



6 June 1966

Dear Hal,

I can't tell you how much I appreciate your taking the time and trouble to write and send along your first-rate paper with which, incidentally, I am in complete agreement.

Increasingly, we are working toward the techniques you describe. We find ourselves dependent upon a helicopter allocation system which is an on-again -- off-again thing. Our one air cav troop to which I have permanently attached our long range patrols is coming along very nicely, and on a smaller scale, is able to perform a similar mission to the 9th Cav. When helicopters are available, we are using squad and platoon combat reconnaissance elements. Frankly, one of my concerns has been the difficulty of supporting some of these small units and we are trying to lay hands on some aerial rocket artillery, but I believe that is in the far distant future.

We are conducting a large number of operations now in populated areas, controlled entirely by the VC. A technique which shows great promises is to load up about 8 helicopters and land on one side of a small hamlet, discharging only two of the ships and going airborne with the remaining 6 as an orbiting reserve. The first landing tends to flush the VC and then the force can be committed only in the productive areas. Our first couple of attempts have been successful.

Possibly the most frustrating aspect of our operations is making light contact with the long range patrol or aerial rifle platoon and then not being in a position to exploit. This happens too frequently. Part of it stems from our own lack of speed and aggressiveness, although these are being overcome very rapidly; and, part of it owing to the laborious channels through which we must get helicopters. Even this last should improve as the system is exercised and hopefully will improve also. Our soldiers are still working very hard to find VC on the ground and in this area which has been well organized by the VC for about 10 years, most of our actions are platoon actions against small VC positions, consisting of one or two bunkers, usually a trench line and maybe a tunnel. Unhappily, we are doing no better in these small unit actions than a 2 to 1 kill ratio, and sometimes not that well. The courage and aggressiveness of our soldiers frequently exceeds their tactical skill in certain respects.

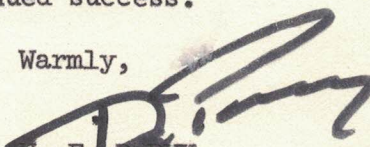
I would say that the principal problem at platoon and company level is to prevent them from piling into the point of contact rather than maneuver; but we are working hard on this one and making some progress.

Lastly, I would like to say that your brigade clearly is recognized by everyone in Vietnam as the most successful - the most professionally competent and aggressive. Results you have achieved speak for themselves. All of us in the 1st Division are impressed and wish you the best of luck in the future, which as far as you are personally concerned, will take care of itself.

When the time comes for you to leave the 1st Cav and on your way home, I would be grateful if you could drop by my Headquarters and discuss some of these matters informally and in some greater depth.

Best wishes for continued success.

Warmly,



W. E. DeFUY  
Maj Gen, USA