

2020 sag

yy nrm

~~from~~

tactics 1 (normass/deepe)

(This is the second of a two-part series on developments along the demilitarized zone, Vietnam. *AS Speculation Reigns of AN American bombing Halt just north of the line.*)

WITH THE U. S. THIRD MARINE DIVISION, ALONG THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE, VIETNAM, OCTOBER 16--Marine units operating around the former combat base of Khe Sanh have developed unique and highly mobile tactics--helicopter hopscotching along the mountain hilltops.

For roughly thirty miles along the Demilitarized Zone--from the beginning of the northern hill-lands westward towards the Laotian border--the Marines have dotted the tops of razor-back ridgelines and isolated peaks with a ^{whole} ~~white~~ checkerboard of artillery bases, helicopter landing zones the size of three pingpong tables and bunkered patrol bases that look like igloos of green sandbags ~~scattered~~ ^{scattered} silhouetting against the jungle.

--more reuter

zczo sag

yy nmm

tactics 2 (normass/deepe)

More than 135 landing zones--some only large enough to land one
~~helio~~ helicopter at a time--and more than 15 fire support bases for artillery
and infantry units have been hacked ~~off~~ out of the ridgelines and
~~off the~~ top of mountain peaks. The terrain is cleared either by chain saws or
air-dropped demolitions, and occasionally ~~every~~ EVEN RANDOM bomb craters are used.
once;
Not all these hilltop bases are utilized at once many are vacated by ground
troops as they are helicoptered from one hilltop to another. When the
Marines leave, A patrol base area, they denude the sandbags from the tops of the bunkers--so
that American aircraft can keep the positions under observations. Thus,
far, the Communists have not ~~booby~~ boobytrapped or occupied any of the
Marine-created positions.

--more reuter

2020 sag

yy nmm

tactics 3 (normass/deepe)

Some strategic positions are manned constantly--but with a rotation of ~~units~~^{AS} Marine units. Some bases were held by the Marines ~~as~~^{AS} observation ~~look-out~~^{look-outs} even during the siege of Khe Sanh. One of these bases is atop Hill 950, where ~~mines~~^{mines} laid by the French, the Communists and the Americans engulf the Marines into an area the size of a football field; ~~at~~^{at} Hill 950 is considered strategic because it over-sees the northwest passage for ^{COMMUNIST} ~~infiltration~~ from Laos into South Vietnam. Monkey-like animals harrass the ~~mar~~ Marines on Hill 950 by throwing baseball-sized rocks at them; the Marines call them "rock-~~ap~~^{ap} apes." A wooden platform half the size of a tennis court serves as the helipad; some of the bigger helicopters can land only on their rear wheels, while letting the passengers out the rear gate, as the nose and front wheels of the helicopter ~~are~~^{are} ~~is~~ ~~turned~~ ~~skyward~~ powered skyward. One helicopter carrying a Marine brigadier general has already crash-landed ~~at~~ at the mini-pad and the officer was returned to the United States for medical care.

The 150-some landing zones and fire support bases have all been given names, ^{SUCH AS GATES AND SHEPARD} several ~~after~~ named after ~~former~~ former Marine Corps commandants, ^{SUCH AS MARGO AND BECKY AND} several after girls, several after birds, such as Robin, ~~and Hawk~~ Hawk and Mallard. One is also named Winchester, which caused the Navy chaplain to erect a simple altar amidst the jungled trees near the base and exclaim, "Ah, what could be ~~be~~ better. Winchester Cathedral! ".
==more reuter

ZCZC sag

yy nmm

tactics 4 (normass/deepo)

WHICH take two days to prepare,
The small hilltops clearings enable the Marines to employ a sort of shotgun, or splatter-type of mobility, as distinct from the ground mobility the Marines ~~had~~ failed to achieve at Khe Sanh before it was besieged by larger Communist formations.

"Since the Khe Sanh siege was lifted," one senior Marine officer explained, "the Marines have ~~increased~~ doubled ~~their~~ their helicopter-lift capabilities up here. The U. S. Army's 1st of the 5th Mechanized Brigade has taken over responsibilities along the DMZ near the seacoast. The Marines have large, heavy ground maneuver elements that can defeat the enemy ~~where~~ even when he's in the mountains and in the jungle, even though he can move ~~from his sanctuaries~~ in on ~~us~~ us from his ~~sanctuaries~~ sanctuaries in Laos or North Vietnam.

"The Marines are convinced the only way to keep them ^{Enemy} from threatening other points in the populated areas ~~of~~ of Quang Tri province is to move Marines out ^{wherever} ~~whenever~~ and whenever we can find the enemy. We concentration ^E on finding the enemy from ^{and} ~~out of~~ clear-out landing zones--and then we put Marines in the middle of the ^{Him} ~~enemy~~. We have cleared and now maintain landing zones all over ^{marine} ~~this~~ this area. ^{BC} ~~The~~ If a ~~battalion~~ battalion runs out of t'enemy and ^{would} ~~some time is more~~ productive elsewhere, the Marines are moved. We move these battalions around helter-skelter. We try to pull back the Marine troops for rest ~~for~~ one or two days out of every eight or nine days--but the main thing for us ~~is~~ is to keep after the enemy."

--more reuter

EGZC SAG

yy nnn

tactics 5 (normass/deepe)

Other tactical features in this ridgeline-leapfrogging operation include:

1. The integration of artillery and infantry units in the same frontline location. As one officer explained, "This is the first time ^{the} ~~and~~ infantry and artillery have been ~~together~~ so close together in one fire support base since the American Civil War, when the artillery accompanied the infantry to the battlefield. We have found that we can not maintain forward infantry ~~posibl~~ ^{GROUND} positions without the artillery and we can't leave the artillery alone without infantry protection from ~~sappers~~ ^{GROUND} a Communist sappers and ~~main force~~ units. So, we have put them together on one hilltop. But, neither the ~~main~~ infantry nor the artillery units can go anywhere from ~~here~~ here without the helicopters—which is the key to the operation."

-- more reuter

2020 sag

yy nmm

tactics 6 (normass/deepe)

2. In the three-dimensional jungled terrain, the Marines now are heli-dropped on the hilltops and begin patrolling downwards into the valleys. ~~with~~ This is a rather significant change from the past, ^{SINCE April} ~~up to~~ ^Q ~~time of~~ the lifting of the Khe Sanh siege in April. From the beginning of the DMZ operation in 1966 mid-1966, the Marines ~~made~~ heli-b² drops were captives of suitable landing zones--mostly in the valleys--and then the troopers were ~~often~~ forced to marching uphill ^{often} ~~against~~ sometimes against Communist dug-in positions.

"The difference between marching from the hilltops downwards instead of the valleys up the jagged hillsides ~~and~~ to the peaks is saving the Marines an incredible amount of time and energy. One Marine battalion commander pointed out one of his company positions only ~~some~~ half mile away on the map--but a tangled, steep ridgeline away. He said it took his company 45 minutes to walk down the hill--but eight hours to ~~walk~~ walk back up it.

--more reuter

zczo sag

yy nrm

tactics ⁹ (normass/deepe)

These mobile tactics have enabled the Marines to regain the tactical initiative on the western flank of the ^{DMZ} ~~DMZ~~. One other helpful factor for them is that the Marine line companies are now at their greatest strength to date in the war; ~~even~~ ^{EVEN} many Marine companies were understrength as the Marines landed in Vietnam in 1965; now the companies are up to strength, informed sources report, up to a 150 to 180 men per company because ~~only 700~~ ² The reason has been that only 700 ~~was~~ Vietnam-veterans of the 27th Marines were withdrawal in September, and the rest of the regiment was assigned to Marine units along the DMZ.

--more reuter

2020 sag

yy nmm

tactics 8 (normass/deepe)

Further east, on the seaside flank of the DMZ, the introduction of the U. S. Army 5th Mechanized Brigade has also enhanced Allied mobility, there, thus freeing Marines and Vietnamese troops from their bunkered outposts and ~~barbed~~ barb-wired installations such as at Con Thien. Initial reports indicate that the 5th Mechanized Brigade, which replaced the 27th Marines, is having trouble with Communist land mines and ambushes. Some fear the monsoon rains in the sand-dune and shaggy brush environment will further hamper the tanks and other tracked vehicles in the brigade. Already one operation to join up with Marines in the rolling "peidmont" hills into the DMZ has been cancelled, informed sources report, because the Army's armor could not cope with the terrain.

==more reuter

ZCZC sag

yy mm

tactics 9 (normass/deepe)

Like the Communists, the Marines are faced with ~~the~~ two immediate problems--the monsoons and malaria. Malaria is considered far worse a problem for the Communists than it is for the Marines; Many ~~can~~ Communist prisoners talk of heavy losses to their units because of fevers. But, it is serious for the Marines too. Casualties from the "fever of unknown unknown origin"^{5/}--which turn out to be malaria 80 per cent of the time--are equal to combat casualties during quiet days of the ^{WAR.} ~~way.~~ ~~At times,~~ At times, the fevers run so high that Marines are given emergency helicopter evacuation off the frontlines for treatment; there have been several fatalities; ~~see~~ ^{see} Allied military personnel in the two northern provinces are taking daily supplemental anti-malaria pills, which has resulted in a 50 per cent drop in the casualty rates and lessened^{ing} the seriousness of the disease.

--more reuter

2020 326

yy nmm

tactics 10 (normans/deepe)

Just how much the monsoon "goo"--as pilots call it--will reduce the Marine mobility, heliborne operations and resupply missions is open to question; commanders say the monsoons will definitely reduce the scale and efficiency of the mobile operations. The northeast monsoons will probably prove less disastrous to the Communists than the outgoing monsoons, which have for the past several months drenched their roads on the laotian side of the mountains.

--more reuter

2020 sag

yy nmm

tactics 11 (normass/deepe)

One can not but sense the profound irony of the new Marine operations along the DMZ, and the Army operations in the province just south of it, in comparison with previous periods of the war. When the Marines landed in the populated coastal lowlands in 1965, they sought to fight the ^A AGAINST local guerrillas counter-insurgency war and to secure the local population. They pooh-poohed the Army's hectic heliborne search-and-destroy operations into the remote, jungled and spare sparsely populated areas. The Marines resisted operating along the DMZ in search elusive North Vietnamese units-- until directly ordered by General William C. Westmoreland in ~~12~~ mid-1966. Now, the two services up here have changed roles--with neither the Marines nor the Army seeming to realizing it. Now, in Thua Thien province, the Army's ~~is~~ two elite, airmobile divisions--the 101st and 1st Cavalry--are in the lowlands and the Army commanders are as enthusiastic about weeding out the Communist "infrastructure" and protecting the local population as the Marines were in 1965. And, the Marine commanders along the DMZ Helicopter into Remote areas are now enthusiastic about operations that they had once criticized the Army for launching.

--more reuter

2020: sag

yy nmm

ta ctics 12 (normass/deepe)

While the Marines have regained the tactical offensive along the DMZ, the Communists continue to hold the strategic initiative. The DMZ has consistently been one of two places where the Allies have been on the strategic defensive, the second place being the long defense line of the U. S. Army 4th Infantry Division ~~stretching from the~~ fanning out from Pleiku and facing the Cambodian-Laotian borders. The political rules of engagement under which the Allied commanders have been ordered to fight ^{then} have prohibited ~~from~~ crossing the Ben Hai river into North Vietnam and into Laos and Cambodia, where the Communists ~~scatter~~ skitter to seek refuge while retraining and regrouping.

--more reuter

2020 sag

yy nmm

tactics 13 (normass/deepe)

the following
This strategic initiative gives the Communists ~~these~~ advantages, which could cause the tactical situation to flipflop significantly ~~at~~ with or without a cessation of the bombing over North Vietnam, ~~which is~~ currently *a topic of wide speculation* ~~widely speculated on~~ in Saigon:

1. The proximity of North ~~Viet~~ Vietnam gives the Communists their shortest supply routes for war materials and their fastest replacement capability.

"I'll tell you how fast the Communists can replace their ~~casualties~~ casualties along the DMZ," one Marine officer explained. "We completely battered the 320th Division this summer, ~~they broke~~ it broke contact, *F-11* exfiltrated from South Vietnam. Then the 320th was re-introduced with the same cadre but fresh troops and ~~was~~ re-established contact. All of this happened in 11 days—and to the best of my knowledge that is a record."

2. The second advantage is that from North Vietnam the Communists can employ their tube artillery with more intensity and effectiveness than ~~at any other place~~ from any other place into the South. Their ammunition supply lines are ~~not~~ *shorter*, which gives them leeway for heavier bombardments, and they face fewer problems in moving their artillery into their invisible *artillery* positions inside the ~~sides~~ of mountains.

==more reuter

ZCZC sag

yy nmm

tactics 14 (normass/deepe)

It is not only the intensity of ar Communist artillery fire in the past, but also ~~at~~ its accuracy on fixed Marine ~~installion~~ installations which causes concern among the Marines. During the summer months, Communist artillery fired into the Marines' huge logistical base of Dong Ha three times. The first round of each barrage hit a prime target. Once, the first round hit a Marines ~~ammunition~~ ^{on} ammunition dump; the second barrage, the first round hit a fuel supply point; ~~one~~ the third barrage, the first round hit another ammunition dump.

Marine commanders ^{Here} recall ~~Here~~ that the siege of Khe Sanh began, not with an intense Communist artillery barrage, but with an embarrassingly accurate one--the first ^{Shells} rounds hit the Marines ammunition dump, which send "hot rounds cooking off" around the Marines for 12 hours. Likewise, one of the first rounds in mid-May against the U. S. Army 1st Air Cavalry ignited the ^{OR} ~~American~~ ^{Depot} ammunition ~~dump~~ which in turn destroyed and damaged more ~~than~~ ^{roughly} 100 helicopters.

Marine commanders and troops "just feel" the Communist artillery is being positioned still being positioned in North Vietnam and Laos to "zap" at their "sitting-duck ~~installion~~ ^{at any time.} installations." No one is ~~predicting when it will happen.~~

--end reuter