

BREAK THE WILL OF THE ENEMY BY DENYING THEM VICTORY . . .

THROUGH ATTRITION STRATEGY

Problems with an attrition strategy:

1. Enemy kept tactical initiative.
2. Viet Cong exploited restrictions on U.S. (including weather)
3. Open-ended – so could require more troops (that were politically expensive)
4. Casualties hurt war's popularity at home
5. Couldn't spare troops for security/occupation; couldn't fight main forces and secure rural areas
6. Left NLF to "swim" in the people
7. Alienated/hurt the civilian population; refugees
8. Reflected lack of confidence in ARVN; hurt morale

Attrition did not reduce American casualties OR wear out the enemy

It was meant to be a LOW-RISK strategy (send a bullet not a man; quantity shall overcome) but it wound up having HIGH risks:

1) Could get out faster if made more progress – but more progress (using technology, etc.) meant . . .

more casualties and thus . . .

loss of public support which meant . . .

end to war

2) Left S.V. forces to handle “the other war” (insurgency/village security)