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HEADQUARTERS, U.S. ARMY SECTION  
MILITARY ASSISTANCE ADVISORY GROUP, VIETNAM  
Saigon, Vietnam

MAGAR-OT (OP)

11  
10 May 1962

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SUBJECT: Lessons Learned Number 12. [U]-8

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TO: See Distribution

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AUTHORITY OF DOD DIR. 5200.1 R  
BARKERS ON 15 Nov 91

No.

1. GENERAL: Operation "RAINDROP" was conducted by Headquarters, 23d Division in an area 35 km southeast of BAN ME THUOT and 10 km south of Highway #21 during the period 28 April - 1 May 1962.

2. PARTICIPATING UNITS: The units participating in the operation were Division Headquarters, two Airmobile Forces of a Battalion Headquarters and two companies each, and Sector Forces of a Sector Headquarters and two companies, one Recon Platoon, and one Civil Guard Platoon supported by one Artillery Battery (105), seven H-21 Helicopters, two T-28 s, and two AD-6 s.

3. MISSION: The mission was to kill or capture VC forces in the area, and recapture an Agrovillage which had fallen into VC hands.

4. CONCEPT: The concept of operations was to airland Airmobile Forces on three sides of the VC located in the Agrovillage. The force was to close in on the objective, block escape routes, and destroy the VC. Sector Forces were to assist in blocking routes of withdrawal and encirclement of the VC force. On the day following the initial attack, the second Airmobile Force was to be lifted to an area containing two suspected VC platoons. This force was to kill or capture VC in the area, and block VC withdrawing from area of the other Airmobile Force.

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5. RESULTS: The operation was only partially successful with VC losses of 6 KIA and one captured; three weapons confiscated; a small amount of equipment seized; and one small installation burned.

6. LESSONS LEARNED:

a. FAILURE TO EXPLOIT SURPRISE IN AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS ALLOWS THE ENEMY TO ESCAPE OR REORGANIZE.

The Airmobile Force that airlanded on the first day of the operation failed to take assigned objectives in an aggressive manner. Therefore, encirclement was incomplete and the VC escaped during hours of darkness. Tactical surprise is quickly lost if not exploited aggressively in the initial phase of an engagement. (See T&T Paper Chapter IV, F1 and 2 and "Lessons Learned" No 1 and 2).

b. CONTINUOUS RADIO COMMUNICATIONS IS A MUST FOR AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS. In this quickly planned and rapidly executed operation, provisions for adequate communications were not made. The lack of communications on the first day between the Division Headquarters and Airmobile Force restricted proper command and control, and partially contributed to the escape of the VC. (See T&T Paper, Chapter IV, E1 and 2).

c. SUPPORTING AIRCRAFT PILOTS MUST BE BRIEFED PRIOR TO DEPARTURE FROM BASE AIRFIELD. The two T-28 aircraft pilots who supported the first days operation did not have suitable operational maps, and were not briefed on the general area of operations prior to departure from base airfield.

d. COMBAT INTELLIGENCE MUST BE TIMELY AND ACCURATE. Two VC platoons were suspected of being in one area of operations, but their presence was not confirmed prior to the operation. In fact, the VC platoons were never contacted during the operation. (See T&T Paper, Chapter IV, B1-4 and "Lessons Learned" No 5 and 8).

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H. K. EGGLESTON  
Brigadier General, USA  
Acting, Chief

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*Joseph Grezaffi*  
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6. LESSONS LEARNED:

a. FAILURE TO EMPLOY SURPRISE IN AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS ALLOWS THE ENEMY TO ESCAPE OR REORGANIZE. The Airmobile Force that airlanded on the first day of the operation failed to take assigned objectives in an aggressive manner. Therefore, encirclement was incomplete and the VC escaped during hours of darkness. Tactical surprise is quickly lost if not exploited aggressively in the initial phase of an engagement. (See T&T Paper Chapter IV, F1 and 2 and "Lessons Learned" No. 1 and 2)

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