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1992
Excerpts from official Vietnamese "Sapper Handbook"

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Summary:

Translated excerpts from an official People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN) handbook for the elite "Sapper" forces, Vietnamese army’s commando/special forces troops. These excerpts discuss the Sapper's training of foreign commando forces from countries such as Laos, Cambodia, Cuba, and the Soviet Union.

Credits:

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Original Language:

Vietnamese

Contents:

Translation - English

SAPPER HANDBOOK [So tay tu lieu dac cong]

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Writing and Document Research: Majors Nguyen Xuan Nghi and Tran Ngoc Tan;

Published by Sapper Command, Hanoi, 1992

[...]

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SECTION SEVEN
SAPPERS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

A. Carrying Out International Responsibilities

In additional to successfully participating in combat operations on the battlefields of friendly nations, the Sapper Branch also received foreign friends who came to visit, study, and exchange experiences in training and combat operations. The branch also directly trained many sapper cadre and enlisted personnel for allied nations.

I. Training for Allies at Branch Facilities (Period from 19 March 1967 until 1990)

Armed Forces from the Following Countries:

1. Laos: 11 classes, 352 students. Class 1 (6 Jan 1969 to 11 Nov 1969).

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2. Cambodia: 3 classes, 97 students. Class 1 (March 1982 to March 1983).
3. Cuba: 6 classes, 152 students. Class 1, five students (May-September 1974).
4. Soviet Union: 3 classes, 24 students. Class 1, five students (May-November 1988)
5. Chile: One class.
6. Colombia: One class, 9 students. Class 1 (August 1990-January 1991)
7. [El] Salvador: One class, 16 students.

II. Sapper Advisors Sent to Foreign Countries (1979-1991):

1. Republic of Cuba: Eight groups, a total of 112 personnel. The initial sapper advisory group consisted of 17 men under the command of Nguyen Van Bao, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Sapper Branch. This group worked in Cuba from January through August 1979.
2. Nicaragua: Three groups, a total of 26 personnel.
3. People's Democratic Republic of Laos: Four groups, a total of 29 personnel.
4. Cambodia: Three groups, a total of 33 personnel.

III. Friendly Nations Visiting, Studying, and Holding Discussions (19 March 1967 until 1990)

Total number of nations that visited us: 26 countries

Total number of delegations: 87

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Asia: 10 nations, 23 delegations
Europe: 4 nations, 22 delegations
Africa: 2 nations, 2 delegations
Latin America: 10 nations, 40 delegations

-Length of visits and study: longest 10 days, shortest one day.

-Composition of Delegations: primarily senior military and security personnel. The highest ranking visitors were four-star generals [Dai Tuong] from the Soviet Union, India, and Indonesia. The highest-ranking members of civilian organizations were the General Secretaries of foreign Communist Parties.

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REACTIONS AFTER VIEWING SAPPER DEMONSTRATIONS

"…Sapper troops symbolize the thoughts of Chairman Ho Chi Minh. Those thoughts are concretely portrayed and illuminate his principles: using small numbers to fight large numbers, using quality to defeat quantity. They have contributed to the glorious history of the Vietnamese people and have been inscribed in the history of support to the international revolution.

"…Our delegation has deeply absorbed these valuable lessons. We consider this our duty, our historic responsibility to the fraternal people of Vietnam as well as to the people of Salvador …"

Excerpts from the speech given by the delegation of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), from Salvador.

"On behalf of the Farabundo Marti People's Liberation Forces of Salvador, Central American, I send our most profound affection to the comrades of the elite special forces of the Vietnamese armed forces. I want to sincerely thank you for providing us with the priceless experiences of the heroic Vietnamese people. This is a great contribution that will enrich the storehouse of experience of the international proletarian class during the fight against our common enemy …"

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"As for the comrades of the special elite forces, we will hold your image in a special place in our thoughts, in our feelings, and in our hearts …"

Delegation of the Central Command of the Salvador National Liberation Armed Forces (Vladi Mieroscan), March 1980 …

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IV.-International Meetings and Exchanges:

In January 1979 Colonel Nguyen Cu (alias Tu Cuong), Deputy Sapper Branch Commander and Chief of Staff, traveled to Cuba and held working discussions on with the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Cuba on sapper/military cooperation between the two countries. …

In November 1988, at the invitation of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of

Cuba, a delegation of representatives of the Sapper Branch led by Major General Tu Cuong, the Sapper Branch Commander, and Senior Colonel Mai Nang, the Deputy Branch Commander, visited Cuba for working discussions with the Cubans. During the visit a document on sapper cooperation between the two countries was signed covering the period 1989-1991, and the visiting sapper delegation inspected the Vietnamese sapper military specialist [advisory] team that was working in Cuba.

In December 1988, at the invitation of the Soviet Ministry of Interior, Major General Tu Cuong, the Sapper Branch Commander, and Senior Colonel Mai Nang, the Deputy Sapper Branch Commander, visited the Soviet Union for working discussions with the Soviets. The two sides signed a number of cooperation agreements regarding subjects involving sappers.

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