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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY COMBAT DEVELOPMENTS COMMAND
Liaison Detachment, HQ USARV
APO San Francisco 96375

CDCCS-LV

19 September 1967

SUBJECT: Trip Report - 1st Air Cavalry Division, 11-14 Sep 67.

TO: Director of Doctrine, USACDC, ATTN: LTC Herrington, LTC Frandsen, LTC Riggsby, Fort Belvoir, Virginia 22060
Director of Materiel, USACDC, ATTN: LTC Johnson, MAJ Stynes, Fort Belvoir, Virginia 22060
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1. During period 11-14 September, ^{A VISIT WAS MADE TO} the undersigned visited the 1st Air Cavalry Division. The primary purpose of the trip was to obtain views of user personnel concerning standardization of some 126 non-standard items. Results of this survey will be reported by separate correspondence. Other subjects discussed were the use of the LAW, employment of machine guns in offense, load of the infantryman, employment of M79 CS rounds, employment of aerial artillery, desired modification to the M48A3 tank, and other chemical weapons.

2. The principal persons with whom these subjects were discussed were:

LTC Wm Louiselle
LTC Jack Dashielle
LTC Bradford
CPT Kotch
AJ Olson
-1LT McWherter
SFC Trout
2LT Jones

Div G-3
Recent CO, 2d Bn, 8th Cav
Div Chemical Officer
Recent CO, Co A, 2d Bn, 16th Inf, 1st Inf Div
S-3, 1st Brigade, 1st Cav Div
XO, Co A, 1st Bn, 69th Armor, attached to 1st Cav Div
Plt Ldr, Co C, 1st Bn, 5th Cav
2d Plt Ldr, Co A, 1st Bn, 69th Armor

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3. Observations. (Sub-paragraphs a, b, c, and e are in response to questions from General Ewell.)

a. LAW/90mm Recoilless Rifle

LTC Dashielle reported his companies normally carried 6 LAW while on search and destroy operations. More were airlifted to the companies if required. He stated the 90mm recoilless rifle was preferred over the LAW for bunker destruction and defense of night positions because of its range and the beehive round. All persons questioned stated the LAW was easily damaged from carrying through the jungle and had to be fired after 2 or 3 days in order to get a replacement. All persons also stated the LAW was not reliable in wet weather because the electrical contacts shorted out. LTC Dashielle apparently felt his greatest success in destroying enemy occupied bunkers was when he had a platoon of tanks attached. The tanks used 90mm, tracks, and hand grenades to destroy the complexes with very small loss to friendly infantry. Captain Kotch explained that his company never carried the LAW during 4 months he was in command because they never had appropriate targets. 90mm recoilless were brought forward in night kits by helicopter. These were preferred over the LAW because of their range and beehive round. The 16th Infantry found many unoccupied bunkers which they destroyed with demolitions. Major Olson reported the 90mm beehive round to be very effective in clearing foliage and underbrush. He had the same comments on the LAW as previously recorded.

b. M60 Machine Gun

All companies take the M60 on search and destroy and other offensive type operations. In all cases it was reported the machine guns are attached to rifle squads. SFC Trout reported that because of reduced strength he usually had only two reinforced rifle squads in his platoon. When questioned about the need for this automatic firepower in view of the automatic capability of the M16, most persons replied that the heavier penetrating power of the M60 was needed and that M16's were usually fired semi-automatic to conserve ammunition and avoid stoppages. The 2d Bn, 16th Inf SOP states that joint men may fire automatic and all others must fire semi-automatic. The M60's are employed in an overwatching role when the squad or platoon crosses a clearing or enters a village. It is employed at other times as an assault rifle using marching fire.

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c. Infantryman's Load

When a battalion is on a search and destroy mission, the companies normally operate from a battalion operating base in the 1st Infantry or a fire base in the 1st Cavalry. Company operations are normally of one or two days duration before returning to a base. Therefore the individual soldier carries mainly ammunition and water in addition to the clothing he wears, his weapon and load bearing equipment. Each soldier in 2d Bn, 16th Inf, carries two smoke grenades, 2-3 canteens of water, 2 fragmentation grenades and one meal of C ration. Riflemen carry 300 rounds of 7.62mm (17 magazines). One thousand rounds of M60 ammunition are carried for each gun; this is distributed 1 box per man. M79 gunners carry 30-50 rounds of 40mm. The RTO carries his radio plus 10-12 smoke grenades and no spare battery.

Loads in 1st Bn, 5th Cav are similar. Each soldier carries from 2-5 canteens depending on his individual needs. The platoon leader stated he carried two, one for himself, one for whoever might need it. Perhaps the platoon leader doesn't do as much physical work as the riflemen and machine gunners. Each man carries two fragmentation and one or more smoke grenades and a pair of dry socks. Riflemen with the M16 carry 300 rounds. Those who prefer the M14 carry 200 rounds. Machine gun ammunition is the same as stated above. Two machetes are carried in each squad.

d. M79 CS Ammunition

This ammunition is well liked and the division wants more. Personnel state it can be placed in the entrance to a bunker from 200 meters thus obviating the requirement for the infantryman to crawl to throwing range. Although it does not drive the NVA out of a bunker, it makes them too sick to fight. The NVA is now issuing a cheap gas mask. These come apart at the seams from the heat; however, it is expected they will correct this deficiency shortly.

e. Employment of Aerial Artillery

According to the Division G-3, Aerial Rocket Artillery (ARA) in the 1st Air Cavalry Division is habitually used to support maneuver elements when outside the range of conventional artillery. If the maneuver element is to remain in the new area overnight, a 105mm howitzer battery will be airlifted to provide fire support.

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The battery can normally march order for such a move in 30 minutes and can be ready to fire 20 minutes after landing. When a move is planned ahead of time, and targets and firing data have been selected and computed in advance, following the artillery raid technique; the battery can lift off according to schedule and be firing 4-8 minutes after touchdown. Other divisions will be questioned on this same subject.

f. Modification of M48A3 Tanks

The proposal, received from the Armor Agency, to modify M48A3 tanks by removing the rangefinder substituting grenade launchers was considered by personnel of Co A, 1st Bn, 69th Armor. They will continue to give this suggestion their consideration, but at present consider it not warranted. Although the range finder is not normally used in close combat, it is employed during H and I fires. It is felt that removal of the rangefinder would degrade the tank. Extra space for carrying ammunition is not required and there was no need for employment of smoke grenades. When smoke is needed, WP is very satisfactory.

The tanks normally operate without a gunner, all firing being done by the tank commander. Command tanks are an exception to this. On command tanks, a gunner is used.

It was suggested that an improvement could be made by mounting a second coax machine gun to fire through the opening intended for the telescope. The telescope is not used. It was also felt the M19 cupola with M85 machine gun should replace the M1 cupola and M2 machine gun. Persons interviewed were not convinced that the spacer ring of vision blocks would warrant the effort to install them, but would be willing to try a few.

g. Chemical Weapons

The Division has employed herbicide agent Blue in hand carried aerosol cans to kill rice seed beds. This is done in areas which have been previously cleared for crop destruction such as the An Lao valley where all friendly civilians have been evacuated and crops harvested or destroyed.

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Two M132 flame throwers with one service unit have recently been loaned to the 1st Air Cav from the 25th Div. Although there has not been an occasion in the past two weeks to employ these weapons, it is expected they will be very effective against bunkers and may have better mobility during the oncoming monsoon season than the tanks.



GEORGE F. HOGE
LTC, GS (Armor)
Senior Liaison Officer

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