

DISPOSAL OF VIET CONG RICE SUPPLIES

1. During the past 10 months, this unit has on a number of occasions found VC jungle rice caches and has been faced with a disposal problem. To date it is considered that a satisfactory solution to the disposal has not been found. The aim of this paper is to detail the problems encountered and to suggest a more efficient method.

2. The systems followed in the past have generally taken the following forms:-

a. Casual or Small Caches. These consist of small quantities of bulk or bagged rice in VC jungle camps. In the past it has been customary to pour the rice into wells if they exist and if the rice is bagged and therefore easily moved, or by spreading on the ground before burning the camp.

b. Large Caches. These consist of well dispersed bulk grain or bagged rice caches distributed over a restricted jungle area. They are usually sited off bullock tracks and are frequently heavily booby trapped. The booby traps may be either inside the bags so that they explode when the bag is lifted or moved or around the outside of the cache. It has been customary in the past to extract and backload as much of this rice as possible and to disperse the remainder by explosive charges, by the use of air strikes, by dumping in rivers or by impregnating with dieselene.

3. The major problems associated with these methods of disposal are:-

a. Disposal by burning. Rice is a non combustible material and only the layer directly exposed to the flame is scorched, burned or ruined. That rice which is under this top layer is unharmed and may be collected and used without ill effect. From a tactical security aspect the use of fire alerts the enemy to our proximity and exposes the patrol etc to retaliatory action.

b. Use of Air. Air power can be used in two ways:-

(i) By bombing the caches with non detonated napalm with the object of impregnating the rice with the fuel mixture.

(ii) By bombing with HE and napalm in an attempt to burn or disperse the rice.

Due to the inherent inaccuracies of aircr ft (eg a 25 metre error makes the strike ineffective) despite clear markings of the target area with smoke or marker balloons, air can not be considered a reliable and effective agent unless 500 to 1000lb bombs are used in large numbers.

c. Extraction by Road. This system poses a large tactical problem. The road as well as the cache must be secured. Vehicles must be moved into the cache area and casualties to men and equipment can be expected from booby traps in the cache and from ambush along the exit route. Because extraction is a large project, sufficient men to handle the rice and secure the route are usually not available and the extraction is therefore extended over two or more days. Each day which passes increases the tactical problem by giving the VC time to concentrate against an attractive bait.

3. d. Extraction direct by Air. This system also poses a large tactical problem. An LZ must be cut, which can take in thick jungle up to 3 days for an LZ suitable for one HUIID Helicopter. During this time the VC can delay activities by ambush and booby trapping; sniping at helicopters or major assault. The ground force needed for this task then becomes considerable ie one to two Rifle Coys. After the LZ has been cut helicopters may not be available (eg "Silver City") which negates the effort in LZ preparation. Vehicles (eg Mules) must be lifted into the area if the caches are dispersed from the LZ. Generally this becomes a major unit operation.
- e. Impregnation with Diesolene. The ratio of diesolene to rice is 4 gals to 1 bag of rice. Lesser quantities of fuel produce only partial denial. As caches are frequently between 200 to 400 bags, this system is therefore impracticable.
- f. Use of Explosives. This is by far the most effective means found so far however large quantities of explosives are required eg complete dispersal of one 400 bag cache with the use of 200lbs of explosive. Small quantities of explosives have been used on similar caches and results have proved that rice recovery by the VC is subsequently possible. The limitations of this system are:-
- (i) Explosives and Engineers must be delivered to the patrol.
 - (ii) The explosions in the area can reveal the presence of friendly forces.
- g. Dumping in Water. This is a suitable system providing the rice is removed from the bags first.
4. Rice can rarely be "destroyed" but there are several means of disposing of it. Of the major systems outlined above, the most economical is the use of ground explosives and it is also the most efficient.
5. Whilst it is appreciated that the cost of air extraction is still less than the value of the rice, any means of extraction is usually uneconomical in terms of men and equipment which could otherwise be engaged in active and aggressive anti VC activities.
6. It is therefore strongly recommended that investigations be made into the production of a lightweight rice "spoiling" compound, spray etc which could be carried by patrols and used on small isolated caches or which could be used on a larger scale should it be decided that extraction is not practicable. The compound should not be designed to poison the rice but should give it an unacceptable taste and should not be removable by washing or cooking. To avoid political repercussions the taste should resemble some substance in common use.


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