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OPERATIONS OF THE 39TH CIVIL GUARD BATTALION, VINH
BINH PROVINCE, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, DURING THE
PERIODS 12-13 SEPTEMBER AND 7-8 NOVEMBER 1963.
(PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A BATTALION ADVISOR.)

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring and summer of 1963, Viet Cong activity in the Province of Vinh Binh had shifted from the small, harrassing activities of local guerrillas to the large scale attacks of a well-trained, well-equipped unit. The major VC unit in the Province at this time was the Cuu Long I Battalion (Main Force), supported by six regional companies, one Special Reconnaissance Platoon and numerous local force units. Reorganization of the 39th Civil Guard Battalion into nine District Companies and three mobile battalions had forced the VC to consolidate their forces into a "regiment," which was actually little more than a reinforced battalion, and operate in even larger combinations of units. Operation and control of the three newly created mobile operations was not as yet as smooth as desired, due to some problems in coordination and support.

THE RELIEF OF MY LONG 12-13 SEPTEMBER 1963

THE EXISTING SITUATION

Increased operation by the newly reorganized 39th Civil Guard Battalion had managed to keep the VC main force units restricted to their bases deep in the palm and mangrove swamps of Long Toan District, at the southern end of the Province. By the middle of July 1963, the CG Battalion had pressed operations to the edge of this swamp, and had managed to seal it off,

except for small excursions by company sized VC units attempting to relieve the pressure on their base area. Operations of the Cuu Long I Regiment had been severely hampered by this pressure, and it appeared that if the base area could be kept sealed while air and artillery were used to destroy VC bases, the province would soon be "pacified." In order to make more forces available for operations, many small watchtowers and guard posts manned by civil guard troops were abandoned and destroyed. This meant that many villages and hamlets had no troops stationed in or near them for defense purposes, but it was felt that the stationing of troops in civilian occupied areas only invited attack, and made it difficult to effectively clear and hold large areas. Platoon outposts were utilized in vital areas, and mobile units were placed so as to be able to reinforce and/or relieve units in contact with VC forces. As of 11 September, this concept had not been tested. On the night of 11-12 September, one company of the Cuu Long I Regiment attacked the village of My Long, over-ran the CG platoon stationed in the village, and occupied the village. This was the type of situation we had anticipated, and relief operations were started.

THE BATTALION PLAN

The mobile battalion stationed in the Province capitol of Tra Vinh was assigned the mission of relieving the My Long outpost and driving the VC out of the village. This battalion, which I will call the 1st Battalion, had a relatively inexperienced commander, Captain Nghia. Formerly a District Chief, Captain

Nghia's only previous command experience had been with a unit assigned to airfield security. He had little actual combat experience and none as a battalion commander.

THE PREPARATION

Captain Nghia received the order from the Province Chief at 0340 hours 12 September. Preparations were hasty, and Captain Nghia decided to take one company aboard the LCVP's of the boat company and send another overland, hoping to converge on the village from two different directions, with one company driving the enemy into the other unit. Company 394 was selected to embark in the LCVP's and Company 392 was to go overland. Captain Nghia, along with Captain Bang, the Province S3, made arrangements to have other units of the battalion trucked into the area if needed. Due to a lack of motor transport in the battalion (this battalion had only eleven 1 1/2 ton trucks for 18 companies) these units were to be on standby in Tra Vinh.

NARRATION

At 0430 hours, 12 September 1963, Company 394, the headquarters element of the 1st Battalion, and two US advisors, Captain George C. Hill and First Lieutenant Robert W. Hightower, departed the boat company landings in the LCVP's enroute to My Long. Each LCVP carried one platoon of Company 394 and a portion of the command group. Company 392 had been moved to the village of Cau Ngan by truck, there to await the order from

Captain Nghia to move on foot to My Long. This arrangement was made to preclude either company from arriving in the area in advance of the other, possibly allowing the enemy to escape the planned envelopment. During the trip down the Co Chien River, little was done in the LCVP's other than assuring that communications with the Province headquarters was maintained. Captain Nghia ordered Company 392 to begin its march at 0515 hours, planning to hold his force in the LCVP's near the Lung Mit Canal, the entrance to which was marked by fishing nets and stakes, until 392 reported it had closed on the road immediately west of My Long (Map A). While afloat at this location, Captain Nghia lost radio communications with the Province headquarters due to a malfunction of the only AN/GRC 9 radio. This was a serious problem, as no request for air support had been made earlier, as Captain Bang, the Province S3, felt that the time required to move down the river to My Long would be excessive, and preferred to have Captain Nghia submit his request just prior to reaching the village.

The problem of requesting air had come up before, and experience had shown that the plan was feasible, as air support for operations in this area of the Delta came from Soc Trang Air Base. A paralleling request from the US advisors had already been submitted, in anticipation of Captain Nghia's request. (At this time in the Vietnam conflict, all requests for

air support of any type had to be submitted through both Vietnamese and US channels. No request would be honored without a parallel request from the counterpart of the requestor.) Captain Bang had told Captain Nghia that he would prepare the formal request and submit it on receipt of a message from the force. Now there was no way to send this message, and the availability of air support was questionable.

Problems with artillery support also arose, as the AN/PRC 10 radios with which the civil guard were equipped could not transmit to the supporting artillery or the Province headquarters. There was one other artillery piece within range of My Long, located at a special forces camp at Long Toan. Attempts were made to contact US special forces personnel to have this 105 mm howitzer support the operation, without success. The battalion would have to rely on the two 60 mm mortars in the LCVP's.

Lieutenant Phung, the company commander of Company 392, notified Captain Nghia that he was approaching the road west of My Long, and was in turn ordered to take up blocking positions along this road and to stop any enemy escaping west from the town. Preparations were made to land the force, using the firepower of the boat-mounted machine guns to assist the unit in crossing the sand dunes and entering the town. Each LCVP had three .30 caliber machine guns mounted on it, one on each side about two-thirds of the way aft, and one mounted in the center of the stern. All guns were capable of firing to the rear, but only two on each boat could fire to the front. Captain Nghia

decided to send two boats in the initial assault, with supporting fire from the other two boats stationed on the flanks of the beach. While orders to the platoon leaders and boat commanders were being passed, some maneuvering of the boats was necessary in order to ensure that the two support boats had a 60 mm mortar, as Captain Nghia wanted to use these weapons to fire on deep targets during the initial assault. This movement and radio traffic was noisy and time consuming. Also, the tide was beginning to ebb, and this area of the Delta was subject to tides of as much as 16 feet. The current in the Co Chien River was rapidly becoming faster and this was causing problems in maneuvering the boats into position.

THE ASSAULT

As the two assault boats started shoreward, the support boats turned stern to and attempted to maintain their position aflank the beach. One gunner began to fire into the village, whereupon the other five took up the fire. No fire had been received from enemy forces in the village, but the gunners could not be halted. The forward firing guns of the two assault boats also began to fire and a heavy volume of fire was placed on the beach and the village endangering the troops preparing to land. As the two platoons landed, however, and crossed the beach, the fire lightened and finally died out, the gunners apparently realizing that they would not be able to fire without hitting the assaulting troops. The two support boats swung around and ran aground on the beach, landing the remainder

of the company and the command group. As no resistance had been encountered, passage across the beach and into the village was rapid (Map B). As the company neared the western edge of My Long, light resistance was encountered. No casualties resulted from this brief exchange of fire as the enemy withdrew from the town. Captain Nghia contacted LT Phung, asking him if he had made contact with the enemy yet. The answer was negative. Since it had become apparent that contact would not be made and on significant resistance had been encountered, Company 392 was ordered to move into the village and join 394 for the remainder of the operation.

THE SEARCH

A search of the village revealed that, of the 29 civil guard soldiers in the outpost, two were killed and 27 were missing. Three wounded civilians were discovered and treated. All of the weapons, ammunition, radios and equipment in the outpost had been taken by the VC. There was no sign of an assault on the post from outside the walls and it was surmised that the VC had attacked from within the village. A male villager came up to Captain Nghia and conducted him and the two advisors on a tour of the area, explaining what had taken place. He was very knowledgeable. Captain Nghia told the advisors that he had begun to suspect that this man was a VC, since he knew so much about what had happened, and was about to interrogate him when one of the soldiers who had been captured was brought

up to the battalion commander. The soldier said he had been taken prisoner along with the other survivors, and had escaped when the enemy fled just prior to the landing. The noise of the maneuvering of the boats had alerted the VC and they withdrew, leaving a small force behind to cover them.

This soldier saw the villager standing nearby, ran at him and began to beat him with his fists. When pulled off, he explained that this man had led the VC into the village, then to the post from inside the village. After the attack, he had requested that the VC either take all the women and children in the post along with them or kill them, since they could identify him as a VC. The enemy commander apparently refused. We had seen none of the dependents in the area, and discovered that they had gone north in sampans in the Co Chien River, passing us in the dark. Suddenly, while the returnee was telling his story, another soldier shot and killed the VC agent with a burst from his Thompson sub-machine gun. This of course ended any plans for interrogation.

Problems with the AN/GRC 9 radio had been due to a loose connecting cable between the transmitter and receiver portion of the radio and the force was once again in communications with the Province headquarters. Captain Nghia reported the situation to the Province Chief and was ordered to return to the capitol town. Company 394 boarded the LCVP's while Company 392 moved out on foot to return to Cau Ngan. Shortly after departing the village of My Long, Captain Nghia was ordered to return to the village and remain there overnight in order to give what aid was available to the

to the local inhabitants. Quantities of foodstuffs were to arrive through US Operations Missions (USOM) channels the next day, and the force was to provide security for the distribution of these items. One company was left to be sufficient for this purpose, so Company 394 returned to the village. Company 392 was not contacted or informed of the change and continued on towards Cau Ngan (Map C).

RE-ENTRY

As 394 re-entered the village, scattered fire was received, and a small firefight ensued. Apparently the VC had returned to conduct propanganda activities, as posters and paper flags had been scattered throughout the central part of the village in the short time the civil guard forces had been out of the area. Enemy elements quickly withdrew with undetermined losses and there were no civil guard casualties. Company 392, at this time some 500-800 meters southwest of the village, had contacted several snipers, and was receiving scattered fire. LT Phung contacted Captain Nghia, and reported that the fire was not effective and asked if he should return to the village. Captain Nghia ordered him to return to Cau Ngan and asked if he needed any assistance. Whether LT Phung clearly understood the message or not is unknown, but a negative reply was made. For approximately the next two and one-half hours, Company 392 was in constant contact

with enemy forces, ranging from light sniper fire to periods of heavy contact, at relatively long ranges. Although there was considerable firing on both sides, 392 sustained no casualties and arrived in Cau Ngan at approximately 2100 hours.

THE DEFENSE

Company 394 had begun to settle down in the village and a defensive perimeter was established. The LCVP's were anchored in mid-stream in the Co Chien just off the eastern edge of My Long. Orders were passed to automatic weapons gunners not to return any fire that might be received unless ordered to by Captain Nghia. The two 60 mm mortars were set up in the center of the market place, adjacent the force command post, established in the only tow-story building in town. This was the posture of the relief force at EENT.

Several incidents of light sniper and harrassing fire occurred during the night, and one light probe was attempted by enemy forces on the eastern wall. This probe was repulsed by small arms, rifle grenades and mortar fire with the order to withhold all automatic weapons fire still in effect. This restriction on firing of automatic weapons probably was a factor which caused the enemy not to mount a strong attack as he had no way of knowing where these weapons were emplaced and could not direct neutralizing fires on them. No friendly casualties occurred during the night.

CONTACT AND TERMINATION

Dawn of 13 September found the force preparing to operate to the west, after receipt of a message from the Province Chief which indicated that the planned USOM supplies would not be received and ordered Captain Nghia to clear the area around the village, then return to Tra Vinh. As 394 moved out along the single road from My Long, the enemy suddenly placed heavy fire on the company from positions astride this road, and on the west side of Provincial Road 159 (Map D). Five civil guardsmen were wounded in this initial burst of fire, and when the company pulled back to take advantage of rice paddy dikes for cover, these men were left in the open, subject to further fire. All five were recovered shortly by LT Hightower and some CG soldiers. A base of fire was established and one platoon managed to maneuver to the north flank of the enemy positions, but were discovered and taken under fire before they could bring their firepower to bear on the VC positions. The enemy broke contact and rapidly withdrew to the south, leaving small elements behind to cover the main body. Thinking that he might be drawn into an ambush if he pursued too closely, Captain Nghia did not choose to regain contact, but broke off the engagement and returned to My Long. At approximately 0745 hours, 13 September 1963, the My Long relief ended as the civil guard forces returned to the Provincial capitol of Tra

Vinh. Total friendly losses were 2 KIA, 5 WIA, 26 MIA and 3 civilian WIA. One enemy agent was killed. All weapons and equipment within the CG post in My Long was lost.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The concept for the conduct of relief operations and the initial plan were both workable but not tested. Little planning and thought had been given to the time required to move forces to the relief under conditions of darkness and no set transportation plan had been established. Even with this, however, the unit arrived at the site in good order and could have been more effective if surprise could have been maintained. It is not a question of whether or not the VC knew a relief was in progress; most certainly they expected some type of operation. The use of two different approaches into the area would surely have given the relief force the benefit of surprise were it not for the maneuvering of the boats prior to the assault.

The lack of air support and artillery most certainly had an adverse effect on the outcome of the operation. Air support should have been arranged on an "On Call" basis, or the strip alert system of having aircraft ready and waiting, but out in the air. By establishing a time for the aircraft to be on station, and having pre-arranged communications channels, air support would have been available even though the AN/GRC 9 radio failed. Coordination between aircraft and ground forces would have been made by using the AN/PRC 10 radios with the relief force. Artillery support could have been obtained by moving the one available mobile howitzer into the Cau Ngan

district town with Company 392, well within range of the AN/PRC 10 radios. Reliance on the single AM radio with the force was placing too much confidence and dependence on what is, at best, a marginally effective item of equipment in mobile operations.

Loss of communications and the subsequent lack of air and artillery support caused Captain Nghia to plan to use his 60 mm mortars from the boats in support of the operation. This, too, would have been very good and workable, had Captain Nghia not insisted on having them both under his personal control, necessitating the maneuvering of the boats just prior to the landing. The use of the boat mounted machine guns to support the landing would have been effective except for the early firing of one gunner, which was picked up by the others. More control and more fire discipline in this area would have enabled the force to retain the element of surprise.

The action of the soldier in killing the enemy agent was not to be foreseen and could not have been prevented. A valuable source of information was lost here which could have measurably changed the results of the operation.

With the situation as yet undeveloped, the decision by the Province Chief to order the force to return to Tra Vinh was questionable. When the force did return to the village, contact was made again, and not maintained or regained

once lost. A definite lack of aggressiveness characterized the operation, possibly due to the inexperience of the force commander. One particularly good point which came out of the operation was the restriction placed on the use of automatic weapons after dark, keeping their location and numbers from the enemy. This is probably the greatest single reason that a major attack did not come during the night of 12-13 September.

Company 392, although not needed for the planned distribution of foodstuffs, should have been kept with the boat landed force in the village, at least until the situation was more fully developed. The contact that 392 had on the way out of the village indicated that the enemy was still in the area, and could have been engaged in a decisive fight. Obviously, the withdrawal of 392 was observed by the VC and was a factor in their decision to engage 394 during the night, and to prepare positions for the possible engagement with them the next morning.

The engagement on the morning of 13 September could have been disastrous had the enemy let 394 get farther in towards their positions before firing. As it was, contact was made at ranges of 75-100 meters. The attempt to flank the VC positions nearly succeeded, but was not followed up by aggressive pursuit. I cannot find fault with Captain Nghia's

reasoning for not pursuing too closely, but he should have pursued and attempted to maintain contact until the enemy decided to stand and fight or they had moved into a more favorable area for the civil guard troops. As an initial attempt at relief by the re-organized 39th Civil Guard Battalion, the operation was nothing more than a failure, but valuable lessons had been learned which were later applied more successfully.

THE RELIEF OF AP LONG PHUNG 7-8 NOVEMBER 1963

THE EXISTING SITUATION

On 1 November 1963, a successful Coup d'Etat against the government of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem took place, and, as a result, very little military action was occurring throughout the central and southern regions of the Republic of Vietnam. The 1st (Mobile) Battalion of the 39th Civil Guard had just returned from operations in the Nhi Long area in conjunction with a clear and hold operation conducted by the 14th Regiment of the 9th (ARVN) Infantry Division. The 14th Regiment had recently been stationed in Vinh Binh Sector, the first permanently assigned regular Army unit to operate in the province since I had been stationed there. This enabled the civil guard units to operate more effectively as relief forces, as the 14th Regiment was engaged in large scale operations against the Cuu Long I

Regiment. In the early morning hours of 7 November, a runner arrived at the Province headquarters with word that the village of Ap Long Phung had been occupied by a large VC force, and were propagandizing the population. The VC stated that civil war had broken out, and all military units were fighting amongst themselves for control of the government and that no units were around to help the villagers against the VC. (This particular village had a very strong, pro-government village chief who was a very good source of information and support.) Now the VC were going to indoctrinate the people of Long Phung. Once again, the 1st Battalion was given a relief mission.

THE BATTALION PLAN

Planning for the relief of Long Phung was more deliberate than for the My Long operation. Immediate requests for air support were submitted with the fighters to rendezvous with the 1st Battalion at Ap Nha Hung, some three kilometers southwest of Long Phung. One 155 mm howitzer was dispatched, with an escort of one Civil Guard Platoon and two armored cars to Nha Hung to establish a fire support base. Once again, Captain Nghia elected to take Company 394 on the initial operation with elements of the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 14th Regiment as a follow up force once the situation had developed to such a point that they could be used. Initial control

of the operation had been given to Captain Nghia, who would relinquish control to the Province Chief in the operation CP at Nha Hung when the ARVN units were committed. The regimental commander of the 14th Regiment concurred in this plan, as this was to be essentially a Provincial operation, and he recognized that he did not know as much about the area as did local commanders.

THE APPROACH MARCH

There was no approach march as such, but for want of a better term, the movement of the 1st Battalion (-) to Nha Hung and on to Long Phung will be so designated. Loaded on the 1 1/2 ton trucks of the 39th CG Battalion, the force departed for Nha Hung, where the 7th River Group (Junk Force) was based. This unit was not on operation at this time, and it was planned to make all necessary coordination for use of the boats with the Junk Force Commander at his base, rather than send lengthy radio messages and to avoid possible compromise. Units of the 1st and 3rd Battalions were to follow as soon as trucks could be obtained and to remain in readiness at Nha Hung (Map E).

Captain Nghia, immediately upon his arrival at Nha Hung, went to the Junk Force Commander and explained his plan, accompanied by Captain Hill and Lieutenant Hightower. The

US advisor to the Junk Force was not present at Nha Hung. Due to the recent coup and the possible repercussions of moving troops across the Mekong River and its tributaries by Naval boats, the Junk Force Commander would not allow his boats to be used without permission from River Group Headquarters in Vung Tau. Captain Nghia did not feel he had time to wait for an answer and a violent argument ensued, at the end of which the Junk Force Commander agreed to furnish one boat to support the crossing. He would attempt to get permission to ferry the two follow-up battalions across.

Company 394 was split into two forces, and the first two platoons were taken aboard the junk for the crossing. This force landed without difficulty on the south bank of the Vam Xep Canal at its juncture with the Co Chien River. As the second boatload with the remainder of the relief force neared the landing site, it was taken under fire by enemy elements located across the Vam Xep Canal from the landing site. Fire was returned and the enemy withdrew into the palm swamps bordering the canal. Re-assembling the relief force, Captain Nghia pushed forward northeast through the center of the village to the village office near the Catholic Church, where the enemy was reported to be dug in. Scattered sniper fire was received from both flanks, with no effect. Movement was rapid and well controlled and

was marked by the arrival of two T-28 aircraft and an airborne forward air controller. The FAC was given the location of forward elements of the unit and went to that location to reconnoiter ahead of the company. All radio traffic between the ground force and the FAC was handled by either Captain Hill or LT Hightower, as no Vietnamese were airborne. Small elements of the enemy unit were reported withdrawing in front of the relief force and were not taking any action to put up a determined defense or to seriously delay the forward movement of the company. Apparently, some measure of surprise had been achieved.

CONTACT

Adjacent the village office, a small stream flows from north to south through the village. At this point, the relief force was halted by heavy fire from dug-in enemy forces. Directly across the stream was the church, flanked by the village school and an administrative building. On the west bank of the stream, troops took cover behind a mud wall some four feet high. This was to be the position of the troops for the next three and one-half hours (Map F). As enemy positions were located, they were pointed out to the FAC, who directed fighter strikes against them. The use of artillery was withheld because the force had orders not to destroy or damage the church unless it was absolutely necessary. While several VC positions were observed around the church, Captain Nghia felt that these positions

could be neutralized by air and damage to the church would be avoided. Attempts to cross the wall and the stream were repulsed with one civil guard wounded. Each time the troops would try to get across the wall, a heavy volume of fire would cause them to drop back behind its protection. Repeated air strikes by relays of T-28's and AD-6 fighter bombers did not reduce this fire. Recognizing that more accurate identification of targets and a greater degree of accuracy on the part of the fighter pilots was needed, the FAC began to lead the strike aircraft in with his O1-E, pinpointing the targets and asking for short bursts to be fired past him into the target so he could correct as needed. This tactic worked very well, although the O1-E took several hits in the process. The FAC continued this throughout the day with each relay of aircraft as they arrived on station. The well prepared positions of the enemy were making it difficult to mount a concerted assault.

THE ASSAULT

Scattered enemy troops were observed trying to get out of the area, and Captain Nghia requested the aircraft to make one final bomb run, at the end of which the troops would assault. One 250 pound bomb fell to the right of the target, near the troops preparing to assault, and buried itself in the mud. The troops hesitated a few moments, then the bomb finally exploded, and the assault began (Map G). This bomb run was the first time the aircraft had dropped bombs during the operation, former runs being conducted with rockets and

machine guns. The violent explosions on and around their positions, coupled with the assault, caused the enemy to leave their positions and withdraw. Rapid and aggressive pursuit by Civil Guard soldiers overran the positions and forced a large portion of the enemy out into the rice paddies to the east and south of the village. Other elements withdrew to the northeast along the Nha Tho Canal. Just prior to the assault, the FAC reported that a B-26 had arrived and was carrying napalm, bombs, rockets and machine guns. It was decided to hold this aircraft until after the assault, as it had a long station time and we could not see any use for napalm at the moment. As the enemy broke and withdrew, the B-26 was requested to expend all his ordnance on targets along the Nha Tho Canal to the northeast, while ground forces pursued those trying to escape to the south and east. Initial runs by the B-26 were from north to south, hampering operations of the ground troops because of stray rounds and ricochets from his firing runs. He was oriented to attack from the south, and this difficulty was eliminated. As the enemy crossed the rice paddies, some of them tried to hide under the water, but gave themselves away by coming up for air, whereupon they were killed by civil guard troops. While these actions were taking place, Captain Nghia requested the 1st Battalion, 14th Regiment to cross and assist in the

exploitation. The Junk Force had received approval for ferry operations, and the 1st Battalion arrived in good order at about 1400 hours.

THE SEARCH

Company 394 was engaged in searching the area immediately around the village, and the 1/14 passed through them to search to the northeast along the canal (Map H). No further contact with enemy was made, and the civil guard unit took up defensive positions around Long Phung. 1/14 continued to search around Long Phung and set up for the night in company sized bivouacs in a loose perimeter around the village. No action occurred during the night and the relief operation was terminated. 1st Battalion, 14 Regiment continued to search the area on 8 November, while Company 394 returned to the Province capitol. Total losses for the operation were 1 WIA, 1 civilian killed by enemy fire, 13 VC KIA, 27 VC killed by air strikes, 12 Chicom carbines, 1 Browning Automatic Rifle, 1 US Rifle, M-1 and 1 Carbine, Cal .30 captured, along with various amounts of ammunition and several hand grenades.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The marked difference in the success of the Long Phung relief and the failure of the My Long relief can be attributed to the more careful planning, the early request for air

support, the actions taken to insure artillery support, and the general conduct of the Long Phung operation itself. The force commander, Captain Nghia, had learned in the My Long operation that preparations for support and conduct of the operation had to be made early and had to be firmed up before any move was made. The decision to use one company in the initial move to Long Phung was felt to be questionable, but turned out to be all the force that could reasonably be employed in the village. Additional forces should have been used in the assault and pursuit, but the movement of the 1/14 was very rapid, and this unit arrived in time to take part in the final stages of the operation. Coordination was excellent during the operation, with the exception of the planned use of the Junk Force to ferry the unit across the Co Chien. Under the political atmosphere at this time, however, the Junk Force Commander cannot be condemned for his actions, as all troop movements, particularly those in the general direction of Saigon, were looked upon with a jaundiced eye. For the most part, the troops were more aggressive, and there was no doubt as to the outcome of the operation. Perhaps an assault could have been made earlier in the day, but this operation was the first one in which the civil guard troops had come up against a unit armed with the Chinese carbine, and the heavy volume

of fire from these weapons was unnerving. Close coordination between air and ground forces was a major factor in forcing the VC to leave their positions, as was the action of the FAC in directing the fighters in to the targets.

LESSONS LEARNED

Unless circumstances prohibit, all needed or anticipated support must be requested and confirmed in advance of the operation. Any plans to call for support at a later time must be scrapped if this support can be pre-arranged.

2. Coordination with agencies not under the direct control of the force commander must be made early, and in such detail as to leave no doubt in the mind of anyone concerned as to how the operation will be conducted. Sufficient lead time must exist to allow alternate plans to be made and put into effect, if necessary.

3. Do not place too much reliance on a single piece of equipment. If at all possible, have back-up items for all critical items, particularly communications equipment and special purpose items not normally available within the unit.

4. In undeveloped situations, retain enough force under the control of the ground commander to enable him to retain some freedom of action until such time as he can be reinforced or relieved. Do not force a commander to place his unit or mission in jeopardy because he does not have sufficient force to carry out his mission due to an error in

planning.

5. When contact is made, retain it, or if lost, regain it as quickly as possible. If the enemy forces is not defeated, it may remain in the area and severely hamper your mission. The lack of aggressive attack by one force invites a strong counterattack by the other.

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