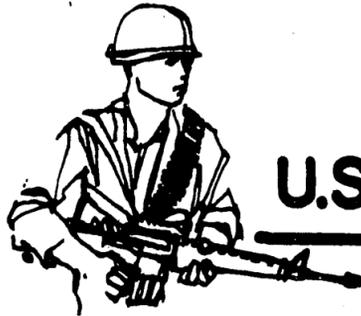


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**HEADQUARTERS
U.S. ARMY VIETNAM**



COMBAT LESSONS BULLETIN

NUMBER 13

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SURVEILLANCE TASK FORCE SYSTEM

(C) GENERAL (U)

The 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne has developed a concept for employment of ground surveillance and detection devices which has proved effective in countering enemy operations. The concept is called the Surveillance Task Force System (STF). The Brigade pooled all ground surveillance radars, Duffle Bag sensor and night observation devices (NOD's) at brigade level. The STF is assigned staff supervision by the S-2 (Figure 1).

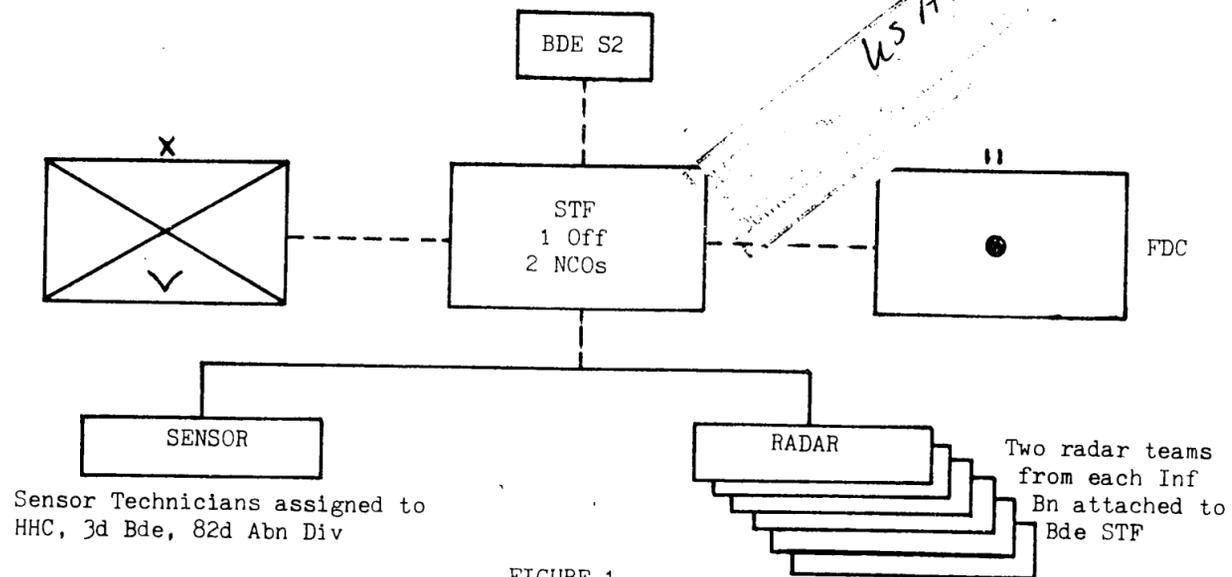


FIGURE 1

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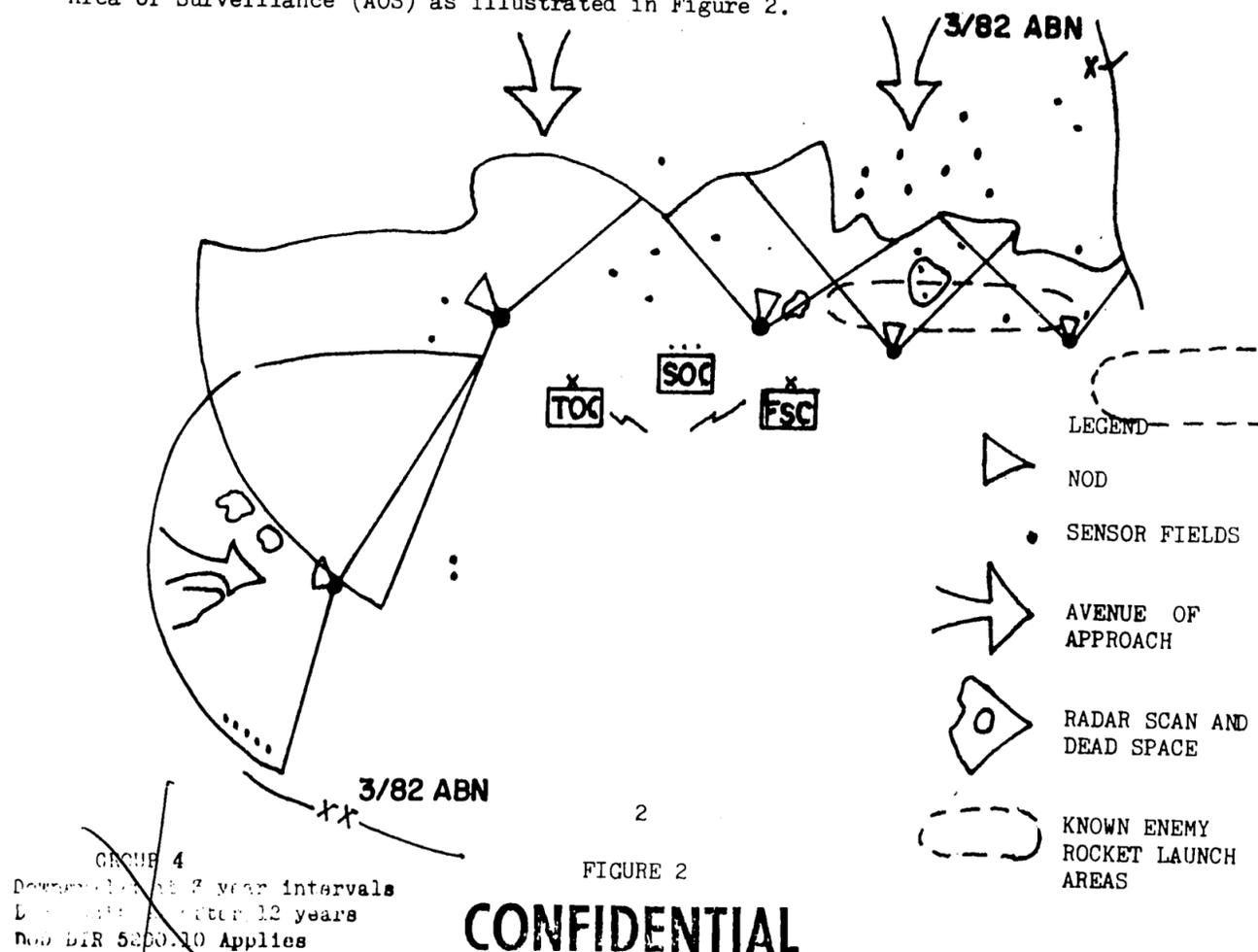
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The STF was given the mission of establishing a surveillance and detection screen around the Brigade area of operation (AO) to assist in the interdiction and prevention of enemy movement toward Saigon. To insure rapid response to targets detected, the STF operation was integrated with the artillery fire direction center.

The STF system has proved to be an excellent example of one of the many imaginative concepts developed by U.S. Commanders. Employment of the STF concept is illustrated in the following paragraphs.

(C) THE ENEMY AND TERRAIN (U)

The Brigade AO was characterized by swamps and marshes that were cut by canals. Trails bordered the canals. The vegetation consisted of brush and scattered tree lines generally located on the sides of dikes. High swamp grass was present throughout the area. The canals were obstacles to foot movement, however, water travel by sampan in the Brigade AO was both a common and rapid means of movement. The NVA/VC are adept at moving quickly and quietly at night through this type of terrain. Intelligence information available concerning known enemy routes was supplemented by study and analysis. Thus the STF was able to develop an integrated surveillance plan that provided for total coverage of the Area of Surveillance (AOS) as illustrated in Figure 2.



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(C) THE CONCEPT (U)

The basic concept was to place radars in a line along the periphery of the AOS, and then cover the gaps and dead spaces with other appropriate sensors. The STF operated from one central location - designated the Surveillance Operations Center (SOC). The monitoring systems for the sensors and the monitoring system for the various radar sites were located at the SOC. NOD's were placed at selected locations along the surveillance line. Communications from the radar site to the units were used to warn ambush patrols of movement and to confirm enemy presence detected by surveillance devices. The communications from the SOC were also established with the Brigade S-2, the Brigade TOC and the supporting artillery.

Radar towers were used to increase the range and eliminate as much dead space as possible. Patrol bases were located at the radar sites to provide security for the radar crews. Radar sites were moved periodically to obtain varying coverage; dummy radars and towers were erected as a deceptive tactic.

When movement was detected by the Duffel Bag sensors, a radar site in that vicinity was alerted to check and or confirm movement. Once movement was confirmed, a forward observer at the SOC called for artillery fire. Experience indicated that within three to four minutes after the target had been acquired, artillery fires were delivered on the location of the enemy movement.

(C) RESULTS (U)

Significant enemy movement ceased soon after establishment of the AOS. PW's and Hoi Chanhs indicated that movement shifted east and south around the Brigade AO. The NVA/VC have shown a remarkable respect for and avoidance of radar towers; none were attacked. No enemy indirect fire attacks were placed on Tan Son Nhut Air Base because suitable launching sites were effectively denied by the AOS.

(C) OBSERVATIONS (U)

Centralized control of radars provided better utilization of available technical personnel expertise and equipment and a more efficient handling of maintenance problems.

Sensors offered a promise of providing a tactical economy of force. However, this advantage was somewhat offset by the inherent requirement for additional technically qualified operators and logistical support personnel.

Swampy terrain has a high background noise level that causes false activations by seismic sensors. This was partially overcome by the use of infrared and magnetic sensors slaved to a seismic sensor so that a confirming infrared signal and a magnetic signal were obtained prior to a transmission by the master seismic sensor.

The STF concept denied several avenues of approach to the enemy, however, the enemy was able to bypass the AOS on two sides. It would have been more effective to have used the AOS concept in conjunction with adjacent units to canalize the enemy or to cover the total area.

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(C) LESSONS LEARNED (U)

The centralized control of surveillance and detection devices combined with ground unit operations provided for integrated coverage of the Brigade AO and immediate tactical information of large scale enemy movements. Additional advantages that accrued were:

- a. Information on enemy movement patterns.
- b. Immediate artillery response.
- c. Economical and practical use of limited technical expertise and resources.
- d. Flexibility in employing radars and sensors.
- e. Rapid response to maintenance problems.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

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