

The following is an extract from operational report lessons learned period ending 31st October 1968. On or about 1840 hours 25th of October 1968 a platoon sized ambush patrol element of the 2nd 14th infantry was departing fire support base Kien^{III} Locations XT6001. The point element had cleared the gap in the tactical war and was in the process of clearing the area forward of the wire. The patrol proper was halted within the gap awaiting instructions to proceed. This procedure had been employed extensively with the time of departure remaining almost constant therefore unknown to the personnel concerned a pattern had been established. At above mentioned times sporadic sniper fire initially prevented movement of the patrol. The sniper was immediately supported by 160 mm mortar with a the gunner placing fire in vicinity of the gap then walking the mortar rounds thru the gap and back to the vicinity of the initial burst causing all rounds to impact within the gap. This resulted in one death and 13 wounded.

US

1. Significant Activities: omitted

2. Lessons Learned

a. Personnel: none

b. OPERATIONS:

(1) Establishment of Pattern:

(a) OBSERVATION: Units and individuals have tendencies to establish operational patterns when conducting tactical operations from static positions for sustained periods.

(b) EVALUATION: On or about 1840 hours, 25 October 1968 a platoon size ambush patrol element of 2-14 Infantry was departing FSB Keane, AT6001. The point element had cleared the gap in the tactical wire and was in the process of clearing the area forward of the wire. The patrol proper was halted within the gap (see attached schematic) awaiting instructions to proceed. This procedure had been employed extensively with the time of departure remaining almost constant, therefore, unknown to the personnel concerned, a pattern had been established. At above mentioned time, sporadic sniper fire initially prevented movement of the patrol. The sniper was immediately supported by one 60MM mortar with the gunner placing fire vicinity of the gap then "walking" the (mortar) rounds through the gap and back to vicinity of the initial burst, causing all rounds to impact within the gap. Results: One US KIA; 13 US WIA.

(c) RECOMMENDATION: That all Fire Support Bases or night laager positions (static) have sufficient avenues of departure and return; that time and place of departure vary daily and that command emphasis be placed on the (prevention of establishing operation patterns).

(2) Identification of Command Vehicles (Mech):

(a) OBSERVATION: Recent activities involving Armor and Infantry (Mech) units have resulted in the destruction of numerous vehicles to include an excessive number of command and control tracks.

(b) EVALUATION: Command and Control are easily distinguishable because of the dual or triple antennas affixed to the vehicle. Sapper or killer teams armed with RPG launcher, supported by riflemen, concentrate their efforts on the command tracks occasionally firing one or two RPG rounds at close range then effecting a hasty withdrawal.

(c) RECOMMENDATION: That an antenna similar to the one presently in use, be devised for test/evaluation. Said antenna should be positioned around or under track vehicles to prevent "marking" of the command and control tracks. However, if the present antenna remains in use dummy antennas should be mounted on each vehicle to confuse enemy gunners and prevent "marking" of the command and control tracks.

ENCLOSURE

3. Encirclement Operations. (See Incl 2)

4. Landing Zone/Pick-up Zone:

a. **OBSERVATION:** Many times, either because of poor planning or necessity, landing zones/pick-up zones have been established within twenty-thirty meters of built up areas or hedge-row complexes thereby, placing the aircraft and personnel in an extremely compromising position. This unnecessary danger is more prevalent when the Eagle Flight concept is utilized because normally Artillery/Air preparations are not employed.

b. **EVALUATION:** Preparation of landing zones by employment of Air/Artillery exists when participating in airmobile operations-combat assaults. When employing the Eagle Flight concept of airmobile operations and engaging targets of opportunity, landing zone/pick-up zone preparations are not feasible.

c. **RECOMMENDATION:** That landing zones/pick-up zones be prepped when possible. If the mission or tactical situation does not permit the employment of preparation fires make maximum use of available terrain; ie, open rice field a safe distance from hedgerow complexes or populated areas.

5. Detection of Booby Traps:

a. **OBSERVATION:** Recently, units in the 2d Brigade TAOL are sustaining an excessive number of casualties from manufactured and some made booby traps.

b. **EVALUATION:** Past Lessons Learned pertaining to detection and destruction of booby traps have been made available to units. Proper techniques are, in many instances, not being employed; ie mine detectors, killer eye device, observation and movement, bamboo poles, etc.

c. **RECOMMENDATION:** That past lessons learned in the area of mines/booby traps be reviewed and proper techniques implemented. Further, that commanders place command emphasis in this casualty producing area to reduce and minimize unnecessary casualties. Note: Scout dogs are extremely proficient in locating recently implaced booby traps.

6. Airmobile Operations (Eagle Flight-Combat Assault)

a. **OBSERVATION:** During recent Eagle Flight operations it was noted that once helicopters were on the ground and the ground elements had committed themselves to a direction of advance numerous personnel (possible VC) were departing the areas without restriction.

b. **EVALUATION:** An effective method of restricting freedom of movement personnel within the axis of advance of a sweeping element

must be employed.

c. RECOMMENDATION: When possible employ a blocking force in close proximity of the sweep element. However, when this is not feasible and contact with a large enemy force is unlikely, a tested concept is for one of the helicopters utilized to insert the sweep or blocking elements, with two infantrymen remaining aboard, and with gunships support, to go airborne above the operational area to perform a "spotter" mission. As personnel are observed fleeing the area the helicopter (with two riflemen) supported by the gunships, effects a quick apprehension.

7. Stowage of 90MM Recoilless Rifle Ammunition:

a. OBSERVATION: When an APC is hit by an RPG anti-tank round, the 90MM recoilless ammunition stowed in the vehicle often detonates, destroying the vehicle and causing numerous casualties.

b. EVALUATION: Protection of this ammunition from other than a direct hit by an anti-tank weapon will serve to significantly reduce loss of personnel and equipment.

c. RECOMMENDATION: An armored ammunition storage container should be fabricated and issued on a basis of one per 90MM recoilless Rifle in a mechanized Infantry unit. As an interim measure, double walled footlocker size boxes, containing sand and other non-combustible material, should be used for storage of said ammunition.

8. Mine Detectors:

a. OBSERVATION: The loss of armored vehicles and cargo vehicles has increased significantly due to the increased use of non-metallic mines by the enemy.

b. EVALUATION: The present metallic mine detector is incapable of detecting non-metallic mines, and the present density mine detector can not differentiate between a nonmetallic mine and laterite, thus rendering present detectors of little value on most roads in RVN.

c. RECOMMENDATION: Immediate steps should be taken to obtain an issue mine detectors capable of locating nonmetallic mines in laterite roads.

9. Track Tension when operating in Rome Plowed Areas:

a. OBSERVATION: If the track tension on the M-113A1 armored personnel carrier is not maintained at the proper adjustment when the vehicle is operating in Rome plowed areas, an unusually high rate of thrown tracks results.

b. EVALUATION: Operating APC's in the unusual amount of debris on the ground resulting from Rome plow operations, often results in thrown tracks. Proper track tension appears to solve the majority of