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**COMBAT LESSONS BULLETIN**

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KIT CARSON SCOUT OPERATIONS

GENERAL

Kit Carson Scouts (KCS) are Hoi Chanhs, former VC/NVA and other dissidents who have rallied to the GVN under the Chieu Hoi "Open Arms" program. They are employed by GVN, US and FWMAF units on a full time basis to assist units in military operations. The KCS is a valuable asset to a unit as he knows enemy tactics, techniques, and habits first hand. In many cases KCSs are familiar with the terrain and people in the unit's area of operation. The accepted basis for employment is two Kit Carson Scouts for each rifle platoon. The KCS program, although relatively young, is already yielding excellent results. Selection, training, methods of employment and actual combat examples of KCS use by US units are discussed in this Combat Lessons Bulletin.

SELECTION AND TRAINING

At the National Chieu Hoi Center and Regional Chieu Hoi Centers, the Hoi Chanhs go through a period of political indoctrination and the ones with potential for becoming Kit Carson Scouts are identified. A unit desiring to employ Hoi Chanhs as Kit Carson Scouts conducts a recruiting program directed toward these identified individuals in an attempt to get them to volunteer for the KCS program. The unit selects the most aggressive and reliable volunteers who are taken to that unit's Kit Carson Scout training center for a period of training and evaluation. Here, US "Buddy" volunteers may be assigned to train and work with the new KCSs. The training consists of English, US tactics and operational techniques. During the evaluation period they are briefed on their duties, tested on their reliability and assigned missions which contribute to the military effort against the enemy without jeopardizing security. Upon completion of the training and evaluation period, the new Kit Carson Scouts are issued distinctive identification badges and shoulder patches to identify them

as part of the unit.

All units have not experienced continuous good results with their Kit Carson Scouts. A study of those who have had the best results reveals that personal attention to the welfare of the KCS is a key factor in their successful employment. Starting with his recruitment, a KCS must be treated as an individual and as the military man he is. He must be integrated into the unit and treated like the other soldiers. The US "Buddy" helps the Scout adjust and explains situations that are strange and different. Availability of adequate medical treatment, relatively high salary and improved living conditions have been important factors in motivating KCSs to do a better job. The KCS must be trusted and made to feel that he is needed. The sooner this is accomplished and the KCS becomes accustomed to working with his new unit, the sooner he will be able to contribute his unique capabilities to the overall accomplishment of his unit's mission.

#### METHODS OF EMPLOYMENT

1. Training and Advising Host Units. The Kit Carson Scouts have provided valuable assistance to their host units in training. Their thorough knowledge of NVA/VC tactics and techniques can be effectively used in replacement and refresher training programs to familiarize all personnel with enemy concepts and techniques. Scouts have proven to be extremely valuable in advising and assisting tactical units and logistical/support installations and fire support bases in the preparation of and improvement of their perimeter defenses. Former NVA/VC sapper KCSs have demonstrated many weaknesses in a unit's perimeter wire location and placement of claymore mines and trip flares. Various units have organized exhibition teams to travel throughout their tactical areas giving demonstrations of how sappers penetrate barbed wire obstacles and perimeter defenses. Additionally, they have recommended changes to improve these positions.

At 2015 hours on 11 July 1969, while Company D, 3d Battalion, 12th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division was in a night defensive position, a trip flare on the perimeter was activated. M-60 and M-79 fire was directed at that area and the attacking enemy was repulsed. At first light, a sweep was made which resulted in finding 4 rounds of B-40 ammunition and 40 CHICOM grenades. Two bloody shirts and several bloody trails were also located. The significance of this event is that the trip flare that had provided early warning of the attack had been installed by KCS Nhuyen Van Mien. In placing the trip flare, he demonstrated that a NVA/VC soldier usually approaches a US perimeter by crawling forward and feeling for trip flare wires. When he finds one, he ties it off so that he cannot trip it and then steps over it. Mien explained that by setting another flare right above the first one at about waist to chest height, there is a good chance of catching the enemy when he steps over the first one. An examination revealed that the flare on the perimeter had been tripped exactly as

the scout had explained it would. The lower flare had been tied off and the upper flare had been tripped. The scout's action prevented a B-40 attack on the company position and saved numerous American lives.

2. Patrolling. Kit Carson Scouts have assisted patrols by actually walking point or moving with the point man. By using their ability to "read" the terrain for information concerning the tactics and disposition of enemy ambushes, mines, booby traps and tunnels, scouts have been able to forewarn patrols of the enemy's presence and allow the patrol to initiate positive action before the enemy could react.

While leading a platoon of Company B, 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry, 4th Infantry Division through a densely vegetated area near Kontum, Kit Carson Scout Thanh observed a platoon sized ambush of NVA troops. He quickly alerted the accompanying platoon and guided their withdrawal to a defensive position. When it was learned that artillery fire could not be used because of low flying aircraft, KCS Thanh began to maneuver back to the spot where he had observed the NVA platoon. Suddenly a NVA soldier stepped into the open less than 20 feet from Thanh and aimed his SKS rifle at the platoon leader who was next to Thanh. With complete disregard for his own safety, Scout Thanh lunged forward, engaged and eliminated the NVA soldier with one shot from his M-16 before the enemy soldier could fire a shot. The noise caused the entire NVA element to return intense automatic weapon fire and Scout Thanh and the platoon leader were forced to withdraw to rejoin their platoon. By effectively applying fire and maneuver, Thanh and the US Lieutenant inflicted several casualties on the enemy while withdrawing. Scout Thanh was wounded by the enemy AK-47 fire but displayed great courage and drive by continuing his fire at the enemy until their advance was halted. By his aggressive and heroic action, Scout Thanh kept the entire platoon from falling into a cleverly planned enemy ambush.

3. Search Operations. Kit Carson Scouts are used in search operations for the detection of NVA/VC personnel by facial recognition. They have, in some cases, been able to make positive identification of dead and wounded enemy soldiers and further have been able to determine enemy unit identification. By applying their intensive knowledge of enemy techniques of concealment, scouts have assisted in locating great quantities of enemy supplies and equipment.

On 21 July 1969, two KCSs working with Company D, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry discovered a 90-bunker cache of NVA supplies and equipment northeast of Tay Ninh. While the company conducted the search of the area the scouts were invaluable in pointing out likely hiding places. The items captured included 8,200 pounds of small arms and machine gun ammunition, 106 rocket propelled grenades, 34 mortar rounds, 2 1/2 tons of rice, 22 bicycles, some medical supplies and a large number of documents.

4. Exploitation of Other Returnees. When a person rallies under the Chieu Hoi Program, it is important that a returnee speak to him as soon as possible to strengthen his decision of defecting. New ralliers with "hot" information may be persuaded to accompany a scout into the field on short operations to seize an important objective or to talk other enemy soldiers into rallying to the GVN. While on a search operation in the Mekong Delta during the period 8 - 15 July 1969, a KCS, working alone, came upon a small base camp which had 13 guerrillas guarding it. After talking with the guards, it was determined that they were dissatisfied with their way of life and the manner in which their superiors were treating them. The KCS explained in detail the Chieu Hoi Program and told them about the good treatment he had received since he had joined the GVN forces. After careful analysis of their plight, all 13 guerrillas decided to Chieu Hoi. During their initial debriefing at the District Headquarters one of the new Chieu Hois revealed the location of a large cache of rice and weapons and volunteered to lead a force to its location. After analyzing this information, the District Chief decided to let the new Chieu Hoi lead a company of Regional Force troops to the cache which resulted in the seizure of three tons of rice and 27 individual weapons.

5. Civic Action Program. Kit Carson Scouts are able to move about and talk freely to the local villagers and discuss their problems. Their personal testimony of rallying, which adds considerable credibility to what they say, gains local support for the GVN. Their ability to talk freely with the villagers has gained much valuable information as to what the village people actually need. The use of this information has assisted in greatly improving the US Forces Civic Action Programs. In the few cases where the KCSs were former NVA/VC medical aidmen, the US Forces have been able to expand their medical civic action projects. The expanded projects have been very successful and have been met with enthusiasm by the local villagers.

During August 1969, Kit Carson Scout Vo Thanh Tung, a former NVA medic working with the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division Civic Action Program, gained immeasurable support for the GVN by administering medical treatment to the local villagers. His knowledge of medicine and ability to converse freely with the people aided the villagers and gained much respect for him and his host unit.

6. Exploitation of Local Intelligence Sources. Local civilians are good sources of current information regarding the enemy and KCSs have been able to exploit this source by winning their confidence. Good intelligence regarding enemy units their movement and the location of caches can be obtained by talking to the civilians. Swift but cautious reaction is extremely important in the exploitation of this type of information.

In May 1969, Chief Kit Carson Scout Phouc obtained information from a local civilian

concerning a group of VC which were operating from a tunnel complex near Cu Chi. Acting upon this information, KCS Phouc reconnoitered the area and located the tunnel complex then led elements of the 2d Brigade, 25th Division to it on an operation which resulted in the tunnel complex being destroyed, 19 VC killed and five prisoners captured. The prisoners identified several of the dead as members of the local VC company and seven of the ten cadre of Cu Chi District. Among the prisoners was the Political Officer of Cu Chi District and two sappers. During another operation conducted in the same area of 26 May, KCS Phouc found some documents which described a three-day meeting of the Cu Chi District Current Affairs Committee that was to take place in Xa Rang Hamlet a few days later. KCS Phouc successfully led his unit through the heavily mined and booby trapped area surrounding the town into a position to attack the meeting place. The attack that followed resulted in routing the VC security force, killing 59 NVA soldiers and breaking up the meeting.

#### CONCLUSION

The success of the Kit Carson Scout program has surpassed all original expectations as evidenced by the high demand for scouts and their individual accomplishments. The scouts have performed heroically on the battlefield and have saved many lives, sometimes at the cost of their own. Kit Carson Scouts have furnished valuable information which has enabled friendly forces to capture large caches of supplies and weapons. Information they have provided has also been valuable in countering enemy attempts to attack or harass Vietnamese cities and friendly military installations throughout the country.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

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