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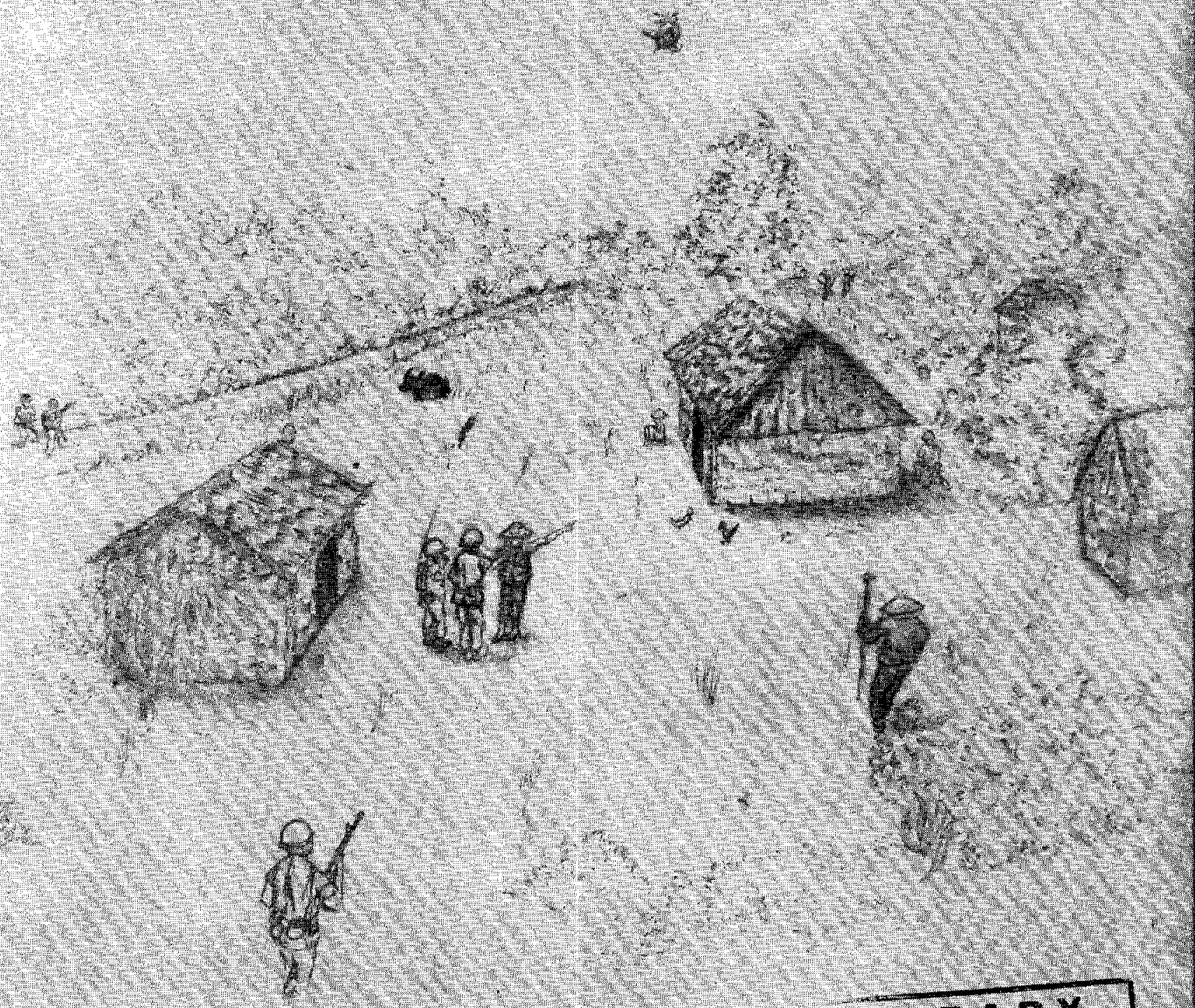

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HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
APO 96222

MACJ3-052 **20 January 1970**

SUBJECT: Vietnam Lessons Learned No. 75 Cordon and Search Operations

SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Attached for information is a Lessons Learned from recent experiences in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN).

2. This information may be of value for direct application to training or to reinforce, review, or revise existing doctrine based on experiences in the RVN.

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FOR THE COMMANDER:

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VIETNAM LESSONS LEARNED NO 75

CORDON AND SEARCH OPERATIONS

1. (U) INTRODUCTION. This Lessons Learned is devoted to a unique operation of the current Vietnamese conflict. It describes those combat, intelligence and civic action aspects of the cordoning and searching techniques employed by US, Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF) and the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). A cordon and search operation is a combined military and civil operation conducted with two major objectives. First, it will localize and destroy the elusive forces of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and the Viet Cong (VC). Second, it will screen out members of the Communist infrastructure and neutralize them. MACV Lessons Learned number 73, titled Defeat of VC Infrastructure, is devoted to the details of the destruction of the VC infrastructure on Vinh Loc Island. This Lessons Learned will discuss other cordon and search operations and as such can be considered an update of Lessons Learned No. 73. It covers a broader field and contains aspects of the pacification and civic action efforts normally conducted simultaneously with cordon and search operations. Most of the content of this Lessons Learned has been extracted from extensive studies conducted by the Deputy Senior Advisor, I Corps and the Third Marine Amphibious Force Headquarters on the subject of Cordon and Search.

2. (C) MILITARY ASPECTS OF CORDON AND SEARCH.

a. General. Cordon and Search is normally a combined civil and military operation, based on good intelligence, and should be preplanned in detail and rehearsed. Everything possible must be done to maintain secrecy and achieve surprise. The plan should be simple and capable of rapid execution. Methods and techniques should be constantly varied. Everyone taking part in the search must be aware of its aim which will determine the methods used. The search may be for persons, arms, ammunition and explosives, or documents.

b. Command and Control. The size of the area, the relative strengths of police and troops, and an estimate of the type of resistance that may be encountered, will determine whether control of a preplanned cordon and search should be exercised by the police or the armed forces. Although a small search in a controlled area may best be controlled by the police, it will be common for all operations outside controlled areas to be commanded and controlled by the military forces with the available police acting in support. In many situations police may not be available in the numbers desired. In these circumstances tasks which should ideally be allotted to the police field force will be carried out by indigenous armed forces who must be trained and prepared for them.

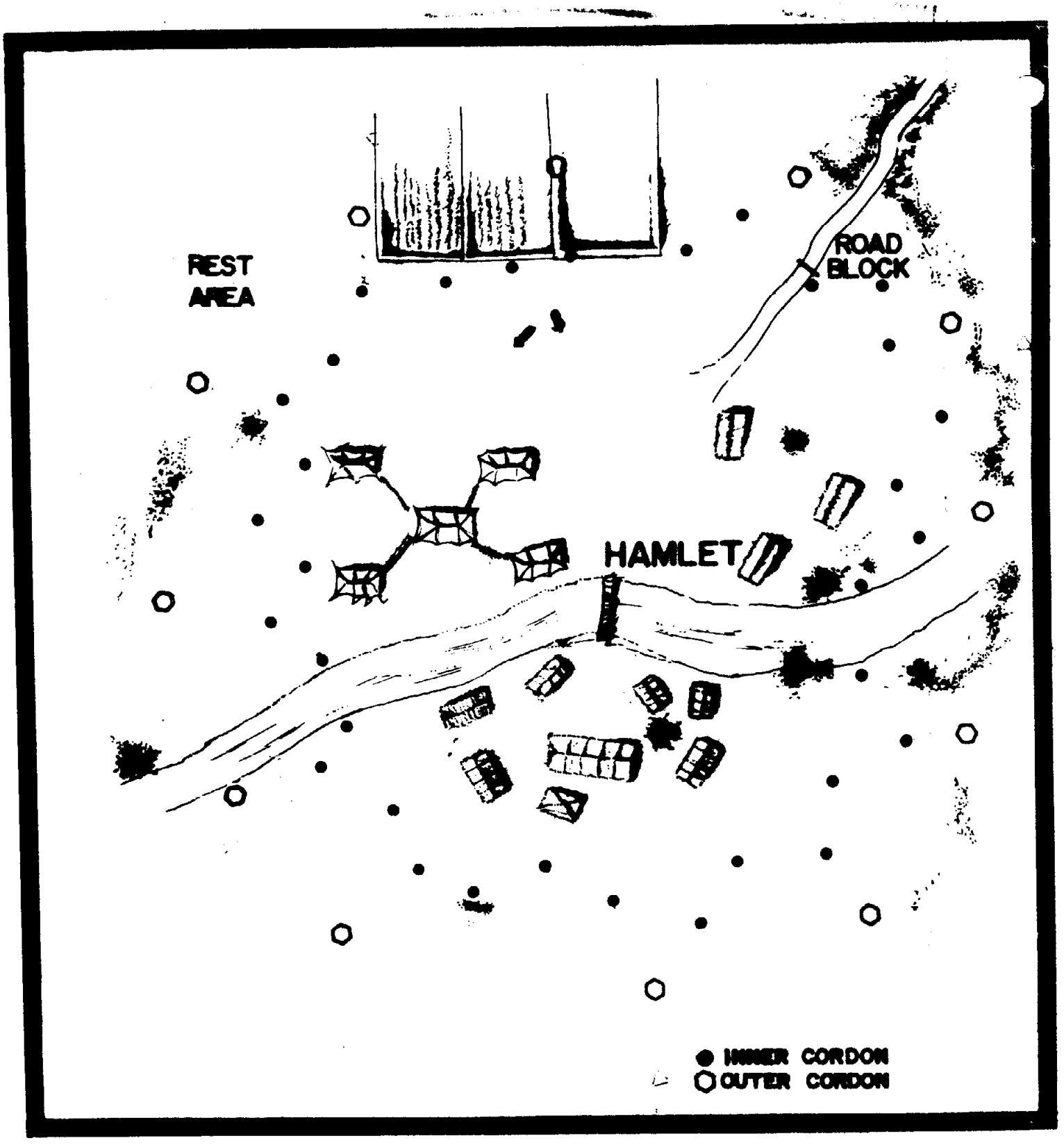


FIGURE 1

c. Tasks. In a cordon and search operation the following divisions of responsibilities are considered ideal:

(1) Military:

(a) Planning, commanding and controlling the operation.

(b) Cordoning the area.

(c) Escorting police search parties.

(d) Guarding and escorting detained suspects.

(e) Providing helicopters to localize enemy movement.

(2) Police: The police, if available in sufficient numbers, should be responsible for:

(a) Carrying out plain clothes reconnaissance, if permitted.

(b) Providing guides for the cordon troops if required.

(c) Giving any instructions to the inhabitants after the cordon is in position.

(d) Carrying out the actual search.

(e) Screening suspects.

d. Difficulties. Among the difficulties experienced in a large scale cordon and search are:

(1) Preservation of security.

(2) The search may irritate the population and win further support for the enemy.

(3) High cost in terms of manpower.

e. Organization. When sufficient forces are available, the following groups should be organized:

(1) Cordon Troops. These surround the area to be searched to prevent anyone inside from getting out. The cordon must not be a continuous line of troops but organized with depth; e.g., a platoon would normally have two squads forward and one in depth.

APPROACH BY HELICOPTER IS CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE WHEN THE ELEMENTS OF SPEED, SURPRISE, AND CONCEALMENT ARE PRIME FACTORS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AMBUSH EXISTS.

FIGURE 2

(2) Outer Cordon Troops. These are deployed some distance from the main cordon at selected points to prevent an attack or interference from outside the isolated area.

(3) Search Parties. These consist of the police and/or troops who search houses and inhabitants in the isolated area.

(4) Cage Troops. These erect and guard enclosures for holding persons awaiting interrogation.

(5) Screening Teams. These consist of police or intelligence personnel, who identify suspects and wanted persons.

(6) Escort Troops. These escort wanted persons to a place of detention after interrogation.

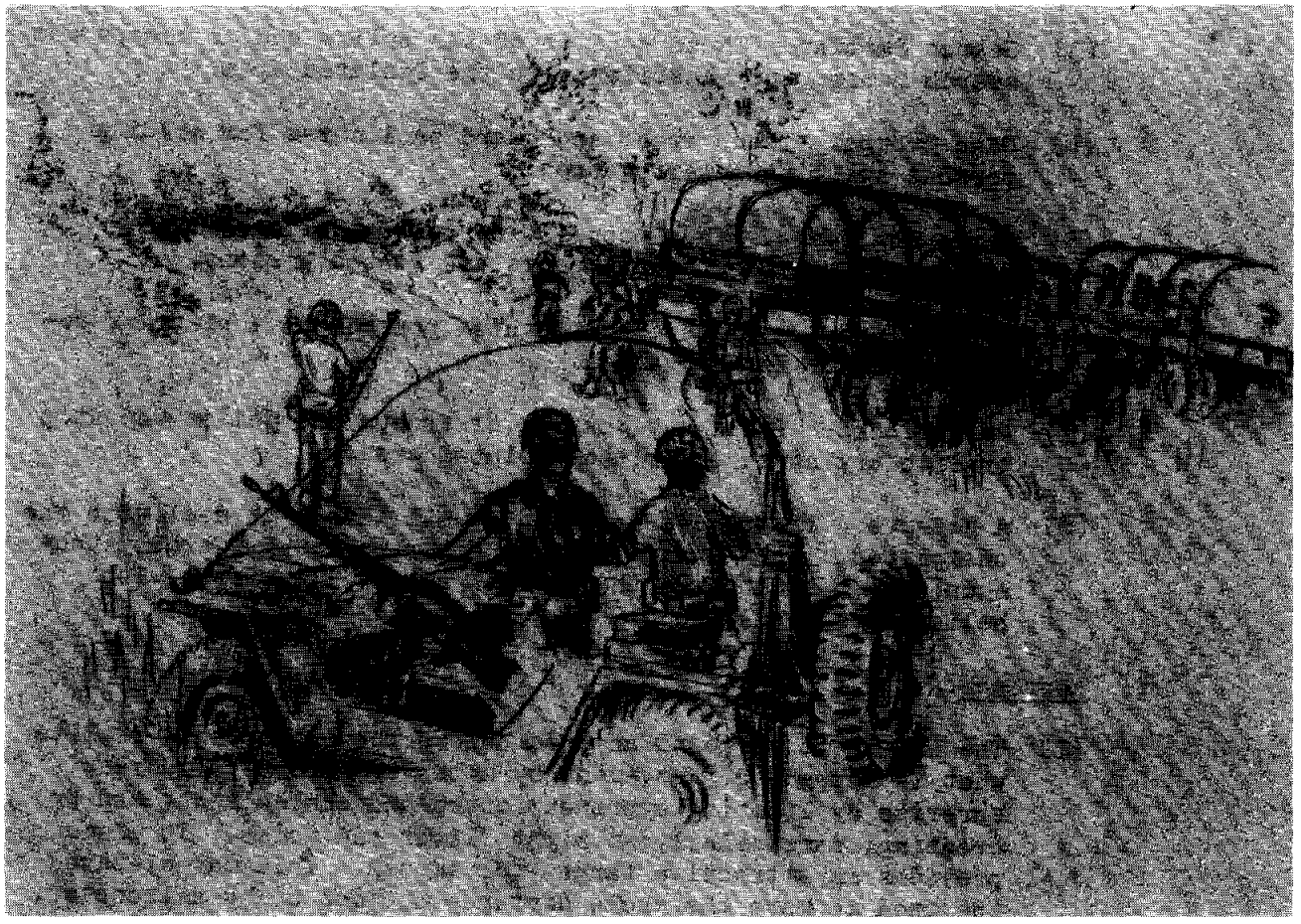
(7) Road Blocks. These may consist of troops and police who stop traffic trying to enter the isolated area.

(8) A Reserve. Troops are required at all levels to deal with the unexpected. They should have no other task. Preferably they should be held outside the area at a convenient spot with helicopters available on stand-by to lift them in.

f. Approach.

(1) The aim is to surround an area before the inhabitants realize what is happening. Movement by motor transport prejudices surprise by limiting approach routes and concealment, and by creating, particularly at night, light and noise. It also provides an attractive target for ambush. This may dictate the need to move the whole distance on foot or by helicopter, or if transport must be used, to dismount at a distance from the area to be cordoned and approach stealthily on foot. When vehicle movement is considered to be the best means in the circumstances, it may be advisable to drive right into the area - as the quickest method often has the most chance of success. An approach by helicopter or by stealth on foot will generally be preferred.

(2) Forces should approach by as many different routes, and as silently, as possible. A cordon established in darkness must be unbroken, but it can be thinned out after daylight and maintained by a chain of observation posts with gaps covered by patrols. Normally, it will not be possible to maintain a continuous cordon for any length of time owing to the large numbers of troops required. Numbers can be reduced in some circumstances, such as, by employing cavalry sub-units to cordon along roads which run through swamps or flooded paddies. Ideally, cordon troops should dig in, taking advantage



WHEN VEHICLE MOVEMENT IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE BEST MEANS IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT MAY BE ADVISABLE TO DRIVE RIGHT INTO THE AREA...

FIGURE 3

of natural cover and using wire to help maintain their line. However, the need for silence will often preclude digging. The amount of light and thickness of vegetation will dictate the cordon density and depth.

g. Road Movement. If the risk of ambush is slight and road movement is decided upon, the following points should be considered:

(1) Forward Rendezvous (RV). A forward RV is necessary to enable the commander of the force to retain control for as long as possible and to reduce the chance of part of the convoy being delayed by traffic during the final move forward. It should be close to, but out of sound and sight of, the cordon area. It is not a dismounting area.

(2) Traffic Control. Traffic control will be required at the forward RV so that the convoy achieves a clear run to the cordon area. If a number of side roads lead into the route selected, between the forward RV and the cordon area, they must be picketed to prevent civilian vehicles from infiltrating into the convoy or blocking the route.

(3) Routes. It is normally best to move to the forward RV by one route, as this is the easiest way in which to coordinate the simultaneous arrival of the whole convoy. From the forward RV to the objective, all available routes should be used so that the cordon may be established all around the objective as quickly as possible and with the maximum surprise. The sub-unit with the furthest distance to travel should move first. This can be done on a time basis, or the necessary gaps can be left in the convoy at the forward RV. Vehicles should not, however, remain in the forward RV for more than two or three minutes, otherwise the advantage of surprise may be lost.

(4) Security. Surprise will be lost if traffic police, detectives or police searchers arrive in the cordon area before the cordon is in position. They should move at the rear of the military convoy. This must be made clear during planning.

h. Timing. Exact timing is the most important factor affecting the success of a cordon and search and is the most difficult to achieve. The area must be surrounded simultaneously. If this does not happen and troops are late in cordoning a part of the area, an alert enemy will slip out an escape exit. A possible sequence of events for an operation is suggested in Annex A.

i. Battle Procedure. Careful briefing is essential to ensure that every man knows his task. As in all other counterinsurgency operations, a high premium is placed on alertness, coupled with a determined attitude in every individual. This battle procedure is suggested for a battalion operation. It closely resembles normal troop leading procedures.

"CORDON TROOPS SURROUND THE AREA TO BE SEARCHED TO PREVENT ANYONE FROM GETTING OUT."

FIGURE 4

(1) Battalion Headquarters Battle Procedure.

(a) A warning order is sent out which includes the following:

1. Features forming the perimeter of the area.

2. Time the cordon is to be in position.

3. RV and time battalion order will be issued.

(b) The intelligence officer should produce an enlarged photo or sketch showing distances on each leg of the perimeter for company and platoon commanders to study while waiting for orders and air photographs. Battalion operations should be supported with air photo coverage, especially as foot reconnaissance is often impossible. Photos should be available to each squad.

(c) Orders should contain the following information:

1. Features forming the perimeter of the area.

2. Location and next time of RV for all commanders.

3. Time cordon will be in position.

4. Company assembly areas.

5. Company areas of responsibility around the perimeter and location of reserves.

6. Route(s) to the area (and battalion forward RV if required).

7. Battalion order of march.

8. Battalion and company cages.

(2) Company and Platoon Procedure. Having received the warning order, each company commander issues his own warning order and any additional instructions deemed necessary. During issue of the battalion commander's order, the company commander should be provided with diagrams of the area for his platoon commanders. He will then prepare his own orders and issue them to his platoon commanders, who should have examined the diagram while waiting for their orders. The platoon commanders then issue their orders to their platoons including any attached personnel. Every soldier must understand the outline plan and his part in the operation before he moves off. There is no time, even for last minute orders, on arrival at the cordon area.

j. Action in Cordon Area.

(1) Deployment. As soon as the troops arrive, speed in identifying the area of the cordon and in deployment is essential. Company commanders must be on the ground early to direct platoons to their sectors of the cordon. If anyone in the cordon sees a suspect approaching he should quietly alert his neighbors and challenge the suspect when close enough to insure a shot does not miss. Subsequent action will depend on the reaction to the challenge. Prearranged signals are necessary to prevent clashes between friendly troops. Platoon commanders should quickly indicate positions for squads. Squad leaders, without pause, should lead their squads to the areas allotted. On arrival at their areas troops adopt fire positions that will give the best possible field of fire over the cordoned area. The platoon commander will then quickly confirm that the troops are deployed correctly, and he or the platoon sergeant will detail areas of observation. If strengths permit, patrols should move behind the cordon in each sector to act as pursuit parties should anyone break through.

(2) Communications. The various sectors of the cordon must be in radio contact with the headquarters controlling the whole operation. If time and aircraft availability permit, an airborne radio control station in a light aircraft will help to maintain continuity of communications.

(3) Action After Deployment.

(a) Once the cordon is in position, the police should warn the inhabitants that a house curfew is in force, and tell them what to do if, for urgent reasons, they have to enter or leave the area. The military commander must tell the police where he wishes the cordon "gate" to be.

(b) At this stage, company commanders should designate a cage area, preferably in the shade, and allot guards.

(c) If transport has been used it should be sent to a secure area close by as soon as practicable, and guarded there by the drivers or a force nominated for this purpose.

(d) If the cordon is established in darkness, movement amongst the cordon force will be restricted to the minimum until first light.

(e) Commanders should make an early tour of the area and personally help ensure that the perimeter of the cordon is complete. Likely escape routes may be sealed off with wire, but must be under observation by sentries. Wire may reduce the overall number of sentries required.

(f) An area should be selected where reserves can rest. It should be outside the cordon area, but near enough for the reserve to react quickly, and immediately occupy alarm positions.

(g) As soon as possible, commensurate with the necessity for security and protection, the strength of the cordon should be reduced and sentries posted on dominating points. Company commanders should plan the resting of complete platoons and within platoons it may be possible to reduce sentries still further. Platoons off duty can form a small reserve. Sentries should be stationed in pairs:

1. Where they have good all around observation and consequently ample warning of any attempt at break out through the cordon.

2. Preferably under shelter.

3. Where possible, in depth.

(h) Search Techniques:

1. Announcement. As soon as the cordon is established the police will inform the community by loudspeaker, or through its headman, that the area is about to be searched and that a house curfew is in force. Everyone must remain indoors or everyone must proceed at once to a central point for screening.

2. Search Parties. Ideally, each search party should consist of at least one policeman and a protective military escort. The escort's task is to guard the police searcher and prevent anyone from escaping. Each search party should also include a trained woman searcher to search females and detect men disguised as women.

3. The police may carry out the search and give all orders to individuals. Should there be no police, indigenous troops should be used. All searchers must be trained to look for all types of enemy caches.

(i) Cages. The armed forces are responsible for erecting and guarding any cages required. Cages should be located under shelter if possible and on ground free from stones. If shade is not available, a shelter should be erected

"THE VARIOUS SECTORS OF A CORDON SHOULD BE IN RADIO CONTACT WITH THE HEADQUARTERS CONTROLLING THE WHOLE OPERATION."

FIGURE 5

for women and young children and, if the search is to be prolonged, arrangements must be made for food and water. Adequate latrines must be provided for males and females. Suggested organization and functions for a cage are given in Annex B (Screening Center).

3. (C) INTELLIGENCE ASPECTS OF CORDON AND SEARCH.

a. General.

(1) The best intelligence available for a cordon and search operation will usually be gathered by the intelligence/police agencies located within the district. The Province Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Center and District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Center (PIOCC/DIOCC) are the nucleus and cutting edge in coordinating the activities of the intelligence agencies at Province and District levels. Its primary functions are to insure that all intelligence pertinent to the District and Province is acquired and readily available for planning and conducting timely operations against the VCI and local VC guerrilla units, and to increase coordination by bringing together representatives within the intelligence community at the local level to work and coordinate on a daily basis to improve the quality and timeliness of intelligence. Both of these centers are part of the PHUNG HOANG/PHOENIX program, which is directed toward the identification and elimination of the VC infrastructure.

(2) The Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) is defined as the political and administrative organization through which the Viet Cong control or seek control over the South Vietnamese people. It embodies the Party (Peoples Revolutionary Party (PRP)) control structure, which includes a command and administrative apparatus (Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN)) at the national level, and the leadership and administration of a parallel front organization (the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSVN)), both of which extend from the national through the hamlet level.

b. Concept of Operations.

(1) Planning.

(a) During preliminary planning, consideration must be given to exploiting every available source of information on the target. Specific information, blacklists, census overlays1/ and special studies should be requested on

---

1/ Census overlays - Population accountability ledgers prepared and provided by the status census grievance (SCG) personnel.

several different hamlets or villages in order to select the most promising target and not disclose the primary area of interest. Determination of the most promising target, with the help of the Province Phung Hoang Permanent Center or the DIOCC, should normally be based on an analysis of collated information which indicates that the Viet Cong are in the area, and that they can be identified through the use of blacklists, photographs, VC census overlays, informants, guides or a combination of these. Requests for studies should be submitted not only for specific operations, but should be requested, maintained and annotated on a continuing basis to assist in the selection of targets for future operations. The following are agencies with representatives in the DIOCC or in the PIOCC and the information they provide:

1. Police.

   a. National or Uniformed Police are responsible for the implementation of regulatory measures for population resource control. At the local level, the National Police are instrumental in compiling biographical data on VC personnel for use and retention by PIOCCs and DIOCCs.

   b. The Police Special Branch (PSB) constitute the intelligence collection arm of the National Police with the specific mission of developing political or VCI intelligence. Its members have full police powers of arrest, detention and search, and seizure. Special Police obtain blacklists and collated studies on the VC from the SP Collation Section and from the Provincial Interrogation Center. Cooperative individuals with knowledge of the target area can be obtained through PSB. Special Police also provide personnel for the screening point and to effect any necessary arrests and searches.

   c. National Police Field Force (NPFF) is the paramilitary reaction arm of the National Police. NPFF can be used to provide security for screening points, used as searching elements, or act as a quick reaction force to exploit information obtained during the screening process.

   d. A Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) is a special reaction arm of the National Police. Its mission includes collecting intelligence on the VCI and participating in the conduct of paramilitary operations to capture its members. PRU

training and equipment has been designed for anti-VCI operations and not for engaging conventional military targets.

2. Others.

a. Regional Forces/Popular Forces (RF/PF). A full-time military organization designed to provide security and defense for hamlets, villages, districts, and provinces, and conduct small-scale military operations against VC units, the RF/PF are recruited locally, and, except for their military training, stationed in those areas from which they were recruited. Being indigenous to the area, RF/PF have an intelligence-information reporting capability because of their contacts with family, friends and relatives as well as a military reaction capability.

b. Revolutionary Development Cadre (RDC). These 30-man self-help teams are responsible for creating a link between the national government and the people by assisting them in initiating civic action programs for economic and political improvement. To accomplish these projects, the teams live with the people and, through their daily contact with the people, the RD members have developed into a vital intelligence reporting network on the VCI at the local levels. The teams also have a minor reaction capability to provide for their own security.

c. Military Security Service (MSS). This is the Vietnamese counterintelligence element, a military intelligence organization responsible to the General Political Warfare Department of JGS and represented in all branches of the GVN armed forces. Tasked primarily with counterespionage, countersabotage, sedition and disaffection within ARVN, the MSS also has a positive collection and reporting mission.

d. Static Census Grievance (SCG). Oftentimes referred to as the CG, this group is an information activity which reports the census and listens to the grievances and aspirations of the people. It also has a positive mission of identifying and reporting on Viet Cong activities,

which is accomplished through their face-to-face contact with the people in the hamlets and villages. With this close association with the populace, the CG is a very capable and effective collection and reporting element in the PHUNG HOANG program.

e. Civilian Irregualr Defense Groups (CIDG). A combat paramilitary element, the CIDG is found primarily in the more remote, sparsely populated areas of Vietnam. Advised and trained by US Special Forces and under the control of the Vietnamese Special Forces, CIDG units have a primary mission of border surveillance, interdiction of enemy infiltration/exploitation routes, and conducting operations against VC base areas. CIDG personnel are usually indigenous to the areas in which they are operating, and, therefore, have a dual collection and operational capability.

b. Chieu Hoi Centers make a very valuable contribution to the PHUNG HOANG program. When returning or "rallying" to the GVN from the VC ranks, the Hoi Chanh 2/ often possesses much valuable information and/or intellignece which can confirm/refute or add to existing information and be exploited for timely reaction operations. Hoi Chanhs are also used in Armed Propaganda Teams, Kit Carson Scouts, and the PRU.

c. Psychological Operations (PSYOP). This activity also plays an important role in the PHUNG HOANG program. It is designed to soothe the people's feelings, especially following military operations which have disrupted their lives, induce defections and elicit popular support for the GVN.

d. Aerial and ground reconnaissance of the target will be made when possible and must be coordinated to preclude repeated reconnaissance and the possibility of disclosing friendly interest in the area.

(2) Execution:

(a) Once the cordon has been set and the cage area designated, a screening point or center will be established.

2/ Hoi Chanhs - VC personnel who accept the offer of the Government of the Republic of Veitnam's "Open Arms" program.

All civilians in the cordon area will pass through the screening center to be classified.

(b) National Police personnel will complete, if census data does not exist in police files, a basic registration card (Figure 6) and photograph all personnel over 15 years of age. Photographs will be printed in two copies; one copy is pasted to the registration card and the other placed in the hamlet-book for possible use in subsequent operations, and for identification by Hoi Chanhs and informants.

(c) PSB personnel at the screening center will prepare blacklist cards (Figure 7) on all newly developed persons as appropriate.

(d) The screening element chief will ensure that the screeners question relatives, friends, neighbors and other knowledgeable individuals of VC functionaries who are operating in the area, concerning whereabouts, activities, movements and expected return.

(e) The screening area of the cage should include areas where selected individuals can be interviewed privately by PSB and military intelligence personnel. Efforts will be made to convince the interviewees that their cooperation will not be detected by the other inhabitants. The availability of monetary awards, i.e., the voluntary Informant Program Fund, for purchasing certain types of information and equipment should also be discussed during the interview.

(3) Follow-Up:

(a) All information of a tactical order of battle nature can be retained for use in future operations by the tactical unit; and it will also be turned over to the sector and subsector S-2s.

(b) All information concerning VCI will be turned over to the PIOCC, DIOCC and the PSB collation section for inclusion in their files and distribution.

(c) Unexploited information concerning VC meetings, indoctrination sessions, etc., will be turned over to the nearest DIOCC for exploitation.

SCREENING BIO CARD

3x5 WHITE

Name Alias Number

Male Fem Occupation I.D. Card #

Date of birth Place of birth

Father (Alive-Dead) Mother (Alive-Dead)

Husband-Wife Children-Ages

Present Address

Circumstances Date/Place

Remarks

MẪU DANH THẾ LẬP CHO NHỮNG NGƯỜI DƯỢC THẨM VẤN TẠI TRUNG TÂM THANH LỌC

Họ và Tên Bí danh Số

Nam Nữ Nghề nghiệp Số can cước

Ngày sanh Nơi sanh

Cha (s - c) Me (s - c)

Chồng/Vợ Con/Tuổi

Địa chỉ hiện tại

Trường hợp Ngày và nơi

Cước chú

FIGURE 6

BLACK LIST CARD

3x5 WHITE

V.C. AT LARGE

Name Alias(s)

Age Distinguishing features

Position in VC

Last known location, date

Family information

Additional remarks, Source of information, Date/Place

MẪU DANH THẾ LẬP CHO NHỮNG TÊN VIỆT-CỘNG HẢY CÒN TẠI DÀO

VIỆT CỘNG TẠI DÀO

Ho và tên Bí danh và bí số

Tuổi Nhận dạng đặc biệt

Dia chỉ trong hàng ngũ VC

Ngày và noi có mạt lần chót

Tin tức gia dinh

Cuốc chú, Nguồn tin, Ngày và noi

FIGURE 7

4. (C) PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS (PSYOP) AND CIVIC ACTION ASPECTS. By application of certain resources, it is sometimes advantageous to establish a Combined Holding and Interrogation Center (CHIC) in conjunction with the cordon.

a. Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GVN) Resources.

(1) Vietnamese Information Service (VIS). Upon request this organization can provide medical groups and cultural teams to provide entertainment and disseminate pro-GVN propaganda. VIS can also provide movies, loudspeakers and literature for distribution.

(2) Hoi Chanhs. If available, Hoi Chanhs from the area can act as guides and identify VC, VC families, caches, assembly areas, and lines of communication. In addition, each province has armed propaganda teams (APT) specially trained in face to face PSYOPS. As ex-VC they explain the Chieu Hoi Program and its benefits from their own point of view and urge people to encourage their VC relatives and friends to rally to the GVN.

b. Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Resources.

(1) Civic Action Team. This team is used to guide and control the population. They also have a MEDCAP capability and during the operation this team hands out clothes, food packages, etc., to the population.

(2) Psywar Team. This team presents GVN policy, disseminates pro-GVN literature, organizes games and additional entertainment. They explain the presence of US/FWMAF troops in Vietnam, particularly in the targeted village.

(3) Cultural Teams. Complement the efforts of the Provincial Cultural Team (para 4a(1) above).

(4) Medical Teams. ARVN Division medical teams assisted by US MEDCAP personnel available, attend to the medical needs of the people. They serve as an example of the government's interest and concern for the people.

c. Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP) Aspects.

(1) Goals. Cordon and search operations provide an opportunity to achieve two related goals of the MEDCAP:

(a) It establishes a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation between the civilian population, GVN civilian officials and RVNAF.

(b) It supports revolutionary development by improving the health standards of RVN civilians.

(2) Definitions. The administrative definitions of MEDCAP show the level of assistance by FWMAF medical personnel:

(a) MEDCAP I is the care and treatment of RVN civilians by medical personnel of the RVNAF. US advisors will assist the RVNAF with planning and providing technical guidance in the conduct of MEDCAP I activities.

(b) MEDCAP II is the care and treatment of RVN civilians by US and FWMAF medical personnel.

(3) The level of commitment should not include complicated medical treatment in the search area. It is desirable that the MEDCAP commitment be such that it can be sustained by the GVN authorities after the termination of the operation to show the continuing concern of the authorities for the welfare of the people.

(4) Information. Leaflets can be distributed to provide information on:

(a) Sanitation.

(b) Medical treatment of injuries during the search.

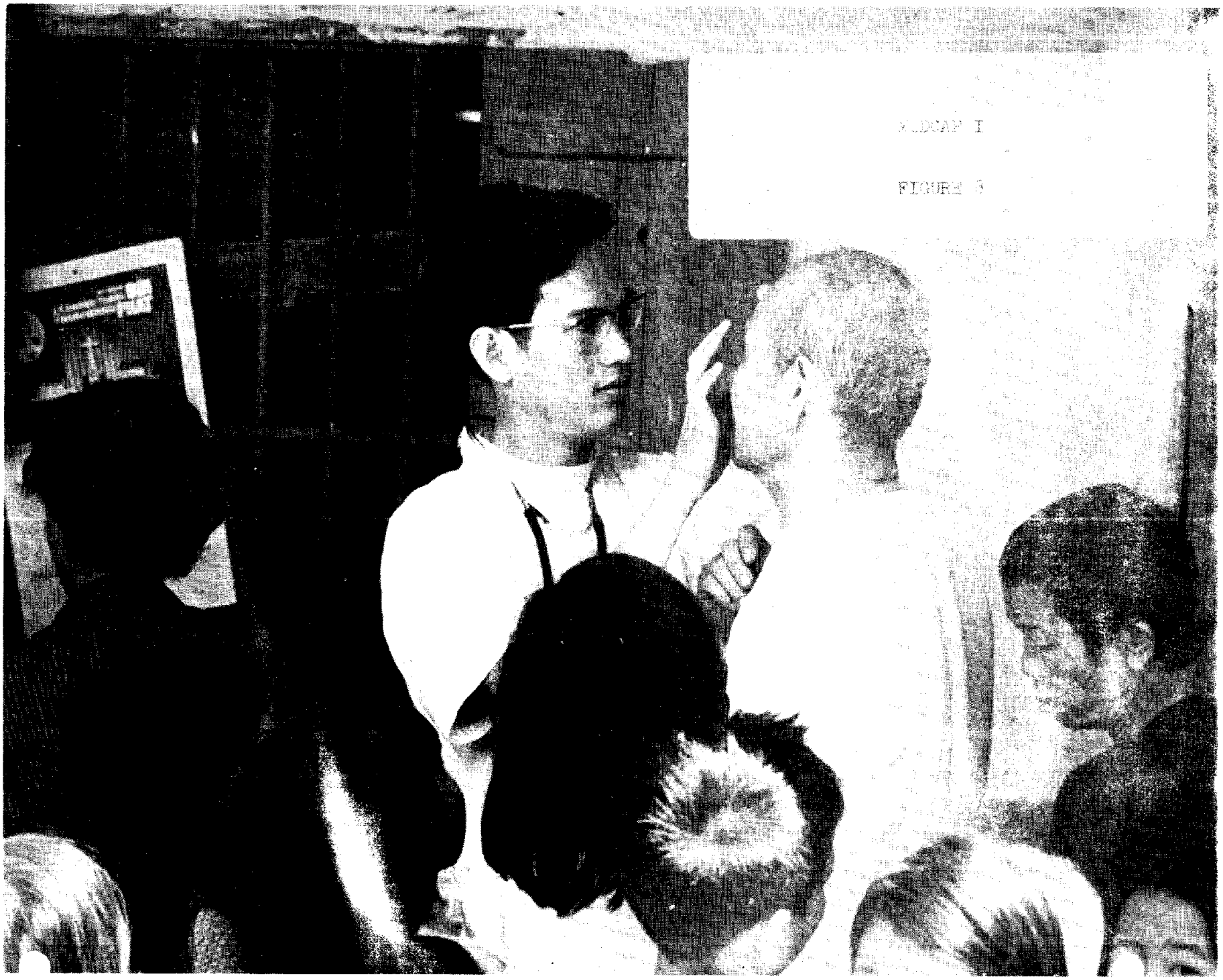
(c) Where continued medical treatment will be available.

(5) Security for MEDCAP teams should be closely coordinated with other population control measures in the search area.

(6) Surplus medical supplies should not be left in the area unattended by proper authorities after the withdrawal of the MEDCAP teams.

d. Caution. PSYOP/MEDCAP activities in conjunction with cordon and search operations should not be merely a standard operating procedure, but instead, should only be used in cases where the PSYOP/MEDCAP team can predict favorable results. Indiscriminate use of PSYOP/MEDCAP teams in the midst of combat operations could cause discredit to their activities.

e. Emphasis. Considerable emphasis must be placed on the conduct of personnel. Disregard of private property, crop destruction, pillaging by troops and other indications of lack of proper respect for the people, will quickly negate all other efforts being made.



VLDCAP I

FIGURE 3

MEDCAP II

FIGURE 9

Every man involved must be made aware of his role and that his actions reflect directly on the success of the operation. The beneficial aspects of the operation should be emphasized in conjunction with special efforts to minimize the temporary inconveniences the population must endure. Minor construction, repair or clean-up projects that can be accomplished within the period of operation are excellent means of winning the population's support. These activities also leave tangible evidence of concern for the people after the troops have left.

5. (C) OPERATIONAL RESULTS/LESSONS LEARNED. The following operations conducted during the period from September 1968 to February 1969 are considered typical examples of cordon and search operations. The majority of these operations were considered successful in the light of the realization of mission and the results obtained. Some, however, were not as successful and in each case certain factors are highlighted as the prime reasons for the lack of complete success.

a. Operation Phu Vang I was conducted in the Phu Vang, Huong Tru and Phu Thu Districts in Thua Thien Province. This operation was conducted by the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) from 27 September to 9 October 1968.

(1) Remarks:

(a) Vietnamese forces were utilized in the operation, and in most cases closely integrated with US Forces.

(b) Surprise was achieved by last-minute notification of the District forces, and by diversionary operations in areas adjacent to the cordon area.

(c) The cordon was closed by first manning blocking positions, then closing the cordon. The area was 28 square kilometers, completely surrounded by navigable waterways.

(d) Destruction was minimized. Artillery was not employed although preparations for its employment were made. Helo gunships were on station, but were not used.

(e) Population screening was conducted by US units and by GVN personnel attached to the units for this purpose. The ARVN battalion conducting the sweep also conducted screening concurrently.

(f) Detailed search and rapid exploitation of intelligence was conducted within AOs, utilizing information gained from civilians, prisoners, and Hoi Chanhs. All persons of military age were detained for processing at the Combined Interrogation Center. Enemy forces were forced to remain in the cordon.

(g) Naval forces screened the waterways adjacent to the AO.

(2) Results.

(a) The enemy lost 96 killed, 168 prisoners of war and 42 Hoi Chanhs for a total of 306.

(b) A total of 332 persons were processed, of which 32 were found to be males of military age, 5 were ARVN deserters and 295 were released as innocent civilians.

(c) Friendly losses were one ARVN killed and eight wounded. Two Popular Forces (PF) and nine US were wounded in this action.

b. Operation Meade River was conducted in the Dien Ban District, Quang Nam Province by the 1st Regiment, 1st Marine Division; 51st Infantry Regiment, ARVN; Quang Nam Provincial Forces, and Republic of Korea Marine Corps Battalion, 2nd Than Long Brigade; during the period 20 November to 11 December 1968.

(1) Remarks.

(a) ARVN forces were used in the initial stages to bring the people out of the cordon area to a combined screening center.

(b) Both Special Landing Forces (SLF) from the Amphibious Ready Groups of the US Seventh Fleet (afloat) were committed.

(c) Surprise was achieved by use of massive helo lift along with simultaneous ground and vehicle movement into cordon position. (71 helicopters were used). Command posts and supporting forces were moved in after the landing.

(d) The cordon was large, being 15 miles around; and it consisted of approximately one fire team of three men every 15 meters.

(e) Friendly maneuver was slow and methodical and consisted of sweep and search of one unit at a time, tightening the cordon.

(f) Destruction to civilian homes was minimized. VC and NVA were forced into a fortified area which contained few homes.

(g) No preparatory fires were utilized, although air, artillery, naval gunfire and tank fire were planned for use on call, and were used when resistance was put up by VC/NVA forces trapped in the cordon.

(h) Population screening was accomplished in one large screening center, divided into three sections:

1. Holding before screening

2. Interrogating

3. Living

(i) The County Fair system of feeding the people and providing entertainment and MEDCAP while search, census and interrogation operations were being conducted was used here.

(j) All persons, including children, were processed through the screening center.

(k) Extensive PSYOPS were employed with airborne loudspeakers, and leaflet drops, to instruct the people what to do and where to go.

(l) Detailed search of homes was conducted by ARVN and NPFF. Detailed sweeps were accomplished by cordon forces.

(m) One US battalion, two ROK companies and 3 combined action platoons 3/ (CAPs) remained in the area after the operation to prevent reentry and use by outside enemy forces.

(n) An extensive engineer effort was required to destroy the numerous fortifications found.

(o) A reconnaissance screen was utilized outside the cordon to warn of enemy reinforcement.

(2) Results.

(a) Enemy losses included a total of 1023 killed, 2727 detained, 123 taken prisoner, six Hoi Chanhs, and 73 VCI/cadre arrested.

3/ Combined Action Platoons - A platoon composed of one Popular Force platoon and a Marine rifle squad plus one Navy corpsman. The platoon engages in pacification activities.

(b) Friendly losses included 108 killed, and 450 wounded.

c. Operation Linn River was conducted by the 7th Marines in the western sector of the Dien Ban District, Quang Nam Province during the period 27 January to 7 February 1969.

(1) Remarks.

(a) The target area was considered to be a way station/staging area between ONG TU slope and Dodge City. Consequently it was known that enemy strength in the area fluctuated greatly and that although up to 300 enemy might be caught inside the cordon, it was also possible that the cordon would find the area void of the enemy.

(b) PW interrogation disclosed that forward elements of the 402nd Sapper Battalion were encountered with the major portion of that unit withdrawing as the cordon was closed. It is estimated from the counted dead and those not counted which were entombed in destroyed field fortified positions that approximately one reinforced NVA company was entrapped and destroyed during the operation. The prisoners indicated that a reconnaissance party from the battalion was also trapped in the cordon.

(c) Although the cordon was not closed on the 27th of January as planned it is believed that the move of 1st Battalion, 7th Marines east to blocking positions adjacent to the 51st ARVN Regt AO succeeded in deceiving the enemy in the LINN RIVER target area into believing that plans did not include that area. PW interrogation revealed that the enemy in the LINN RIVER area were completely surprised by the move to establish the cordon on 28 January.

(d) The damage to four transport helicopters during the assault phase was particularly unfortunate in that a 2 1/2 hour break in the troop lift resulted. This interruption, coupled with the cancellation of later lifts into LZ OWL, greatly slowed the troop build-up and delayed the closing of the cordon. PW interrogation revealed that the enemy capitalized on this delay and many troops were able to escape to the southwest.

(e) The assault phase of LINN RIVER reemphasized the vulnerability of operational plans for helicopter assaults. The many variable factors involved in this type operation (i.e., weather, helicopter availability, LZ prep requirements) dictate that such plans allow for maximum flexibility.

(f) The initial L-hour was planned for 271300 hours for two completely different reasons. It was felt that previous operations had established a pattern of early morning assault landings and that a 1300 landing would provide a better opportunity for catching the enemy off guard. Furthermore, the 1300 L-hour would lessen the chance of early morning low ceiling delays.

(2) Results.

(a) Enemy losses included 53 NVA/VC killed and three PWs.

(b) Friendly losses included nine killed and 46 wounded.

d. Another Operation was conducted in a village in III Corps Tactical Zone during the period 22 January to 3 February 1969.

(1) Remarks.

(a) A week elapsed between the time an infantry battalion moved to the village and the start of the operation. An RF company and armored elements conducted operations in this area during this period. This provided the VC sufficient time to assess a building of cordon forces and to take evasive action.

(b) The operation was coordinated on 21 January to commence on 22 January. This allowed little time for operational planning. An additional day of planning would have precluded a number of smaller problems which developed.

(c) The initial cordon was executed on schedule. However, the cavalry unit in the northwest sector of the cordon did not effect a ground link up with other forces until late afternoon the first day.

(d) On the second day of the operations two infantry battalions of the same regiment exchanged positions in the cordon. This was to be done with squad and platoon integration into each other's locations, but was not well executed. Both units moved at the same time, leaving large gaps in the cordon.

(e) The search operations were poor the first three days of the operation but improved when more command emphasis was applied. Initially one unit was given the responsibility for searching tunnels, another for searching houses, another for area search. This was changed after several days to one unit being given an area of responsibility.

(f) A 24 hour curfew was enforced on the population from the outset, but it was not effective until the third day of the operation.

(g) US/ARVN coordination was generally excellent. Timely information was exchanged throughout the operation.

(h) Initially no interest was shown in establishing a Joint Interrogation Center. After two days of effort all were convinced of its necessity.

(2) Results.

(a) Enemy losses included 39 VC/NVA killed, 122 persons detained, 8 VC/NVA captured.

(b) Friendly losses were 2 ARVN, 12 US, and one Kit Carson scout killed. 19 ARVN, 46 US, one Kit Carson scout and one interpreter were wounded.

(3) Lessons learned from this operation:

(a) No troop build-up should occur in an area prior to employment of a cordon.

(b) Planning of a cordon and search operation must be done through both US and RVN channels at all headquarters prior to the actual conduct of the operation.

(c) Once a cordon is in place no unit within the cordon should be relieved by another unit.

(d) Well defined search procedures must be established prior to the operation and not be altered after commencement of the operation. The search elements must be given an area, not a type task within an area.

(e) US and ARVN headquarters should have separate but adjacent areas assigned.

(f) Operation of the combined intelligence center and interrogation center must be planned in detail prior to commencement of the operation and commanders must emphasize the need for free flow of intelligence information between the elements.

(g) Immediate, aggressive, and continuing follow-up action must be taken to ensure that the results achieved by the operation are lasting.

ANNEX A

SUGGESTED SEQUENCE OF ACTIONS

1. 0415H* - Blocking forces assume final positions on the line of encirclement.

2. 0430H - Local GVN civil and/or police elements poise at the line of encirclement prepared to advance towards the objective hamlet. Key local GVN official, accompanied by ARVN representatives, depart landing zone (LZ) aboard PSYWAR helicopter to deliver a prepared message to villagers. (The message can be prepared previously recorded on tape, for delivery without requiring presence of official).

3. 0455H - A local GVN official, airborne in PSYWAR helicopter (or on tape), delivers the message to villagers in the objective hamlet via loudspeaker. The official's message notifies the people of the operation that is commencing, informs them that GVN forces (perhaps with Free-World force assistance) are already positioned around the periphery of the hamlet, and orders all villagers to remain in their homes until further word and not to attempt to leave the hamlet. The official's message stresses that the purpose of the operation is to assist the people of the hamlet by removing the threat of Viet Cong terrorism, and by providing services and assistance to improve the people's welfare.

4. First light - GVN military security forces, as necessary with local GVN civil and/or police elements tighten the line of encirclement and commence movement towards objective hamlet. Search teams deploy into previously assigned areas to search carefully and thoroughly for Viet Cong personnel or contraband materials. "Control Cadre" equipped with battery-powered portable loudspeakers direct the villagers to assemble at a previously selected central collection area. (The collection area must be easily identifiable to avoid confusion.) A tight cordon is maintained about the hamlet, allowing no one to enter or leave. At the appropriate time, the commander of GVN forces leads civil and military elements into the hamlet and establishes a command center at the central collection point where villagers are being assembled. Hamlet authorities are contacted, informed of the nature of the operation, and invited to assist. Villagers are requested to assist in establishment of the collection point (i.e., to erect tents, construct detention enclosure and prepare feeding facilities, as required). In the presence of a friendly or passive population, the application of force is accomplished with caution. All personnel emphasize that the purpose of the operation is to help the people. The processing (interrogation and segregation of villagers) sequence is:

* Times should vary depending on the situation, locale, intelligence, etc. and to prevent setting a pattern of operation.

a. Initial screening: Local GVN authorities identify those persons known to assist the Viet Cong and indicate all strangers to the hamlet.

b. Police administrators carefully examine individual and family identification documents, and re-issue documents as required. Examination must seek "census-type" and family background information.

c. Persons with inadequate identification papers or who are otherwise questionable are required to undergo interrogation by ARVN interrogators. (Military personnel equipped with polygraph are made available to provide assistance.)

d. Persons completing screening are marked on the forearm with a special stamp to facilitate identification.

e. After completion of screening, villagers attend the PSYWAR program, to include: newsreels, propaganda movies, radio news broadcasts, taped messages, daily newspapers, etc. Effort is made to provide this program as "entertainment", which makes the propaganda messages more palatable.

f. Villagers requiring medical assistance are treated by the MEDCAP team.

g. Local government officials address the people, with emphasis on the concern that the GVN has for the people, the government's future plans, and the assistance that the people can provide.

5. Meal hours - A staple food ration should be prepared and distributed to those villagers dislocated by the operation or otherwise unable to prepare or provide food.

6. Conclusion - Processing continues until all villagers have been screened, all dwellings and family shelters searched, and all suspected hiding places examined for Viet Cong or weapons. Cordon is maintained until termination of the operation.

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ANNEX B

SCREENING CENTER

1. GENERAL. This annex includes some recommendations for the organization of the screening center used during a cordon and search operation. It generally comprises the techniques used in Thua Thien Province by elements of the 101st Airborne Division, Sector/Subsector Headquarters and organizations represented on the Phung Hoang Committee.

2. MISSION. The mission of the screening center is to screen all detainees, conduct preliminary interrogations, channel selected persons to the appropriate area for further interrogation, and provide the ground commander with information of immediate tactical importance.

3. ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS. The screening center will be comprised of three main elements; the screening unit, the field interrogation unit and the reaction force.

a. The screening unit will receive all captives, PW, civil detainees and innocent civilians. As these personnel pass through the screening center they will be identified and classified. When a suspect is identified, a record of his capture will be made, and only pertinent information will be taken at this time. Personnel in the screening unit:

(1) Police Special Branch and NPFF personnel will be the primary operators of the screening center. They are trained in the identification of suspects and they have blacklists which help to identify VC, criminals and other wanted personnel.

(2) Sector/Subsector intelligence personnel are familiar with the area and the people who live in the district. They also can coordinate moving into another district to react to information obtained from detainees.

(3) ARVN/FWMAF intelligence personnel who will obtain and disseminate intelligence of immediate tactical importance.

(4) Status census grievance (SCG) personnel to be used for fast document readout and to be assigned to whatever unit can best use their services. SCG personnel usually will have an intimate knowledge of the area and possess valuable information on the population.

(5) A member of the province Phuong Hoang Committee or the DIOCC who will check existing blacklists to assist in identifying VC.

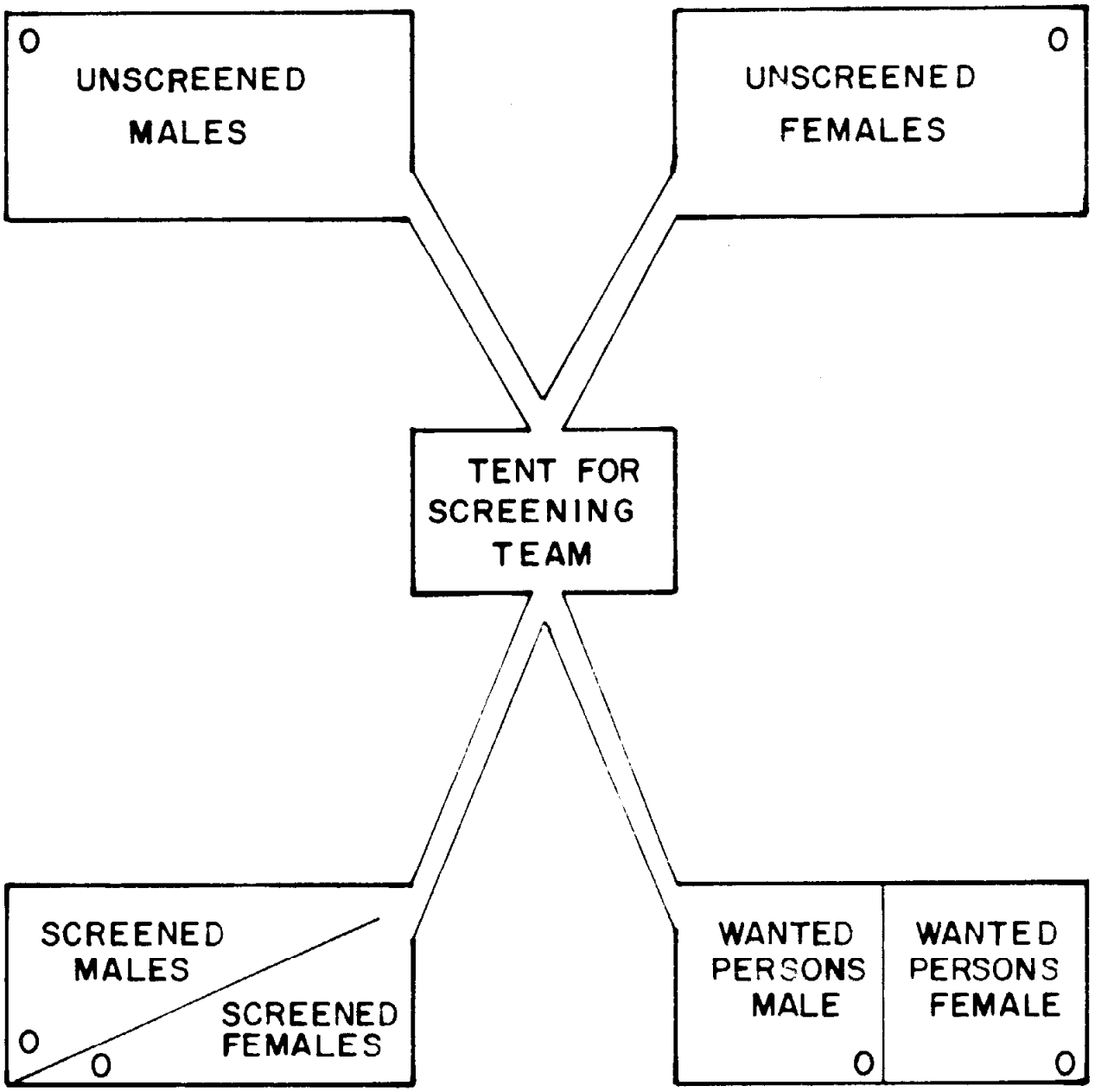
(6) A doctor and interpreter.

b. As a detainee continues through the screening center he will be sent to a field interrogation unit according to his classification (i.e., PW will go to sector, ARVN or FWF interrogation teams; civil detainees will go to the PSB interrogation unit, etc.). Here the detainee will be interrogated for immediately exploitable information. This information should then be turned over to the appropriate S-2. Once field interrogation is finished the detainee will be released or, if suspected, will be transported to the appropriate detention center for further processing and interrogation. Civil detainees will be turned over to District or Province Police depending on arrangements made for the operation. Children must not be automatically regarded as innocent, since they may have been trained to be hostile. If under 12 years of age they should be kept with the women.

c. The third unit of the screening center will be the Reaction Force. This unit will normally be made up of provincial reconnaissance unit (PRU) or National Police Field Force (NPFF) personnel. Its function is to react to that information that would not require use of regular forces (i.e., location of individual members of the VCI). This reaction force is not to be confused with the reserve force for the operation. It is used to react immediately to information gathered by the screening center.

d. The District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Center (DIOCC) or the Province Phung Hoang Permanent Committee will be able to provide the guidance necessary to establish a screening center for each particular operation. The Phung Hoang program can supply a wealth of information prior to the operation and significant assistance during its execution.

SCREENING CENTER



O DENOTES LATRINES

ANNEX C

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2	30 Mar 62	Airmobile Operation in I Corps
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5	11 Apr 62	Multi-Battalion Operation in Northern Tay Ninh Province
6	11 Apr 62	Operations in Phuoc Thanh Sector to Relocate Civilians
7	18 Apr 62	Operation DAN TIEM VIII
8	23 Apr 62	Operation CA CHEP
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2 - COMUSJAPAN
2 - CG, USARJ
2 - 39th Air Div
10 - CHMAAGCHINA
11 - Chief, JUSMAGPHIL
1 - CINCPACREP PHIL
2 - CHMILTAGINDONESIA
5 - COMUSMACTHAI
2 - CG, USARSUPTHAI

2 - Supt, USAFA
5 - Dept of Hist, USAFA
1 - Aero Systems Div (ASBEE-10)
1 - AU Library
5 - Dept of Air Police Tng
2 - Hq Aero Sys Div (AFSC)
1 - Hq For Tech Div, AFSC
1 - Air Tng Comd (ATOPT-S)
1 - Dir, Special Air Warfare Sch
2 - 82d Cmbt Security Police Wg
4 - 479th Tac Ftr Wg
1 - 3636Cmbt Crew Tng Gp (CCT-OT)
2 - Armt Dev & Test Cen (ADFS)
2 - Fld Tng Det (TDBAS-2)
1 - General Research Corp
2 - CG, Marine Corps Base, Cp Pendleton
2 - CG, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego
1 - CO, Landing Force Tng Comd, Pac
1 - COMPHIBTRAPAC
2 - CG, Marine Corps Dev & Ed Comd
8 - CINCAL
14 - CG, USARAL
5 - CINCLANT
5 - CINCLANTFLT
3 - COMPHIBLANT
3 - COMPHIBTRALANT
1 - COMNAVSPECWARGRULANT
1 - NAV Ops Spt Gp LANT
1 - CINCEUR
10 - CINCUSAREUR
2 - CG, 7th US Army
2 - CINCSTRIKE
2 - HQ, USAFSTRIKE
2 - CINCSOUTH
15 - US ARMY FORCES, SOUTHCOM
2 - USA School of Americas
2 - COMDT, USA Jungle Warfare Sch