

Sniff Out Danger

Scout Dogs Aid Patrols

On a bright day recently an MP reconnaissance patrol stalked through the rice paddies just south of Long Binh Post.

Hobo, a scout dog, was far ahead of the patrol. He missed the scent of a hidden booby trap and tripped a wire triggering the explosive device. Nine members of the patrol escaped injury because of the premature explosion.

"This is the kind of story of-

ten heard about scout dogs in Vietnam," said Corporal Robert L. Fuller who heads the five man scout dog team of the 212th MP Company (Sentry Dog), 720th MP Battalion.

The MP scout dog team, formed in October 1967, is composed of former handlers of German Shepherd sentry dogs who guard storage areas and patrol perimeters. It is the only such MP unit in Vietnam.

The men of the 212th are first

trained as MPs, then later schooled in the handling of sentry dogs. Still further training is given to those who volunteer as scout dog handlers.

The mild-tempered scout dog does not bark his warning; his more vicious counterpart, the sentry dog. But his job is the same — to alert men of danger. Specialist Four Ronald E. Wolford, a dog handler, says that the dog's warning signals may not be very obvious and often are difficult for anyone but a well-trained handler to detect.

"The dog's warnings are silent," he said, "his tail may begin to wag, he may pull aggressively on the leash, or he may stop. But he will not always act the same way in giving an alert, so the handler has to use his own judgement.

He added that the handlers have learned to work with each other's dog. "On long range reconnaissance patrols we go in pairs with one dog. This way we have one dog handler as back-up."

"The dogs can go many more places than the men and they won't slow down the patrol," he said. "Recently, in fact, my dog kept me from walking into a certain wire that I couldn't see."

"But it's not unusual for a guy to get hurt because they neglect or don't notice the warnings of their scout dogs," he added.

The men and dogs, including Hobo, who is now back in action, are an indispensable part of Operation Stabilize, an infantry mission conducted in a 22 square miles area by MPs from Company B, 720th MP Battalion to help keep Long Binh Post secure.

Like their B Company comrades who plod the rice paddies in daily reconnaissance patrols and stage nightly ambushes, men of the 212th scout dog unit are an integral part of the Military Policeman's changing profile.



Scouting ahead of a B Company, 720th MP Battalion, reconnaissance patrol, Hobo, a scout dog, and his handler, PFC Dirk Rutherford, keep the patrol members from wandering into hidden VC traps.