



Quadrillage Pacification in a Counter Guerilla Situation

Quadrillage is a method of deploying troops on a grid-like pattern throughout a populated area for pacification. Late in 1957, General Raoul Salan, commanding the French army in Algeria, instituted a system of quadrillage, dividing the country into sectors, each permanently garrisoned by troops responsible for suppressing terrorist operations in their assigned territory. Salan's methods sharply reduced the instances of FLN terrorism but tied down a large number of troops in static defense. Salan also constructed a heavily patrolled system of barriers to limit infiltration from Tunisia and Morocco. The best known of these was the Morice Line (named for the French defense minister, André Morice), which consisted of an electrified fence, barbed wire, and mines over a 320-kilometer stretch of the Tunisian border.

The French military command ruthlessly applied the principle of collective responsibility to villages suspected of sheltering, supplying, or in any way cooperating with the bandits. Villages that could not be reached by mobile units were subject to aerial bombardment. The French also initiated a program of concentrating large segments of the rural population, including whole villages, in camps under military supervision to prevent them from aiding the bandits--or, according to the official explanation, to protect them from FLN extortion. In the three years (1957-60) during which the regroupment program was followed, more than 2 million Algerians were removed from their villages, mostly in the mountainous areas, and resettled in the plains, where many found it impossible to reestablish their accustomed economic or social situations. Living conditions in the camps were poor.

Hundreds of empty villages were devastated, and in hundreds of others orchards and croplands were destroyed. These population transfers apparently had little strategic effect on the outcome of the war, but the disruptive social and economic effects of this massive program continued to be felt a generation later.

The French army shifted its tactics at the end of 1958 from dependence on quadrillage to the use of mobile forces deployed on massive search-and-destroy missions against ALN strongholds. Within the next year, Salan's successor, General Maurice Challe, appeared to have suppressed major terrorist resistance.

One of the results of French pacification quadrillage was to remedy the structural defect of the orthodox intelligence services. By infiltrating the population and winning their confidence, the armed forces secured information on terrorist organizations. However French quadrillage troops encountered certain difficulties.

In the area of underground activity, the advantage was on the side of the terror networks, whose movements could be entirely covert, while the armed forces' actions were more or less overt. The pacification potential of quadrillage forces was limited in regard to Muslim political organizations. The inappropriate French respect for legality frequently ended in rendering ineffectual any sanctions against terrorist organizations, since a crime was not only difficult to prove, but even more difficult to condemn by means of conventional tribunals. On the other hand, recourse to violence and illegality, if it took place openly, would be likely to arouse antagonistic feelings among the civilian population and might tend to drive them into the arms of the terrorists. Only the ruthless and strong can effectively carry out anti-terror campaigns.

Not many generals can carry out quadrillage operations, because they forget that they must simultaneously deploy constant offensive operations by pursuit commandos.

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