

VIA

C O R N I N G I N T E R O F F I C E M E M O R A N D U M

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Subject: ROE's

L08183

In response to the Rules of Engagement posting, Chris Wheeler said that their rules in '71 were simple: If you could identify the person as hostile, you could blow him away.

In the late spring of '72, the rules had gotten ridiculous. It was not enough to identify the person as hostile, they had to "be" hostile. In other words, they had to shoot first.

One day in May or June of '72, I was flying MG James F. Hollingsworth, CG of the Third Regional Assistance Command. Some of you might remember him as "Danger 79." We were flying single ship, no gun security, when we saw a whole column of clearly identifiable NVA soldiers sitting beside a small road north of Lai Khe, green pith helmets, AK47's, and the whole shebang. But they weren't firing at us so technically there wasn't anything we could do.

This, obviously, was unsatisfactory to an aggressive old war horse like Hollingsworth.

He asked in his wonderful Texas drawl, "Plummer, can you take this sumbitch any lower?." When I allowed that I could, he ordered us down to 50 feet and on a course parallel and about twenty-five to fifty meters from the trail. As we flew past this gaggle of grinning and waving NVA regulars, I heard screaming from the back. When I looked around, the General was on his knees, throwing C-Ration cans out the door and yelling: "Take that you #\$%*, you chicken@\$*# are too yellow to fight! Shoot, you sorry bastards!"

Thank God, they didn't shoot or we would have been dead meat. I quickly informed the General that our fathermaratchet had gone into overloop and the chrome plated gestelbin was tarnished necessitating a return to base. I wasn't about to fly down THAT road again! This just demonstrates how ridiculous things were while Henry Kissinger and Alexander Haig were selling our safety down the drain for an "honorable end to hostilities."

"Rev. Thunderhorse"
John Plummer

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