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SAIGON--The Communists' use of well-camouflaged tunnels, entrenchments and foxholes is one of the greatest tactical problems facing American combat units.

Low-ranking American field officers indicate that some of the Viet Cong foxholes and tunnels are so well-camouflaged that American units walk past the positions and then the G.I.'s are ^{shot} in the back from the rear. During the famous "Operation Starlight" conducted by 5,000 U.S. Marines in August, an estimated 75 per cent of the American Marine casualties--the heaviest casualties thus far in the war--were shot in the back, according to the commanding general.

During past engagements, Communists, heavily armed with mortars, and lethal recoilless rifles have been able to rain in fire from their foxholes and tunnels on advancing American units.

Throughout the Communist controlled area of the countryside, the village guerrillas have constructed "combat hamlets" in which each village perimeter is protected by a series of tunnels, within the village each home is equipped ^{by} air-raid bunkers; footpaths in the village are dotted with foot-traps of steel spikes, or mines; the village fences and gates are fused with explosives. The villagers know to avoid the dangers; advancing to Vietnamese or American units do not.

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On occasions, American commanders have used ~~smoke~~ smoke grenades and tear gas pumped through a blower to counter the Communists' use of tunnels, but thus far these techniques have not proved to be effective.

"I fly over this terrain every day," one American helicopter pilots based in the U.S. Marine enclave city of Danang explained. "One day I see a tunnel about fifty meters long; the next day I fly over that same area and that tunnel has been covered with logs, grass and mud and another fifty meter extension has been made built. I'll bet if anyone some one could map all these Communist tunnels--they'd all lead to Danang." The city of Danang, protected by the equivalent of a division of U.S. Marines, lies 390 miles north of Saigon.

Communist defectors have reported that the Viet Cong ~~guerrillas~~ ^{HAVE BEEN} are digging a series of tunnels under Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport, but attempts to LOCATE ~~them~~ ^{IF THEY EXIST} have proved unsuccessful for government officials.

American intelligence reports indicate that Communist guerrillas and regulars are attempting to dig UNDER some of the isolated Special Forces camps dotting the jungled Vietnamese borders with Cambodia and Laos.

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During the nine-day siege of the famous Plei Me Special Forces camp, situated 18 miles from the Cambodia border, the Communist troops--reportedly regular units of the North Vietnamese Army--dug an intricate series of foxholes as close as fifty yards from the camp perimeter. The one-man holes viewed by this correspondent were about four feet deep and five foot wide, but at the bottom the Communists had dug a long niche for sleeping or for self-protection against American airplane bombings or mortar attacks.

"One of our patrols overran a Communist bunker," explained Captain Harold M. Moore of Pekin, Illinois, the American detachment commander at the Plei Me camp. "The Communist^s had built alot of foxholes and trenches all leading into one bunker. This was only about one-quarter of a mile from our ~~camp~~ camp; from this bunker the Communists could see everything we were doing in our camp, but it was so well camouflaged we couldn't see them from our positions. The Communists had dug their holes and then covered the tops with mud, logs, dirt and weeds for protection. We couldn't even see the Communist positions only thirty meters from our camp; we could see tracers coming out of the weeds, but we couldn't see their foxholes.

"One afternoon (during the nine-day siege around the camp) five other Americans and I had a 'duck shoot' just like at a carnival. I had found a pair of binoculars and I saw five or six Communists creeping along with bushes on their uniforms. They were dancing around only thirty meters from the barbed wire edge of our camp. I passed the binoculars around to the other Americans and then we all opened up with M-16 rifles at one time. But none of us could see the Communists without the binoculars."

A defector from a North Vietnamese Army unit told this correspondent that the Communist cadre had recently issued orders to dig trenches deeper, but narrower. The young defector said that the Communist orders called for the depth of the ~~changed~~ trenches to be changed from 1.20 meters to 1.50 meters, but the width was ordered to be narrow^{ed} by changing measurements from one meter, to half meter.

"We had different types of trenches," the defector recalled. "The first one is individual holes---they are circular foxholes. The second kind is L-shaped---The Communists call it ^{Ham} ~~ech~~ (the open jaw of the frog). It is L-shaped---straight down on the sides with the horizontal portion b~~y~~eing under a thick layer of earth. The third type is zig-zag, sometimes it is a tunnel underground and sometimes it is open at the top--- the Viet Cong call these communication and liaison tunnels. A fourth type is a trap for M-113 armored personnel carriers--- which works like a big elephant trap."

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"For the Communists, digging trenches is more important than eating," the defector continued. "Even if we were hungry and tired, the first thing we had to do was to dig trenches. When we came to a place where we were going to stay for only two hours, the first thing we had to do was to dig trenches, even for as long as half-an-hour. This order was automatically given to the troops.

"I remember one day my group had to move to three different places, one kilometer from each other and we lost two hours digging trenches in each place. Around one village, I remember we arrived in one place, dug trenches for two hours, stayed there for an hour; then moved on to the second place and started digging again."

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