



<< Bait >>
A Viet Cong decoy lures American infantry into a trap.

<< VIETNAM WAR DOGS >>
Americans tried to use service dogs to search for tunnel entrances. Viet Cong then began to place stolen American uniform at entrances, confusing the dogs. If the service dogs nevertheless got into the tunnels, they most often perished in traps.

<< SPIDER HOLES >>
A sniper waits for Americans from an entrenchment, from which there is easy escape to the tunnel system.

Trip wire grenade traps are the most common trap found in the tunnels.

A classic pit trap with Punji spikes.

The 60-120° zigzag of the tunnels do not give American soldiers a clear view into the tunnels.

<< CORPSES IN WALLS >>
To keep Americans from estimating their losses, the dead were buried as soon as possible, sometimes directly into a wall. Because of the humidity the bodies quickly decayed, filling the top level of the tunnels with a distinct stench.

<< MINI-INFIRMARY >>
Some caves were equipped with medicines and special ventilation where the wounded guerrilla could rest in bed and gain strength.

<< SIDE NICHEs >>
Niches are located deep in the tunnels where the Viet-Cong wait for Americans passing by.



Provision Stockpile. Generally it was stocked as much as possible.

Smoke Grenade. Americans used poison gas grenades to clear the tunnels. Frequently they had problems with the gas because it dissipated very slowly.

Telephone Wire. Americans left wire throughout the tunnels while clearing them out until all paths were explored.

Tunnel Width
0.6 - 1.2 m / 2 - 4'
Tunnel Height
0.8 - 1.6 m /
2 1/2 - 5 1/4'

Rolling Punji spike trap. The victim is practically guaranteed to lose a leg and sometimes their life.

Underground Dien Bien Phu kitchen. Cooking smoke is dispersed with the aid of several flues located in remote bushes.

Water barriers were often used to protect the tunnels from gas. Usually, by holding your breath, you would come up on the other end. Sometimes, however, a dead end awaited.

Mole Hole. The narrow entrances where Viet Cong could barely squeeze through often blocked Americans. If gas was used, the Viet Cong inside awaited certain death.


Sleeping quarters with hammocks were located on the second, or even third floor of the tunnels, where it was impossible for the Americans to get to. The hammocks were made from Americans parachutes.

Hidden Door-flaps. The entrance was covered with clay and merged into the wall. It was opened slowly, bit by bit to avoid detection.

Weapons Factory. Landmines were typically made from soft drink cans and unexploded American ordnance.

A bicycle generator was used for the weapons factory, military hospital and even the movie theater.

Deep underground wells were used because the chemicals Americans sprayed above ground could not contaminate the water.



<< Manure Gates >>
Village entrances to the tunnels were often located in pig corrals, hidden under a layer of manure. Even the most meticulous searches by Americans could miss these.

<< Soldier on a Stick >>
Hidden in a niche covered with a thin wall of clay, Viet Cong would see Americans coming through a viewing hole and stab them with spears.

Scorpion Trap. If Americans stumbled over a string, a door would open filling the tunnel with scorpions.

Garrote ambush. When Americans pushed their heads through narrow manholes, sometimes the Viet Cong were waiting with a garrote.

Mine Well. When faced with a steep shaft in the tunnel, grenades would fall on the Americans from above. After throwing them, the Viet Cong would close the entrance and hold it down with a sandbag.

Sentry Snakes. A bamboo viper was tied to a scaffold in the ceiling. Americans would shoot at it, thus warning about their approach. If they did not notice the snakes they would suffer from a venomous bite.

KHÔNG CÓ GIẤY HỒN ĐƯỢC LẬP TỰ

Cinema. Propaganda films were shown where actors would raise the soldiers fighting spirit.

Military Hospital. The ceiling and walls were enclosed by parachutes so that bacteria living in the soil could not cause an infection if it fell onto patients.

Because the tunnels were so tight and everyone was moving in close quarters, many soldier's first time in the tunnels were tough. Darkness, narrowness and silenced caused claustrophobia in even the most fearless soldiers. Only locals, many of whom had played in these tunnels since childhood, were capable of moving easily in the underground labyrinth and could even live there for months.

Headquarter of the Viet Cong. One such cave contained a stolen American m48 tank, which had been loaded into a pit and then buried. The tank itself was used as a command center, the batteries, lights, and the radio were still working.

Underwater entrance. Several secret entrances to the tunnels were at the bottom of rivers and lakes.

And so, our fascinating tour of the Cu Chi tunnels comes to an end. Today, in the city of Ho Chi Minh (formerly Saigon), any taxi driver will bring you to the supposed ruins of the Cu Chi tunnels for 20 dollars. Unfortunately, you're most likely to visit an attraction which was specially dug for tourists.

The real tunnels (or what's left of them) are not on any tourist routes. The jungle grew over them long ago while nearby neighborhoods and villages were built. Local boys sometimes go in the tunnel ruins to play guerrillas. On one hand, this is just fun and games, but on the other... you never know.

