



ROK OPERATIONS IN CENTRAL VIETNAM

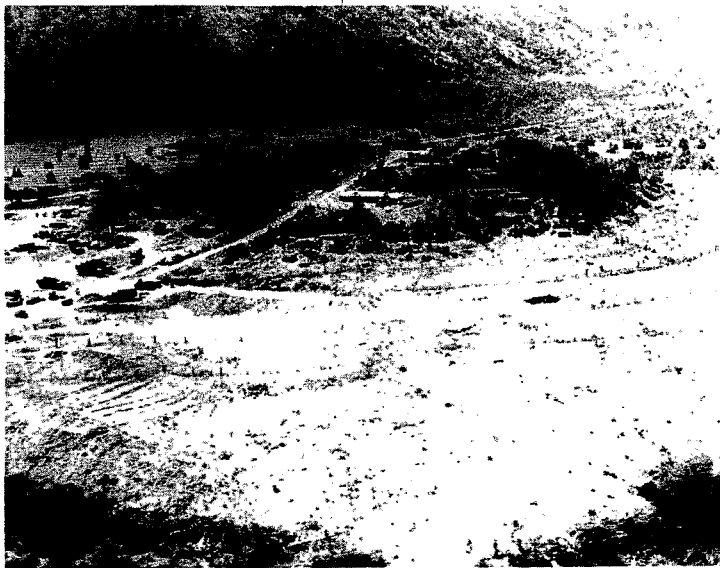
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TWO divisions from the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army are currently deployed along a 280-mile front in the 2d Corps area in South Vietnam. These forces are engaged in bringing some one million Vietnamese

people under positive control of the government of South Vietnam. The success ROK forces have enjoyed in Vietnam has been remarkable, but not well publicized nor understood.

Operation Oh Jak Kyo I (meeting of the

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Base camp of a Republic of Korea Army unit

two suns) was recently completed in agriculturally rich and heavily populated Phu Yen Province. The final figures for this operation were 831 enemy killed, 234 defectors received, and 659 weapons cap-

tured. Korean losses were 23 killed and 115 wounded. Since the tactics and techniques employed by the Koreans during combat operations have proved effective, they merit close examination.

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Most of the ROK operations have been conducted against local and main force units and guerrillas along a comparatively narrow strip of the coastal plain. ROK forces have consistently been afforded a degree of protection by mobile US elements operating against enemy concentrations on their western flank. This has enabled the Koreans to concentrate most of their efforts in fairly restricted areas. This concept of employing highly mobile US forces against enemy concentrations throughout the corps zone, while ROK forces ferret out local and



US Army

The individual soldier is the key to the Koreans' success



Courtesy of author

Search and destroy operation



Courtesy of author

Final assault

main force Viet Cong units and guerrillas in selected areas, has proved highly successful.

The key to the Koreans' success is the individual ROK soldier. He is undoubtedly one of the best soldiers in the Free World. Tough, aggressive, well disciplined, patient, persistent, and thorough, he keeps his equipment in top condition and responds almost instinctively to orders and instructions. One veteran US officer, who has served with US infantry units in three conflicts, called him "the epitome of a soldier, almost faultless."

When the Koreans enter an area where they intend to stay for some time, they immediately construct elaborate company bases. The bases are well prepared on defensible terrain, completely tied in by fires, and encircled by up to five layers of wire.

From these strongpoints, extensive patrols and ambushes are conducted day and night. ROK forces literally cover every square foot of ground, and virtually nothing escapes them. The search is repeated again and again until they are satisfied that the area has been cleared. Regional and Popular Forces are encouraged to assume responsibility for the cleared areas so that ROK forces can be committed in another area.

During search and clear operations, close liaison is maintained between ROK company elements and the local population. At least one member of each company speaks Vietnamese, giving the force an on-the-spot communication capability when combing an area.

Soon after arrival in a new area, ROK companies initiate what is called the "sister program." Under this program, a com-

pany assumes responsibility for the security of hamlets in a specific area and provides limited assistance to the people to improve conditions. This helps to establish rapport with the people, resulting in a steady flow of intelligence on the Viet Cong and their sympathizers.

A technique frequently employed to ferret out the guerrilla from the local population is to broadcast in advance the fact that ROK forces intend to operate in a certain area. The villagers are told to gather at preselected points where they are carefully screened. The Viet Cong also are told to lay down their arms. The point is emphasized that the Koreans come in peace and that the responsibility for any bloodshed must be borne by the Viet Cong and their sympathizers. This thorough screening has paid dividends.

In addition, wives and families of missing males of military age are issued safe-conduct passes and are encouraged to bring their men back to government control. ROK forces make it clear to the Viet Cong that, if they continue resistance, they must be prepared to face the consequences.

The Koreans also emphasize civil affairs activities. The theme of their program is a sincere, genuine concern for the welfare of their fellow Asians. Extensive, high-cost programs are avoided. Activities such as feasts for village elders are often held in

an effort to win their support. The Koreans, like the Vietnamese, have great respect for the elders of the villages and hamlets. Therefore, such endeavors are accepted as a natural part of everyday life.

Combined sports events are often held where ROK forces organize teams and pit their skills against Vietnamese units. Korean karate teams frequently put on demonstrations.

Of particular interest is the Korean philosophy concerning the conduct of the overall conflict. The killing of the Viet Cong, or "body count," is played down. What is emphasized is the number of weapons captured. A careful study of Korean battle statistics reveals a kill-to-weapons-captured ratio of one to 2.1. Many Korean commanders say that this is the true indication of success in a struggle with guerrillas. The Koreans reason that, when you take weapons, you deny the guerrilla his means to wield power over the people; therefore, he is ineffective.

When the enemy occasionally elects to mass or strike a friendly force, ROK forces react with up to regimental-size forces supported by tactical air, helicopters, and artillery.

Be it in an open-pitched conventional battle, patiently and painstakingly rooting out the infrastructure, or conducting civic action, the ROK soldier today has proved his mettle.