

Viet Cong's 'Kill' List: U. S. Advisers at Top

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SAIGON.

American advisers here are concerned that their names are on the top of Communist "kill" lists. They are taking precautions to disappoint the Viet Cong guerrillas.

"We don't know how much money we've got on our heads," one field officer said, "but we know the Viet Cong guerrilla who kills us could retire with the money."

MACHINE GUN SPRAY

To prevent the Communists from collecting, one American Captain said he always sprays the roadside with machine gun fire when he travels by jeep in the countryside. "It gives us a feeling of confidence to know that our machine guns are working while we drive," he said. "Of course," he added, "we don't shoot as we go through villages. But we hold several grenades in our hands, knowing that if we're fired at in a village we could throw out a grenade. We don't know if we've ever killed anyone on the roadsides—we never stop. That would be a trap and we'd be knocked off for sure."

Another U. S. adviser said he never started the engine of his jeep without first checking for grenades, timebombs and gunpowder in his gas tank and engine.

One American explained that he always checked his pillow and blankets for poisonous snakes before going to bed. "That would be a very clever way to kill me," he said, "and Viet Cong are very clever."

Still another adviser described his personal precautions: "I go to sleep about 2 a. m. each night with my radio earplug in one ear. That ear is listening for any noises outside. Of course, I sleep with my pistol by my side and I always sleep with my glasses on. I'm stone blind without them."

AMERICANS FIRST

A number of incidents have supported the theory that the guerrillas have specific orders to kill Americans first. For example, an American captain was killed and a sergeant seriously wounded recently when an electronically-detegrated land mine exploded between them. The two were on patrol with 300 Vietnamese, but the Communist guerrillas apparently waited to catch the

Americans before setting off the mine.

Also, in an action earlier this year northwest of Saigon, Viet Cong attackers used a megaphone to talk a company of Vietnamese soldiers into deserting four American advisers. All but five South Vietnamese mountain tribesmen fled the scene, and the guerrillas then attacked and killed the four Americans and the five loyal Vietnamese.

BLENDING IN

"The Viet Cong have been trying to pick off Americans," one U. S. adviser said. His rule of the road to combat this: Blend in with the crowd. "At first they spotted us because of our uniforms, so we started wearing exactly what the Vietnamese government troops wore," he said. "Then the Viet Cong picked us out because we carried newer weapons than the Vietnamese, so we started using old weapons."

Blending in with a crowd, though, is more easily said than done. "My two sergeants are short and fit in with the size of the Vietnamese soldiers," another American serviceman said. "But I'm tall and they can spot me miles away." "Besides," he added, "I wear glasses—and none of the Vietnamese do."