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HEADQUARTERS

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COMBAT LESSONS BULLETIN

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ARTILLERY RAIDS (U)

(U) GENERAL (U)

The purpose of an artillery raid employed by units in Vietnam, is to temporarily extend combat power and exploit the element of surprise by rapidly displacing an artillery unit to a position from which it can engage targets not within range of permanent fire support bases.

(U) CONCEPT (U)

Artillery raids are conducted as pre-planned or immediate reaction operations and are characterized by rapid displacement of firing elements to a lightly secured position for a short period of time. Artillery raids are clearly suited to self-propelled medium and heavy artillery but can be accomplished by heli-lift of light artillery into hastily prepared firing positions. The pre-planned raid, the most effective, is characterized by detailed planning which includes the following:

a. Coordination with appropriate artillery and maneuver headquarters for the collection of significant target information. Intelligence sources show that the NVA/VC concentrate supply caches and base camps beyond the range capabilities of medium and heavy artillery located within fire support bases.

b. Detailed procedures for reconnaissance, selection, and occupation of position to include:

- (1) Survey or observed fire chart
- (2) Registration
- (3) Coordination of route and position security
- (4) Coordination for continuous aerial observation for maximum exploitation of available fires

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(5) Pre-clearance for fires in the target area

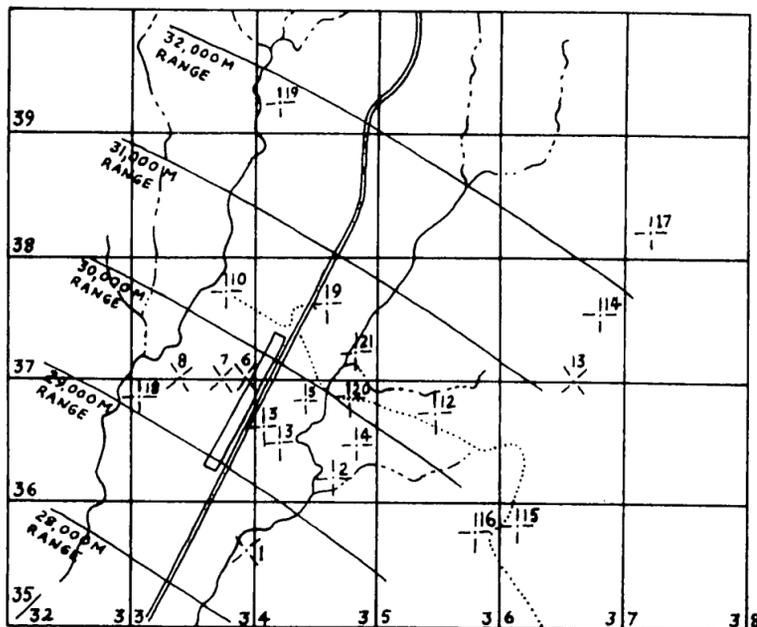
Command and control procedures, although not unique for artillery raids, must be thoroughly planned and coordinated in advance to insure no delays occur after the mission is initiated. All communications and fire request channels should be agreed on in advance by all participants.

The artillery raid can best be illustrated by an actual example of employment as follows:

(C) ACTUAL COMBAT EXAMPLE - 175MM ARTILLERY RAID

CONDUCTED BY B BATTERY, 6TH BATTALION, 27TH ARTILLERY (U)

In January 1970, a 175mm platoon of B Battery, 6th Battalion, 27th Artillery, conducted an artillery raid in the vicinity of BU GIA MAP (YU 3437) in Phuoc Long Province. The BU GIA MAP area has long been a haven for NVA troops and is normally out of range of all artillery. During the month of January, an intelligence build-up was noted in this area and a request was made by the 6th Battalion, 27th Artillery, to II FFORCEV Artillery for permission to move to a firing position to attack these suspected targets. The raid was set for 13 January 1970. The target list (see figure 1 below) was prepared by the battalion based on information received from various intelligence gathering agencies in the area. This list was provided to the battery and the aerial observers for the mission, and was precleared prior to the raid to preclude any delays.



TGT DESCRIPTION

1. Fort
2. A/A Positions
3. A/A Positions
4. Fighting Positions
5. Bunker Entrance
6. Bunker & AW Position
7. Bunker & Trenchline
8. Huts
9. Bunkers
10. A/A Positions
11. Tunnels & Trench Net
12. Bunkers
13. Bunkers & Huts
14. Bunkers
15. Base Camp
16. Military Structures
17. Bunkers
18. Bunkers
19. Bunkers
20. Tunnel
21. Tunnel

GROUP 4

Down to 1000 feet intervals
Elevation 1000 feet or more
DGD BIN 3-000-00 Apolites

Figure 1

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A firing position was selected to allow adequate coverage of the target area. The position was relatively secure, located behind the province headquarters on a bluff overlooking the Song Be River. The position had been used before and accurate survey data was available. Coordination for the move was accomplished by the battalion with the Commanding Officer, 2d Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division and the Province Chief.

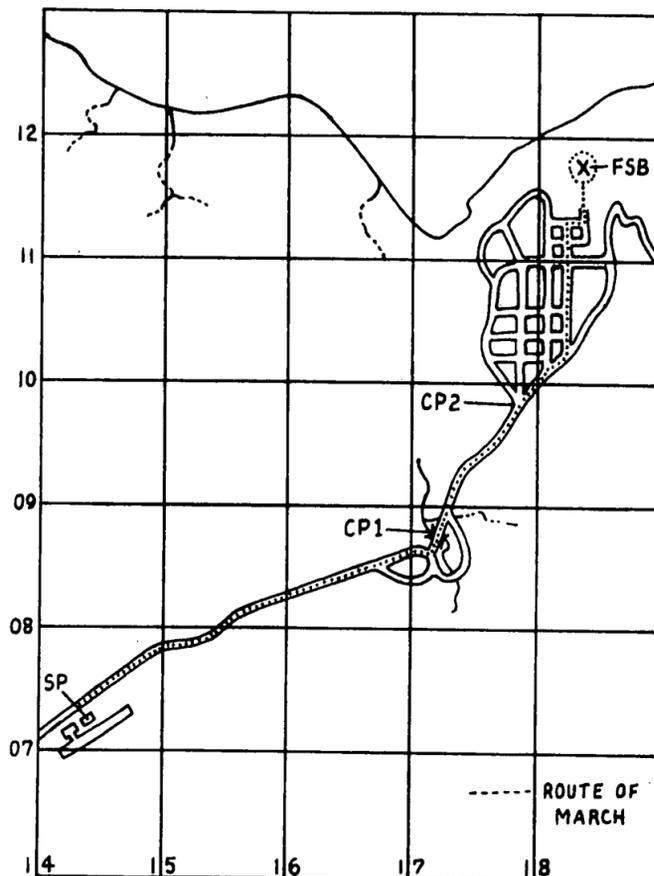


Figure 2

On the day of the operation, the executive officer moved with the advance party to the firing position to check the area for booby traps and supervised preparations for arrival of the main body. The 175mm gun platoon moved at approximately 0730 hours under battalion control and arrived in position at approximately 0805 hours. Security during the march was provided by two Quad 50's, which remained with the platoon in position.

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After occupation of the position, the battalion aerial observer registered on a point located some distance from the BU GIA MAP area, to retain the element of surprise. Control of fires was exercised by battalion, which maintained contact with the firing platoon through a command FM net and a fire direction net. The platoon also monitored the fire direction frequency of the 1st Battalion, 77th Artillery, the direct support 105mm battalion in the area. The day was spent firing on suspected staging areas, bunkers, military structures, huts, sampans, and targets of opportunity. During the firing, the aerial observer received ground fire. He subsequently engaged the source, killing at least two enemy. Surveillance at the end of the day revealed numerous bunkers and military structures destroyed, one sampan destroyed, two KIA and two secondary explosions. A total of 165 rounds were fired during the raid. The unit departed the forward position at 1700 hours.

(U) OTHER TECHNIQUES OF ARTILLERY RAIDS (U)

The airmobile divisions have also experienced excellent results by airlifting three to six tubes of light artillery into hastily prepared firing positions. The location of the firing site is within the range of other supporting artillery and is secured by a minimum of one infantry platoon. Prior to insertion of the artillery raid force, the raid site may be prepared with daisy cutters to clear away dense bamboo or thick jungle growth and white phosphorous or napalm to burn the tall grass in the area. The raid usually lasts 12 hours with the raid force then being extracted. The force is airlifted into position in the early morning, fires throughout the day and is extracted just prior to dusk. The operation may also be initiated in the late afternoon with extraction early the next morning. An overnight raid will normally necessitate a larger security force. An aerial observer is used for target adjustment and surveillance. Firing data should be pre-computed, facilitating the expeditious delivery of fire and minimizing fire direction requirements. For an overnight raid, an airmobile FDC can be constructed in two conex containers.

(U) SUMMARY (U)

Artillery is one of the more effective forces at the disposal of Vietnam commanders. As sufficient artillery is not available to completely cover all areas of operations, units should make maximum use of the raid technique to extend fire coverage. Excellent results can be attained by using the raid concept.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

George L. Mabry Jr

GEORGE L. MABRY, JR.
Major General, US Army
Chief of Staff

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