

SMALL-UNIT

By Lt. Col. R. A. Mendoza



OUR Armed Forces has countered the Huks by fighting them in a manner befitting the times.

At the height of the Huk power, we resorted to the employment of large groups to attack and destroy equally large enemy targets. The Huks then were usually prone on large concentrations.

After a few years, the Huks, much decimated, decided to disperse into small groups made up of from five to twelve men under a sub-commander. Their idea has been to render themselves more mobile and easy to conceal from the AFP troopers. With this idea followed, they are able to move about the country with facility, elude our troops and thus survive.

From 1952 to the present the Huks not only have followed but also have perfected the dispersal method of moving around and operating in the field. Except during their high-level conferences, the Huks avoid concentrating themselves in large numbers. Today even the top Huks have to content themselves with a few picked men to provide them security.

The shift in Huk tactics called for rapid and determined adjustment on the part of the AFP.



LEADERSHIP

& Lt. Col. L. I. Gunabe

Not to be outdone, and to meet realistically the demands of the new situation, we reassessed our fight against the Huks and came up with some tricks of our own.

One adjustment of the AFP is the placing of more and more reliance on the employment of small hard-hitting units on a grand scale. These units are usually self-sustaining. They are self-sufficient. They can operate by themselves under any condition of terrain and weather. Mobile, slick and penetrating, each of such units as a tactical group could easily be controlled and handled.

However, its ultimate usefulness and success in operation is dependent upon the type of leadership it is provided with.

Normally, an NCO is detailed to lead a small unit, except in the execution of highly sensitive pressing missions, such as raids, probing tasks, liquidation missions, or capture of live enemy. During such delicate missions, a commissioned officer is assigned to lead.

Under this type of troop employment there arises an imperative need for a high quality of small-unit leadership. The more dispersed the men are in the type of operation adopted,





the greater is the demand for small unit leaders who can act on their own initiative and can be relied upon to accomplish their missions and at the same time control and safeguard the men placed under their direct charge.

For any combat unit to succeed, it is not enough that they be headed by non-commissioned officers or ranking privates. Such non-coms and ranking privates must be of the type that fulfills the requirements of a good combat leader.

It is true we have had small-unit leaders who have proven their worth in the anti-dissident campaign. The exploits of Staff Sergeant Pastolero in the Panay Island could rightly justify our genuine pride in Filipino soldiery. The same could be said in the case of Master Sergeant Adlawan who led the team that put an end to the life and gory adventures of Capadocia in the craggy, treacherous highlands of San Remigio, Panay Island.

In many Battalion Combat Teams and Philippine Constabulary Commands as well as in Air and Navy task forces we find quite many NCOs and ranking Pvts who have demonstrated abundantly the ability to lead.

Master Sergeant Del Moro of the 26th BCT has many times successfully led small units against roving bands of the Lapu-Lapu Unit, RECO 4 in Bondoc Peninsula.

Master Sergeant Francisco Raquel of GHQ, AFP, when he was with the 16th BCT, accounted for numerous dead, captured and surrendered Huks in a display of a fine degree of leadership in small-unit operations in Longos and the surrounding Bay towns of Laguna province.

The coolness, steadfastness, courage and determination with which Staff Sergeant Francisco Ladrera of the 2nd BCT led his unit in the celebrated raid on OB 4 at Pacabit, Catanauan, Quezon, on 26 August 1955, never fails to evoke the ad-

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Sergeant Galimba of the same BCT twice led a team of five men and each time polished off the target indicated. First at Villa Perez, Gumaca on 7 February 1955, he was responsible for the capture of Comdr Washington and the killing of a minor Huk. Then at Burgos Ilaya Pitogo, midnight 2 May 1955, he effected the killing of Comdr Wilmer and wounding of Comdr Emmy of OB 1.

The late M/Sgt Camacho of the Rangers highly deserved all the honors posthumously bestowed upon him by the President and the Chief of Staff for splendid leadership shown in a difficult and dangerous mission. To do away with Comdr Eddie Villapando, terror of the Batangas-Cavite area, and his fanatical aides was a challenge that called for a high level of leadership.

These and a hundred other isolated cases in the past reveal that

the Filipino soldier is not lacking in the basic ingredients for effective combat leadership. Yet the need for more and better small-unit leaders in the Armed Forces continues to mount in intensity. The enemy is mobile, wily, deceptive, resourceful and determined. To get him is our mission. We have to overcome him. We can overcome him by being more mobile, more wily, more deceptive, more resourceful, more determined than he is. We possess the resources and the means to do it. Only we must do it correctly and in the right measure.

We have to employ small units to locate the enemy. We have to employ small units to destroy him. But such small units must be provided effective leadership. That leadership must come from the NCOs and ranking Pvts in all our military organizations. These NCOs and ranking Pvts must be those who can appreciate the exacting demands and re-

quirements of the type of operations we are now pursuing.

For these NCOs and ranking Pvts to be entrusted with the command of small units in the operations against the Huks, they must be fully qualified to lead.

To qualify them devolves upon their officers. Leadership courses must be prescribed and taught all NCOs and ranking Pvts. It will be noted in this regard that other armies of the world exert as much effort in running Non-Commissioned Officers Schools and combat leaders schools as they extend in conducting higher level types of military training. Non-commissioned officers and outstanding privates must have been screened for leadership ability before they are given any command of small units. The recognition of this felt need and the dependence on small unit leaders for the ultimate success of the anti-dissident campaign should spur us to device means by which this need can be supplied.

It is not difficult to discover men possessed of the ability to lead. Experience has shown that those enlisted men who are observed to be demonstrating leadership in the classrooms, in the offices, in exercises, in routine details and in train-

ing usually come out providing similar leadership to small units in combat operations.

Once we observed in the 2nd BCT a staff sergeant who was reliable in his performance of military duties. He was demonstrating traits of leadership. We marked him as a potential. When the day came for designating a good NCO to lead a composite team to strike at Comdr. Balmori's group at Tagbacan Ilaya, Catanauan, Quezon, on 9 January 1956, we readily picked on him. He executed his mission magnificently. His name is Staff Sergeant Artemio Las Marias. He is now Acting First Sergeant, Hq. & Hq. Sv. Co., 2nd BCT.

There are many channels that could be exploited as reliable gauges of leadership ability among NCOs and ranking Pvts. Officers could watch the enlisted personnel while they are on-the-job training, at rehearsals, in field work and in actual combat. Those with the ability to lead will inevitably emerge above their fellows.

Other expedients or measures may be resorted to. But one thing stands paramount: officers must see to it that small units employed in the operations against the Huks and the outlaws are provided the proper leadership.

Appendix II of "Leadership for Filipinos"
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For most men, the matter of learning is one of personal preference, but to army officers the obligation to learn, to grow in their profession is clearly a public duty.

—Gen. Omar Bradley