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OPERATIONS OF THE LONG RANGE RECONNAISSANCE
PLATOON, 173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE),
PRIOR TO AND DURING A BRIGADE SEARCH AND
DESTROY MISSION IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
(OPERATION SIOUX CITY), 26 SEPTEMBER -
9 OCTOBER 1966. (PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A
LONG RANGE RECONNAISSANCE PLATOON COMMANDER.)

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INTRODUCTION

WRITER'S PREFACE

At the outset I would like to make a few comments as to the purpose and background of this paper.

I intend to describe, and in so doing to analyze, the operation of a long range reconnaissance organization as it conducted patrols in hostile territory over a specific period of time. The unit is the Long Range Reconnaissance Platoon of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate); the hostile territory is War Zone "D," Republic of Vietnam; the period of time is 20 September to 2 October 1966, or before and during Operation Sioux City.

If successful this monograph will provide to the reader, whom I presume to be either an academic student of military history or a dedicated career soldier (or both): (1) a detailed record of a typical long range reconnaissance patrolling operation (to include an explanation of problems, concepts, techniques and tactics) and (2) an insight to the advantages, liabilities, and dangers of using this kind of unit on future operations.

The facts presented in the body of the paper and portrayed in the visuals are the result of digging into the sometimes faulty memories of former members of the unit. The lack of comment on the Long Range Reconnaissance Platoon's activities in the Operation Sioux City after-action report provides me with the advantage of painting the picture as I saw it, or better, as I remember it. It also provides me with the disadvantage of inherent inaccuracies. These inaccuracies are certainly unintentional, and hopefully they are inconsequential.

The organization of the paper is strictly chronological even

to the extent of the titles. Hence the flow of thought will be logical and should be easy to follow. What does perhaps need additional explanation is the list of visuals.

The provisional table of organization and equipment (TOE) of the unit is provided for the information of the reader. The TOE was initially established under General Order authority and was later submitted as a modification TOE.

The inclusion of the roster of key personnel provides possible interest for a few, conforms with the basic tenets of the Army Office of Public Information, and satisfies an egotistic urge of the writer.

The time sequence table is a graphic summary of events. It combines the patrols and their areas of operation into a daily log. This table was necessary in the reconstruction of events, and it has been included in an attempt to simplify and summarize the many patrol operations.

The last page in the monograph contains a $1/50,000$, fold-out map of the entire area of operation. The smaller patrol areas of operation are depicted in five different colors. Each color represents those areas that were infiltrated on a specific day. During Operation Sioux City each area of operation was numbered, for simplicity, by the number of the patrol assigned to it. Since patrols had two or three such areas over the course of the operation, I have lettered the areas to lessen confusion. The exact location of landing zones, pick-up zones, and enemy contact would be guess-work for me at this time, and it is for this reason that they are not shown on the map.

I intend to use the following abbreviations for the sake of brevity:

- (1) Long Range Reconnaissance Platoon (LRRP)
- (2) Long Range Patrol (LRP)
- (3) Area of Operation (AO)

LRRP BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

The 173d Airborne Brigade was the first conventional unit to employ the LRP as it is now conceived. Our operations modeled very closely those of Project Delta, 5th Special Forces Group. As early as April 1966 personnel from the 173d LRRP were sent to the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrolling School (later renamed the MACV Recondo School), and our unit benefited greatly from this and subsequent sessions. The school's cadre were former Project Delta patrol leaders, and they proved to be outstanding instructors.

Our provisional TOE provided for personnel to fill ten LRP's. It was understood that only eight of these would be operational because of training requirements, "R and R," and ailments (such as a bad cough) which would not stop the normal infantryman but which proved unacceptable to the LRP. We had not yet expanded to the TOE strength, and at the beginning of Operation Sioux City, we had seven LRP's.

A word must be said about the chain of command for full understanding of the operation. All patrols were controlled by the LRRP commander or, in his absence, the LRRP operations officer. The LRRP commander worked directly for the cavalry troop commander (an authorized major), and this relationship included tactical control as well as administrative support. The next link in the chain was the brigade commander or the S2 speaking for him. Often the troop commander was left completely out of the picture because of a cavalry mission or some other commitment.

Even when the troop commander was briefed on the LRRP operation, he was still put in a very difficult position: one of his subordinate elements was performing a specific mission for the brigade and in most cases reporting information directly to brigade.

The experience of the 173d LRRP prior to Operation Sioux City included infiltration by UH-1D helicopter, by vehicle drop-off, by helicopter rappel, and by the stay-behind technique. The unit also had experienced a need to use the emergency, rope extraction technique developed by Project Delta for use when a patrol is compromised but when no clearings are nearby.

The LRRP enjoyed a remarkable casualty record. Even though patrols were often extracted under fire after having been chased by the enemy, only one man had been killed in some forty-odd patrols. This record coupled with the distinction of being an elite unit provided for tremendous esprit. Nevertheless each man was aware of the dangers of his job and of the plausibility of a patrol being wiped out to the last man. The danger of the extremely adverse effect on the morale of the unit, if this were to occur, was of great concern to me at all times.

THE EXISTING SITUATION

Because the after action report for Operation Sioux City is classified, I am purposely excluding information obtained from it. The detailed enemy situation, friendly unit boundaries and specific troop locations can be found in the above mentioned document.

The brigade had been alerted for an operation into that position of War Zone "D" shown on the attached map. The initial assault was to occur on 26 September 1966. Because the intelligence picture was somewhat sketchy and slightly outdated, the

commanding general decided to use the LRRP prior to the brigade operation. His instructions to me included the following guidance: (1) to put in five patrols initially, (2) to concentrate my attention in the northern sector of the map sheet, and (3) in addition to performing the normal reconnaissance and surveillance mission, to bring back a prisoner.

With the exception of the villages along the Song Dong Nai River and along the left border of the map, the land was totally Viet Cong, and everything moving was considered fair game. The villages and built-up areas were no longer existent and all signs of life were hidden from view with one exception: ruts in the road network after a heavy rain.

As in most of III Corps Tactical Zone, the land in our area was generally flat, and the jungle varied from sparse to very dense but never reached the triple canopy thickness. In this area there were quite a few small clearings large enough for one helicopter to land and take off.

The weather - as my memory serves me - was good for that season of the year. Our main concern was helicopter visibility, and except for early morning fog, our operations were not hampered in this respect.

There were no friendly units north of the Song Dong Nai River except for a Special Forces "A" Camp (coordinates YT153284) with no artillery and a unit from the U.S. 1st Infantry Division that was located just off the northwest corner of the map sheet. The 173d Airborne Brigade's base camp served for most of the operation as both the LRRP command post and the helicopter ^{stand-by}~~standby~~ location.

It ~~is~~^{was} just 3000 meters south of the map sheet.

Time and space considerations presented no problems. We had a day-and-a-half to get ready and then six days to accomplish the mission. As far as space was concerned, War Zone "D" belonged to the LRRP.

PREPARATIONS

The initial plan involved five patrols, each prepared to stay for three days and each hoping to get an unwary enemy soldier or small group of enemy soldiers into their ambush. We planned to have three of the patrols link up after two days if we still had no prisoner. The purpose of this move was to be able to hit a sizeable force. This contingency plan was discarded because of the distance between patrols and the difficulty of linking up.

The 173d had never before had more than three LRP's in enemy territory at one time, and no LRP had ever before attempted a prisoner snatch. Since this was my first operation at the helm of the LRRP, I found my feet getting warm. My request to decrease the initial number of patrols infiltrated was denied by the commanding general.

Whether we had three or five patrols in the jungle, we could only extract one at a time without doubling the aircraft support requirements. Therefore, the only thing new with five patrols was a higher degree of risk and a little bigger control problem. General Smith felt the risk was worthwhile and the control problem manageable.

Five patrol leaders were assigned AD's, and after a map study, the men were taken on a reconnaissance flight. Each sergeant (with his pilot's advice) picked primary and alternate landing and pick-up zones. In some cases alternates were not available. The total flights over the area was limited to three, and an attempt was made to fly common routes and not to pinpoint areas, but I am certain we aroused some curiosity.

Each patrol planned and rehearsed its move and ambush. Different techniques were tried until each patrol felt it could accomplish the prisoner snatch mission. Detailed patrol orders were given by each of the patrol leaders, and key personnel from the LRRP headquarters listened in. This eavesdropping insured completeness through helpful questioning and precluded a lack of understanding on the part of the headquarters personnel as to the patrol plans.

A Forward Air Controller was requested over the area for the first two hours of daylight, as this was considered the most critical time. An army, fixed-wing, radio relay aircraft was to be in the air for the remainder of the day. Both of these were given LRRP frequencies, call signs, and code words. Artillery concentrations were sent to the 1st Division, and we obtained their fire direction frequency. This gave us 155mm howitzer support in most of our zone and 8-inch howitzer support throughout.

The exigency of our mission, at a time when the brigade was doing little, opened up not too cooperative supply channels and enabled us to obtain one wristwatch for each patrol, among other things. Operating under a provisional TOE that included no equipment and dealing with people who had only a hazy concept of the LRRP created real problems in the supply field.

I found that more than a few soldiers in the brigade knew the location of the unit's next mission. Phrases such as "D Zone" and "going across the river" were common in the rumor conversations. Certainly some of these meaningful words could have been picked up by the indigenous people either on or off post. I had given my men

explicit instructions and I feel certain that most of the leaks came from commanders and staff officers either at brigade headquarters ^{or} ~~and~~ in the battalions. This possible breach of security gave us an unnerving feeling.

NARRATION

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

As it turned out, three of the five initial patrols were extracted within twenty-four hours, and the decision was made to put patrols back in those general areas for more information. In the first six days, or prior to the start of the brigade operation, ten patrols had been placed into the area yielding various degrees of success. For ease of fire control all patrols were pulled out of the area prior to the brigade assault.

The LRRP was again employed on 29 September in an attempt to discover lucrative targets for the searching battalions. A total of four additional patrols were conducted over a four-day period; however, the mission for these LRP's no longer included the prisoner snatch.

An account of the entire LRRP operation will now be presented in a day-by-day description.

20 SEPTEMBER

The seven UH-1D helicopters formed a trail as they left the helipad ^{of} ~~at~~ the 173d base camp. I was in the first helicopter (the command and control ship), and I had an AN/PRC-25 radio with the long antenna sticking out the door. The next five helicopters carried the five patrols. The last helicopter was the alternate command and control helicopter with the platoon sergeant, SGT Rice. Four armed helicopters or "gunships," which constituted two light fire teams, escorted the formation.

We flew to the release point, and as each LRP "slick" went to its own area, the two relatively empty control helicopters orbited over a central point. One light fire team orbited in the north and one in the south. If one of the LRP "slicks" crashed or was shot down, the nearest fire team was to suppress around the downed helicopter, and the two relatively empty helicopters would land to pick

up the crew and the six-man patrol.

As each helicopter dropped its patrol, it reported to my pilot on its own net, and when each patrol was safe in the woods, each LRP leader called in on our frequency. All helicopters monitored both nets.

The first phase went exactly by the time schedule and all patrols were infiltrated without a shot. Returning to base camp I experienced a feeling that is unique to this type of business, I had just placed thirty men in an extremely precarious position, yet I was on the way back to a beer and a safe bed. Although I knew my job was to control and support them, I felt that it was somehow wrong not to be there too.

21 SEPTEMBER

The rescue team waited at the brigade helipad during daylight hours. It included myself (or Lt Vencill) and SGT Rice. The three helicopters were rigged with ropes, so that each helicopter could pull two men out of the jungle, if a clearing was not available. Under normal extraction one of the three helicopters would retrieve the patrol with the other two ready to assist if the first was shot down.

At about 1000 hours SGT Jakovenko called for an emergency extraction. The code word was immediately relayed to the LRRP command post and monitored at the helipad. Within twelve minutes LRP-4 had been extracted from ~~AO C~~^{AO C}. They had ambushed two Viet Cong on a trail. Both had been wounded. One had escaped, and the other would have been a prisoner had the patrol not started receiving fire from another direction. The man had to be killed and the patrol had to run. SGT Jakovenko received a slight wound on his hand during the encounter.

About thirty minutes later LRP-7 in ~~AO D~~^{AO D} was seen by an enemy

force of unknown size. In the fire fight that took place at very close range, SGT Hamilton's patrol reported one Viet Cong killed, one Viet Cong killed-possible, and no casualties. The patrol used "CS" gas and fragmentation grenades to break contact. The patrol called for an emergency extraction and headed for a landing zone. Enroute they came upon a camouflaged civilian truck about the size of a two and one-half ton cargo truck. It was parked just off the main road and under a heavy jungle canopy. SGT Hamilton destroyed the truck by dropping a fragmentation grenade in the gas tank.

Not long after LRP-6 had returned and had undergone the thirty-minute debriefing routine, LRP-7 got into the act. Three Viet Cong were casually strolling down a trail with rifles over their shoulders. One was in khaki and two wore black pajamas. All three had web gear of some sort. SGT Brown gave the word to fire and a few moments later the ambush was completed. The action netted two Viet Cong killed, one Viet Cong wounded, and three bolt-action weapons. The wounded man and the weapons were extracted with the patrol.

After minor surgery, the Viet Cong was interrogated by a military intelligence team. The prisoner gave the location where a platoon was living with their families. A message was found on the prisoner, stating that someone had observed a helicopter drop a six-man unit into a small clearing about dusk.

At about 1600 hours SP5 Sipes reported that he had experienced unusual difficulty with his radio and asked for an extraction. (It would be appropriate at this time to inform the reader that the emergency extraction code word was never questioned. When an LRP leader used it, we got him out. If other than an emergency existed, we discussed it and then acted. Examples of the latter category are

a questionable radio, as was this case, a bad cough, and a twisted ankle.) Since the radio seemed to be in good working order at that time, I denied the request and ~~left~~^{kept} LRP-3 in AO B. I regretted the decision the next day when I was unable to reach the patrol for six hours.

22 SEPTEMBER

I received word in the morning of 22 September, to put three more patrols into the area. Williams, Brown, and Hamilton were alerted. As their assistant patrol leaders started preparing the men and equipment, the patrol leaders picked the landing zones from the 2000-foot high vantage point of a reconnaissance flight.

Sometime after this flight SP5 Sipes reported that his unit was on the outskirts of what appeared to be a small base camp. His men had seen a few structures and a vehicle. The patrol was then spotted by a khaki-clad enemy soldier. LRP-3 shot the man and swiftly departed the area. When the patrol was about 1000 meters from the installation an air strike was brought in on it, yielding a secondary explosion of what looked to be petroleum and uncovering a few demolished huts.

LRP-3 was directed to return to the camp for a bomb damage assessment. In the process of circling back to the bombed area, the last man in the patrol detected movement to the rear. Feeling that the unit was being followed, SP5 Sipes made a small loop and set up an ambush on his own trail. The patrol luckily had just enough time to set up a Claymore mine facing the trail. It was placed only a few yards from the soldiers with a large tree serving as a back-blast screen. The Claymore was detonated when the Viet Cong came into view and each man threw a fragmentation grenade. SP5 Sipes reported three more Viet Cong killed.

At this point LRP-3 was ready to come out. The patrol had lost track of their location and needed assistance in finding a clearing. The patrol dropped a smoke grenade, and I directed them to a small clearing about 800 meters away. To say that the six men were tired when they reached the helicopter is unfair. One man could not climb into the helicopter and had to be lifted in. The patrol as always was unbelievably happy to see the weird eggbeater contraption that gives mobility to today's soldiers.

LRP's 2,6, and 7, with their weapons test fired, their patrol orders given, their faces blacked, and with a good meal in their bellies, were ready. We elected to slightly alter the infiltration since we had had so much action recently. Each of the three patrols would touch down five minutes apart. This would enable us to concentrate our support on one area at a time. We also had only one light fire team and those two "gun ships" could escort only one "slick" at a time.

Lieutenant Vencill controlled this operation and decided to place the patrols in from south to north or into areas H,F, and G in that order. The time schedule for this infiltration was designed to provide both a five-minute interval between patrols and a minimum amount of daylight to the last patrol. The reasoning for this last point is that the cover of darkness is an asset to a small team whose location in the enemies' backyard has been so uniquely pinpointed by the helicopter.

LRP-7 had just left the helicopter in AO H when they received fire from the woodline. SGT Brown and his men scrambled back on the helicopter and were flown home. LRP-2 under SGT William's command touched down in AO F with no trouble. SP5 Hamilton and LRP-6 never

got off the helicopter into AO G. When they were thirty feet from the ground a burst of enemy fire forced the pilot to pull out. The helicopter attempted to land in the alternate landing zone but received the same welcome.

In each case where fire had been received, the armed helicopters returned fire and 1st Division Artillery fired the preplanned concentrations. The day ended with only two patrols in War Zone "D", LRP-1 in AO A and LRP-2 in AO F.

23 SEPTEMBER

SGT Smith and his men had spent three nights on their mission and had been successful at the two ambush sites they had used. Enroute to their pick-up zone they heard what they thought were men moving through brush. As the patrol was running for the helicopter about a handful of Viet Cong were seen in the woodline not far away. One of the doorgunners in the helicopter reported killing one Viet Cong.

Meanwhile LRP-2 in AO F had set up ~~their~~^{its} ambush on the main trail. One, two, then three Viet Cong soldiers came into view, each looking left and right with rifle in the ready position. The Viet Cong were spread out with 10 to 15 meters between men. The point man spotted a member of SGT Williams' patrol and opened fire. Contact was broken with automatic fire and fragmentation grenades, and the patrol was picked up about 500 meters away. No friendly casualties and no known enemy casualties resulted from the action.

Two more LRP's were told to prepare for missions that day. Because SP5 Sipes was experiencing severe pains in the ribs, and because some of the men were beginning to grumble about going back into a hot area, I decided to lead LRP-3 on this mission. In my absence LT Vencill, the operations officer, was in charge of the LRRP. The other patrol designated was LRP-6, led by SGT Hamilton.

My patrol went into AO I with no difficulty, so I thought. It turned out that the last man running from the helicopter heard automatic fire coming from the opposite side of the clearing. He assumed that the rest of us heard the rounds even though the helicopter was making a lot of noise. He was wrong, and I did not have the benefit of this knowledge until the patrol was debriefed back at base camp.

SGT Hamilton's LRP-6 gained access to AO J, and it was a full 15 minutes before an estimated 15 Viet Cong ran them out of the woods. The extraction was poorly illuminated, but successful. Again the gun ships and artillery retaliated with unconfirmed results. The end of 23 September found only LRP-3 in War Zone "D".

24 SEPTEMBER

In AO I, LRP-3 under my guidance moved cross-country toward the intended ambush site. We thought we heard a dog barking and chickens clucking, but we were unsure. We did hear three rounds fired from a heavy caliber weapon to the north. Patrol members disagreed as to the type and distance of the weapon, but the consensus was a recoilless rifle^{and} an estimated 500 meters. This was reported in along with our conjecture that it was practice firing. (The enemy later used recoilless rifles against armored personnel carriers of the brigade's D Company, 16th Armor within 1000 meters of the coordinates we gave.) No more missions were given to the LRRP because of the imminent assault. We were to have all patrols out by the night of the 25th.

25 SEPTEMBER

No Viet Cong ventured into the six-man ambush set by LRP-3 in AO I, and our patrol was pulled out shortly after noon on the 25th.

26 - 28 SEPTEMBER

During these three days the brigade operation was initiated. There was no LRRP combat activity during this period.

29 SEPTEMBER

I was directed to place patrols in the general areas outlined as AO's K,L, and M. LRP's 6, 2, and 1 were given these respective areas. LT Vencill took over the job of SGT Hamilton, who was in the hospital with a minor ailment.

The patrols were again infiltrated one at a time, and none of them received any fire. I had dispatched all the helicopters but the command and control ship in which I was riding. My helicopter was remaining over the area for an extra five minutes or until the sun was almost out of sight in the west. When the other helicopters were nearing the Bien Hoa base camp, I received a call from SGT Williams. He was in a fight and wanted an emergency extraction. I relayed the code word to the other helicopters, and they headed back for the AO L.

When the patrol was attempting to break contact with the enemy force and before they had reached the open ground, I told Williams to throw smoke in order to help the "gun ships" in suppressing the enemy. This call was answered not only with smoke from LRP-2 but also from the enemy 1000 meters away. Obviously the radio net was being monitored by unfriendly ears.

The pick-up was made in close to total darkness. It was by luck that SGT Williams had used a corner of a large open field for his landing zone. Knowing that the only obstacles to flying were the enemy bullets, the pilot was able to accomplish the extraction even though visibility was extremely limited. The actual location of the patrol was made known by the ignition of a trip flare SGT Williams had been carrying.

The suppressive fire of the "gun ships" was miraculous and was the sole reason the "slick" was not shot down. The patrol later marveled at the helicopter machinegun fire that was so close it was unsafe - which made it perfect.

We received no casualties from this action, and there were no sightings of Viet Cong being hit.

30 SEPTEMBER

LRP-1 and LRP-6 spent a relatively uneventful day. That night, however, SGT Smith's patrol in AO M received about ten rounds of 105mm howitzer, the closest round landing within 100 meters. The 173d fire support coordinator in the War Zone "D" tactical operations center had failed to notify the battery still in the Bien Hoa base camp that two LRP's were within their range. Luckily this mistake took no blood, although it did produce some gray hair.

1 OCTOBER

The patrols led by LT Vencill and SGT Smith were extracted without further incident. I was later instructed to place another patrol in the vicinity of AO N. This mission was somewhat unusual in that one of the battalions was within 1000 meters of the area and was moving toward it. The principal idea here was to watch a trail hoping to detect the movement of the enemy when the battalion moved. The mission, which required close coordination, gave us the advantage of a closeby reaction force. It went against the grain with me, however, because of the limitations I envisioned in the use of fire support should either the LRP or the forward elements of the battalion make contact.

At any rate LRP-5, under the leadership of SGT Guill, entered AO N by helicopter around 1400 hours. Not long after that, LRP's 1 and 6 were extracted.

2 OCTOBER

When SGT Guill failed to come up with any intelligence reports, I was instructed to pull the patrol out. We did so without incident. This extraction terminated Operation Sioux City for the LRRP.

SUMMARY OF ACTION

From 20 September to 2 October 1966, the 173d LRRP placed 14 patrols into War Zone "D," incurring 13 contacts with the enemy.

I have tabulated the following as a summary of results:

1. Viet Cong casualties:

9 killed	1 killed (possible)
2 wounded	(one of which taken prisoner)

2. US casualties:

0 killed
1 wounded

3. Destroyed items:

1 2½-ton truck
1 small base camp (probably fuel supply point)

4. Captured items:

3 enemy weapons, bolt action

5. Significant Intelligence Obtained:

Confirmed enemy locations 13 times
Heard recoilless rifle fire
Enemy platoon location, reported by prisoner
Enemy knowledge of LRP, reported by prisoner
General description of enemy clothing and equipment
Numerous reports of lack of enemy activity

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. The overall operation was extremely successful. I attribute this to the following factors: (a) high caliber, well-trained soldiers, (b) detailed and thorough planning, (c) excellent support, and (d) extremely good team work both on the patrol and on the platoon level.

2. The intelligence needed by brigade headquarters to achieve major combat successes was not provided by the LRRP. A much better job of intelligence finding could have been done by altering our plan. Instead of going after the prisoner, the LRP's should have gone after intelligence. Instead of using their hands and weapons in the offensive role, they should have used their eyes and ears in the scout role. By doing less moving, less ambushing, and more trail watching, a better overall enemy picture could have been developed. This method of operation would have enabled the patrols to concentrate on stealth instead of combat power. The result would have been far fewer patrols spotted and the LRRP effectiveness increased. Contact certainly located the enemy, but it also located the LRP; more important, it told the enemy that we knew where he was. So he moved.

3. On many trails and in many areas there was no sign of the Viet Cong. People tend to feel that a negative report from an LRP is tantamount to failure, and nothing could be further from the truth. The knowledge that there are no Viet Cong in an area is important; this is good intelligence.

4. The stealing of live bodies from enemy territory is risky business. We were lucky: we got a prisoner yet lost no men in the process. If the decision makers want a prisoner, and if they are willing to compromise "reported" intelligence in order to get

this live source, it can be done. To say it can be done with relative ease would be foolish, but to say that it can be done with a good chance for success would be realistic. If the two major problems, that our patrols faced, are solved - and they can be solved - prisoner taking will be a lot more common in Vietnam.

a. Flank security must be placed at least 100 meters from the ambush site. These elements serve to alert the patrol of enemy walking down the trail and to ensure that a sizable force is not attacked. An additional four to six men are needed for this job.

b. A device or technique must be developed to knock out or stun the prisoner. Gunfire is too deadly for the enemy, and hand to hand combat is too deadly for the friendly troops. Blackjacks, silenced pistols, firing automatic weapons at the legs of the enemy, and even the flying tackle ~~were all~~ proved unsatisfactory.

Our experimentation was far from scientific, but it proved to me that a need exists.

5. In the narration there has been no mention of any reaction force. There was no reaction force, or at least the reaction force was in no way geared to the LRRP operation. It should have been. If an LRP^{had} discovered or developed some good intelligence, no unit was prepared to assault. If an LRP ^{had gotten} ~~got~~ into more than it could handle and ^{was unable to} ~~could not~~ be extracted, there was no unit prepared to go to their assistance.

6. The withdrawal of LRP's prior to the brigade assault was a poor move. The influx of a large unit into an enemy sanctuary is going to cause the enemy to move. LRP's scattered throughout War Zone "D", observing trails, would have been an extremely valuable asset to the brigade.

7. Apparently there was a major credibility gap in the 173d Airborne Brigade during Operation Sioux City. There is no mention in the after action report of the LRRP activities. I certainly do not think that the LRRP should have received "headline coverage," but I am amazed that even the enemy, dead and captured, statistics are not included.

LESSONS LEARNED

GENERAL DISCUSSION

I have divided the lessons learned into two main groupings. The first, entitled "New Concepts for Thought," contains a few ideas I consider worthy of future study if not immediate application. They are to my knowledge new concepts based on the operation described in this paper. The second grouping, entitled "Lessons Relearned," contains a number of ideas, principles, and pitfalls that were underscored in my mind by Operation Sioux City and which will assist future staff officers and commanders in the employment of the LRP. An attempt has been made to eliminate the trivia in order to prevent minimizing the main points.

NEW CONCEPTS FOR THOUGHT

1. "Prisoner snatch" is a feasible and proper mission for an LRP; however, because warning/security elements are necessary for success, the size of the patrol must be increased for this type mission.

2. Some type of knockout instrument (gas, dart, pellet) must be developed in order to debilitate an enemy soldier ~~from~~ 10 to 15 meters away, if the LRP prisoner snatch is to be successful.

3. When possible, prior to a large airmobile assault, LRP's should be employed in the trail-watching role in order to observe and monitor enemy movement once the assault has begun.

LESSONS RELEARNED

1. Success for LRP operations depends on meticulous planning and unfaltering teamwork.

2. If helicopter support for the LRP is not provided (rescue helicopters on standby and armed helicopters on call), the LRP, instead of accomplishing the mission, will hide.

3. As a general rule, the best fire support for an LRP in contact is the armored helicopter.
4. The LRP is more effective on point surveillance (trail watching) than on area reconnaissance.
5. The LRP should be employed far enough away from friendly units so as to provide freedom of action for the various means of fire support.
6. Although the helicopter is the only feasible method of infiltration in many instances, other methods should be considered and used where possible.
7. The overall LRP plan should include the contingent use of a reaction force.
8. Unless absolutely essential an LRP should not be sent into an area that was recently vacated by another LRP, especially if the first patrol drew enemy fire.
9. Whether the size of the unit is a platoon or a company, the commander of an LRP organization should work directly for the S2/G2; a chain of command that involves a cavalry troop/squadron commander is unwieldy.
10. Strict instructions at all levels concerning the security classification of impending operations are an absolute necessity when soldiers come into frequent contact with the indigenous population.
11. The pictographic map is a necessary tool in the exact locating of troops from a helicopter.
12. An alternate radio is an essential item of equipment for each LRP.
13. There is a definite need to recruit first-class soldiers into the LRP. (This seems superfluous, but extremely good non-commissioned officers and soldiers are at a premium, and it

takes the influence of the commanding general to insure that the LRP organization is not slighted in this most valuable resource.)

14. Special emphasis in LRP training must be placed on the following areas: (a) physical stamina, (b) jungle movement, (c) immediate action drills, and (d) emergency extraction.

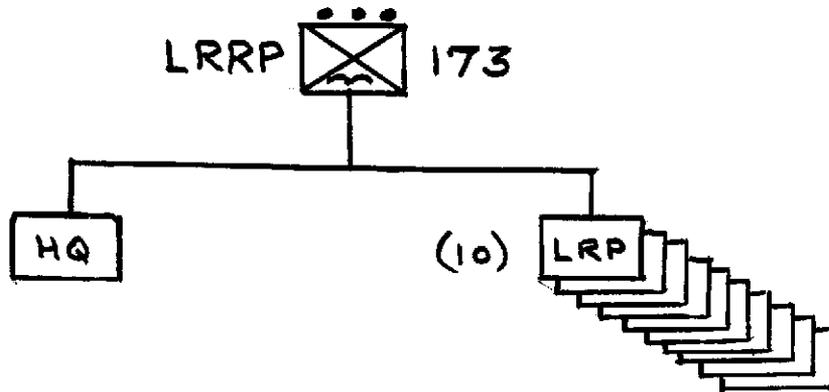
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PROVISIONAL TOE



LRRP COMMANDER (CPT)
 OPERATION OFFICER (LT)
 PLATOON SERGEANT (E7)
 INTELLIGENCE SERGEANT (E6)
 COMMUNICATIONS SERGEANTS (E5, E6)
 MEDIC (E4)
 RTO (E4)
 RTO (E4)
 (2 OFF, 7 EM)

LRP LEADER (E6)
 ASSISTANT LRP LEADER (E5)
 RIFLEMAN/SCOUT (E4)
 RIFLEMAN/SCOUT (E4)
 RIFLEMAN/SCOUT (E4)
 RIFLEMAN/SCOUT (E4)
 (60 EM)

TOTAL: 2 OFF 67 EM

ROSTER OF KEY PERSONNEL

BDE COMMANDING GENERAL
 COMMANDING OFFICER E/17th CAV
 LRRP COMMANDER
 OPERATION OFFICER
 PLATOON SERGEANT
 INTELLIGENCE SERGEANT
 COMMUNICATIONS SERGEANT
 1st PATROL LEADER
 2d PATROL LEADER
 3d PATROL LEADER
 4th PATROL LEADER
 5th PATROL LEADER
 6th PATROL LEADER
 7th PATROL LEADER

BRIGADIER GENERAL PAUL SMITH
 MAJOR BRYAN SUTTON
 CAPTAIN ROBERT CARROLL
 1LT CARL VENCILL
 SGT RICE
 SGT WILSON
 SGT PAYNE
 SGT SMITH
 SGT WILLIAMS
 SP5 SIPES
 SGT JAKOVENKO
 SGT GULL
 SGT HAMILTON
 SGT BROWN, R.

TIME SEQUENCE TABLE

DATE	<u>PATROLS INFILTRATED</u>			<u>PATROLS EXTRACTED</u>			<u>TOTAL LEFT IN AT END OF DAY</u>
	<u>Patrol Number</u>	<u>Patrol Leader</u>	<u>Area of Operation</u>	<u>Patrol Number</u>	<u>Patrol Leader</u>	<u>Area of Operation</u>	
20 Sep 66	1 3 4 6 7	Smith Sipes Jakovenko Hamilton Brown	AO A AO B AO C AO D AO E				5(ABCDE)
21 Sep 66				4 6 7	Jakovenko Hamilton Brown	AO C AO D AO E	2(AB)
22 Sep 66	2 6 7	Williams Hamilton Brown	AO F AO G AO H	3 6 7	Sipes Hamilton Brown	AO B AO G AO H	2(AF)
23 Sep 66	3 6	Carroll Hamilton	AO I AO J	2 1 6	Williams Smith Hamilton	AO F AO A AO J	1(I)
24 Sep 66							1(I)
25 Sep 66				3	Carroll	AO I	0
26-28 Sep 66							0
29 Sep 66	6 2 1	Vencill Williams Smith	AO K AO L AO M	2	Williams	AI L	2(KM)
30 Sep 66							2(KM)
1 Oct 66	5	Guill	AO N	6 1	Vencill Smith	AO K AO M	1(N)
2 Oct 66				5	Guill	AO N	0