

Strange Assortment of Weapons Being Used in South Viet Nam War

Editor's note: This is the first of three dispatches by UPI Saigon Bureau Manager Arthur J. Dommen on the little-known battle between South Viet Nam Communist guerrillas and the U.S. military.

By ARTHUR J. DOMMEN

SAIGON, South Viet Nam—UPI—A small but savage war is going on in the southern marshes of South Viet Nam.

It is a war that is fought with knives, a strange assortment of small firearms, booby traps and dummy rifles. It is a war fought against an enemy who remains largely unseen and avoids engagements against regular troops. No one ventures to say when a final victory will be achieved. Communist guerrillas are the enemy, and the Vietnamese government has sent units as large as regiments into some of the most difficult terrain in this Southeast Asian republic in an effort to weed them out.

Monsoon Rain Factor
Combat operations go on in swamps, jungles and rice paddies that make trucks, tanks and artillery virtually useless. The predominant feature of many of these areas is the driving monsoon rain that sweeps across the flat land and makes life miserable for soldiers and guerrillas alike. "This is not a conventional war," a lieutenant colonel in charge of a large scale operation told this correspondent. "It is rather like the war the French are fighting in Algeria."

Up till recently the struggle against Communist insurgents in the south has been largely carried on by units of local militia organized within each village or by provincial troops called civil guards.

But as of the beginning of this year, the government of President Ngo Dinh Diem has increasingly engaged regular army troops, and even fighter aircraft, in an effort to wipe out the Communist elements that spread propaganda and terrorize the peasants who form the majority of the 13.5 million inhabitants of this country.

Some areas, known to be refuges and supply points for the Communists, have been evacuated by the peasant population on orders of the government and declared "war zones."

Presumed Agent
In such zones, anyone caught moving by the army is presumed to be a Communist agent, called here Viet Cong (Communist supplier or sympathizer), and is liable to be shot with no questions asked. The evacuated thatched huts of the peasants were burned and stocks of rice in the zone confiscated or destroyed.

Such a zone is the U Minh Ha swampland of the country's southernmost province, where a regiment of the Vietnamese army and a battalion of crack American-trained marines have just completed a "mopping up" operation.

The U Minh Ha is an inhospitable region of forest and swamp, drenched for half the year by torrential rains and affording sweet water during the long dry season in only one or two locations. It has been a haven for insurgents since the beginning of the bloody Indo-China war, and is so unhealthy that not even the French army attempted to penetrate it. Now it has become the closest thing in Viet Nam to a territorial domain claimed by the Communist cadres who were left behind following the partition of Viet Nam at the 1954 Geneva conference.

Operational plans drawn up at the command post in the provincial capital of Camau provided for a five-day drive from the eastern edge of the swamp to the coast of the Gulf of Thailand by a battalion of marines with some artillery support from fixed

positions along the swamp's edge.

The drive was conducted by a single column of marines wading through knee-deep water along the bank of a straight east-west canal, while a string of wooden sampans carrying food, ammunition and medical supplies followed the advancing troops. Progress was slow, with the party averaging about one mile per hour.

At times the troops were forced to wade through water up to their necks, holding their rifles and submachine guns above their heads. Rain sometimes cut visibility to practically zero.

Troops are supplied with all the gear of the modern foot soldier. They have a good stock of first aid equipment and their standard weapons are the American M-1 rifle

and the Browning Automatic Rifle. They use American portable radios to keep in touch with other units.

Morale of the troops appeared good from the start of the soaking, tiring trek, to the very end. Each day's march usually was made to the tune of much good-natured joking in Vietnamese. Only the officers, who have had training under the U.S. Marines at Quantico, Va., speak good English.

Much of the credit for the good morale of the troops must go to the young officers like 34-year-old Capt. Tran Van Nhut, who commanded the battalion on this operation. He has a wife and children in Saigon and hopes to go back to the United States for a second tour of instruction.

"Our army doesn't yet have

a large corps of senior officers," he explained in response to a question about the youth of the commanding officers involved in the "mopping up" operation. Few officers in the Vietnamese army rose above the rank of major during the years of French colonial rule here.

The U Minh Ha swamp afforded no firm ground in all its miles of barren waste. So at nightfall, when it became dangerous to progress further along the canal, a camp was pitched on a soggy hillock with the troops joining their ponchos to make tents. But by morning the soggy hillock was entirely flooded.

Water was everywhere. The driest place to be had was a well-bailed-out sampan.

Next: The Guerrillas Live Off the Land.



CUBA BEEFS ARMY—Cuba beefed up its army with Soviet weapons and drafted women for duty in the militia to free men for hill fighting against anti-Castro guerrillas. Scattered clashes between guerrilla bands and government forces were reported from Las Villas province in central Cuba to Pinar

Del Rio at the western end of the island. Maj. Sinesio Walsh, bearded, center rear, shown with members of his anti-Castro guerrillas, was reported commanding his forces in the Cienfuegos sector of Las Villas. A former Castro adherent, Walsh is a violent anti-Communist. (UPI Telephoto)

Bulgaria Has Renewed Hopes for Luring American Tourists and Their Dollars

Sofia, Bulgaria—UPI—You'll find Elvis Presley records on the juke box in the bar of the best hotel in the capital of the most communist Soviet satellite state.

It is one of many surprises waiting for western tourists now being coaxed here with the promise of sunny Black Sea beach resorts and relaxed visa requirements.

Most western visitors to this Tennessee-sized Balkan state come from Europe. Particularly France and West Germany these days. But Bulgarians have new hopes for luring Americans, and their dollars, for the first time since World War II.

Relations between the Bulgarians and the United States became so strained following the Communist take-over in 1944 that in 1950 the U.S. broke off diplomatic contact altogether. Last year the two countries agreed to exchange ministers again, and this spring the Americans moved into a new legation here.

Diplomats Surprised
Elvis Presley aside, western observers find few significant changes in the Iron Curtain surrounding satellite Bulgaria. But newly returned American diplomats, expecting a cool reception, have been pleasantly surprised.

"Apparently we had left behind a stock of good will," remarked an American diplomat. "The Bulgarians seem glad to have us back."

One thing is guaranteed to impress western visitors in Sofia: The lack of cars—and traffic jams. The capital's white uniformed, baton waving traffic cops literally give each passing auto personal attention along the broad avenues criss-crossing the city.

Almost any reasonably new American or Western European car draws crowds of curious Bulgarians.

There are other surprises waiting. On the official state radio, party propaganda is alternated with scratchy recordings of Chicago-style jazz and Hawaiian hula songs. And earlier this month Sofia residents began jamming local movie houses for their first look at an American film in more than a decade—Mario Lanza in "The Great Caruso."

Schools Closed
The Communist regime has long closed all schools and hospitals operated by Bulgaria's Eastern Orthodox religious faithful. But church bells still echo across the city on Sunday morning, and Sofia's chief landmark remains the glittering gold domes of the Church of Alexander Nevsky.

Despite persecution, priests and nuns appear on the streets

in their black robes, and shops specialize in religious objects.

Bulgaria's chief tourist attraction is its Black Sea beaches. On Moscow's instructions, a number of new hotels were built around Bourgas and Varna for weary East Bloc commissars. But now the Bulgarians are anxiously trying to coax in western visitors with hard currency to spend.

Sunny Beach, a new resort near the coast village of Nessebar, was built only last year. Now it has a casino and more than 30 hotels.

Bulgarian tourist officials claim the number of visitors to the three main seaside resorts jumped from about 8,500 in 1956 to more than 130,000 last year.

Tourist visas enabling visitors to travel around Bulgaria are now easily available from Bulgaria's foreign embassies and legation. And transit visas good for only 48 hours can be extended in Sofia.

Forced Off Train

In a glaring exception to the smooth course offered most travelers, an American woman recently was forced off an outbound train near the Bulgarian-Turkish border at 2 a.m. because her visa had expired at midnight. She was allowed to leave hours later after explaining she

would have met the departure deadline if the train had run on schedule.

(Although United States passports carry the notation they are not good for travel in Bulgaria, it is now possible to have them stamped as valid for entry into Bulgaria.)

Richland Juveniles Being Held Here

Three Richland, Wash., juveniles are being held in the Jackson county juvenile detention home after being picked up in Prospect by state police Tuesday night as runaways.

The 15-year-old boy and two girls, one 14 and one 13, were apprehended in the Prospect hotel. They had abandoned the car belonging to the boy's father, and left it in a roadside ditch. Officers found the damaged car, saw a set of schoolbooks in it, and checked the area until they found the three juveniles.

The parents have been notified, and are expected to come to pick up the three youngsters, juvenile authorities said.

NO DARKNESS HERE

Gonzales, Texas—UPI—The front lawn kept by Mrs. F. L. Drab is anything but drab. A local garden club recently named the Drab lawn "Yard of the Month."

Nuclear Bomb Testing Gives Scientists Tracer

Washington—(Science Service)—Because of the testing of nuclear weapons, scientists have in their possession a giant-scale tracer that can be used to study the mechanisms and rates of many natural processes that involve the element carbon.

Several examples of such tracer studies are suggested by Drs. Wallace S. Broecker and Edwin A. Olson of Columbia University's Lamont Geological Observatory at Palisades, N. Y., in a report to Science. They also report estimates of the proportion of radioactive carbon available for such studies.

Maximum Before 1963
The ratio of carbon-14 (radioactive carbon) to carbon-12 in the atmosphere over the Northern Hemisphere will reach a maximum before 1963 at from 1.3 to 1.4 times the pre-bomb level, the scientists report.

By 1980, the ratio for the atmosphere will have dropped halfway back to the pre-bomb level.

Early in the next century, the proportion of radioactive carbon in the atmosphere will be affected more by man's burning of coal and oil than it is by the setting off of nuclear bombs. This is due to the fact that such combustion releases into the atmosphere carbon dioxide that is free from radioactive carbon.

Can Be Used as Tracer
Bomb-produced radioactive carbon can be used as a tracer in investigations in the fields of soil science, biochemistry, limnology, and oceanography, the scientists suggested.

Radiocarbon measurements in simultaneously collected tree-leaf and atmospheric carbon dioxide samples, for example, show that the concentrations are often the same but that situations arise where tree leaves give a lower value. A possible explanation for this lack of agreement is that the leaves receive part of their carbon dioxide through the roots of the tree.

Bomb-produced radiocarbon also has effects on radiocarbon dating. Although archaeologists have long been complaining that the bomb-produced radiocarbon has been interfering with their dating tests, the bomb-produced radiocarbon can also have its advantages, the scientists indicated.

Due to "continuous spiking" of the atmosphere with bomb-produced radiocarbon, changes in the radiocarbon concentration throughout the carbon cycle are now occurring much faster than changes due solely to radioactive decay. Consequently, processes carried out in from one year to 100 years are now measurable or will be in a few years.

SHINE 'EM UP

Memphis, Tenn.—UPI—"Mama," asked 3-year-old Mary Louise Coletta, "why are you polishing brother?" Mrs. John A. Coletta was applying skin lotion on Mary Louise's baby brother.

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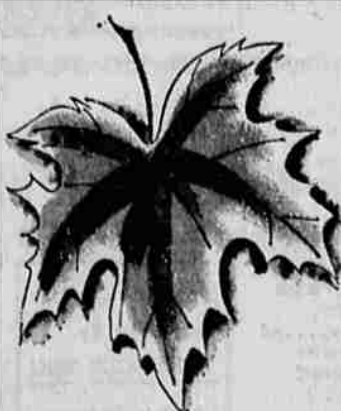
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