

VIETNAM

HEADQUARTERS

UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
APO 143, San Francisco, California

1 October 1964

COMBAT FUNDAMENTALS FOR ADVISORS

The goal of the United States Government in Vietnam is to assist the Government of the Republic of Vietnam in its fight for freedom. Together we will win the struggle against the Viet Cong.

In the prosecution of the war, American advisors are called upon to appraise the situation and to give sound advice. This advice must be based on an objective analysis grounded on fundamental military knowledge. Attached are combat precepts as they apply to the war in Vietnam, which are commended for your study and use. The effectiveness of your advisory efforts will be in direct proportion to the application of combat fundamentals, knowledge, past experience and common sense.

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AMBUSH

A favorite tactic of the VC is the ambush. By use of the ambush the VC seek to offset their overall inferiority in manpower and weaponry through surprise and concentration of force at one location. Recognizing this typical guerrilla maneuver, anti-ambush thinking and planning should become second nature to every U.S. Advisor in Vietnam.

The combat Fundamentals for Advisors which follows, in this publication are applicable in general to all military operations—but they should be constantly applied to uncover, thwart or destroy VC ambushes. For example, a standard VC tactic is to attack a hamlet or small post as relief's, then ambush on the route which government reinforcements must take to relieve or reinforce the hamlet or small post. Since every relief column is a potential target it must take the proper security measures enroute and not rush headlong down the road. Where possible the relief column should move by two or more routes and avoid the most obvious and direct route.

One of the main problems in anti-guerrilla war is to bring the enemy to combat. When he ambushes, he volunteers to fight. Thus, the destruction of the ambush must become a main objective of RVNAF forces— as important — in some cases more important to the overall effect than the relief column itself.

Anticipate ambushes — note potential ambush sites as a result of past experience and map reconnaissance — make detailed fire support plans — use reconnaissance by fire (artillery and small arms) against likely ambush areas — use air cover — adopt ultra-secure formations — take unorthodox approaches and routes — use multiple routes — be close-mouthed and deny VC advance information — be secure in planning troop movements — screen actual movements with ground patrols operating to front and flanks of the main body to discover ambush sites before the main body arrives. Be suspicious — be practical — be professional. Apply the Fundamentals and avoid the — AMBUSH.

ANALYSIS OF MISSION VICTORIES

1. Is the mission clearly understood by all?
2. Does the plan have flexibility? Is the enemy the objective, particularly after contact has been gained, rather than terrain which was assigned for control purposes?
3. Does the plan have a decisive, attainable objective?
4. Is the selection of the objective based on the means available, the enemy, and a reasonable size area of operations?
5. Is it planned to use all available means? Crew-served weapons, artillery, air, ships and/or boats, armor, airborne?

OFFENSIVE

1. Is the commander imposing his will on the enemy rather than reacting to enemy action? Only offensive action can win and prevent the enemy from escaping, reorganizing, and resuming his attack.
2. Is the commander keeping contact and pursuing with all available means—infantry, armor, artillery, airborne and/or airborne forces, boats and air? If contact is lost is every effort made to reestablish it through the use of aerial surveillance, extended patrols, Eagle Flights, and aggressive offensive action?
3. Are night operations used extensively to accomplish the mission and to keep the enemy on the defensive?
4. Does the plan block all VC escape routes?
5. Has the commander instilled in his troops a will to win?

SECURITY ON THE MOVE

1. Is every possible measure being taken to prevent surprise by the full use of intelligence and counter-intelligence? Reconnaissance, searches, patrols, aerial observations, PW's, information from higher and lower units?
2. Does the formation adopted by the commander during approach to contact or on reconnaissance insure the main body against ambush?
3. Does the commander move the unit by bounds when he considers contact imminent?
4. Does the commander have knowledge of the civilians and friendly forces in the area?
5. Is the commander using deception to keep the VC off balance? For example, moving at night and the use of camouflage and concealment?
6. Is there security on moves and halts? Outposts, sentinels, scouts, searches, reconnaissance, and stealth in moving units?
7. What is the reaction of the villagers, are they friendly or have they disappeared?
8. After objectives are taken, is security continuous and is the area searched?

CIVIC ACTION

1. Has the commander required his soldiers to treat civilians properly so that the citizens of RVN have a favorable impression of their Army?
2. Have the soldiers been properly briefed on respecting civilian property? Food, crops, dwellings and animals?

FIRE AND MANEUVER

1. In an offensive situation, does the commander use fire and maneuver to close with and destroy the enemy? (Find; Fix; Fight; Finish).
2. Are mobility means being used, to, move, RYNAF forces (other than VC ? M 113's, helicopters, trucks, airplanes, riverboats ?
3. Does the unit establish a base of fire and maneuver at the same time, taking advantage of direct and indirect fire support elements while maneuvering ?
4. Has the commander tested his communications with supporting artillery, mortars, armed riverboats, and air to guarantee continuous fire support ? Is the small unit commander controlling his fires ?
5. Have plans been made for the pursuit and continuation of the attack ?
6. Can the scheme of maneuver be changed to suit the situation ? For example, when under fire, does the unit take immediate action to flank the enemy ?

COMMAND AND CONTROL

1. How can the commander best control the operation ? From where ? What control measures ? When will the components of fire support start ? What signal or command will be used to start, stop, and stop it ? How, when, and where should the attack order be issued ?
2. Is there a clear-cut channel of command to promote unity of effort and the decisive application of full combat power ?
3. Is there coordination of all forces toward a common goal ? Coordination with Province (RF - PF - Rangers), Sector, Division, Air Force, Navy, Marines ?

COMMAND AND CONTROL (CONT'D)

4. Is there a single commander of the operation?
5. Have communications with lower and higher echelons been established and checked to provide control?
6. Does the commander have continuous communications with other maneuver elements? Heliborne forces, armor elements, riverboats, airborne forces?
7. Has the commander made personal visits to follow-up his orders? Has he inspected his men and equipment before the operation?
8. Are the tasks simple and are the orders clear? Have leaders and troops been briefed?
9. Has the commander checked food, water, medical supplies, medical evacuation, ammunition distribution, and tested essential equipment for the operation?

