many subordinate commanders and units are ineffective, and the unwillingness to take risks.

7. Tendency to utilize commanders who are politically reliable rather than professionally competent.

8. Officers are not motivated with a sense of national purpose and pride.

9. Officers do not have a sense of urgency.

10. Senior officers do not know what goes on on the battlefield because it is only on rare occasions that any officer above the battalion commander accompanies the troops on operations or utilizes aircraft at sufficiently low altitudes to observe the activity during combat.

11. There are actually three plans, all different, that exist in the conduct of most operations; first, the plan approved by the commander; second, the plan that was actually executed; and finally, the plan that was reported to have been implemented by the battlefield commanders. Since the senior officers do not visit the battle field, they are frequently unaware of this situation.

12. The VN Corps, Division, regimental and sector commanders usually attempt to direct operations from elaborately equipped command posts, miles from the scene of the operation. Usually the command post has a magnificent display of overlays and maps but with almost a total absence of up-to-date information as to what is occurring on the battlefield. There is little or no effort made to secure reports or to take corrective action against those who fail to report.

13. The senior VN commander at the command post frequently refuses to accept the word of the U.S. advisors who are with the units on an operation as to the location and activity of the unit being advised, even when such information is confirmed by many sources.

14. The senior Vietnamese officers show little or no concern over the necessity to evacuate casualties as rapidly as possible. When they are advised that steps should be taken to move the wounded, who may be in critical condition, they appear to be studiously concerned but rarely display any real sense of urgency.

15. The senior Vietnamese officers exhibit almost a complete lack of appreciation of the need for detailed planning at the unit level; the conduct of rehearsals for operations, the need for corrective training, and the need to profit from lessons learned.

16. The senior officers frequently display a complete lack of concern for the inhabitants of an area which is to be the scene of operations by conducting prolonged air strikes and artillery bombardments on hamlets that are considered as VC strongholds, regardless of whether the VC are unwelcome guests in the hamlet or not.

17. Plans prepared by senior VN officers rarely if ever are designed to achieve total surprise, completely encircle or box-in an objective or block every conceivable avenue of escape. Instead, many of the senior officers deliberately design the plan in such a manner as to "frighten" the VC to such an extent that it is hoped that the VC will move into open "killing zones" where air strikes and artillery bombardments can be used to destroy them without the necessity of risking losses by close infantry combat.

18. Senior VII officers often make hasty, ill conceived decisions in the employment of reserve or additional forces during operations without conferring with their staffs or with the U.S. Advisors, and order such forces to be dropped by parachute or landed by helicopters, or by boat, without the commander of the force being employed having any knowledge of the location of friendly and enemy units, nor what the situation may be at the time.

19. The senior VII officers are unwilling or afraid to expose and remove many known incompetent officers. On the other hand there is little or no evidence that any attempt is made to recognize, reward and exploit those who display a high degree of leadership ability and a willingness to fight.

20. The senior VII officers are unwilling to allow subordinate commanders to use their own initiative.

21. The junior VII officers are far more receptive to the suggestions, recommendations, assistance, support and guidance from the U.S. Advisors than are the senior officers. However, many of the junior officers openly state that they agree with the U.S. Advisor but don't dare apply his suggestions for fear of censure from their superiors. Many are tormented by visions of being the scapegoat.

22. There seems to be an instinctive tendency to cast suspicions and create hostility toward a brash, fired-up, determined, successful, popular combat leader throughout all echelons of command.

(4) Weaknesses Noted in the Design and Conduct of Operations:

(a) Plans based on old, warmed-over intelligence of doubtful validity, on rumors, on hunches, or on other highly questionable bits of information with no attempt being made to confirm the accuracy of such reports.

(b) Failure to utilize skillfully hidden observation and listening posts, highly trained reconnaissance scouts, and other such means to develop and confirm intelligence and to maintain surveillance over movements of VC units.

(c) Failure of higher commanders to give adequate consideration to time and space factors in repositioning and moving troops and equipment for employment in operations.

(d) Premature movement of troops, supplies, boats, vehicles, command posts, communications equipment, POL and other materiel and service units into or near the area from which operations are to be launched.

(e) Excessive and obvious reconnaissance flights over areas to be raided or attacked.

(f) Failure to provide unit commanders with sufficient information for adequate preliminary preparations and for planning at the unit level.

(g) Failure to provide for logistical support.

(h) Failure to consider the weather, tides, conditions of terrain in prescribing routes, equipment to be used or carried, and time and space factors.

(i) Plans for "sweeping" or "clearing" a zone, which consisted of nothing more than one or more battalions being directed to move on an azimuth, or on definitely prescribed routes through a vast area to a series of "objectives", or to a single "goose egg" on an empty space on the map. Usually the prescribed routes for the battalions were spaced so far apart that contact or mutual support between battalions was impossible.

(j) In the conduct of such operations, the unit commanders were normally given a prescribed time to reach their "objectives". The plan was normally executed by the battalion moving in a single column, or sometimes two closely spaced columns, in single file fashion along the tops of the checker-board like dikes across the rice paddies, along the trails through the hamlets, and along the trails through jungles and swamps, with virtually no effort being made to search for hidden VC. In most instances the unit commander insisted that he had no authority to deviate from the prescribed route, not to take time for a careful search, since he was required to be on the "objective" by a prescribed time. When these matters were brought to the attention of the higher commanders, emphatic denials were made that such restrictions were placed on subordinates and it was further contended that the troops searched diligently and thoroughly in all applicable areas. On termination of such fruitless operations, the higher commanders usually contended that the VC learned about the operation before it took place through loose talk by advisors, press representatives, VC agents and sympathizers in GVN organizations and offices, or by other skillful intelligence work.

(k) In many operations against areas or hamlets which are considered to be hard-core VC strongholds, all possibility of surprise is lost by prolonged air strikes and artillery bombardments prior to the landing or movement of troops into the area. The innocent women, children and old people bear the brunt of such bombardments. If the area is actually a VC stronghold, the VC will usually have ample time to reach their dug-outs in between the first and second aircraft strikes, and while the artillery is being adjusted on the area. In most instances where a limited number of aircraft and artillery pieces are being utilized, the VC have little difficulty in moving from cover to cover and working their way to covered routes of withdrawal before the bombardment is completed. In almost all cases, the VN commanders allow an appreciable time to elapse between the termination of such bombardments and the movement of troops into the area.

(l) Many futile and costly operations are staged under the pretense of going to the rescue of a post which has been over-run by the VC, or under the pretense of a pursuit. Usually all operations of this type, if conducted by division or higher headquarters, are staged many hours or even

days after the VC have departed. I have never known of any attempts by the Division or Corps commanders to actually make an effort to follow the trails or tracks of the VC in conducting such operations, but the "objective" is selected by pure speculation as being that to which the VC withdrew.

(m) There seems to be an almost universal lack of understanding, from the soldier to the highest ranking officer, on the principles of fire and movement, and in the principles of fire and maneuver within the company, the battalion or larger units. This matter is constantly stressed and emphasized throughout the entire advisory organization, but little or no progress has been noted.

(n) There is almost a total absence of effort on the part of all Vietnamese officers to follow through to see that orders and directives are carried out. It appears that after a directive is published, or a verbal order is issued, that the originator feels absolutely no responsibility to take steps to insure that the order or directive is executed. This attitude prevails in all staff sections as well as with commanders, and as a result there is virtually no such thing as staff and command supervision.

(o) Unit training would never be conducted in most organizations if it were not for the constant pleading and urging of the advisors as well as the fact that most of the preparatory work is accomplished by the advisors in ready-to-use form and training aids and training areas are built largely by the advisors.

(p) With the exception of night movements of troops for subsequent daylight operations, commanders of regular ARVN units rarely if ever conduct night operations. In fact, only on rare occasions will commanders attempt to contain VC which may have been "bottled-up" after nightfall.

(q) After long persuasion, advisors of the 7th Division were permitted to accompany GVN patrols and ambush groups on a number of night operations. In every instance where contact was made with the VC, one or more individuals "inadvertently" fired their weapon prematurely, long before the VC moved into the trap.

(r) In many instances ARVN troops are noted firing well in the air, firing into the ground immediately in front of their own position, and in some instances firing from protected positions while holding the rifle with the arms extended over their heads when engaged in fire fights with the VC. When brought to the attention of unit commanders, no corrective action is taken on most occasions. Frequently the unit commander is also unwilling to expose himself in order to exercise control over his unit or to observe the enemy position.

(s) One of the greatest weaknesses in GVN commanders and in the unit leaders is the failure to pursue the VC as they withdraw from a position being attacked.

3. GENERAL COMMENTS:

a. Employment of Helicopters:

(1) The helicopter has been of enormous value in influencing the Vietnamese commanders to be more aggressive, to have more confidence, to develop more logical plans, to strive to achieve surprise, to give more consideration to time and space factors, to appreciate the necessity for coordination and detailed planning, to utilize blocking forces, to pursue the VC, to maintain and utilize mobile reserves, to exploit the capabilities of air and artillery support, to give more consideration to proper logistical support, to timely evacuation of casualties, to the need for timely, accurate intelligence, to the value of proper treatment and immediate interrogation of prisoners, and to the value of encirclements as opposed to area "sweeps".

(2) Initially when helicopters were first employed in Vietnam, the commanders insisted on landing the attacking forces only on one side of an objective and usually from one to three kilometers from the edge of woods lines bordering the objective. Occasionally the VC fired a few rounds to harrass the troops as they struggled for an hour or more through the paddies toward the objective, but in almost all instances the VC had vanished before the troops closed in. As the helicopters were used more frequently, landings were made virtually on top of groups of VC which were not expected to be present. In such instances the ARVN troops had little choice other than fight if the VC opened fire. The unit commanders and the troops soon discovered that the VC were not "supermen" as had been believed, and in most instances the ARVN losses were insignificant in comparison with VC losses. In gaining confidence in their own ability to destroy the VC, the ARVN commanders became more willing to land closer and closer to the objective, and to permit landings on two or more sides of the objectives in order to "box-in" the enemy. This technique proved to be highly effective if the objective was small enough to be contained.

(3) In most instances there have not been enough helicopters to permit a simultaneous landing of sufficient troops to effect a complete encirclement of the objective area. For this reason troops were shuttled into the area by multiple lifts, usually from a common loading zone. This procedure is time consuming and frequently required the refueling of the helicopters in between lifts, which sometimes required as much as two hours by hand pumping from drums. Normally, the VC were able to easily escape before the gaps were closed by the second and subsequent lifts. More effective operations were developed by pre-positioning blocking forces by foot movements, boats and by vehicular means under cover of darkness in such locations as to close in on the objective area in coordination with the landing of heliborne assault forces in order to effect encirclements. Premature and noisy movements of blocking forces often gave the VC sufficient warning to evacuate the area prior to the ARVN attack.

(4) The VC have become more and more effective in hitting the helicopters with small arms fire, however in most instances where a significant number of hits were made, the VC had been able to procure their weapons and

place themselves in favorable positions after the first landings were made, and were ready to fire on the helicopters on the second and subsequent lifts.

(5) The capabilities of the helicopter can be exploited in the Delta area to a far greater extent than in jungle or mountainous areas. Troop landings can be made in virtually all parts of the Delta area even in water-covered areas while the helicopter momentarily hovers over the surface. Helicopter operations can be conducted throughout the rainy season although individual storms may delay the conduct of an operation for an hour or more. The helicopter permits raids and attacks to be conducted with a far greater degree of surprise than by any other method of delivery. The helicopter permits complete or partial encirclements to be effected in simultaneous landings. Tactical integrity can be maintained, and assaults may be conducted the second the troops touch the ground if planned and rehearsed in sufficient detail.

(6) Helicopter operations against the VC strongholds and hideouts in the Delta area should be conducted insofar as possible without any prior reconnaissance. If reconnaissance is necessary, flights over the area should be made days ahead of the planned day of attack. Flights over the area should be made in such a manner as to appear to be normal administrative flights. Low-level photographs are invaluable, but should be taken long before the day of the operation if the area is large enough to require repetitive flights over the area.

(7) Preliminary air strikes and artillery fires are highly undesirable in conducting helicopter operations in the Delta area. Such strikes not only kill many innocent women and children, but give the VC ample time to hide, withdraw, or to be prepared to fire on the helicopters as they land.

(8) The assault element of heliborne task forces should be landed as close to the edge of the woods lines (bordering VC strongholds) as can possibly be accomplished. Normally the VC do not occupy foxholes and firing positions around the perimeter of their strongholds except when an attack is expected. For this reason, if helicopter landings can be accomplished with total surprise the ARVN troops can be beyond the VC positions before they can be occupied if the landing is made within a matter of a few feet from the woods line.

(9) Armed helicopters should fly above the edge of woods lines, and slightly toward the center of the objective to place suppressive fires on VC in foxholes around a VC stronghold. In this manner the VC have considerable difficulty in seeing the helicopters and in firing effectively at them.

(10) Fighter-bombers should also restrict their fire to the edge of the woods lines when such support is required during helicopter operations. Napalm is a much more effective weapon than any other munitions when the VC are in foxholes.

(11) Helicopterborne "hunter-killer" teams are invaluable to apprehend and destroy groups of VC who may try to flee the vicinity of areas being raided and attacked.

(12) There are approximately 6,000 hamlets in the delta area. Most of these are inaccessible by road, and many are situated on such tiny water courses that nothing larger than a sampan can negotiate the water ways. The VC are living in hundreds of these isolated hamlets. We are learning more and more as to the exact locations of these hideouts. In order to find the VC at such a time that he can be identified, he must have something in his possession that discloses his identity. This can be done if he is caught in his hut with VC weapons and equipment in his possession or while he is manufacturing such items. In order to catch him in such a predicament a raiding force must achieve virtually total surprise. This must either be done by stealth or by surprise helicopter landings. Since the countryside is dotted with VC observers and agents, it is very difficult to achieve surprise by foot or boat movements. For this reason, the helicopter is by far the best means for conducting surprise raids. With proper planning, the same helicopters may be used for conducting a number of raids over a considerable area from the same operational base in a single day.

(13) For these reasons, every possible effort should be made to provide more adequate, reliable helicopter support to the IV Corps, if necessary at the expense of other requirements. The CH-21 helicopter support is completely inadequate because of the inability to maintain a reasonable percentage of operational helicopters.

b. Value of the Self Defense Forces and The Civil Guard:

The bulk of the fighting strength of GVN forces is found in the SDC and Civil Guard; however, the greater part of the advisory effort is concentrated on the regular forces. There is much evidence that members of the SDC and Civil Guard have a stronger desire to rid the land of the VC than do the regular forces, since most of the SDC and Civil Guard are in or near their home areas. A major effort is being made at this time by MAC-V, MAAG and the field advisory organizations to influence the GVN officials to discontinue the near worthless small posts and to utilize such forces in hidden observation and listening posts, in small reconnaissance and hunter-killer patrols, and in concealed ambush positions. If this policy is carried out, thousands of men will be available for carrying out reconnaissance, patrolling and ambush missions. However, the vast majority of these forces will have to accomplish their missions without the benefit of U.S. Advisors.

c. Psychological Warfare Measures:

U.S. Advisors and GVN officials universally agree that the Government of Vietnam must win the hearts of the people in order to achieve a victory over the communists. In the absence of a colorful, powerful, inspirational national leader, it is believed much could be done toward winning the hearts of the people through the media of motion pictures. The rural people are tremendously impressed and influenced by motion pictures. Recently the U.S. Advisory detachment located in a remote area of the Plaine des Joncs at Moc Hoa staged an outdoor showing of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. It was estimated that more than 2,500 people packed the area in order to have a glimpse of the small screen. It appears that many of the existing films of the Walt Disney type could be used

to appeal to the children, if not the elder people. With the proper Vietnamese technical assistants, films could be produced to appeal to the young men and women of Vietnam. As a suggestion, these films might be stories of high adventure, depicting Vietnamese who place "duty, honor and country" above other things. With the assistance of skilled propoganda experts, it should not be difficult to weave into those stories, a subtle theme of loathsome villains who have many of the ear-marks of communists and VC. The same techniques could be utilized to indoctrinate the people in many ways that can rarely be achieved by ordinary leaders.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS:

a. That one or more of the highest U.S. Governmental Officials confer with President Diem in frank, open and completely honest discussions concerning the absolute necessity for the GVN commanders to accept U.S. advice if the military assistance program is to continue as presently planned.

b. That every possible effort be made to secure President Diem's approval to conduct a series of joint, US/VN conferences and/or seminars at the national level for all Vietnamese General Officers, the key members of the corps and higher staffs, as well as division and brigade commanders for open and frank discussions concerning: the principles of command, command responsibilities, characteristics of successful commanders, traits of unsuccessful commanders, how to develop a fighting spirit in soldiers and junior officers, principles of combat leadership, necessity for commanders to display great personal courage and aggressiveness, principles of fire and maneuver, principles of shock action, principles of massing fires, command control on the battlefield, principles of encirclements, coordination of fires between assaulting and blocking forces in encirclements, coordination of forces in combined arms and joint task force operations, principles of fire and maneuver, proper use of helicopters in conduct of raids and assaults, use of fire support coordination centers, capabilities and limitations of fighter aircraft and armed helicopters, medical support, psychological warfare and civic action measures in tactical operations, the necessity to recognize and reward those who excell on the battlefield, and the necessity to isolate and eliminate the ineffectives.
