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sept. 9, 1965

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SAIGON-American policymakers may soon reverse their for position and allow the consistent use of non-lethal and riot control tear gases on the Vietnam battlefield, reliable sources indicated today.

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The gast issue, which caused mar sensational headlines and world-wide consternation in late March, again broke into the news this week when a U. S. Marine Corps battalion commander countermanded military orders and used tear h gas—without authorization—to flush out nearly 400 Vietnamese women and children from Viet Cong tunnels near the coastal city of Qui Nhon, 250m miles north of Saigon.

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An official military investigation is currently underway to determine whether the Marine Corps battalion commander, Lt. Col. L. N. Utter, deliberately broke military orders specifying that tear gas would not be used on the Vietnam battlefield without authorization from he the approval of higher headquarters. American military sources indicate that General William C. Westmoreland, would commander of Military Assistance Command in Saigon, would have been necessary to authorize the use of the tear gas—and that he would have had to obtain approval from higher headquarters, in the Pacific command in Honolubu and possibly from the Pentagon.

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"This Marine colonel may turn out to be a hero," one reliable sax source indicated. "Every general in this town (Saigon) wants to use non-lethal gas." (Source 1)

Another reliable source explained, "this Marine colonel incident may make it possible for the Administration to red row back from their former stand against the use of police control gasses here. But there has been no row-back yet.

"But if in several more weeks another battalion commander accidentally breaks the order, and several more weeks later another breaks it, pretty soon the outside world will accept it as a normal occurence." (Source 2).

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when the Associated Press reported the use of non-lethal gas in Vietnam late March, the story caused a world-wide sensation—and a considerable number of headqua headq headaches in Washington.

"I'd rather lose the war rather than language use gas," one high-ranking Administration officialt reportedly answer said. "I'm not going to go through that again. There's something about the word gas that we can't understand." (Source 3).

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The highest ranking American military officials here, speaking in private, openly opposed the Administration's position and were bitter that is Washington officials had failed to handle the "flap" well enough to permit continued use of the pairse gas.

"The tear gasses and vomiting gases are ideal counterinsurgency weapons," one high ranking military official counterinsurgency "But the just try to use it!" (Source 4)

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Another American advisor, who had previously ame appraised
the use of non-lethal gas during his Pentagon tour, explained, "We could
effectively use man tear gas and vomiting gas in Vietnam, but it
still has alot of limitations. First of all, the effects last only
ten minutes, which means that the government troops must for pounce
into the area immediately after the gas is dropped. Sometimes, if
the winds are too strong, the gas does not drop to the ground, but just
drifts away without any effect.

"But still, gas could effectively be used best be used when the mi Viet Cong have seized a government post. Instead of bombing the post and the civilian population, helicopters could use many drop the gas, and the government troopers could be dropped in to pick up the Viet Cong fighters and the wounded Vietnamese government troops." (Source 5)

One non-Western counter-insurgency expert was also reportedly miffed at the Administration's opposition to the use of non-lethal gas.

He looked at the gas issue at the da conceptual level as a means to revolutionize the nature of war.

"The West is fighting in Vietnam what the Communists call revolutionary warfare," he explained. "Now, with the advelopment of gas, the West has all the means to revolutionize the nature of war—the nature of war being to kill people for political reasons.

The Americans could conceivably as the ga use of gas is perfected/win the war without killing people—and this would revolutionize the nature of war itself. The Americans and the Vietnamese government, for example, could conceivably captured the Viet Cong hard—core battalions in their base areas, instead of spending years of chasing them around the jungles or trying from to kill them with mass bombing raids."