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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
28th MILITARY HISTORY DETACHMENT
11th ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96257

AVIC MR

18 Dec 1970

SUBJECT: Unit Interview

Office, Chief of Military History
Washington, D.C. 20315

1. The following interview was conducted with CPT Arnold H. Gaylor, Armor, D Company Commander from 5 May 70 to 14 Dec 70. The interview was conducted by SGT Richard J. House, 28th Military History Detachment, at the Delta Company Orderly Room.
2. The tape was recorded on both sides at a speed of 1 7/8 IPS on a Sony (National) TC-350 tape recorder.
3. There are Confidential restrictions on the interview.

The following is a transcript of the interview.

Question:

Sir, what is your general evaluation of your assignment as a commander, including job requirements, tenure of command, and personal qualifications?

Answer:

Over all I think I have been extremely lucky to receive a command with tanks, I have been qualified with these for quite awhile. I was a 2Lt with a tank platoon and then had a tank company in Germany. Later I had an AIT tank company in the states; had one tour here with the Cav with a Cav Troop, but I was more qualified for a tank company than anything else. Once I got back in the country this time, I worked pretty much with the idea of having a tank company this time. Basically everything I did lead up to assignment with a tank company. I think I was very fortunate to get a tank company instead of a recon troop.

Question:

Sir, what is your evaluation of the Company's performance of duty?

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Answer:

I have nothing but praise for the entire company, and the people in the company. We have an outstanding combat record; I have been through fights with the company, I have been through a proached peace time conditions with this company, and would take this company anyplace in world. I have an outstanding unit, I am convinced that I have the best company in the unit, and probably the best unit in all of Bietnam. I could take this company anywhere and measure it up to any other company. This is based primarily on the caliber of the NCO and junior officers who work with me. They know their performance is such fields as maintainence; things in this nature. I am sure that this unit would sack up with any unit of this in the U.S. Army.

Question:

Sir, do you have any comments on maintenance and logistics? Would you recommend any changes?

Answer:

In the field of maintenance there is a general blurr in the situation we find ourselfs here. There is a general blurr between the category of maintenance we've been taught as we came along. The difference between 1st and 2nd category is so fine, you have to over-step this difference so often. This general concept and idea I think needs to be evaluted in the future. This is especially true for a major componet of a tank, example; the pack. In cases I had a pack go out, knowing full well what was wrong with the pack, it could be a small item which I could replace; such as a fuel injector pump, but still I must send the entire pack to the rear are and put a new pack in. I thought this to be very expensive. It would be much easier if some way we could blurr this line somehow between the 2 category's of maintenence so we could be authorized to change such items.

The field of logistics, the only thing I could add or say is it works! It works well, especially when you work with the system and not around it. I had a young executive officer work for me, he was extremely knowledgeable in this field, more so than many of his counterparts. But he insisted on working through the system for such things as parts and re-supplies. For the first time we have had valid command data on exactly the parts we use and parts we need. Even if he had to scrounge a part he would report this through the Taylor System so that this data was picked up in a data point. The system work well as long as you work with the system and not around it.

Question:

Sir, did the training that your officers receive prior to coming to Vietnam perpare them for leadership in Vietnam?

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Answer:

This is a difficult question to answer. Main reason being my concept of leadership is quite different than you might read in a book. I have felt all along and still feel that leadership is not something that can be learned; leadership techniques can be learned, but only sharpen what leadership ability the individual has already. Of the 6 to 8 officers that work for me, at least 5 of them can be termed "born leaders". One of them was self made leader in that he had the qualities and attribute, but had to work at them. I also had a couple that were no leaders in any circumstances or by any criteria. I feel that leadership training as such is really hard to evaluate. These people came over with very limited experience, they did an outstanding job while they were here. They were leaders in every sense of the word. How much of this was based or hinged on their previous leadership training we really can't say. I think that leadership, especially in combat conditions is too much of an individual thing; what works for one man will not work for another. I am not really sure of how to approach this problem of leadership training. I can say that the majority of the cases, my junior officers were qualified and did lead men in the best tradition of the Army.

Question:

Sir, how would you evaluate the overall manner of performance of your EM?

Answer:

With one word...Outstanding! I haven't been in too long, this is my 7th year active. The quality and caliber of the people that work for me in this unit far exceeds that of any unit I have had. The youngsters we have coming in today may not be professional in the sense that they have different outlooks and value system that what I have; like wearing their hair exactly the way I may want it; but these people are over here to do a job, most of them for 2 years, and they do the best job for 2 years they possibly can. I think we must recognize the fact that they are better educated, have a broader outlook on life, they have a firmer grasp on what the world situation actually is and they are different from the troops we are normally used to working with. I saw nothing here that would make me ashamed of any member of the U.S. Army. This runs for the E-8's and E-7's I had working for me all the way down to the E-2's on a tank. I had E-2's that could fire a tank as well as E-6's. Of course I had some E-6's that had problems firing the tank. This is for every MOS all the way from the cook up to the tank commander.

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Question:

Sir, what is your evaluation of the weapons and communications facilities used by the company?

Answer:

In the field of communication. The basic equipment we have to work with is very good. However, there is one system that is not working exactly as planned, and this is the VRC-12 series of radios, the automatic tuner type. We find through the vibration and the extreme hard wear we put on these radios, that they will not function properly after a period of time. Also the concept of having an auxiliary receiver with one transmitter simply does not work under many situations. To change channels and talk to someone else, many times in a crucial situation and this means you are going to miss something very important that comes over on another net. I think all command vehicles should be outfitted with two 46 series radios, so that the commander does not have only dual monitoring capabilities, but also dual transmitting capabilities. I had one situation where I was in a fairly hairy situation, a fire fight developed and my "12" radio went out, left me with only an AR (auxiliary receiver) so I had to dismount my tank and take over another one. So this concept, I think, the command vehicle must have dual monitoring and dual transmitting capabilities. There is one other item of communication I would like to talk about. This is the "secure set" we have coming down the company level. This is the most outstanding piece of equipment I have yet seen come down. Not in the equipment itself, for it can also bear improvement, but it is the general concept for being able to get on the air in times of stress when things are not going quite well and not having time to stack information or put it in a short form that someone can understand, yet devote too much to the enemy. Being able to talk to the secure mode and up to and including secret is probably the greatest contribution we had. Now a word on these, the series we are presently working with are extremely heat sensitive. I don't believe that we would be able to work this system down in a tank itself because of the heat and so forth on a tank turret. We find that to operate this continuously, we must have some form of a cooling capability such as a fan or something of this nature. And at any time that the instrument does get warm it will go all rushing and be unable to transmit; so this is one problem that needs to be worked with.

As far as the weapon system is concerned, of course being in a tank company, I have worked with weapon systems that have been proven time and time over the years, such as the M-2-50 caliber machinegun, 90mm main gun, coaxial, the M-73, all these weapons are extremely good, particularly maintenance free. All you have to do is keep them clean, and they will work fine; as far as small arms, once

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again they are standby, such as a caliber .45 pistol. The M-79 is probably one of the finest little weapons we had in quite awhile. The reese gun which the tanks are equipped, I think have about out-lived their use from us. I am under the impression that the CAR-15 would probably be a much better weapon for a tank rather than a sub-machinegun. The M-16 rifle with the modification they have and the care we take with them, I have yet to see one jam. As far as the weapons system of the people who have worked with me the 155-SD Holister Howitzer is a fine weapon system. It is one of the finest I ever worked with as far as artillery is concerned, it is as accurate as you can desire and has an unbelievable fire power. So all in all, I can rate the weapon system we have as simply outstanding!

Question:

Sir, what comments do you have on the RF Units you have worked with?

Answer:

The only way you can judge a RF is to judge the commander. I worked with several RF Units, the ones with good commanders, officers, and NCO's made outstanding units. I worked with some that are as good as any of the ARVN regular Army. As far as the basic knowledge and wanting to go down and actually slug it out toe to toe, these people are outstanding. I worked with units that would go off after they got into the operation, hide behind a tree and wait the required number of hours and march out. But in all these cases, you are not evaluating the unit, but rather the commander. I have taken out RF Units that I mentioned who hid behind the tree and with another commander they had a fine showing and worked as good as an ARVN Airborn Unit. I have nothing but praise for them when they have good leaders, and many times it is dangerous to even work with them.

Question:

Sir, during the past few month, a great many of our operations have been conducted with Vietnamese Regional Forces. What has been the purpose of these operations?

Answer:

As I understood the operation, and as I briefed my people, the basic purpose behind these operations; get the ARVN or the Vietnamese people themselves into their own fight, and the reason I am there is to give enough encouragement to know that there is someone there in case they do get into a fight, but not to fight the fight for them. I thought this general concept worked real well, if they know I'm there, they fight much better and when the fight is over with; it is the RF's that killed the enemy and won the battle; but I was right there in case they needed me.

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Question:

Sir, to what advantage do the VC/NVA put terrain, weather and our mistakes?

Answer:

The VC/NVA individual is outstanding. He is one of the finest soldiers we have been up against in quite awhile. He knows his terrain and takes advantage of it; for example, a tank company will come along and he will set up between two creeks and knows fully I can't reach him in any way possible. He can get into the thickest and marshiest areas. He knows his terrain and takes full advantage of it.

As far as the weather is concerned, he fights when he wants to fight and picks the worst weather possible. As far as our own mistakes, he will capitalize on them in a minute. The only time you will really get caught short out there is when you make a mistake; he's watching you all the time. He can evaluate you as a professional soldier and if you make a mistake, it is a mistake, and you will have to live with it.

Question:

Sir, how do you assess the enemy's anti-tank capability at this time?

Answer:

The individual weapon that the NVA/VC are using; the RPG-2 and the RPG-7 are both extremely effective anti-tank weapons. They will penetrate the heaviest armor. They are accurate well up to 200-300 meters, used by brave men (they do have plenty of brave men) this becomes quite a threat to armor forces. We have noticed with contact with the medium tanks (M-48) initially will receive a verve of RPG fire, this dwindles to almost nothing, then the fight is over. The weapon itself must be in close to be used and adequate black-lash must be allowed.

If they took that weapon, take the people they have, the caliber of people they have are brave, and train them into 1-2-3 men anti-tank teams, they could be very effective. It's a threat that I don't think we faced before, because of the terrain we are working in and because it is so easy for an anti-tank team to hide someplace, and you drive right by them (as close as 50-75 meters). You drive by them and they get two or three rounds off and that's all it takes to destroy a tank.

I think now that the anti-tank personnel have finally learned to try and hit

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the main gun. Initially when we got into a fight, they were shooting for the turret ring or shooting for some place to stop the tank. However, after a few fire fights, they learned that they must stop the main gun. Now they are shooting at the gun mantle, shooting for the gun itself, or shooting at the tank commander. They shoot right under the right hand in-box, knowing fully well if they hit there, not only will they disable the gun, but probably kill or disable the TC. It took them quite awhile to realize under most conditions we were not carrying gunners, down in the gunner seat. This reason is two-fold. First of all, they can not see from down there when you are busting jungle, the driver can not see through the fire sight, and second of all we need somebody on the back deck. This man covers the rear and makes sure the enemy does not climb on the back deck and plant a mine or shape charge. So it took them quite awhile to realize that we were not carrying gunners. Later I think they realized that we were doing most of the firing from the tank commander override and that is when they started getting really effective by shooting at the tank commander himself.

There anti-tank capabilities is something to be reckoned with. Of course it is not a great as the long range weapons that you face in a conventional war, but they are effective.

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