

CHAPTER 10

Tactical Employment of Herbicides

Upon proper approval authority, possible herbicide employment techniques may accomplish the following:

- Kill the vegetation bordering roads, paths, trails, railroads and waterways, thereby reducing possible sites from which friendly forces may be ambushed.
- Kill the vegetation surrounding vulnerable base camps, communications complexes, pipelines, supply points, assault strips, landing zones, and air defense sites. Use of herbicides would enhance security of these sites.
- Control vegetation in fields of fire and avenues of approach to create kill lanes which channelize enemy approaches and withdrawals. Properly integrated with terrain, obstacles, and fire support barrier plans, herbicides can enhance the lethality of direct and indirect fire weapons.
- Destroy large areas of dense vegetation for major construction projects or for health and sanitation programs. Herbicides may be used to mark areas through which roads are to be built. Herbicides may be used on enemy held terrain to support retaliatory operations by defoliating large area targets to improve intelligence gathering. Increased visibility, vertical and horizontal, in densely vegetated areas should make observation of enemy movements easier. Herbicide operation could also potentially restrict enemy use of ambush sites and infiltration routes.

Defoliation operations also support killing vegetation on friendly objectives and suspected enemy positions. Restricting the concealment opportunities often increased the chances of locating targets. Exposure of enemy supply depots, base camps, and other operations will make him more vulnerable to air attack.

Destroying enemy food supplies and cash crops when such objectives constitute proper military objectives is another option for use of herbicides. Herbicides reduce the enemy's ability to maintain an army in the field when food crops fail to mature and cash crops, such as drugs, cannot be sold to purchase arms and munitions.

Presidential approval is always required to employ herbicides in war, but host nation agreements may also require allied approval. Local civilian officials should be kept abreast of the effects of herbicide operations. Civil affairs provisions are made to provide food or money to families whose crops are accidentally damaged by herbicides operations.

Defoliation of heavily vegetated areas by use of herbicides is the primary means of obtaining visual observation of enemy forces, facilities, roads, ambush sites, infiltration routes, and other enemy locations from the air, ground, or water. The use of herbicides for defoliation—

- Enhances security. Defoliation of vegetation bordering and overhanging roads, path, trails, waterways, and railroads enhances security around friendly base camps, airfields, ammunition dumps, ports, along railroads, waterways and other locations by providing defense fields of fire and reducing possible ambush sites.
- Improve military intelligence. Defoliation of large-area targets improves military intelligence for plan and operations by increasing vertical and horizontal visibility in heavily forested or dense jungle areas. Defoliation also provides data for correcting existing maps for preparing new ones.
- Reduces enemy resistance. In defoliated areas,

soldiers will meet less enemy resistance than in areas that have not been defoliated, and fewer soldiers will be required for operations. Exposure of the enemy's supply depots, base camps, and other locations will make him more vulnerable to air strikes and resultant damage, harassment, and threat of attack may cause him to move out of an area.

- Facilitates movement of military supplies.

Defoliation along highways, railroads, and main shipping channels will facilitate movement of supplies and decrease the number of convoy guards required. Herbicides can also be used to reduce the enemy's food and industrial crops. This could cause him to divert combat manpower to production of food, depend on local food resources, become more stationary because of the necessity to cultivate hidden crops, and reduce production of war munitions.