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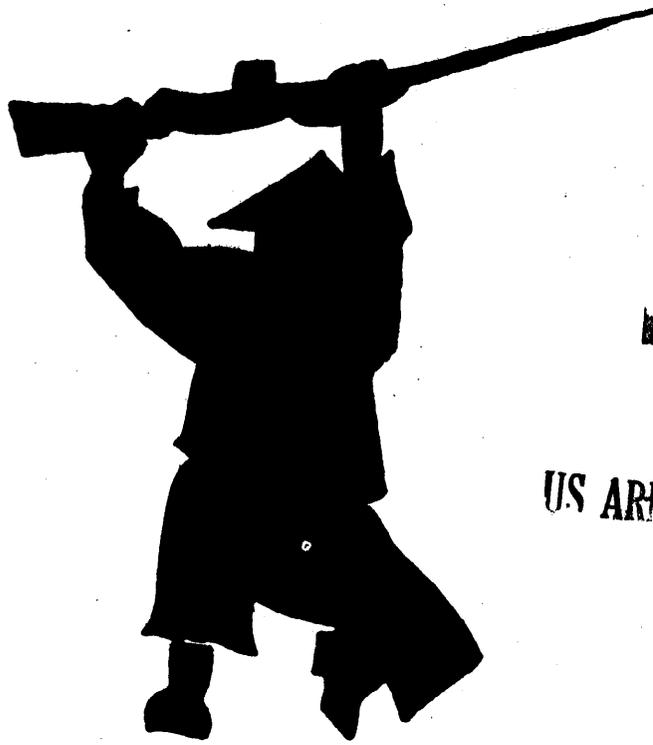
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# LESSONS LEARNED

# 51

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HEADQUARTERS  
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM  
APO US FORCES 96243

Serial No. 0587  
24 April 1965

MACJ 321

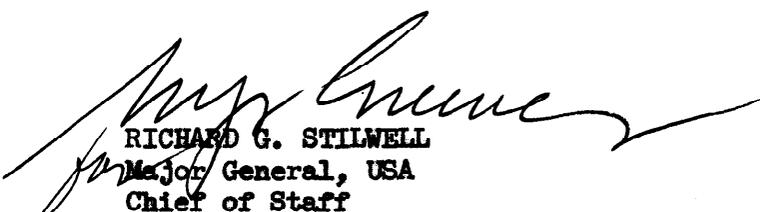
SUBJECT: Lessons Learned Number 51: Operational Employment of Riot Control  
Munitions

TO: See Distribution

1. (U) Attached as Inclosure 1 is the latest "Lessons Learned" from counterinsurgency operations in the Republic of Vietnam.
2. (U) The information contained in "Lessons Learned" is primarily intended for use by US Advisors in Vietnam. Lessons may be of value for direct application, or they may simply reinforce existing tactics, techniques or doctrine.
3. (CMHA) Attached document is classified CONFIDENTIAL to permit freedom of expression and careful analysis of operational methods and tactics of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, to protect US advisor-counterpart relations and to deny any possible use by insurgent forces. Special handling is required under the applicable provisions of DA-DCMI(A) when released to friendly nations. Release to personnel of the Republic of Vietnam will be governed by the provisions of MACV Directive 380-4, 11 Apr 64. Sanitized versions of this information omitting dates, names of locations and participating personnel and units may be prepared for instructional purposes and/or official US Army, Navy, or Air Force publications.
4. (U) Comments, questions and requests for changes in distribution should be addressed to this headquarters, ATTN: J321.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

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as

  
RICHARD G. STILLWELL  
Major General, USA  
Chief of Staff

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SUBJECT: Lessons Learned Number 51: Operational Employment of Riot Control Munitions

TO: See Distribution

1. (CMHA) A great deal has been written or said recently about the RVNAF employment of riot control munitions on operations. Most remarks have been highly critical and give the impression that these munitions have had widespread use and have caused many casualties. However, when after action reports are studied, it is obvious that these munitions have had only limited effect on the enemy at best. The purpose of this issue of Lessons Learned is to discuss these munitions and their employment in RVNAF operations.

2. (CMHA) MUNITIONS AND DELIVERY MEANS AVAILABLE:

a. Munitions. The following is a list of the agents which are contained in the riot control munitions available to RVNAF and a brief description of their effects:

(1) CN. Causes tears and irritates skin. Does not prevent a determined defense, but could have definite psychological advantages if the enemy force was surprised and unfamiliar with the agent and if RVNAF forces were quick to follow up the chemical attack with a ground offense. Has rapidly diminishing effects.

(2) CS. Causes tears; irritates skin, particularly when damp; acts as a vomiting agent; and may cause temporary pain in the chest. Has a greater psychological effect than CN and can cause sufficient physical reaction to prevent defensive action in some individuals. Effects last from five to ten minutes after leaving contaminated area.

(3) DM. Causes headaches, nausea, violent sneezing and temporary mental depression. Has results similar to CS but more pronounced. Effects can last up to one hour after leaving contaminated area.

(4) CNDM. A combination of (1) and (3) above.

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b. Delivery Means: All of the above irritants can be dispensed in a variety of means. These include:

- (1) Aerial spray tanks and modified rocket launchers.
- (2) Portable, helicopter mounted or truck mounted dispersers.

3. (CMHA) OPERATION BAN THAI I: Although there have been three operations utilizing riot control agents conducted in RVN, Operation Ban Thai in Phu Yen Province in January 1965 was the first use of such agents against a fortified position. This operation resulted in several significant lessons learned which should be considered in the planning and conduct of **similar** actions.

a. Friendly Forces. One ARVN Regiment supported by VNAF/USAF fighter-bombers, 52nd Aviation Battalion and VNN blocking forces.

b. Intelligence. The objective was an area near the tip of the Phu Lac Peninsula. VC forces in the area were estimated to consist of one regional company and three local platoons. The local population was reportedly sympathetic to the VC and there were extensive VC entrenchments and fortifications in the area. These included tunnels, reinforced firing positions, barbed wire entanglements and punji stake defenses.

c. Concept of Operation. The operation was to be initiated with a deception action by one battalion which was to feign an attack to the west of Tuy Hoa. On the same day, another battalion would be helilifted to Tuy Hoa and start an apparent movement west to reinforce the first battalion. During the early morning hours, this second battalion would change its direction of march and attack south on the peninsula while other units, including naval, would move into blocking positions (Inclosure 1). When the enemy forces had been driven into a small area on the tip of the peninsula, they would be attacked with napalm, smoke and riot control agents and, subsequently, ground forces. Medical and psywar teams would accompany ARVN forces to provide maximum psychological benefit.

d. Concept of Chemical Phase. This phase called for a protective smoke screen to be delivered by A-1E aircraft after which UH-1B helicopters would disperse CS agent using M4 and M5 aerial dispersers. A back-up capability was to be provided by five UH-1Bs equipped with troop landing smoke screen system (TLSS) (modified XM3 rocket system); two loaded with smoke grenades and three with CS and CN-DM grenades. Troop units would also carry riot control agent grenades to be delivered by hand or rifle grenade launchers.

e. Preparation: Preparation for the action included gathering and testing the special chemical equipment and material and the normal operation preparations. Special attention was given to the fitting of

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protective masks, mask drill and conduct of a gas chamber exercise. Troop training involving maneuver while masked was not conducted.

f. Execution:

(1) Ground. The initial attack was launched as planned and all scheduled events took place in the proper sequence. However, the time phasing varied from the original schedule and there was a delay of about three hours in the final (chemical supported) attack. This was partly due to the ground commander's reluctance to call for the chemical attack until he had verified that all units were 100 percent ready. After delivery of agents, there was a general lack of troop aggressiveness and assault elements did not jump off in the attack for almost 10 minutes.

(2) Air. Helicopter support was continuous throughout the operation and, in addition to delivering chemical agents, armed ships struck targets of opportunity and escorted troop carrier helicopters. Fighters attacked fortified positions with pinpoint accuracy and laid the planned smoke screen. Fighters flew a total of 36 sorties and delivered 14,100 gallons of napalm, 33,240 lbs of HE and WP explosives and 12,100 rounds of 20mm cannon fire.

(3) Chemical. Delivery aircraft and equipment were ready for employment at 0800 hours on the day of the operation. The weather, until approximately 0930, was particularly suited to the employment of riot control agents. The sky was overcast; wind speed was approximately four knots; and an inversion condition existed. Actual employment of the agents was not started until 1215 hours. By this time weather conditions had changed considerably. Wind speeds had doubled and the early morning inversion had changed into a weak lapse condition. The delivery of agents was to begin immediately after the A-1Es had laid their smoke screen. However, this screen was laid approximately 1000 meters north of the target area and necessitated the commitment of two UH-1Bs equipped with TLSS (smoke) to form another screen. Although the bulk agent covered 70 percent of the target area when delivered fire was still being received from the area and the reserve agent carried in the remaining TLSS was delivered.

g. Results:

(1) Enemy losses: 149 killed and three personnel and miscellaneous weapons and equipment captured.

(2) Friendly losses: 1 KIA and 17 WIA.

4. (CMHA) LESSONS LEARNED:

a. The weather is a highly important factor in chemical operations. The delay in delivery of agents in this operation reduced effectiveness of the

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agent by approximately 50 percent due to the presence of a lapse condition which allowed the agent to rise rather than hug the ground. Operations of this type must be planned to take advantage of optimum (inversion) weather conditions which usually exist at night or prior to about 0930 hours.

b. Of the two delivery systems employed, the bulk dispersers and the modified XM3 rocket system, the latter was the most effective. The bulk disperser requires technical support in the form of personnel and equipment and is more subject to mechanical failure. In addition, the rocket system allows for greater concentration of agent in a small area and one helicopter using this system is able to carry a greater agent load than one employing the disperser.

c. The indoctrination of participating troops in maneuver and tactics while masked would have materially aided exploitation and helped remove any psychological barriers that existed. Troops using protective masks for the first time may have mental reservations since the mask, at least to some extent, limits both activity and vision.

d. The ground commander should have a chemical representative immediately available to advise him where and when to employ smoke and riot control agents. In this operation, the original plan was inflexible and there was no attempt to alter smoke and agent delivery plans even though the situation was different than originally contemplated.

e. Ground troops must be prepared to exploit the chemical attack immediately after delivery of agents. In this case slow reaction negated any short term benefits afforded by the chemical agent.

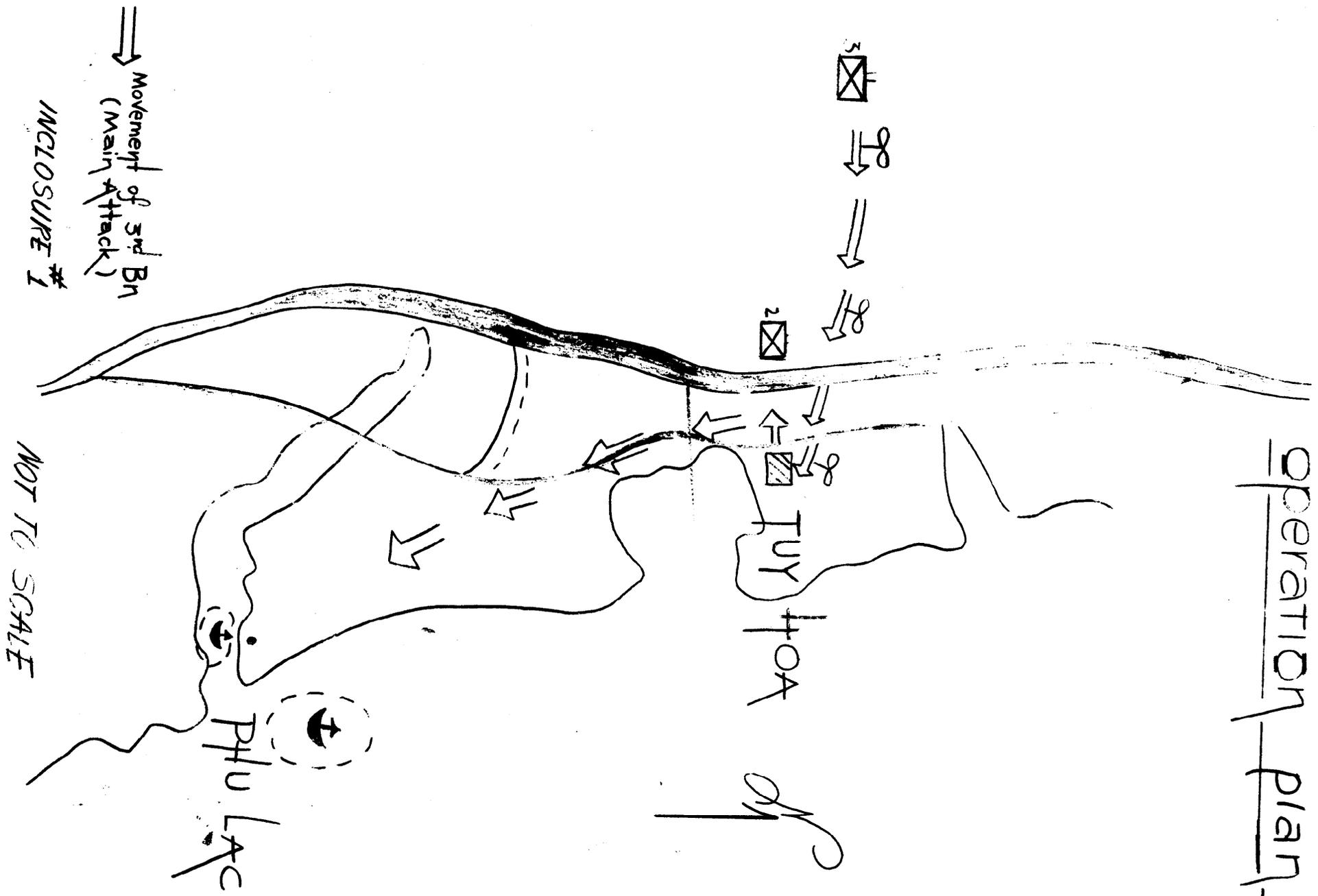
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# Operation Plan



⇒ Movement of 3rd Bn  
(Main Attack)

INCLOSURE #1

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