VIET CONG TACTICS

The Viet Cong are not employing tactics that are new or peculiar to South Vietnam. Today's tune there is being called, on the Communist side, by General Giap of North Vietnam. Several years ago (1959) Giap published a book titled "People's War, People's Army", recounting the Viet Minh war against the French forces, and how it developed from small attacks and ambushes by guerrilla bands to operations by regular mobile battalions, culminating in the army-sized attack at Dien Bien Phu. The development of a campaign of operations envisioned by Giap has taken place in South Vietnam as evidenced by the battalion and regimental operations of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese.

It is important to know how the tactics recommended by Giap are practiced by the VC/NVA today. The Giap idea embodies two principal features. First, grind down the enemy by a series of harassing actions and small scale attacks, and then entrap him in a situation not of his own choosing. The grinding down process is practiced daily around our combat bases in the form of snipers, mine warfare, attempted ambushes, and small scale attacks. In practice the Viet Cong have adopted other Giap inspired tactics for these small scale attacks. They are guided by the "Four Quicks and One Slow". That is; quick advance, quick assault, quick battlefield clearing, quick withdrawal, and slow preparation. Emphasis is placed on detailed planning (sand table models are often used) and rehearsals. Basically, the Viet Cong actions are deliberate rather than spontaneous in attacking targets of opportunity, although they sometimes improvise. Rarely do the VC deliberately risk their resources, except when they believe the probability of success is high.

The Viet Cong lack the comparatively considerable fire power of the Free World Forces in South Vietnam; therefore, it is usually not to their advantage to secure terrain. Rather, they concentrate on inflicting casualties, and "wear down the enemy forces". This is characterized by their technique employed so many times in the years past, of attacking a small Vietnamese outpost which is in turn then reinforced. The reinforcing column is the real target and the outpost is just the bait. When the relief force is ambushed, the VC withdraw.

Baiting an ambush is another technique practiced and recently used against a Marine patrol. A platoon engaged in a day combat patrol was investigating intelligence reports of a VC weapons and
ammunition cache. While moving to the suspected position, two VC riflemen were observed moving away from the patrol. The leading fire team took them under fire and the platoon pursued. When the platoon reached the position where the VC were first observed, they came under the sniper and machine gun fire of an enemy platoon. The patrol returned the fire, and reinforcements were dispatched as the VC began withdrawing toward a hamlet in their rear. Once in the hamlet the VC fire on the exposed Marines increased. Soon an orderly withdrawal by the VC was underway with sniper and mortar covering fire to harass any Marine advances. A second Marine platoon was lifted by helicopter to reinforce the first one. They joined forces and advanced on the VC occupied hamlet. Snipers and mortars continued harassing the advance to such an extent that six members of one platoon were killed by sniper fire alone. Additional reinforcements established blocking positions to prevent an escape, but although their arrival was rapidly executed, they were too late and no further contact with the VC was reported. Marine casualties (38) included 21 WIA, most of whom were wounded by mortar fire.

These techniques comply with the VC military doctrine of "Force the enemy to fight at a pre-selected location". To a Marine in combat this means he must maneuver his forces rapidly to envelop the enemy units seeking to execute the entrapment.

Bear in mind Giap's guidelines:

"Is the enemy strong? Avoid him."

"Is the enemy weak? Attack him."

MOVEMENT:

The Viet Cong usually moves by foot wherever he goes, although he uses junks, bicycles, stolen trucks, sampans, etc., when he can. He normally must carry on his back whatever he needs. He leads a hard life and receives little reward for his efforts. If he moves with his unit, it is usually at night as daylight brings the observation aircraft and not far behind them, the attack aircraft or artillery. The Viet Cong must put up with harassment from the air by day and long arduous marches by night. To move safely during the day, he must go alone or in small groups of two or three. Assembly of these small groups is usually prearranged in conjunction with a particular task or operation. When the small groups gather in the
assembly area, the plans are discussed, the briefing conducted, and the final decisions for execution are reached.

A particular method of operation for the Viet Cong is to move a unit from the assembly area to the attack position at dusk or shortly thereafter and reach the attack position prior to midnight.

Prior to the movement of the main force, an enemy situation cell composed of three men (one recon, one demolitions and one staff representative) will usually move to the objective area to reconnoiter the attack position and check on the security of the objective. One member of this cell then returns to the assembly area and becomes part of the recon squad that leads the main body. The attack will usually be launched so that sufficient time exists to attack, fight, withdraw and disperse prior to daylight when the observation aircraft will return.

Conducting continuous operations under the above described circumstances requires a hardy, dedicated individual. The Viet Cong guerrilla is such a man. However, we cannot disregard the peculiar circumstances in which he has been allowed to operate and his high percentage of successful operations. Denied this success, he would soon develop morale problems with far reaching effects. This is our job.

Stemming the Viet Cong ability to move about freely will deny him the capability of massing at will and cause him to fight on our terms, thus taking the initiative from him. The effort of denying the guerrilla the ability of free movement must be total and carried out energetically by all hands. This effort must include a universal suspicion of all native activity. The individual rifleman must be constantly alert, allowing no one to pass without being thoroughly scrutinized, both male and female, regardless of age.

Although the above objectives can be accomplished, they will by no means be easy and swift. It will require a concerted effort at all echelons, but the heaviest responsibility will rest upon you, the individual rifleman. Here lies the real key to success. Only through your constant alertness and willingness to seize the initiative will this giant step toward defeating the Viet Cong be realized.
TERRORISM:

A guerrilla force can exist only if it has the cooperation of the people. This cooperation can be either in the form of popular support where the guerrilla is viewed by the people with favor and is supplied and assisted voluntarily or it can be brought about through fear. The Viet Cong have principally resorted to the latter by employing terror tactics on a large scale. These tactics range from vague threats to kidnappings, torture and murder and have been primarily aimed at government officials and their families and sympathizers in the rural areas. The objective has been to reduce the government apparatus to ineffectiveness and to force the populace into submission. The results speak for themselves as in many rural areas, governmental control is nil and the people refuse to cooperate for fear of reprisal from the Viet Cong. This lack of cooperation on the part of the populace compounds the difficulty of locating the guerrillas and bringing about their eventual defeat.

In that terrorism is a totally negative approach to gaining support, it is highly susceptible to backfiring. It must be understood that the populace does not relish living in this atmosphere of terror, but endures it only to remain alive. If the threat of reprisal is removed, the program of terrorism suddenly reverses direction on its implementer and not only strips him of his support, but unleashes a force against him that he cannot withstand, namely, the populace.

To bring about this reverse effect and to deny the Viet Cong guerrilla his vital support, it is necessary to gain the full confidence of the people. This will be slow in accomplishing, but once started will pick up speed with a snow-balling effect. It will entail protecting the people that are within our areas and providing them with any assistance possible. Since they have lived for years beneath the yoke of Viet Cong terror, they will be wary and uncooperative at first, but will gradually warm up as they realize that we do not intend to harm or desert them. Once the fear of reprisal is removed, the people will willingly cooperate and provide us with the necessary information and assistance to bring about the ultimate defeat of the Viet Cong guerrilla.

AMBUSH TACTICS:

The ambush has historically been the most common type of offensive operation conducted by guerrilla forces. This is
necessarily so as the guerrilla has neither the men nor material to withstand extended periods of contact against a regular force, but rather, must rely upon the element of surprise and the ability to mass his firepower against a given point for a short duration.

An ambush is defined as "a trap in which concealed persons lie in wait to attack by surprise". The success or failure of an ambush is hinged upon the element of surprise as it is assumed that the enemy will be able to mass his firepower against the given point or area. To eliminate this essential element is to turn the ambush into a normal contact and to take the initiative from the enemy.

The Viet Cong have employed the ambush tactic to considerable advantage against the RVN forces as they have consistently possessed the element of surprise. The ambushes often occurred where and when they were least suspected: in the middle of an open field or a flooded area, in areas near RVN installations that were considered to be secure, and during movements to reinforce units under fire. In all of the above instances, the situation existed where security is likely to be relaxed thus rendering the friendly force susceptible to a damaging ambush.

The ambush formations employed by the Viet Cong are identical to those found in any small unit tactics book. The linear ambush using the "L" and "U" formations and the area ambush are generally employed. Although these tactics are understood by both sides and are considered to be sound, success is dependent upon surprise and this surprise is dependent upon camouflage and concealment. The Viet Cong are well versed in camouflage techniques and continually stress its importance. They have gone to great lengths to achieve concealment from RVN patrols, both air and ground, even to the digging of extensive tunnel networks. Each Viet Cong guerrilla carries with him a straw mat which serves as his bed by night and his camouflage by day. This mat is garnished continually as a unit moves, with the foliage that prevails in that particular area.

However, regardless of the thoroughness with which it is constructed, camouflage is always susceptible to detection. The individual rifleman will ultimately bear the responsibility for the detection of the Viet Cong in his camouflaged ambush. It is through his efforts while serving as point or flank security that the enemy will be uncovered and his ambush sprung prematurely. The rifleman must be suspicious of his surroundings at all times and be aggressive in his actions as it is entirely up to him to wrest the
initiative from the enemy by denying him the vital element of surprise.

USE OF MINES AND TRAPS:

The Viet Cong have made extensive use of mines and traps ranging from the primitive punji stick to recently introduced concave mines, similar to the Claymore. Generally, the purpose of a mine is to delay and harass. However, the electrically detonated concave mines have been used in an offensive role in conjunction with ambushes as anti-personnel devices.

Considering that the vast majority of the mines used by the Viet Cong are of the passive variety; that is, they are detonated by the victim, they must be emplaced at a location where there is a strong likelihood of U.S. and RVN troop movement. This increases the probability of encountering mines on roads, trails and other likely avenues of approach and the area surrounding the Viet Cong strongholds. There has also been a fairly high incidence of Viet Cong mines being located close by U.S. and RVN installations, having been surreptitiously emplaced by infiltrators.

Mines and traps should be respected. They are totally impersonal and although they may take many forms and be well disguised, their effectiveness is only as great as the lack of respect accorded to them.

Mines and traps are aimed principally at the front line rifleman, at slowing down his movement and instilling fear. However, there is a direct relationship between the success of mines and the awareness of the individual rifleman. It must be assumed that a certain percentage of success will be achieved by the employment of mines and traps, however, this percentage need not be high. It can be whittled to the minimum by an awareness of the capabilities and limitations of mines, by an understanding of where they are most likely to be emplaced, and by a constant alertness on the part of the front line rifleman at whom they are aimed.

The Anti-Personnel Mine:

The most destructive device encountered has been the M16Al anti-personnel mine.

Artillery shells are frequently used as both anti-personnel mines
and anti-vehicular mines. In many cases, a grenade has been discovered rigged to the shell as a secondary device. Methods of finding this type of mine have been effective due to well coordinated efforts. Ordinarily, these mines are encountered along roads. By careful surveillance and patrol of the roads by the infantry, by careful mine sweeping efforts by the engineers, and by following up the engineer teams with tracked vehicles to discover and explode any remaining mines, the roads can be kept fairly clear.

Until the VC received a supply of M16A1 mines, his favorite anti-personnel mine seemed to be an M-26 or a CHICOM grenade. These have been emplaced in the ground and above the ground in a variety of ways. The majority have been rigged with some type of trip wire. Grappling hooks with a long length of line and a long pole thrown ahead of a man have proved effective against trip wires.

Neither of these methods has effectively countered the M16A1 mine; it is too powerful to permit anyone being that close. Nor is the grappling hook or the bamboo pole effective against pressure devices unless it just happens to directly hit the release device; tracked vehicles have been more successful. Homemade devices have ranged in size and description from a small clay pot which was used for fish sauce (nuoc mam) and had been packed with explosive, to a light wooden box packed with about 40 pounds of explosive and heavily laden with scrap metal. This was then suspended six feet above ground in a tree line; the resulting explosion was best described as devastating. Even artillery rounds wrapped with a layer of junk metal have been discovered hung in tree lines and over trails which were closely bordered by heavy brush.

Recently some bounding type mines have been discovered. This throws a 60mm mortar projectile about 8 feet into the air before the shell explodes. One Marine patrol activated three of these arranged atop a four foot paddy dike in a triangular pattern two yards on a side.

A suitcase containing explosives was picked up in an area which had been searched three days before. When a careless patrol member opened it, it exploded, resulting in three casualties.
Captured U. S. M-26 fragmentation grenades become effective anti-personnel mines when modified by the VC. The fuse assembly is removed and a non-electric blasting cap with a 6 penny nail placed in the top is inserted in the well of the grenade. Wax is poured into the grenade well, around the nail and blasting cap, to waterproof the grenade and hold the nail in place. This device is then buried upright with the nail protruding above the earth. The grenade is detonated when stepped upon.

In addition to probing and using mine detectors, a good visual inspection of the ground will reveal this device. If possible blow these devices in place because the fuse removal has made them extra sensitive.
The Command Detonated Mine:

A great many of the VC mines encountered are the controlled electric detonation type. Very often the lead wire used to detonate the mines is communication wire. It is extremely difficult to distinguish VC lead wire from friendly communication lines.

All communications wire should be moved at least 20 meters from utilized roadways. This practice will help the visual detection of mines electrically detonated from points off the roadway.
Unexploded artillery shells have often been employed as mines by the VC. One interesting variant involved the emplacement of a 155mm round as a road mine with an improvised firing mechanism consisting of three pieces of bamboo, four flashlight batteries and a length of electrical wire. The entire firing mechanism and artillery round were buried just below the surface of the road at a depth where the weight of a man could easily have detonated it. The sketch on the above page illustrates the position of the mine. Note its distance from a culvert and that there is sufficient room on the right-hand side of the road for a vehicle to bypass the mine if its location is known.
Detonator covered with twigs, leaves, etc.

VC M-79 Mine

The VC are adept at modifying all types of discarded or dud munitions for use as simple mine devices. A Marine patrol discovered a pressure type anti-personnel device which had been made from an M-79 round. The head of the M-79 cartridge was removed and the centrifugal arming device rotated until the round was armed. A triggering device was the detonating contact. The device was then buried along a trail with the camouflaged trigger device above ground, where the pressure from the weight of a man would be sufficient to cause detonation.

This illustrates the importance of caring for and accounting for all ordnance or explosive devices.

A thirteen year old Vietnamese boy recently claimed that the VC forced him to reconnoiter helicopter landing zones and routes used by U. S. and ARVN forces. The boy was instructed by the VC
to place hand grenades in helicopter landing zones which would detonate when the troops disembarked. This was to be accomplished by pulling the pin and wrapping a piece of string around the spoon to hold it in place temporarily. The free end of the string is then tied to a piece of heavy paper or cardboard, which in turn is laid over the grenade in the landing zone. Rotor wash from a landing helicopter blows the paper, thereby unwrapping the string, and releasing the safety lever.

Other Improvised Mines and Traps:

The ancient cross-bow has been brought to this strange war by the Viet Cong. Concealed along jungle paths, it is set off when a thin line across the path is disturbed.

The Malayan whip is used along trails and is released when a trip wire across the path is disturbed.
This device fires one round at its intended victim when he touches the trip wire and the mousetrap snaps shut on the primer of the bullet.

This trap is designed to pierce the ankle of its victim. It was devised after U. S. forces brought the anti-punji boot with its steel insole to Vietnam.

Steel spikes used by Viet Cong.

This device fires a bullet into the foot of its victim when he steps on it.
A discarded C-ration can may become a deadly mine when rigged as shown above with explosive, detonator and trip wire.

A deadfall like the one pictured above can be suspended inside a hut above the door. The trip wire is released when the door is opened and the deadly instrument comes swinging down chest high. The Viet Cong have made some of these as large at 500 lbs, studded with steel stakes.

The Viet Cong also have bear traps in their arsenal of mines and traps.
This electrical firing device was made completely from discarded U. S. material. Crude but effective.

A section of bamboo can also be turned into an effective mine.

The above sign warned of VC mines ahead. Several types of signs are used by the VC to point out to their own people whether a particular area is safe or mined. Although these signs change periodically and differ from area to area, it will do a Marine well to watch for peculiarities such as an unnatural arrangement of sticks or stones when operating in VC controlled areas.
VC Employment of Women:

Utilization of women as an enticement to enemy soldiers is not new to either guerrilla or conventional warfare. Women have been used throughout history in this role. The Viet Cong have also employed women for espionage purposes, and to entice Marines into areas where they may be captured or killed.

Recently two Marines began looking for someone in their area to do their laundry. They checked two houses in the platoon area, but the inhabitants had no soap. The pair left the perimeter and about 40 meters away they found a hut where a woman said she would do their laundry for a few cans of "C" rations. One Marine went into the hut to give the woman the laundry, and the other Marine stayed outside. While the first Marine was inside the hut discussing the price of the laundry, he noticed that the Marine who had remained outside was talking to a young girl. He appeared to be laughing and telling the girl jokes. A few minutes later the price had been decided on and the Marine who had been inside the hut emerged. His buddy was nowhere in sight. He returned to the platoon area and searched for him, to no avail. He notified his squad leader and they both searched; his platoon commander dispatched two squads which searched until dark.

To this day, no trace has been found of this young Marine who was last seen joking with a young Vietnamese girl, only forty meters from his platoon's CP!

THE HAMLET AND THE VIET CONG

Vietnamese villages are generally made up of several small hamlets located in close proximity to one another. The hamlet will always be located along some access route such as a road, river or trail. The picture on the following page fairly well depicts the typical hamlet and the surrounding rice fields. As the reader can see, hedges surround each hamlet and in many cases, more hedges separate houses and gardens within the hamlet. The presence of the hedges severely limits the fields of observation, compounding the
difficulties encountered in entering and searching a hamlet. If the hamlet happens to be occupied by Viet Cong and they are alerted prior to our arrival, mines and traps will be set along the likely approach routes, at fence openings and in houses. This necessitates a slow, methodical entry with a covering force left behind. The troops must avoid being canalized into a single direction by fences, hedges, punji traps, etc. Friendly villagers can often provide information as to the location of mines, traps and Viet Cong locations. It is well worth cultivating friendship with local inhabitants.

This photograph is typical of a Vietnamese hamlet in the lowland region.

The Viet Cong are masters in the art of tunneling and camouflage. In hamlets that they occupy, tunnels and bunkers will be dug in which they can hide while we are in the area. Many of these tunnels will be expertly constructed and camouflaged with entrances underwater, such as on the side of a stream, or underneath the cooking area in the house, and are extremely difficult to locate. In one hamlet sweep, Marines located a hidden tunnel entrance. They didn't know if the tunnel was occupied or where it led so they put a smoke pot and blower in the entrance which flushed out the guerrillas and exposed
other entrances. It is often necessary to occupy a hamlet for a period of time until the Viet Cong are forced from their hiding places by lack of provisions.

The search must be conducted with the utmost thoroughness. The searcher should honor others' belongings, but must not be inhibited in the thoroughness of his mission. When searching, especially look at the rafters, thatched roofs, rice bags, hay stacks, dung heaps and wells as these make excellent hiding places for arms and equipment.

The infantry troops must fully understand the techniques of entry and search of hamlets as they differ considerably from city search techniques. Observation is more restricted due to hedges; the hamlets lack any pattern as is found in the organization of city streets, and grass and adobe structures do not provide much cover. (Example: One Marine threw a grenade into a room and stood next to the grass wall waiting for the detonation. He was, of course, wounded by the fragments.) These peculiarities must be borne in mind and the individual must remain ready to adjust his plans to the situation as it varies considerably from hamlet to hamlet.

The Viet Cong have made a concerted effort to control as many of these hamlets as possible and to gain the support of the inhabitants. Only with this control and support can they survive as guerrillas. Our mission is well defined: To enter these areas, clear them of Viet Cong, and gain the trust and confidence of the people.

The following three photographs and figures one (1) through ten (10) depict in detail the extensive and skillfully constructed underground tunnel networks and hiding places of the Viet Cong.
A board is found under the arrangement of bottles, baskets and jugs.

Arrangement of material in this house appeared suspicious.

Several Viet Cong were discovered hiding in this hole.
Figure 1

Cave is constructed by trenching and covering trench with bamboo and 10 inches of dirt. Entrance and exit from either end. Difficult to clear unless approached from top and opened with demolitions.

Figure 2

Root system provides excellent reinforcement for roof of cave.
Figure 3

Water about root high. With water plants, etc. This type of cave usually has entrance from below water line to about 1 foot above. There is about a 2 foot approach leading to the main approach leading to the main room which is circular and about 6 to 8 feet across. Can only be entered from the water.

Figure 4
Figure 5

Figure 6
Well-Tunnel Complex above was discovered near Ben Cat in September 1965. It is a series of multi-bunker tunnels with angled connecting tunnels. Each bunker has space available for 15 to 20 men. The entrance to and exits from the VC bunkers are built into the walls of actual or simulated wells which are 20 to 30 meters deep. Access to these skillfully camouflaged entrances and exits is by way of notched dirt steps or by the use of notched bamboo pole ladders.

**Figure 7**

**VC UNDERGROUND BUNKER**

Bunker shown above was discovered in the vicinity of Da Nang during June/July 1965 by ARVN units.

It is a multi-bunker tunnel with angled connecting tunnels. Each bunker has space available for 3 or 4 men. The entrance to the VC bunker is built into the wall of the artillery shelter and skillfully camouflaged. A second bunker is concealed behind the first; each entrance in turn is camouflaged on the outside by local inhabitants.

**Figure 8**
Figure 9

Figure 10

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MARINE AREAS

The present Marine offensive effort is essentially based upon four locations in the I Corps area: Dong Ha, Hue-Phu Bai, Danang and Chu Lai. Each area has two things in common: an air strip and rice paddies.

Dong Ha:

Dong Ha is the newest of the Marine bases in Vietnam. Marines moved into this area in force on 7 July 1966 when Operation Hastings commenced. This area is also the northernmost Marine bases, located twelve miles southwest of the Demilitarized Zone, and nine miles inland.

View of the airfield at Dong Ha. From left to right are the runway, the Marine camp and Dong Ha village.
Phu Bai:

Phu Bai is located approximately 10 miles south of the old imperial capital of Hue on Highway #1. The Marine base camp is located on the high ground overlooking the airstrip and is approximately 7 miles inland from the coast. The location of the camp affords excellent observation and fields of fire in all directions.

Marine base and airstrip at Phu Bai

Marine outpost near Phu Bai receives its supplies by helicopter.
Danang:

The port city of Danang, the largest city in I Corps area, is the home of the III Marine Amphibious Force. The Danang airfield, located a short distance west of the city, is one of the world's busiest and is the site from which thousands of flights are launched each month in support of U. S. and RVN operations. Marine ground units stretch out for miles to the north, west and south, providing protection against Viet Cong attacks.

View of the busy Danang air base looking north toward Danang harbor. As you look at the photograph, the Marine area is located on the left of the airstrip, U. S. Air Force on the right. The city of Danang lies off the photograph to the right.
Inside Marine compound looking west toward Hill 327.

Downtown Danang.
Chu Lai:

The southernmost of the four Marine bases is unique in that only scattered villages existed in the area prior to the arrival of the Marines. Today, Chu Lai is a bustling complex, housing Marine units of all types. The immediate area around the airfield is typified by the broad, sandy expanses that stretch up to five miles inland from the beach. However, areas adjacent to the beach under Marine control differ considerably as you can see.

The beach and airstrip at Chu Lai with the broad sandy expanses in the background.
The Ky Ha peninsula northwest of the beach at Chu Lai offers a much different terrain.

Marines shop at small hamlet near Chu Lai.
SECURITY

Although training in security starts early in the career of a Marine, it cannot be overemphasized to the Marine about to serve in Vietnam. Viet Cong agents or sympathizers may be anywhere and are always ready to listen in on your conversation. A piece of information gathered by the enemy may seem unimportant, but put together with other bits and pieces, can develop into information of critical significance. Here are some of the DON'Ts:

DON'T discuss known friendly or enemy locations

DON'T discuss unit movements

DON'T discuss future operations, plans or orders

DON'T discuss casualty information

DON'T discuss status of supplies or personnel

In addition to the above, when using communications equipment:

DON'T give friendly coordinates in the clear

DON'T use proper names

DON'T discuss passwords

DON'T discuss any classified information over communications means.
A Marine assigned to duty with the III Marine Amphibious Force can expect to be located in or near one of the four bases described previously. The particular assignment will, of course, depend upon a Marine's MOS and the requirements of the unit to which he reports. Regardless of where he is assigned, as a Marine in a combat area, he will be called upon to put forth a great effort.

On 8 March 1965, there were 500 Marines in Vietnam. One year later, there were over 50,000; today over 70,000. The original task of defending the Danang airfield is but one small part of the present day mission. Today, the nature of Marine operations is essentially offensive. At the time of the Marines' arrival, Viet Cong main force units roamed the countryside and struck government outposts almost at will. However, the greatest threat came from the Viet Cong guerrillas who, over the ten preceding years, had penetrated deeply into the daily life of the people through their network of terrorism, brutality, threat and extortion. Governmental influence was rare beyond the outskirts of the cities and usually consisted of nothing more than a passing military unit which was of little benefit to the people. Law and order had deteriorated and the thousands of people who craved protection found no one to whom they could turn. The result was a frightened and disorganized population slipping gradually under Communist domination.

It was clear from the beginning that in this region, the battlefield lay among the people. It was concluded that the best way to fulfill the task of airfield security was by continuous offensive action, ranging at long distances from the airfields themselves, designed to weed out the Viet Cong guerrilla infestation from the population and, at the same time, seeking out any enemy main force units that could be locked in combat. And, through it all, to establish a relationship with the people which would cause them to voluntarily support the U.S. and the Vietnamese and correspondingly, to withhold support from the Viet Cong.

This job is being done by three types of offensive action; large unit operations, counterguerrilla operations, and revolutionary development. The large unit operations are conducted against the main force units and generally consist of a multi-battalion force. These operations are familiar to most of us as they usually receive wide recognition in the newspapers. Less spectacular and little publicized are the day-to-day patrols and ambushes conducted
by the fire teams, squads and platoons. These are what eventually rout out the guerrilla and deny him access to the populace, the mainstay of his existence. In earlier days, it was said that the day belonged to the ARVN (or the French) and the night belonged to the Viet Cong. This is no longer the case as the Marines conduct about half of their operations during the night and are achieving considerable success.

To the individual Marine serving with III Marine Amphibious Force, the large unit operations and anti-guerrilla operations form much of his job, but these would be much less effective if it were not for the other type of offensive action: pacification/civic action. This means putting the people back on their feet and showing them that we are truly their friends. It takes on many faces; providing protection against Viet Cong attacks, giving medical assistance, helping re-establish the local government, providing food and other forms of assistance. The objective is to bring the people to a state of self-sufficiency and re-establish the local authority as in the final analysis it must be the people themselves who finally beat the Viet Cong.

The Marines have met with success in Vietnam. Heavy blows have been dealt organized units through operations such as Starlite, Harvest Moon, Double Eagle, Hastings, Prairie and Colorado, to mention but a few. Through the conduct of over 10,000 small unit patrols and ambushes monthly, the guerrillas no longer move freely about. "Sting Ray" patrols move far into the hinterland to search out the enemy, and call artillery or air strikes down upon him when he is found. The Civic Action program is reaping positive results; "County Fair" operations destroy the Viet Cong's governing organization within the hamlet and "Golden Fleece" operations protect the farmers' rice harvest. There is still much more to be done. Each Marine assigned to duty in Vietnam must approach his new job with a sense of responsibility, and the knowledge that the hopes of the free world rest with him.
MEDICAL TIPS

Malaria Protection:

Malaria is ever present in Southeast Asia and should be considered as a direct, personal threat to the health of every Marine entering Vietnam, whether it be for a full tour or for a few days. Malaria is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. Spraying is partially successful in killing mosquitoes in and around permanent base camp areas but this is not always practical. Constant intelligent use of personal protective measures is the first step in malaria discipline. Protective measures include:

Use of mosquito nets.

Use of chemical repellents. The issue repellent is effective if used properly.

Swimming or bathing after dark should be discouraged. The mosquitos love it.

Avoid areas of high malaria incidence whenever possible. Villages in or near swampy and sluggish water areas are breeding places for the mosquito.

Take your malaria suppression pills as prescribed. Malaria can be successfully treated but as anyone who has had it can tell you, an ounce of prevention (a pill) is worth pounds of cure. Be alert for malaria symptoms as these may vary greatly. Headache and fever is the most common set of symptoms. Report to your corpsman if you have any idea you are experiencing these ailments.

Leeches:

Land leeches are encountered in the swampy areas of Vietnam. It is disturbing to discover a slimy passenger fixed securely to an arm or leg.

The land leech, like a mosquito, is a blood sucker and is found in grass and foliage from which it attaches itself to passing humans. The leech fastens itself to the skin, feeds, and then drops off. The leech bite is painless and not at all harmful, although the small wound it makes may become infected. Leeches can be repelled by applying standard insect repellent to exposed skin. A
leech attached to the skin may sometimes be dislodged by pulling it off by hand. Otherwise, it may be induced to detach itself by touching it with a lighted cigarette or by applying salt, vinegar, gasoline, or other strong solutions. The bite mark should be cleansed, preferably with alcohol, to prevent infection. If an infection does develop, see a corpsman for application of an antibiotic to kill the infection.

In short, leeches are nothing more than nuisances. With simple precautions, their effects can be minimized.

**Immersion Foot:**

Extended operations in the flooded areas along waterways and rivers may result in a prolonged wearing of wet foot gear. Unless wet socks can be changed frequently for dry ones, and feet are periodically exposed to sunlight, immersion foot can result. This is an extremely painful condition in which the feet swell and take on a puffy, wrinkled look. Extra socks and planned breaks to expose the feet can avoid the worst effects of immersion foot.

![Image of Marine with immersion foot](image)

This Marine has immersion foot. It is caused by prolonged wearing of wet footgear and is extremely painful.
MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Postage: All letters, and sound recordings that take the form of personal correspondence, may be mailed free of postage by personnel serving with, or attached to, a unit in the combat zone. Such letters and sound recordings should not be endorsed AIR MAIL, as all "FREE" mail is air lifted to end destinations as space available mail under Public Law 89-725.

Air Mail/First Class:

- From RVN to East Coast 4 days
- From RVN to West Coast 3.5 days
- From East Coast to RVN 3.5 days
- From West Coast to RVN 3 days

Parcel Post:

Normally, 6 to 8 weeks.

It is recommended that all parcels weighing over five pounds, containing perishables and mailed to personnel in WestPac, be air mailed.

Space Available Mail (SAM):

Parcels weighing five pounds or less, with postage paid at the 4th class rate are air lifted from the port of embarkation to WestPac units on a space available basis. Average transit times for "SAM" mail is:

- From West Coast to RVN 5 - 7 days
- From East Coast to RVN 7 - 9 days

Change of Address: It is recommended that all personnel send change of address cards to all concerned, including any magazine subscriptions, as soon as possible upon arrival in country. This will preclude unnecessary delays in receiving mail.

Time Zone: Vietnam is in the zone that has an actual time differential of 8 hours slower than (behind) San Francisco, or eleven hours slower than New York City. However, Vietnam is "across" the International Date Line from the United States. During most of the
day this causes a date differential of plus one day in Vietnam from the date in the United States (i.e., when it is 18 August in the U.S., it is 19 August in Vietnam).

Special Pay and Tax Exemptions: The following monthly pay scales are in effect for personnel serving in South Vietnam. These pay scales are in addition to normal pay and allowances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>OVERSEAS PAY</th>
<th>HOSTILE FIRE PAY</th>
<th>TAX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pvt/Pfc</td>
<td>$8.00</td>
<td>$65.00</td>
<td>All tax exempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCpl</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>GySgt &amp; Up</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>All WOs</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>$65.00</td>
<td>All tax exempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Officers</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>$65.00</td>
<td>$500.00 exempt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Separation Pay: All married personnel, corporal or above with over 4 years service, whose dependents are not residing in government quarters are entitled to $30.00 separation pay monthly.

Currency: Military personnel serving in Vietnam are required to use Military Payment Certificates (MPC) in lieu of U.S. currency. Upon entering the country, all personnel are required to exchange U.S. currency for MPC. Upon leaving, all MPC will be reconverted to U.S. currency by a disbursing officer. All sales of MPC for Vietnamese currency (piasters) will be made by the disbursing officer. The exchange rate for U.S. forces is 118 piasters per dollar.

R&R Program: An R&R (Rest and Recreation) program is in effect for Marine personnel serving in South Vietnam whereby each Marine is allowed one out-of-country R&R trip during his tour, conditions permitting. Taipei, Okinawa, Hong Kong, Manila, Tokyo, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Honolulu are the sites presently available to visit on R&R. The trip permits a pleasant change of pace as well as the opportunity to shop at some of the world's best prices.

Hints and Tips: The Marine going to Vietnam should:

1. Ensure that his field and summer uniforms are in good condition. Extra utilities, socks and underwear are advised.
2. Bring a minimum of non-required items as in many cases they will have to be stored.

3. Bring a couple of small plastic bags for keeping personal articles/special items dry.

4. Check page 15 of his Service Record Book (Record of Emergency Data) to ensure that the information therein is correct and up to date.

5. Make out an allotment. This cannot be overemphasized. Although it is required for all married men, bachelors should take advantage of the opportunity of saving some money. It is advisable to make out an allotment for U. S. Saving Bonds, the 10% Savings Deposit Program or to a private savings institution. Pay rates differ in a combat zone.

6. Return personal valuables to his family.

7. Have two pair of glasses when glasses are needed. Sun glasses are highly recommended as the summer sun is particularly bright and hard on the eyes.

8. Have dental work completed, if possible.

9. Make out a will.

While in Vietnam, the Marine should:

1. Pay particular attention to his weapon and equipment. In this hot, humid climate metals rust and corrode extremely fast. One should clean and oil his rifle as well as bayonet, magazines and any other metal equipment at least daily.

2. Inspect his ammunition daily to insure it has not corroded.

3. Be supply-conscious at all times. Most supplies have to be transported from the U. S. and the cost is considerable in time and money. Waste not, want not.

4. Observe the rules of good hygiene. It may be difficult at times but it will be worth the effort. The climatic conditions in Vietnam are such as to produce every kind of skin infection/disease.
known to man. Bathe as often as possible and be sure that clothing is properly washed and rinsed. If boots and socks become wet, change them as soon as the situation permits.

5. Make sure that he takes a malaria pill each week.

6. Never just throw something away. What may seem like a piece of useless gear can be used by the Viet Cong against you. For example, a very effective electrical mine was made out of a discarded wooden ammo box, what was thought to have been a smashed radio battery, and some communications wire. The explosive was supplied by the VC.

7. Conduct himself carefully while on liberty. This is political as well as military war; Marines must be ambassadors as well as fighters. The Viet Cong are more than ready to exploit through propaganda any embarrassing incidents caused by a careless or intoxicated Marine on liberty.

8. Stay away from water buffaloes. These animals are extremely nervous and high-strung and are apt to attack any tormentor. An infuriated 1,000 pound water buffalo can certainly present a problem.

9. Take particular care to protect the property of the local inhabitants; rice fields and gardens should not be trespassed upon unless it is an operational necessity.

10. Never eat or drink products sold by vendors. Ground glass has been found in the vendor's wares on numerous occasions.

11. Write home as often as possible. Your family is genuinely interested in your welfare and wants to hear from you. Much congressional mail has been generated by parents who had not heard from their sons and who contacted their congressman to inquire.

12. Be always faithful in the practice of his religion through private devotion, public worship and daily conduct.
SUMMARY

This booklet is designed to familiarize the reader with the I Corps area, its people and their history, and the Marine Corps effort in assisting the Vietnamese people in maintaining their independence. A brief study is made of the Viet Cong and their tactics and recommendations are offered for personnel reporting for duty in Vietnam.

As we have seen, the terrain is rugged, the climate is often disagreeable by any standards, and the enemy is a tough, capable fighter. However, he has the same limitations imposed upon him by the weather and terrain as we do. He does not have the resources at his disposal to fight sustained battles but must rely on hit-and-run engagements. We must view the Viet Cong as a lightweight who can only win when he has his adversary off balance. He relies upon his ability to make his opponent commit himself or drop his guard. This is demonstrated on the larger scale by an attack on a village or outpost which calls for reinforcements. The reinforcements arrive only to be caught in a well laid ambush. On a smaller scale, bait has been offered to patrols in the form of exposure at a distance, sniper fire, open smoke fires, etc., in an effort to draw the patrols either into ambushes, a cross fire from prepared positions, booby-trapped areas or away from established base camps and other guerrilla facilities. This is the only way that the Viet Cong can effectively fight us with a hope of victory. To counter this we must temper our responses with the realization that Viet Cong actions may be an attempt to induce precipitous reaction with a subsequent goal of entrapment or distraction. In a more positive vein, we must turn the tables and cause him to react to our actions. This is easier said than done, however, it is within grasp. A thorough knowledge of the enemy, weather and terrain is required by all hands before this will occur. Marines in I Corps have demonstrated the will of the United States to assist the Vietnamese people to gain and maintain their freedom, and to develop a strong and lasting democratic government. It is hoped that the information in this booklet will prepare you to assist in dealing the decisive blow to the Communist insurgent and to assist the people of Vietnam in attaining their ultimate goal.