

PART VI  
PACIFICATION: THE ELUSIVE GOAL



## CHAPTER 14

# Marine Corps Pacification

*County Fair and Golden Fleece – Combined Action – Personal Response – Kit Carson – Psychological Warfare – Civic Action – The I Corps Joint Coordinating Council*

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### *County Fair and Golden Fleece*

In developing their pacification concepts, the Marines drew upon a wealth of experience and history. General Walt recalled his early training as a young officer when he learned the fundamentals of his profession from Marines who had fought Sandino in Nicaragua and Charlemagne in Haiti. These veterans had stressed tempering the struggle against insurgents with an understanding and compassion for the people.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1935, the Marine Corps published its *Small Wars Manual* which emphasized the lessons learned by Marines who fought the campaigns against the guerrillas of their day.<sup>2</sup>

According to the 1940 edition of the *Small Wars Manual*, "small wars" involved diplomacy, contact with the lowest levels of the civilian population, and the uncertainties of political disruption. The goal of "small wars" was to gain decisive results with the least application of force and the minimum loss of life. Caution was to be exercised, and the population was to be treated with "tolerance, sympathy, and kindness."<sup>3</sup>

Although this philosophy formed the basic structure of Marine Corps "small wars" theory, III MAF found it necessary to develop pacification tactics to meet the conditions unique to South Vietnam.\*

Two innovations which showed promising potential were the County Fair and Golden Fleece programs. Both had their origins in late 1965 and were refined during the course of 1966.

The 9th Marines initiated prototype County Fair operations in late 1965 and in early 1966 in response to the need for new techniques to secure its area of operations south of the Da Nang Airbase. Containing an extended area dotted with hamlets and villages, the 9th Marines TAOR was one of the most densely populated areas of South Vietnam with over 1,000 inhabitants per square mile. The Marine regiment realized that it had to eradicate the VC guerrillas and political cadre in order to pacify the hamlets. Employing traditional cordon and search tactics, the Marines began a continuing effort in the villages to clear out the VC. The County Fair technique was an outgrowth and elaboration of these tactics.<sup>4</sup>

Begun on an experimental basis in February 1966, this technique emphasized coordination and cooperation with South Vietnamese military and civilian authorities to reestablish government control of a community without alienating the people. While Marines cordoned a village, ARVN troops and police gathered the inhabitants at a designated collection point. The South Vietnamese troops then searched the hamlet for any VC who might still be hiding. During this time, South Vietnamese ad-

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\*Two former III MAF staff officers emphasized that from the very beginning the Marine command had focused on pacification. Colonel Robert B. Watson, as an operations analyst, had earlier served on the staff of the Development Center at Quantico, Virginia. He recalled that in 1962 when General Walt became Director of the Center that the War Games Group had been directed to war game the landing of a reinforced Marine amphibious force at Da Nang. Watson claims that the results of this game, "Operation Cormorant," proved very predictive of later operations by the Marines against the VC guerrilla forces. General Walt had been alerted to the problems of operations against enemy forces where no FEBA [forward edge of the battle area] was established, where the enemy was so elusive and where significant

portions of the offensive force had to be committed to the security of the support areas." Col Robert B. Watson, Jr., Comments on draft MS, n.d. [Jun 78], (Vietnam Comment File). Colonel Donald L. Evans, who served as the recorder of the I Corps Joint Coordinating Council, observed that although "some of our [pacification] techniques were still a little ragged and sporadically applied in 1966 . . . I believe that our approach was sound and quite well developed by this . . . time. Many Army folks who believed in pacification or were involved in it in those days readily admitted to me that the Marine approach was sound. . . ." Col Donald L. Evans, Comments on draft MS, dtd 17Jun78 (Vietnam Comment File).



Marine Corps Photo A186992

*The 3d Marine Division Drum and Bugle Corps plays for the entertainment of assembled villagers during a "County Fair" in April 1966. County Fair operations were sophisticated cordons and searches, involving U.S. Marines and South Vietnamese troops while local government officials and police checked identity cards and conducted a census. Band concerts helped to provide a festive atmosphere while the other aspects of the operation were completed.*

ministrative officials and police processed the villagers at the collection center, taking a census, issuing ID cards, and interrogating the population about their background and the location of members of their families. In addition, the people were fed, provided medical assistance, and entertained. A significant feature of the entertainment was that it permitted the government to present its case to the villagers in the form of movies, speeches, folk music, and drama.

Throughout these activities, the Marines remained as unobtrusive as possible, except to furnish medical and limited logistical assistance. The idea was not to overwhelm the local populace with the American military presence, but to provide a climate in which the local Vietnamese military, police, and civilian administrators could operate.<sup>5</sup>

One of the more successful of these combined operations was the 9th Marines' County Fair-11 in the hamlet of Thanh Quit (3) during April 1966. The hamlet, located in a small triangle between the Thanh Quit and Vinh Dien Rivers and 1,500 meters east of Route 1 below Da Nang, often served as a haven for local guerrillas. On the morning of 26

April at 0500, Lieutenant Colonel William F. Donahue's 2d Battalion, 9th Marines established blocking positions east of the hamlet while an ARVN company blocked to the west. One hour later, two companies of the 3d Battalion, 51st ARVN Regiment advanced north from the Thanh Quit River into the hamlet. The South Vietnamese soldiers surprised a guerrilla unit in Thanh Quit (3). Realizing they were trapped, the VC fought stubbornly. The ARVN killed 45 of the guerrillas, captured 17 prisoners, and confiscated 14 weapons. The Marines in the blocking position suffered no casualties while the ARVN battalion sustained one dead and 14 wounded during the action.<sup>6</sup>

The success of this operation and another in April, during which the Marines and South Vietnamese captured a VC district official, caused General Walt to order the expansion of the program throughout the Marine TAORs during the following months. Many of the regiments prepared standing operating orders for the conduct of these operations and developed fairly elaborate procedures to create a festive atmosphere. At the collection points, the tents were decorated with bunting and flags. A Marine division band or drum and bugle corps often played martial airs, followed by South Vietnamese

*In County Fairs, the allies take elaborate measures to ensure that they get their message across to the assembled villagers. In the picture, members of the Quang Ngai Drama Team perform in a skit which condemns Viet Cong terrorism and praises U.S. assistance.*

Marine Corps Photo A369174





Marine Corps Photo A186995

*The County Fair had two faces. While the villagers listen to music, troops from the 51st ARVN Regiment search out suspected VC tunnels and hiding places.*

troubadours who continued to entertain the villagers. Although creating a "county fair" atmosphere, the purpose remained to ferret out the VC. By the end of June, the Marines and the South Vietnamese had conducted 25 of these operations with a fair measure of success. In other corps areas, U.S. Army units adopted the County Fair concept, but changed the name from County Fair to "Hamlet Festival."<sup>7</sup>

In a letter to General Walt on 4 July, General Westmoreland specifically mentioned County Fair as a desirable technique to enhance village and hamlet security. Although he observed that such operations tied down U.S. units and required the retention of a reserve, Westmoreland declared:

The Hamlet Search [County Fair] concept offers a realistic prospect for developing meaningful and lasting security in areas where it is conducted; and to the extent that this is the real objective of all our military operations, every opportunity for successful achievement of this goal should be pursued.<sup>8</sup>

He reminded Walt that County Fair operations were

not necessarily appropriate for universal employment throughout Vietnam and that he did not want any dissipation of U.S. strength "to the detriment of our primary responsibility for destroying main force enemy units."<sup>9</sup>

The MACV commander continued to demonstrate interest in the County Fair program and on 10 July, he requested III MAF to report on its County Fair activities for the preceding four-month period. The Marines were not only to furnish the total number of operations for each month from March through June, but were to provide the following data as well: names and coordinates of hamlets searched; number of suspects detained; number of enemy killed and captured; number and type of weapons seized; and number of hamlets in which the enemy "infrastructure" was considered destroyed.<sup>10</sup>

The month of July was to be the highwater mark for the number of III MAF 1966 County Fair operations. During the month, Marine units conducted 21

such operations near Da Nang: nine by the 3d Marines, eight by the 1st Marines, and four by the 9th Marines. Colonel Bryan B. Mitchell, the 1st Marines commander, observed that his units, cooperating with the South Vietnamese, provided "the first real GVN influence in many of the hamlets during the past three years."<sup>11</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Robert R. Dickey, III, whose 1st Battalion, 3d Marines had just completed County Fair 4-11 on 28 July in Kim Lien hamlet six miles northwest of the airbase in the 3d Marines TAOR, was less sanguine. He wrote:

Increased search skills and techniques of both Vietnamese and Marines are needed. The villagers aid the VC due to friendship and personal relations, not politics. District officials should get to know needs of people and offer tangible evidence of GVN presence.<sup>12</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Dickey had touched upon only one of the problems that the County Fair concept was to encounter during the remainder of 1966. By the end of July, General Walt wanted to increase the number of County Fair operations to an average of at least 10 a week, but III MAF never attained this goal in 1966. With the diversion of battalions to the northern battlefront, the Marine regiments did not have the troops in the southern TAORs that would make an expanded County Fair program feasible. Furthermore, South Vietnamese officials on the district level were not fully cooperative. At the close of a visit to Vietnam in early September, General Krulak remarked that Marine commanders had complained to him that the "absence of Vietnamese participants had slowed down our County Fair program far below that of which we are capable and below that which we had planned."<sup>13</sup> Krulak agreed with General Walt's contention that the Marines should not go into a pacification endeavor unless there was adequate South Vietnamese military and civilian representation. Although General Lam had assigned the entire 51st ARVN Regiment to the pacification program in the I Corps national priority area south of Da Nang, the decline in the frequency of County Fair operations continued. By the end of the year, III MAF was conducting an average of four per month.

During the 88 County Fair operations conducted during 1966, over 46,000 South Vietnamese villagers were screened and more than 20,000 of them were provided medical treatment. These same operations accounted for 192 enemy killed and 262 captured. Although this represented an average of only slightly

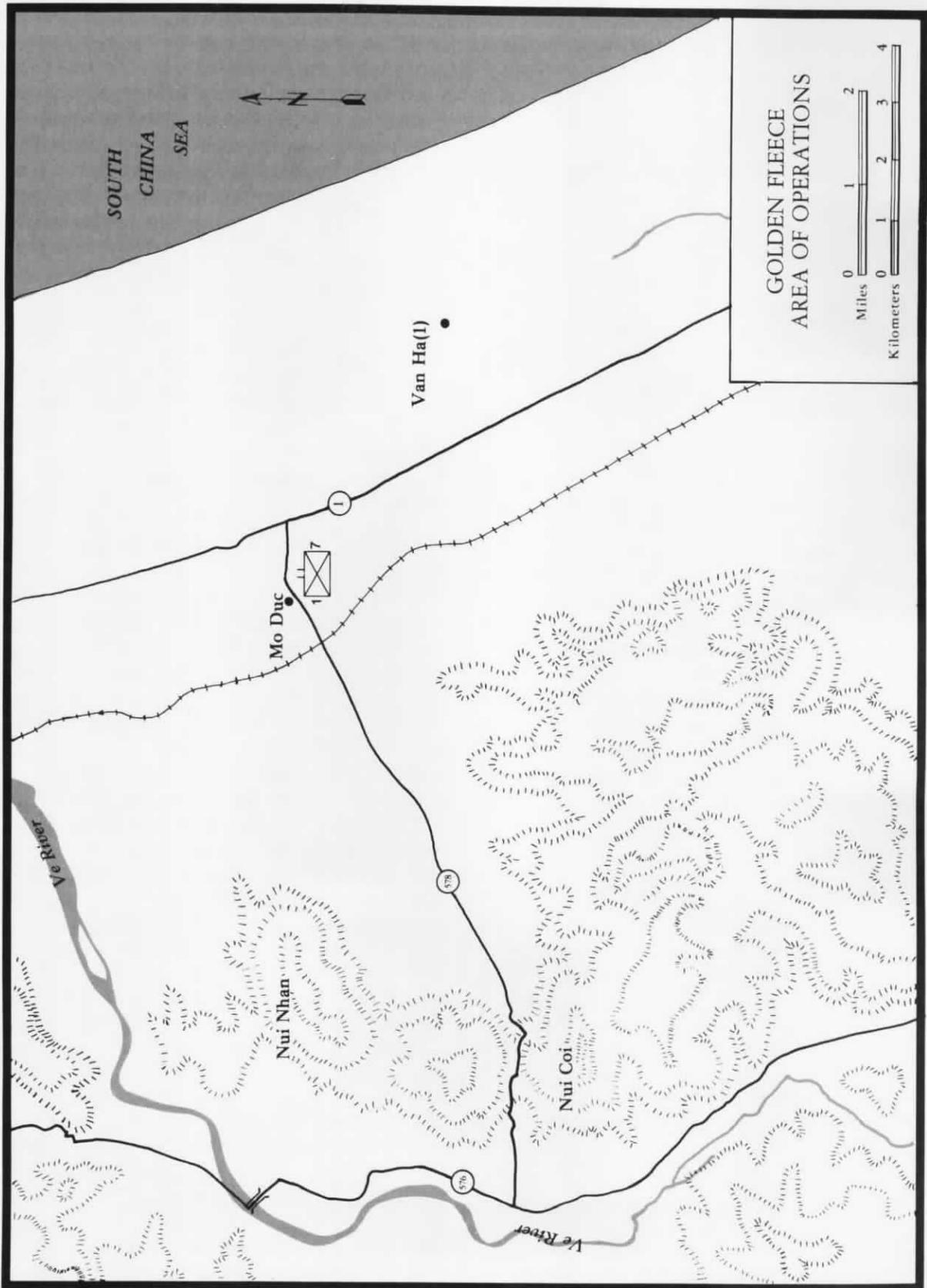
more than five VC per operation, the enemy casualties were local guerrillas and political cadre, the basis of VC control in the countryside. The loss of these men in sufficient numbers could destroy the Communist influence among the people. The County Fair program was a useful technique of gaining control and extending influence.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to the frustrations experienced by the Marines in conducting County Fairs, their rice-protection campaign was more successful. Begun during the fall harvest season of 1965 and named Golden Fleece, the concept called for a Marine battalion to maintain security around the rice paddies while the peasants harvested the grain. These operations allowed the Vietnamese farmer to keep his produce, while preventing the Viet Cong from collecting their usual percentage of the crop. The Golden Fleece campaign deprived the VC of badly needed supplies, and furnished the uncommitted South Vietnamese peasant an incentive to support the government cause. Marine staff officers estimated that the III MAF rice protection program kept over 500,000 pounds of rice from the grasp of the enemy during the 1965 harvest season.<sup>15</sup> III MAF expanded these operations during the 1966 harvest seasons. At the end of September, General Walt observed that more rice was withheld from the Viet Cong during the month than during any previous season in years.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most productive of all such operations was Golden Fleece 7-1 carried out by Major Littleton W. T. Waller II's 1st Battalion, 7th Marines in Mo Duc District south of the city of Quang Ngai.\* The Marine battalion entered the district, 25 miles from its Chu Lai area of operations on 8 September to conduct a search and destroy operation. The operation, labeled Fresno, was designed to prevent enemy main force units from disrupting the constitutional election. Although Fresno did end after the election, there was a sudden change of plans. In a conversation with General Walt, General Lam, the I Corps commander, observed that for years the Viet Cong had collected nearly 90 percent of the rice harvested in the Mo Duc region. General Walt suggested that the Marine battalion remain in the area to help pro-

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\*Major Waller is the grandson of Major General Littleton W. T. Waller, USMC, of Boxer Rebellion and Philippine Insurrection fame.





Marine Corps Photo A369608

*Marines of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines conduct Golden Fleece 7-1, a rice protection operation, in the Mo Duc sector of Quang Ngai Province. The Marine on the right is checking identity cards while the Marine on the left stands guard.*

protect the harvest. General Lam agreed and on 16 September, Major General Fields, the 1st Division commander, ordered Colonel Lawrence F. Snoddy, Jr.,\* the 7th Marines commander, to terminate Operation Fresno at midnight and immediately begin Operation Golden Fleece 7-1. Colonel Snoddy visited Major Waller's command post south of the village of Mo Duc and told him of the change in plans.<sup>17</sup>

The informality of the planning for Golden Fleece 7-1 may have deceived the enemy and apparently contributed to the effectiveness of the operation. Major Waller later commented that the operation was approached on a low key:

There was a minimum of fuss and coordination with the ARVN Division in Quang Ngai [the 2d ARVN Division]. Perhaps this low level approach accounted for the enemy not getting the word. At any rate, if he did get the word, he did not seem to think we would affect his plans.<sup>18</sup>

Allied intelligence sources had indicated that two VC battalions, the 38th and 44th were in the area with two local force companies. These forces totaled approximately 900 men and agents reported that the

enemy units were operating freely in the area, the 38th west of Route 1 and the 44th in the paddy lands east of the highway. During Fresno and the period immediately preceding the constitutional election, these enemy battalions had avoided all contact with allied forces in the Mo Duc region. Perhaps believing that the Marine battalion would return to its base area after the election, the Viet Cong commanders became bolder after 16 September.

Although the enemy had at least two battalions in the Mo Duc area, the fighting during Golden Fleece 7-1 was usually on a small-unit level. Marine patrols either sighted or engaged enemy units attempting to move into the fertile lowlands. Marine air, artillery, and naval gunfire was called on to finish the job. Battery G, 3d Battalion, 11th Marines reinforced by five U.S. Navy destroyers offshore provided direct artillery support to the infantry battalion, and Marine aircraft from Chu Lai and Da Nang furnished close air support.

While 2d ARVN Division units were protecting the rice fields east of Route 1, Major Waller sent platoon and squad patrols along the access routes into Mo Duc from the west. The Song Ve constituted the northern and western boundary of the area of operations and Highway 578, the southern. Special South Vietnamese observation units, called *Dac Cong*, supplemented the Marine patrols. By entering the Nui Nham-Nui Coi hill mass, which dominated the en-

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\*Colonel Snoddy in 1972 legally changed his name from Snoddy to Snowden. He retired from active duty in 1979 as a lieutenant general.



Marine Corps Photo A369479

*The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines advance on the hamlet of Van Ha (1) in Operation Golden Fleece 7-1. The hamlet was a known Viet Cong stronghold.*

tire region, the Marines and their South Vietnamese allies probed much further to the west than the VC expected. The roving patrols provided excellent information which resulted in most of the Viet Cong casualties. For example, a *Dac Cong* outpost in the northern area of operations sighted three enemy platoons approaching the Song Ve on the night of 19 September and called for artillery and naval gunfire. A nearby Marine reconnaissance patrol observed and adjusted the fires. This particular action resulted in the death of 47 Viet Cong.<sup>19</sup>

On another occasion, a Marine patrol saw what appeared to be 75 ARVN troops in a position where no friendly units were supposed to be. The patrol leader

quickly checked with the battalion command post and learned that the troops he had spotted were not ARVN, but VC. The Marines opened fire on the enemy and also called in artillery and air as the VC fled. A Marine tactical aerial observer in a UH-1E helicopter, controlling the airstrike, reported at least four enemy killed. When the Marine patrol swept the area, they found a base camp that the enemy had established, apparently for rice collection.<sup>20</sup>

Through 21 September, Major Waller continued the same tactics, deploying small patrols into the hinterlands and conducting company sweeps in the lowlands west of Route 1. On the 21st, the Marines readjusted their boundary with the 2d ARVN Division in order to attack the hamlet of Van Ha (1), 2,000 meters east of Highway 1, long a Viet Cong stronghold. The hamlet was honeycombed with bunkers and interlocking tunnels. The district chief stated that no South Vietnamese Government force had dared to enter this complex for over four years.

Expecting heavy enemy resistance, Major Waller stationed Company A in blocking positions that night and called for an intensive air, artillery, and naval bombardment the next morning. After the bombardment, he launched a three-company attack

*After taking Van Ha (1), the Marines found a granary holding 727 tons of rice. Here a Marine holds a burlap bag open for one of the 8,000 workers that were brought in to take the rice to Mo Duc.*

Marine Corps Photo A369606





Marine Corps Photo A369612

*Marines from the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines assist in the evacuation of villagers from Van Ha (1) to resettlement in Mo Duc. Many of the 700 refugees claimed that they had wanted to leave Van Ha, but had been prevented by the VC.*

on the hamlets. Although a few VC had probed Company A's positions during the night, the Marine advance encountered only token opposition. Once they secured the hamlet, the Marines found Van Ha (1) to be a well-established logistic base. A granary within the hamlet held over 727 tons of rice.

Major Waller contacted the district chief and assured him that the Marines would remain in the village, if the South Vietnamese could haul the rice away. The chief agreed and provided a force of more than 8,000 workers to move the rice from Van Ha to Mo Duc, the district capital. In less than 50 hours, the South Vietnamese had removed the rice, as well as the household effects of approximately 150 families living in the village. In addition to the villagers' furniture, they gathered up the cattle, hogs, ducks, and chickens and transferred everything to the district town. Over 700 civilian refugees from Van Ha were relocated to Mo Duc where they were

processed. Many of the villagers claimed that they had wanted to leave Van Ha for some time but were prevented by the VC.<sup>21</sup>

At this point the South Vietnamese Government decided to settle the problem of Van Ha (1), once and for all, so that it could no longer serve Communist purposes. The district chief, a Mr. Lieu, asked Major Waller to destroy the entire village. Waller's men used 13,500 pounds of explosives "to destroy a total of 554 bunkers, 123 houses, 50 caves, 130 sheds, and 125 wells, [in the process] producing 24 secondary explosions."<sup>22</sup>

The battalion left Van Ha (1) on the 26th and closed out Operation Golden Fleece 7-1 the next day. On the 27th, Mr. Lieu hosted a traditional Vietnamese banquet for the Marines in Mo Duc. The Vietnamese officials expressed their appreciation for what the Marines had accomplished and presented gifts to Major Waller. According to the battalion's

report, more than 5,000 South Vietnamese lined the streets of Mo Duc to bid the unit farewell as the Marines boarded trucks for the return to Chu Lai.<sup>23\*</sup>

The results of the operation were impressive both in number of enemy casualties and the amount of rice salvaged from the Communists. Marines claimed 240 enemy dead at the cost of one Marine killed and 19 wounded. The district chief estimated that over 7,000 tons of rice were harvested and kept out of the hands of the enemy. Major Waller doubted that the VC had been able to obtain more than 15 percent of the total crop before the Marines had arrived.<sup>24</sup> Most significantly, none of the harvesters working in rice paddies protected by the Marines had been bothered by enemy troops or tax collectors. Major Waller had nothing but praise for Mr. Lieu and his U.S. Army advisor, Major Richard A. Weaver, both of whom had cooperated fully with the Marine battalion.<sup>25</sup>

Lieutenant General Krulak summed up the accomplishment of the Golden Fleece operations in the following manner:

The Golden Fleece effort by III MAF organizations is keyed to the various times when rice crops become ripe. As such it is nearly a continuous project. Golden Fleece 7-1 was a particularly good example. . . . The VC were determined to get their hands on the rice this time, and came out in the open to fight for it. . . I believe that Golden Fleece, along with County Fair, Combined Action units and the other Revolutionary Development efforts—halting though they are—are giving the Viet Cong basic structure a hard time.<sup>26</sup>

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\*A few months after the Golden Fleece operation, Marines in Operation Sierra returned to Mo Duc where they again enjoyed excellent relations with the local authorities and population. Lieutenant Colonel Warren P. Kitterman, whose 2d Battalion, 7th Marines participated in the latter operation, recalled several instances of friendliness on the part of both officials and villagers. He particularly remembered the "fine food and entertainment" provided by the ARVN battalion at Mo Duc and the villagers on Christmas Eve. Kitterman related: "About midnight, after making prior arrangements with my direct support battery commander, I gave a short 'thank you' speech. I concluded by saying, 'All we need to make it a perfect Christmas Eve is for a star to appear in the east.' At that instant, five illuminating rounds popped in the east in the shape of a star. Everyone was surprised and delighted, including the battalion chaplain." LtCol Warren P. Kitterman, Comments on draft MS, dtd 16Jun78 (Vietnam Comment File).

### *Combined Action*

The combined action program had its inception in the summer of 1965 at Phu Bai as an expedient to improve base security. The concept involved the assigning of a Marine squad to a South Vietnamese Popular Force (PF) platoon. In the early stages of the program, III MAF accepted only handpicked volunteers for combined action units. These Marines received rudimentary training in Vietnamese language, history, customs, and military and governmental organization. Initially, five combined action platoons were formed at Phu Bai. These Marines entered into the life of their assigned village and were integrated into its defense. They offered military training to the local PF platoons, while at the same time participating in civic action.<sup>27</sup>

In January 1966, General Walt authorized the expansion of the program. A second combined action effort was started at Da Nang, where Marine squads were paired off with the seven PF platoons stationed around the airbase. By July, III MAF had 38 combined action platoons, scattered throughout the three Marine enclaves. The number of platoons grew to 57 by the end of the year: 31 at Da Nang and 13 each at Phu Bai and Chu Lai.<sup>28</sup>

The combined action program, like the County Fair and the Golden Fleece operations, developed into an integral component of the Marine pacification strategy. Both Generals Walt and Krulak gave

*LtGen Krulak, CGFMFPac, inspects a combined action unit on 31 December 1966. Gen Krulak was an avid supporter of the combined action concept which integrated a South Vietnamese Popular Force platoon with a Marine squad.*

Marine Corps Photo A801024



the concept their unstinted support and were avid crusaders, attempting to convince MACV to expand a similar program to all of Vietnam. The Marines assembled very convincing statistics to back up their strong beliefs. A FMFPac report prepared in January 1967 observed that the 22 Vietnamese villages in the Marine TAORs that had an active combined action program for six months or longer averaged a grade of 60 percent on the III MAF pacification scale. This was a rise of nearly 20 percentage points since the combined action platoons were stationed in these villages. The report pointed out one other significant trend. It noted that the South Vietnamese PF, a home guard directly responsible to the district chief for the defense of their particular villages, was generally regarded as the poorest of all the South Vietnamese forces. According to the FMFPac study, the desertion rate from the PF was almost four times that of the ARVN. For the period August through December 1966, the report cited statistics which revealed over 39,000 PF troops had deserted, representing nearly 25 percent of the total nationwide PF strength. During this same period there were no recorded desertions of PFs assigned to the Marine combined action units. Other figures included in the report indicated that the kill ratio of the Marine combined action platoons was 14 VC to 1 Marine or PF soldier, as contrasted with a 3 to 1 ratio for regular PF units. The report concluded:

This tends to underscore the improved military performance that is possible through the melding of highly motivated professional Marines with heretofore poorly led, inadequately trained, and uninspired Vietnamese—who now are finding leaders who are qualified and who take a personal interest in them.<sup>29\*</sup>

The rapid expansion of the combined action program did cause some problems. Although no specific billets had been allotted to the program, there were approximately 2,000 Marines assigned to combined action units. These men came directly out of the manning level of the individual infantry battalions.

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\*One of the most important assets of the combined action platoons was their knowledge of the local situation. Colonel Clyde D. Dean recalled that as S-3 of the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines at Da Nang in May 1966 during the political crisis the combined action platoons provided "our best on-site intelligence of who was who and where. . . . I personally felt our CAPs were our best eyes and ears around the base." Col Clyde D. Dean, Comments on draft MS, dtd 27 Aug 78 (Vietnam Comment File).

As could be expected, Marine battalion commanders were often reluctant to send their best and seasoned NCOs and riflemen into the program while receiving no direct recompense in return.<sup>30</sup>

The necessary complexity of command and control of the combined action units was also troublesome. There were two chains of command, one Vietnamese and one American. Coordination and cooperation were the core of the entire program. Two or more combined action platoons were coordinated by a combined action company headquarters, commanded by a Marine captain, with a PF lieutenant as his deputy. The Marine battalion commander was responsible for coordinating patrol activity and combat support of combined units in his TAOR, so for practical purposes, the Marine battalion commander actually exercised operational control of these combined action units.\*\*

Although the district chief, in effect, relinquished command of his PF units assigned to the combined action platoons, he still retained administrative responsibility. In addition, the district chief usually suggested which villages were to be assigned combined action units and made the necessary arrangements with the hamlet and village chiefs. Moreover, the district chief was in a position to undercut the program by simply transferring his PF troops out of the combined action unit.

At the platoon level, cooperation and trust were most important. A typical South Vietnamese PF platoon consisted of one officer and 37 enlisted men, organized into three 11-man infantry squads and a five-man headquarters group. A platoon was usually responsible for an entire village complex, deploying individual squads into the most important hamlets making up the village. The combined action platoon was the unit that resulted from combining a 14-man

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\*\*Colonel Noble L. Beck, the 3d Marine Division G-3, observed that although in theory the battalion commander was to exercise operational control, "it didn't work as smoothly as stated except in those instances where the battalion was in a static situation. Most often, the infantry battalions were on the move from one area to another while the combined action units normally remained in the same location. It was not infrequent that the infantry command was called upon to come to the aid of a combined action unit with its 'tail in a crack' in a situation unknown to the infantry commander in advance, and often this found him in an awkward tactical posture for response." Col Noble L. Beck, Comments on draft MS, n.d. [Aug 78] (Vietnam Comment File).



Marine Corps Photo A188181

*A South Vietnamese village chief goes over patrol routes with Cpl John J. Shylo, an assistant combined action unit squad leader. The term combined action company, or CAC as seen on the oil drums, was later redesignated combined action platoon or CAP because of unpleasant connotations in the Vietnamese language.*

Marine rifle squad plus a Navy corpsman, with a PF platoon. The Marine NCO squad leader became the advisor to the Vietnamese platoon leader, while each of the three Marine fire teams was assigned to an individual PF squad. Both the Vietnamese militiamen and the individual Marines soon discovered they each had something to learn from the other. While the Marines taught the PFs basic small-unit tactics and discipline, they themselves obtained knowledge of the terrain, local customs, and valuable intelligence about the enemy. When the combined action platoon functioned properly, there was a mutual exchange that was helpful to both the Americans and South Vietnamese.

The combined action platoon in the village of Binh Nghia in the Chu Lai TAOR provided an excellent example of this process at its best. Located in Binh Son District four miles south of the Chu Lai Marine base in the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines TAOR, Binh Nghia consisted of seven hamlets, three named My Hue and four called Binh Yen Noi. The entire village complex was only two miles long, enclosed on the north by an expanse of sand dunes and on the south by the Song Tra Bong. According to allied intelligence sources, two independent VC companies and one main force battalion were operating in Binh

Son District. The district chief estimated that more than 750 men from Binh Nghia, alone, had left their homes to join the Viet Cong. Despite this apparent loyalty to the enemy, in June 1966 the Marines and South Vietnamese decided to establish a combined action platoon in the village.

The recommendation to establish the combined action platoon in Binh Nghia was made by the district chief. His U.S. Army advisor, Major Richard Braun, convinced General Walt that he should place a Marine squad with the PF in this sector. According to one Marine observer, the conversation between Braun and Walt went as follows:

"If you had them [a combined action platoon] where would you put them?" Walt asked.

"There's a big village not far from here. It sits along a river which the Cong use to move supplies back up into the mountains. As a matter of fact, it's just south of Chu Lai airfield. The government forces were chased out of the village a couple of years ago. A platoon of Cong live there regularly now, and sometimes a company or more come in to resupply or rest."

"Why pick there to start?" Walt asked.

"I didn't, sir. The district chief did. He has this outstanding police chief who's being badmouthed by some of the local politicians. These pols make the mafia look like a bunch of Trappist monks. The district chief's afraid this police chief will say the hell with it and transfer to another district. But his family's from this village and his mother still lives there. The district chief says he'll stick around if we make a play for that village. The police want some Americans along if they're going in there. They don't think too much of the local troops in this district. . . ."

"I'll see that he [the police chief] gets them," Walt replied. "By the way, what's the name of that village?"

"We call it Been Knee-ah, sir."<sup>31</sup>

On 12 June, a Marine squad led by Corporal Robert A. Beebe entered the village. They were met there by Ap Thanh Lam, the police chief mentioned by Braun in his discussion with General Walt. The local force in Binh Nghia consisted of 15 policemen and 18 PF troops, somewhat of a variance from the normal makeup of a combined action platoon. Lam and Beebe set up their headquarters in a villa that had been abandoned by a rich landowner in 1950 when the Viet Minh first entered the district. The old house was on the outskirts of Binh Yen Noi (3), the largest and southernmost hamlet of the village complex. Lam persuaded Beebe that it was too dangerous to live in the hamlets at night and that the Marines and the PFs should transform the villa into a fortified position. Corporal Beebe set the example for the South Vietnamese the first night they



Marine Corps Photo A369600

*A combined action unit in a hamlet in the Chu Lai TAOR presents arms at morning colors as the South Vietnamese flag is raised. By early 1967, the Marines had established 57 combined action platoons.*

were in the hamlet. After working all day erecting the fortifications, he personally led a night patrol. Although Beebe left Vietnam after only a few weeks in the village, he believed that his combined action platoon was accomplishing its mission. In his final report, he wrote:

On June 10th, 1966 one squad of Marines from Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines were picked to join the Popular Force unit at Binh Yen Noi. It is obvious to those who have initiated and followed the PF program that it has been a success. Since the Marines have begun their instructions, the confidence and skill of the PFs have risen considerably. The PFs are now a well-organized efficient combat unit. This program has also strengthened the relationship between the Marines and the PFs and civilians in the area. The effect of this had been the strengthening of the defensive posture of the area.<sup>32</sup>

Beebe had painted too rosy a picture. The Viet Cong were completely aware of the fact that if they allowed a Marine squad and some local militiamen to push them out of the village, their hold over the population would crumble. The morning that Beebe left the village, a VC assassination squad entered the home of Chief Lam's mother and killed Lam who had spent the night there. At the end of June, the Marines suffered their first casualty. Private First Class Lawrence L. Page, the youngest man in the squad, was killed in a Viet Cong ambush while on a night patrol.

Saddened by the deaths, the Marines were determined to stay put. Beebe's successor, Sergeant

Joseph Sullivan, adopted an aggressive program. Marines and PFs conducted night patrols and established ambushes even in the My Hue hamlets north of Fort Page, as the villa was renamed after Page's death. Later in the month, five Marines and three PF troops set up an ambush on the northern bank of the Tra Bong. Apparently the Viet Cong had watched the patrol establish its position and attempted to maneuver around them to hit the ambushers from the rear. The Marine patrol leader had taken no chances and had stationed a PF soldier as a rear lookout. He saw the enemy crawling along the rice paddy dikes and quietly gave the alarm. The patrol leader turned his men around and allowed the VC to approach within 50 yards before giving the order to fire. In eight minutes, it was all over. The patrol counted 21 enemy dead, including a VC company commander and a platoon leader. There were no casualties in the combined action platoon.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout July and much of August, the combined action unit at Fort Page engaged in over 70 firefights and averaged almost 11 contacts a week. The Marines and their PF allies proved themselves superior to the Viet Cong in both night patrolling and fighting. By the end of August, the combined action platoon thought it had wrested control of Binh Nghia from the Viet Cong. There had been no significant contact with an enemy unit for over two weeks. According to Marine estimates, the village's pacification category had risen from the contested stage to a figure of 75 percent pacified.

Once more, however, the Viet Cong forced the Marines to reassess the situation. On the night of 14 September several Marines and PFs were out on patrol, while six of the Americans, including Sergeant Sullivan, remained at the fort with 12 PFs. Although the combined action unit had not engaged the VC for over two weeks, there were disturbing rumors that VC forces across the river had been reinforced by North Vietnamese regulars. To insure the security of the fort, Sergeant Sullivan had asked the South Vietnamese PF leader to place a seven-man detachment in the hamlet of Binh Yen Noi to protect his rear. This detachment discovered nothing unusual in the hamlet and decided to go home to bed, rather than spend the night in the cold drizzle that began to fall. Apparently the enemy had maintained close observation of the fort. A company of North Vietnamese regulars from the 409th NVA Battalion, approximately 60 men, joined 80 Viet

Cong and crossed the Tra Bong River. Probably guided by villagers, the enemy infiltrators slipped through the hamlet of Binh Yen Noi undetected and attacked the fort from two directions. In the ensuing battle, five Americans, including Sergeant Sullivan and the Navy corpsman, were killed. The other Marine in the fort was wounded as were five of the PFs; the remaining seven PF troops held out. A reaction force from Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines and the rest of the combined action force came to their rescue and the VC broke contact.\*

Instead of breaking the morale of the combined action platoon, this attack strengthened the bond between the remaining Marines and the PFs. On 15 September, Colonel Snoddy offered the combined action Marines the opportunity to abandon Fort Page and to a man they elected to stay. They had gained a strong affection for Binh Nghia; it was their village and they were determined to protect it. That day the villagers held a funeral service honoring the Marines and PF troops who had died in the defense of Fort Page.

On the night of the 16th, the Viet Cong came back to Binh Nghia; this time they received an entirely unexpected reception. Apparently believing they no longer had anything to fear, they walked boldly down the hamlet's main street toward the market place. They literally bumped into a Marine PF patrol coming from the other direction. Recovering from their surprise first, the Marines and PFs opened fire and gave the alarm. In less than 10 minutes, other members of the combined action unit reinforced the patrol led by Sergeant James White, Sullivan's replacement. The enemy tried to get back to the river bank and cross, leaving a rear guard to provide covering fire. An old woman pointed out to the Marines and PFs the positions of the VC. The unit blasted the enemy rear guard trying to escape in small wicker boats. While the shooting continued, the villagers gathered on the river banks to watch the show. According to one Marine, "You would have thought it was daytime out there . . . it was incredible."<sup>34</sup> The combined units accounted for 10 known dead VC and un-

doubtedly killed others in the water. There were no Marine or PF casualties.

The Marines in this particular combined action unit had gained a new perspective on the war. They realized there was to be no easy victory over the Viet Cong. The PFs were becoming better soldiers, but the Marines had attained something as well. They now understood the villagers and looked upon them as people to be protected and helped. One corporal put it in these words: "Hell, this is our village, it's why we're here."<sup>35</sup> An indication of the acceptance that the Marines had achieved occurred during the last week of December. The villagers held a fair and the Marines were invited, not as guests, but as participants.

Although the Marines in Binh Nghia had achieved a modicum of success in their efforts, the Marine command was not satisfied with the overall progress of the combined action program. General Walt had hoped to establish 74 units by the end of the year, but the government had not provided enough PFs to achieve this aim. Nonetheless, the Marines believed that the combined action concept held promise for the future. General Krulak stated this belief in the following words:

This idea has the greatest leverage of any concept yet to emerge from this war. Here is a case where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The Marines learn from the PF and the PF, mediocre soldiers to say the least—learn volumes from the Marines. They become skillful and dedicated units, and no hamlets protected by a combined action platoon has ever been repossessed by the Communists. . . . It [combined action] set the tone for what I honestly believe may be the key to the whole Vietnam war.<sup>36</sup>

#### *Personal Response*

The combined action program was important because it achieved one of the basic goals of the pacification effort, the unity of interest between the South Vietnamese villager and the individual Marine. For pacification to work in the TAORs, this same unity of interest had to be established between the regular Marine battalions and the local populace. The Marines in the regular, organized units had to realize that their mission was the protection of the people, while the Vietnamese peasant had to learn to overcome his fear of the Americans.

Generals Krulak and Walt were both aware how important attitudes were and both were interested in

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\*The VC had chosen a propitious time for their attack. Most of 1/7 was conducting Operation Fresco/Golden Fleece 7/1, while the remaining elements of the battalion were stretched thin in the Chu Lai TAOR.

means of determining the extent of the problem and developing a program that would avoid unfortunate incidents. The interest reflected by these two Marine generals created the Marine Personal Response Program during the summer of 1966. General Krulak discussed the question with the FMFPac chaplain, Captain John H. Craven, USN. In July 1966, Captain Craven assigned one of his new chaplains to be the Fleet Marine Force Personal Response Officer. His choice was Lieutenant Commander Richard McGonigal, who was not only a chaplain but also held a master's degree in sociology.\*

Chaplain McGonigal arrived in Vietnam on 5 July for a brief indoctrination visit. General Walt expressed his interest in the project and offered the chaplain the full cooperation of his staff. Lieutenant Commander McGonigal decided to take a sample survey of approximately two percent of the total III MAF force and a smaller sample of the South Vietnamese who had a close association with Americans. After refining his questionnaires and interviewing techniques, McGonigal conducted the attitude survey during the first two weeks of September.

The initial sampling revealed that a large percentage of the Marines tested held negative feelings for the South Vietnamese. Only 43 percent of the Marines indicated that they liked the local population. The South Vietnamese, on the other hand, showed a more positive feeling toward the Americans. Over 70 percent of them stated that they generally liked Americans, but 46 percent declared that Americans did not like them.

Other aspects of the survey showed that individual Marines indicated a certain ambivalence toward the

population, rather than an intense dislike. Most importantly, the sampling of combined action platoon Marines and their PF partners revealed an overwhelming feeling of trust and confidence in one another.

Chaplain McGonigal had accomplished a portion of his aims with the September survey. These were to determine the existing attitudes toward the Vietnamese, where the greatest problems were, and how these attitudes were acquired. He believed that he needed a much larger and more refined testing procedure before he could begin to develop a program to overcome frictions between Marines and the Vietnamese. From December 1966-January 1967, he conducted another survey, followed by a third in June 1967. Based on his intensive study of over 10 percent of the Marines assigned to III MAF, Chaplain McGonigal reached the conclusion:

The name of the game in Vietnam is relationship. When a Marine sees the ancient Vietnamese grandmother who smiles at him with her betel nut stained ebony teeth as a *full-fledged human being*, he is ready to operate more effectively than we hoped. He becomes more careful in his use of firepower, more sensitive in dealing with refugees and a better trainer of host counterparts.<sup>37\*\*</sup>

The need for Marines to remember that the Vietnamese civilians were more often victims of the war, rather than the enemy, was dramatized during the latter half of 1966 by three shocking and tragic incidents. In one, a Marine on a combat patrol during August told other members of the patrol that he intended to shoot a Vietnamese villager in order to flush out the VC. No one took the Marine seriously until he suddenly shot a farmer as he was showing

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\*Chaplain Craven observed that Personal Response had "its genesis in Exercise Silverlance in March 1965 when I succeeded in getting Chaplain Robert L. Mole assigned to the staff of the Troops Exercise Coordinator and we were able to crank some realistic problems involving local religions and customs into the Exercise . . . It was on the plane to observe this Exercise that I asked General Krulak about requesting a chaplain for FMF Pacific to work full time in this field, and so the Southeast Asia Religious Research Project was born. This young project grew . . . into the Personal Response Project." Stating that although Chaplain McGonigal was the first specific Personal Response Officer, Captain Craven noted that Chaplain Mole in the summer of 1965 started the project by beginning "first hand research in the religions, customs, and value systems of Southeast Asia." Capt John H. Craven, CHC, USN, Comments on draft MS, dtd 2Jul78 (Vietnam Comment File), hereafter Craven Comments.

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\*\*Colonel Drew J. Barrett, who assumed command of the 9th Marines in July 66 commented on the requirement for such a program: "I felt helpless and inadequate because I had little knowledge of Vietnam, its people, and its culture. As the war progressed we recognized this, and within capability tried to include treatment of these matters in training syllabi and in all orientation materials. However, especially in this kind of conflict, it was impossible to fill this big void with short-cut measures." Col Drew J. Barrett, Comments on draft MS, dtd 5May78 (Vietnam Comment File). Despite such recognition of the value of the Personal Response Project, Chaplain Craven remembered that during his three years as FMFPac Chaplain and five years as the Chaplain of the Marine Corps, "I was always walking a fine line between Marine officers on one hand who questioned the need for any such project, and chaplains on the other hand who felt that chaplains should have nothing to do with the project." Craven Comments.

his ID card. The other Marines reported the outrage when the patrol returned to base. A general court-martial found the Marine guilty of murder and sentenced him to life imprisonment and a dishonorable discharge.

One month later, another patrol, composed of eight Marines, raided a South Vietnamese hamlet. They killed five villagers and raped an 18-year-old girl. The same month, three other Marines killed an old woman and placed her body in a hay stack which they set afire. As they left the burning pyre, they discovered an elderly man who had observed their actions. They shot him and one of the Marines cut off the man's ear. All the Marines involved in these incidents were charged and faced court-martial by the end of the year.\*

The response of the Marine command to these tragedies reflected General Walt's determination that they would not reoccur. On 17 November, he sent a personal message to General Westmoreland giving the full details of each incident and the actions that he had taken.

More significantly, General Walt reiterated basic guidelines to his senior commanders to prevent future outrages. He made no recriminations, but also allowed no excuses. He stated simply:

I know that all of you are deeply concerned and are taking the actions you consider appropriate. . . . The following observations and suggestions appear to me to be worthy of your consideration. It is an oversimplification to lay the blame on the quality of leadership, at least not as a blanket indictment as it is usually employed. I believe, however, that perhaps the focus of our leadership has been too sharply concentrated on our operational problems and we may need to reorient and broaden this focus to devote more time and attention to the training of our younger, less mature leaders and to more eyeball-to-eyeball talks with all our troops. . . . We have had to rely frequently upon inexperienced noncommissioned officers in positions of great responsibility. To overcome the effects of this we need a period of intensive personal effort by our mature experienced officers and noncommissioned officers to counsel and train their juniors. Formal schools are not practical in our present tactical dispositions, but frequent informal sessions are possible and offer potentially rich

rewards. We need discussions of such fundamental subjects as are illustrated in the material published in connection with the personal response study. Recent events offer convincing evidence that the general attitude toward the Vietnamese people is manifestly poor and must be changed. There are also strong indications that we need personal attention to the responsibilities of leadership and vigorous efforts to weed out those who are ineffective. . . . In coordination with these efforts, I believe we can eliminate some of our future problems by screening our commands to separate those men whose records demonstrate their unfitness or unsuitability for retention, particularly at a time when the demands of our service call for self-discipline in a greater measure than ever before. . . .

The general continued:

A more careful examination of our disciplinary reports and increased efforts to make our trials and punishments as prompt as we can make them, within the law, offers another area for attack against a situation that we all recognize is not going to be resolved by any one magic formula. . . .

I cannot believe that our men fully understand and appreciate how disastrous their sometimes thoughtless actions can be to our efforts here. One man, through crime, or just plain wanton disregard of human dignity can undo in a few minutes the prolonged efforts of a reinforced battalion. We make propaganda for the enemy with every heedless act toward the Vietnamese as a people and as individuals. At the same time, we undo all the good that had been done. We must get this message across.<sup>38</sup>

*Kit Carson*

Although Chaplain McGonigal's 1966 survey and General Walt's message reflected some of the negative features resulting from Marine infantry units operating in populated areas, Marines more often than not demonstrated that they could work with individual South Vietnamese to bring stability to the countryside. One of the most unusual and yet successful of these attempts was the formation of special cadre made up of former VC. These men, former enemy troops, had taken advantage of the government "open arms" (Chieu Hoi) policy and rallied to the government cause.

The Marines began to use a selected few of these "ralliers" or Hoi Chanhs during the spring of 1966. In May, a group of VC surrendered to units of the 9th Marines, asking for asylum. The enemy immediately started a rumor among the people that the Marines had tortured and killed one of the ralliers by the name of Ngo Van Bay. Colonel Simmons, the regimental commander, asked Bay and two of his

\*In his best selling memoir, Philip Caputo, a former Marine lieutenant, described an earlier incident in 1966 when a patrol led by him killed two Vietnamese villagers. Caputo and five of his men were charged with murder. A court-martial found one of the men innocent and the charges against Caputo and the rest of the men were dropped. Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1977), pp. 314-336.



Marine Corps Historical Collection

*Former Viet Cong who defected to the government attend an indoctrination class. The Marines recruited several of these "ralliers" or Hoi Chanh as "Kit Carson scouts" to accompany Marine units in the field.*

*A former VC (right), now a Kit Carson scout assigned to the 1st Battalion, 26th Marines in the An Hoa sector, points out a possible enemy hiding place. These former VC were not only a valuable tactical asset, but served to further allied propoganda.*

Marine Corps Photo A370000



compatriots to return to the village and put the rumor to rest for once and for all. The three former Viet Cong agreed and, according to Simmons, this, in a small way, was the beginning of the program.<sup>39</sup>

Other Marine units at Da Nang, and eventually in all of the TAORs, started using former VC as scouts, interpreters, and intelligence agents. By October 1966, the program was established on a permanent, official basis. General Nickerson, the commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, who was part-Indian and a Western history buff, designated the former VC working with the Marines as "Kit Carson scouts." He selected the name because the Hoi Chanh working with the Marines were good scouts, in the tradition of Kit Carson, the famed frontiersman, Indian agent, and soldier.\*<sup>40</sup>

\*The name of Kit Carson was doubly appropriate since Carson had served with Lieutenant Archibald Gillespie, USMC, during his secret mission to California for President Polk in 1846. According to General Nickerson, another reason for the designation Kit Carson was to "provide the initials KC as counter to VC." LtGen Herman Nickerson, Jr., Comments on draft MS, dtd 1May78 (Vietnam Comment File).

From October to December 1966, III MAF credited the Kit Carson scouts with the killing of 47 VC, the capture of 16 weapons, and the discovery of 18 mines and tunnels.<sup>41</sup> The scouts repeatedly proved themselves a valuable tactical asset. For example, in November, one scout attached to the 1st Marines at Da Nang led a Marine company at night over unfamiliar terrain to an objective area, resulting in the surprise and capture of 15 Viet Cong.

The scouts provided more than just tactical capability. They were also a valuable propaganda tool. Villagers were much more ready to listen to them than to representatives of the government. During a December County Fair one scout gave a speech to the gathered villagers and evoked applause from his audience several times. According to the Marine report, the scout then:

... ventured into the VCC/VCS compound and spoke to them. . . . A definite response was observed by the facial expressions of some of the individuals. Attention seemed to follow the Kit Carson Scout wherever he went, including an apparent interest generated among the ARVN troops who participated in the operation.<sup>42</sup>

### *Psychological Warfare*

The Kit Carson program was only part of an intensive psychological warfare campaign that III MAF had begun in the latter half of 1966. In fact, it was an officer in the III MAF Psychological Warfare Section, Captain Stephen A. Luckey, who recommended the formal implementation of the Kit Carson project and it was the Psychological Warfare Section that developed the Kit Carson SOP. The section had consisted of only Luckey and a senior staff NCO until 4 August, when General Walt assigned Colonel Robert R. Read as the psychological warfare officer. In September the section became a special staff section, directly responsible to the III MAF Chief of Staff. According to the force order establishing the section, Colonel Read had four basic missions:

1. to reduce the combat efficiency of the VC;
2. to further the effort of the South Vietnamese Government in establishing control by attempting to modify attitudes and behavior of special audiences;
3. to coordinate psychological operations with civic action programs;
4. and finally to obtain the assistance and cooperation of the South Vietnamese villagers.<sup>43</sup>

General Walt did not expect Colonel Read to accomplish miracles, but he wanted "an increased em-

phasis on psychological operations by all III MAF commands." Colonel Read was to coordinate the III MAF efforts within the command and with the ARVN, MACV, and U.S. Information Agency and its South Vietnamese counterpart. Read remembered that his two initial problems were that "There were no T/O billets for PsyWar personnel and there were no Marines trained in PsyWar operation." He and his small staff took several steps to overcome these difficulties. They persuaded III MAF to direct its subordinate organizations to establish psychological warfare sections and instituted monthly meetings of PsyWar personnel. Moreover, III MAF requested Headquarters, Marine Corps "to provide school trained PsyWar personnel in replacement drafts, which they did." On 18 September, Read obtained operational control of the U.S. Army's 24th Psychological Operations Company's two detachments in I Corps, one at Da Nang and the other in Quang Ngai. Believing that the physical separation seriously hampered the company, Read consolidated both detachments at Da Nang and established there in October a Psychological Warfare Operations Center. By the end of the year, III MAF had a coordinated program that included the preparation of leaflets and broadcasts aimed at the enemy forces, as well as the screening of Hoi Chanh's for employment as Kit Carson scouts. According to Read, the increase in former VC rallying to the Vietnamese Government through the Chieu Hoi program was in part due to the new emphasis on psychological warfare operations.<sup>44</sup>

### *Civic Action*

The people needed more than just words to persuade them to join in the national effort against the Communists. An integral part of the Marine pacification campaign was its civic action program, aimed at improving the lot of the Vietnamese peasant as well as giving him a reason to support the government. According to Brigadier General Jonas M. Platt, General Walt's Chief of Staff during most of 1966, an effective civic action program had to fulfill certain requirements: it had to meet not only the needs of the people but involve them; the Marines should listen to what the people wanted and then offer them material and advice; work had to be done by the populace themselves.<sup>45</sup>



Marine Corps Photo 193952  
*SSgt Gerald E. Anderson from the 3d Tank Battalion assists a Vietnamese farmer to put up a windmill to pump water from the Song Cau Do. Another Marine, Sgt Enos S. Lambert, Jr. (hidden by the windmill except for his arm), helped with the project. The 3d Tank Battalion had a well-coordinated civic action program in the Hoa Tho Village complex south of Da Nang.*

Marines were to ensure that the Vietnamese Government received the credit for the various projects. Provincial, district, and village officials had to be involved from the beginning in both the planning and execution of any project. The entire effort was dependent upon coordination with the Vietnamese Government and U.S. civilian agencies so that the projects had the desired impact upon the local populace.<sup>46\*</sup>

\*General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., the Commandant of the Marine Corps during this period, observed that the civic action program in Vietnam "was made possible by a *tremendous* effort mounted in the U.S. to collect medicine, clothing, soap and food. The National Junior Chamber of Congress was largely responsible in the success of the program which resulted in *trainloads* of contributions from manufacturers and the public proceeding to West Coast ports to be loaded on government transports and ships, e.g. aircraft carriers and civilian freighters, for movement to South Vietnam." Gen Wallace M. Greene, Jr., Comments on draft MS, dtd 5May78 (Vietnam Comment File).

The activities of Lieutenant Colonel William R. Corson's 3d Tank Battalion in the Hoa Tho village complex, on the northern bank of the Cau Do River, provided an excellent example of a coordinated civic action program. In December, the battalion's civic action team sponsored a farmers' meeting in the hamlet of Phong Bac. The village chief of Hoa Tho and the hamlet chiefs participated in the event; over 80 farmers attended. They discussed raising live stock and a representative from the U.S. Army 29th Civil Affairs Company distributed seed to the farmers. After the meeting, the village chief took the occasion to tell the people of the hamlet about the Marines. He stressed that the Marines were guests of the Government of Vietnam and that they were only trying "to help the Vietnamese people in the struggle for freedom and fight against Communism."<sup>47</sup>

By the end of 1966, the Marines had accumulated impressive statistics reflecting the assistance they had furnished to the South Vietnamese. Marine units entered hamlets and villages 25,000 times during

*A Navy corpsman with the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines at Chu Lai treats an old man's infected foot. Medical assistance was one of the most popular and effective of the Marine Corps civic action efforts.*

Marine Corps Photo A369403



the year for the express purpose of conducting civic action. Navy corpsman and doctors attached to the Marines provided medical treatment for over a million South Vietnamese and trained more than 500 Vietnamese to assist in meeting the health needs of the population. Even more significantly, South Vietnamese villagers and Marines working together, completed 1,100 construction projects. The Marines had supported schools, assisted in the resettlement of victims of the war, provided basic items such as soap and food, and generally attempted to make life somewhat easier for the civilian population, caught in the webs of war. To the Marines, civic action was more than just a giveaway, but a weapon designed specifically to win the people to the government cause.<sup>48</sup> One young Marine officer, First Lieutenant Marion (Sandy) L. Kempner, described the intermingling of the anti-guerrilla war and the civic action program in the following terms:

We have been doing a lot of work in the villages lately, of the community development type, so it looks as though I will never get away from the Peace Corps days. We must be really messing up these people's minds: by day we treat their ills and fix up their children and deliver their babies and by night, if we receive fire from the general direction of their hamlet, fire generally will reach them albeit not intentionally; they must really be going around in circles. But I guess that just points up the strangeness of this war. We have two hands, both of which know what the other is doing, but does the opposite anyway, and in the same obscure and not too reasonable manner—it all makes sense, I hope.<sup>49</sup>

### *The I Corps Joint Coordinating Council*

The Marines never presumed that they had the sole solution for “winning the hearts and minds” of the people. They were among the first to recognize that they needed assistance from the other U.S. agencies in Vietnam, civilian as well as military, and from the Vietnamese themselves. The U.S. Army 29th Civil Affairs Company had arrived in June 1966 to furnish expert assistance to the Marines in their relations with the South Vietnamese civilians. Long before that, General Walt had recognized the need for coordination. In August 1965, he had contacted Marcus Gordon, the chief of the U.S. Operations Mission for I Corps at that time, and suggested the formation of an interagency clearing committee. The result of his efforts was the creation of the I Corps Joint Coordinating Council (JCC). Eventually, representatives from American civilian agencies, Marines, and the South Vietnamese I Corps command met weekly to try to give unified direction to the allied civic action effort.

Although the spring political crisis temporarily halted the functions of the council, it began to meet on a regular basis once again in July 1966. By this time the JCC had sponsored several subordinate committees designed to meet specific problems: public health, psychological warfare, roads, commodities distribution, port affairs, and education, and by the end of the month, the council was prepared to expand its activities even further.

*The I Corps Joint Coordinating Committee which was established to provide liaison and direction to the various U.S. and South Vietnamese military and civilian agencies' assistance programs, poses for a group picture in August 1966. LtCol Donald L. Evans, the recorder of the committee, is third from the left in the back row, and MajGen Lewis B. Robertshaw, Commanding General, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, the chairman of the committee, is fourth from right in the front row.*

Marine Corps Photo A801957 (LtCol R.J. O'Leary)



On 3 August, Mr. Gordon suggested that the JCC should concern itself with all of I Corps. He observed that, until now, the cities of Da Nang and Hue, and the Marines TAORs had received most of the council's attention. He stated that the JCC, as the overseeing body, could function more significantly if it considered all projects in the context of all of I Corps. Major General Robertshaw, Commanding General of the 1st MAW and permanent chairman of the JCC, agreed with Gordon's remarks and suggested that the group should hold one meeting a month in a different provincial capital to give the South Vietnamese provincial officials and their American advisors the opportunity to discuss their particular problems with the JCC.<sup>50</sup> The JCC concurred with General Robertshaw's suggestion. For the rest of the

year, it held its monthly meeting in a different provincial capital, on a rotating basis.

In addition, the JCC encouraged the provinces to establish their own committees to coordinate Revolutionary Development efforts at the provincial level. By the end of December, three provincial committees had been formed. Although the provincial committees mirrored the organization, mission, and functions of the I Corps JCC, they were not subordinate to the larger council, but operated independently. The important aspect of both the I Corps JCC and the provincial committees was that they provided a vehicle for the coordination of the military and civilian aspects of pacification, and at the time the only such organizations at the corps and province levels in South Vietnam.

## CHAPTER 15

# Pacification, the Larger Perspective

### *Pacification Receives Priority—Reorganization and Support of Revolutionary Development—Measurements of Progress*

#### *Pacification Receives Priority*

The actual pacification gains in 1966 were relatively modest. Although the government had hoped to have placed Revolutionary Development teams in over 300 villages by the end of the year, the Vietnamese were only to fulfill approximately one-third of this goal. General Westmoreland estimated that the percentage of the South Vietnamese population that lived in relative security had risen from 50 percent to approximately 60 percent, due largely to the presence of American troops, rather than to any effort on the part of the Vietnamese themselves.<sup>1</sup> The

major element of change in pacification during 1966 was the redirection and new emphasis given to the entire concept by MACV and the South Vietnamese.

The February Honolulu Conference established six primary aims to be accomplished by the end of 1966. Four of these pertained to defeating the enemy's main force units and to opening up lines of communication in the country. The other two applied to the "other war" being waged in the countryside. The allies were to expand secured areas and the government was to complete the pacification of high priority areas.<sup>2</sup>

In April 1966, Deputy Ambassador William Porter established a special task force to determine American interagency priorities to support the South Vietnamese Revolutionary Development Program.

*President Johnson (center of picture with back to camera) meets informally with South Vietnamese leaders and Adm Ulysses S. Grant Sharp, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command, in Honolulu during February 1966. Seated to the left of the President is the South Vietnamese Chief of State, Nguyen Van Thieu, and on the right is Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky. Adm Sharp is on the sofa facing the President. MACV was a subordinate unified command under Adm Sharp.*

Marine Corps Historical Center



This group made its report in July and in its introduction declared:

After some 15 months of rapidly growing U.S. military and political commitment to offset a major enemy military effort, the RVN has been made secure against the danger of military conquest, but at the same time it has been subjected to a series of stresses which threaten to thwart U.S. policy objectives. . . .<sup>3</sup>

The task force stated that the lack of success was due to a variety of reasons, but in essence, should be attributed to the fact that the South Vietnamese had provided relatively little protection for the hamlets. In its report, the committee made 35 recommendations, which it divided into 16 "highest priority" tasks, followed by 10 "high priority" tasks, and finally a nine-point list of lesser priority programs. One Defense Department historian noted that in at least one of the 35 different priorities one could fit nearly every program and policy then pursued in Vietnam.<sup>4</sup> Although the committee's report lacked a degree of focus, many of its recommendations were accepted. One of these was the formation of still another study group to examine the roles and missions of each of the military and paramilitary organizations in Vietnam.

In July, the U.S. Mission Council directed a staff member, Army Colonel George D. Jacobson, to head an interagency committee which was to study the entire problem of Revolutionary Development. The committee submitted its findings and recommendations to Deputy Ambassador Porter on 24 August. The study group warned that the Revolutionary Development cadres were not a panacea in themselves. According to the study, Revolutionary Development demanded a radical reform within both the Government of Vietnam and its armed forces for success. The committee noted that such a radical change in the government and armed forces was very unlikely, unless the U.S. military and civilian officials exerted strong pressure on the Vietnamese at a very high level. Jacobson's group emphasized that the goal of the Americans in Vietnam was the establishment of a South Vietnamese Government which was capable of gaining popular support and winning the war. The committee commented that although American forces should have the destruction of the enemy's main forces as their primary mission, U.S. troops could join with local ARVN and paramilitary forces in clearing operations

to support Revolutionary Development. The study group specifically cited the Marine combined action and County Fair programs as activities to be encouraged.

The roles and mission group placed major emphasis upon changing the role of the Vietnamese Army. Analyzing the course of the war, the study panel noted that the ARVN had played only a minor part in brunting the challenge of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong regular forces. On the other hand, most of the war against the local guerrillas in the countryside had fallen upon the shoulders of the regional and popular force militiamen, who, by themselves, were unable to meet the challenge. The committee strongly urged that the entire orientation of the regular South Vietnamese Army be directed toward providing security for revolutionary development. Through coordination with the local government forces, the Army could conduct aggressive small-unit operations, night and day, in and around government-controlled hamlets and villages, as well as in areas to be pacified. The report called for an overhaul of the South Vietnamese Army command system in relation to pacification. According to the group's recommendations, most of the ARVN combat battalions should be assigned to area commanders for extended periods of time and Army division commanders should not be permitted to withdraw those battalions during that specified assignment. The aim was to remove the division commanders from the Revolutionary Development chain of command. It was the belief of the study group members that ARVN division commanders and staffs were preoccupied with the large-unit war and would not or could not give revolutionary development the attention it required.<sup>5</sup>

Although General Westmoreland disagreed with the recommendation to take away the division commanders' responsibility for pacification, he, too, was arriving at the opinion that the South Vietnamese Army should be reoriented toward support of Revolutionary Development. In fact, this was to be the main thrust of the U.S.-South Vietnamese Combined Campaign Plan for 1967. The MACV staff had started its planning for 1967 during the spring of 1966 and by midsummer most of the concepts had been worked out. On 7 July, the Mission Council authorized General Westmoreland to establish a planning group to coordinate U.S. planning for Revolutionary Development and to participate with



Marine Corps Historical Center

*U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk (center of picture) confers in Saigon with South Vietnamese Prime Minister Ky and U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. Ambassador Lodge was a strong proponent of an active pacification program.*

the Vietnamese in forming the 1967 Revolutionary Development plan.

On 10 August, U. S. Army Major General John C. Tillson III, the MACV J-3, reported to the Mission Council on the progress of the planning effort for 1967. He noted that the MACV concept was coordinated closely with the Jacobson Task Force on Roles and Missions. General Tillson told the Council members that the American staff proposed to the Vietnamese that the ARVN assume the primary mission of direct support for Revolutionary Development, while U.S. military forces met the threat of the VC/NVA main forces and carried offensive operations into the enemy's base areas. According to Tillson, General Westmoreland had already reached an agreement with General Vien of the Vietnamese General Staff that the ARVN would devote at least half of its effort in the I, II, and III Corps areas to direct support of Revolutionary Development. In the Mekong Delta, or IV Corps, where there were no U.S. troops at the time, the South Vietnamese Army was to allocate at least 25 percent of its force to pacification. General Tillson indicated that greater emphasis on the pacification program on the part of the Vietnamese Army would require some changes of South Vietnamese attitudes.<sup>6</sup>

General Westmoreland summed up the entire concept of the strategy that the allied forces were to

follow in a message to Admiral Sharp on 26 August. He stated that American forces would provide the shield behind which the South Vietnamese could shift their troops in direct support of Revolutionary Development. The MACV commander declared, "Our strategy will be one of a general offensive with maximum practical support to area and population security in further support of Revolutionary Development."<sup>7</sup> Although emphasizing Revolutionary Development, General Westmoreland continued to stress that American forces, in coordination with the Vietnamese, had to take the fight to the enemy "by attacking his main forces and invading his base areas."<sup>8\*</sup> He declared that there could be no Revolutionary Development unless the

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\*General Greene, the Marine Corps Commandant during this period, observed in his comments that Westmoreland's strategy as outlined in the message to Admiral Sharp was "Still the search and destroy concept." Greene believed that the South Vietnamese Armed Forces at the time were unable on their own to support Revolutionary Development and that "Westmoreland's 'shield' should have been established on the perimeter of secured areas and great effort devoted to bringing the people into the national fold. . . . The goal should have been positive local security for the population in the villages and hamlets," and that not enough U.S. forces were providing area security. Gen Wallace M. Greene, Jr., Comments on draft MS, dtd 5May78 (Vietnam Comment File).

enemy's main force units were prevented from gaining access to the populated areas. In an appendage to the message, Ambassador Lodge indicated his concurrence with the overall MACV strategy, although stressing more than Westmoreland the importance of pacification. The Ambassador wrote:

After all, the main purpose of defeating the enemy through offensive operations against his main forces and bases must be to provide the opportunity through Revolutionary Development to get at the heart of the matter, which is the population of RVN.<sup>9</sup>

By this time, the combined planning for 1967 was well under way. On 17 September, the MACV and the South Vietnamese staffs published the first draft of the Combined Campaign Plan and submitted it for staffing and coordination. During the following week, representatives from both Vietnamese and American commands visited each of the corps areas and presented copies of the draft plan to the Vietnamese Corps commanders and the American component commands. By the first week in October, all echelons of the Vietnamese and MACV chain of command had commented on the overall plan. In the interim, the Joint U.S. Agency Planning Group, in coordination with General Thang's ministry, had designated the four national priority areas and developed the general guidelines for Revolutionary Development in 1967.<sup>10\*</sup> After incorporating these concepts, as well as the comments from the Vietnamese and American field commanders, the final version of the plan was prepared and on 7 November, General Westmoreland and General Vien, as Chief of the Vietnamese Joint General Staff, signed the document in a formal ceremony.

The signing of the combined plan was only the beginning of the real work in forming the strategy for the next year. Much of this burden fell upon the major subordinate American and South Vietnamese commanders who had to prepare their own plans in accordance with the new guidelines. The combined

plan's reemphasis on pacification, redirecting the Vietnamese Army from search and destroy operations to the support of Revolutionary Development, caused further complications. As a result, the military planners had to take into consideration the provincial Revolutionary Development programs which had yet to be completed. On 14 November, General Thang, accompanied by members of his staff and both American civilian and military advisors, began to visit each of the 44 provinces to review and approve provincial Revolutionary Development plans.

One week later, General Westmoreland briefed the Mission Council on the allied objectives as outlined in the new plans. He explained that the primary mission of the Vietnamese Armed Forces was to support the Revolutionary Development activities, with particular emphasis upon the national priority areas. American forces were to reinforce the Vietnamese Army, but destruction of the Viet Cong and NVA main force and base areas was their primary mission. According to the plan, there was to be no clear-cut division of responsibility. ARVN forces would still conduct search and destroy missions while the American forces would continue to provide direct support and assistance to Revolutionary Development activities.

The plan contained two significant innovations. It required the Vietnamese and American subordinate commands to prepare supporting plans designed specifically to accomplish the objectives of the various provincial Revolutionary Development plans. The combined plan also required quarterly reports which would indicate progress in achieving these goals.<sup>11</sup>

On 20 December, General Thang had completed the review of most of the provincial plans. With the reception of the various subordinate campaign plans, on 29 December, General Westmoreland signed a combined MACV/JGS directive which required the preparation of sector security plans to coordinate military support of Revolutionary Development in each province. This directive was published the next month. By the end of the year, the Vietnamese general staff announced that 40 to 50 ARVN battalions were to provide security for the pacification effort in the selected priority areas.

South Vietnamese mobile training teams had already been established to instruct ARVN battalions in Revolutionary Development. These teams

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\*The national priority areas remained much the same as they had been during 1966, although there was some expansion in all of the corps areas with the exception of ICTZ. There was to be no overall Revolutionary Development GVN Plan for 1967. Instead the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, assisted by the Joint U.S. Agency Planning Group, was to develop detailed guidelines for provincial RD plans. Each province then was to develop its individual plan for Revolutionary Development. The aggregate of the 44 provincial plans was to constitute the Vietnamese Government's RD plan.

were to indoctrinate the South Vietnamese troops with a positive attitude toward the population as well as understanding of the pacification mission. All Vietnamese maneuver battalions, with the exception of the general reserve, were slated to receive this training.

*Reorganization and Support  
of Revolutionary Development*

Throughout the latter half of 1966, the Americans and South Vietnamese continued to adjust and examine their pacification organizations and concepts, while still planning for 1967. General Westmoreland, in a message to Admiral Sharp, explained that Revolutionary Development goals and supporting plans were nonexistent when the 1966 combined plan was developed. He noted that in the period from March to December 1966 goals were changed three times. He declared that the 1966 military buildup provided the necessary security which permitted American and South Vietnamese commands to turn their attention toward Revolutionary Development.<sup>12</sup> The general observed that very often Revolutionary Development had not functioned properly because of a lack of command interest, but he believed that with the renewed emphasis upon pacification since July, "the overall organization appears to be functioning more effectively."<sup>13</sup>

One of the basic changes that the South Vietnamese made during the year was to expand General Thang's authority. On 12 July, his title was changed from Minister for Revolutionary Development to Commissioner-General for Revolutionary Development. The new title included responsibility for the Ministries of Public Works, Agriculture, and Administration in addition to his own ministry. Two months later, his authority was expanded again; on 23 September he became Assistant to the Chief, Joint General Staff for Territorial Affairs and Pacification. General Thang still retained control of Revolutionary Development, but had gained the additional responsibility for the development of military policy in support of Revolutionary Development. His new powers also made him responsible for the training, disposition, and employment of the South Vietnamese Regional and Popular Forces.

The purpose of the reorganizations was to provide the South Vietnamese with a centrally directed

pacification program which could respond to local needs. General Thang organized Revolutionary Development councils on district, province, and corps levels. The chairman of each district council automatically became a member of his provincial council. In like fashion, the chairman of each succeeding council became a member of the next higher level council. General Thang served as Secretary General of the National Central Council and the Revolutionary Development Ministry was the executive agency of the National Council. On each level, the military commander who was responsible for overall security was also a council member, thus integrating the military and civilian aspects of pacification.

During this period, General Westmoreland also modified his 1966 plans to include stronger support for Revolutionary Development. On 20 July, the MACV commander issued a directive outlining the planning programs for his staff. The order, in no uncertain terms, stated that all MACV concepts and plans ". . . must be closely integrated with and support the National Revolutionary Development Program."<sup>14</sup> General Westmoreland noted in his 26 August message to Admiral Sharp that his Southwest Monsoon Planning Directive for the period 1 May through 31 October 1966, which supplemented the 1966 combined plan, required general security and support of Revolutionary Development. Although the overall strategy was to contain the enemy through spoiling attacks against his main force units, the American command was to use all available remaining units for area and population security in support of pacification. The MACV commander declared that all had not gone as planned:

The threat of the enemy forces (VC and NVA) has been of such magnitude that fewer friendly troops could be devoted to general area security and support of Revolutionary Development than visualized at the times our plans were prepared for the period.<sup>15</sup>

In the other supplemental plan for 1966, the Northeast Monsoon Campaign Plan covering the period 1 November 1966 to 1 May 1967, General Westmoreland intended to continue a general offensive "with maximum practical support of . . . Revolutionary Development."<sup>16</sup> He visualized that a large number of American maneuver battalions would be committed to TAOR operations. Their missions were to encompass base security as well as

support of Revolutionary Development. The American forces were to conduct numerous patrols throughout their TAORs, while at the same time maintaining an active civic action program. U.S. troops were to work in close association with ARVN and the local militia, bolstering the South Vietnamese combat effectiveness. Westmoreland believed that American division commanders, working in close association with their ARVN counterparts, would be able to influence the South Vietnamese to pay more attention to pacification.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the remainder of the year, General Westmoreland periodically reported on the continuing participation of American troops in support of the pacification program. On 16 September, he informed Admiral Sharp that during the period 28 August-3 September, 73 U.S. battalion days were devoted to pacification. He indicated that he planned to employ as many as half of the American infantry battalions to support pacification in their respective TAORs.<sup>18</sup> On 19 September, he told Ambassador Lodge that approximately 40 percent of the U.S. forces were engaged in providing area security, while the other 60 percent were involved in offensive operations against main force units.<sup>19</sup> A few weeks later, Westmoreland indicated to Admiral Sharp that although units with the priority mission of security would be employed against enemy main force troops, they would not be committed out of their TAORs for extended periods of time.<sup>20</sup> General Westmoreland believed the basic contribution of the American forces was their success against regular enemy units, and he contended that this success permitted the development of plans to assign the South Vietnamese Army to Revolutionary Development protection in 1967.<sup>21</sup>

The most important changes in the U.S. pacification organization were to be made in the civilian organization in South Vietnam. For some time, senior American officials had believed that the American civilian apparatus in support of South Vietnamese Revolutionary Development needed better coordination and direction. In mid-August, Presidential advisor Robert W. Komer prepared a memorandum entitled "Giving a New Thrust to Pacification," in which he proposed three alternative means of providing central direction to the pacification effort. These were:

Alternative one—Put Porter in charge of all advisory and pacification activities, including the military.

Alternative two—Unifying the civilian agencies into a single civilian chain of command, and strengthen the military internally—but leave civilian and military separate;

Alternative three—Assign responsibility for pacification to Westmoreland and MACV, and put the civilians in the field under his command.<sup>22\*</sup>

The significance of these proposals was that alternatives two and three foreshadowed the actual changes that were to occur. At the Manila Conference, the South Vietnamese leaders vowed their intent to commit ARVN forces to clear and hold operations in support of Revolutionary Development. Shortly afterwards, Secretaries McNamara and Rusk sent a joint message to Ambassador Lodge directing him to consolidate U.S. civilian support of Revolutionary Development under one office.

According to the authors of the *Pentagon Papers*, "this cable was not repeated to Saigon until after the Manila Conference; presumably in the intervening period, the President had a chance to talk to Lodge and Westmoreland about the matter, since they were both at Manila. . . ." <sup>23</sup> The President arrived in the Philippines on 23 October. The seven-nation conference (the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Thailand, Republic of Vietnam, Republic of the Philippines, and Republic of Korea) took place on 24-25 October.<sup>24</sup>

One month later, Ambassador Lodge announced the formation of the Office of Civil Operations (OCO). This office, as an Embassy activity, was to direct all American civilian support of Revolutionary Development. The deputy director of USAID in South Vietnam, L. Wade Lathram, became the first director of the new organization. One of the new

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\*In its comments, the Center of Military History observed that Presidential advisor Komer had agitated for increased support of pacification long before his August memorandum. Several U.S. civilian agencies, specifically the Agency for International Development, the U.S. Information Agency, and the Central Intelligence Agency, "had a stake in some aspect of the pacification process [in Vietnam], and it was the lack of focus of their efforts as well as those of the U.S. military that eventually prompted the President to integrate civil and military support of pacification under Westmoreland and to appoint Komer as Westmoreland's deputy for Pacification." CMH, Comments on draft MS, dtd 17May78 (Vietnam Comment File). For a detailed study of the reorganization of the pacification program, see: Thomas W. Scoville, "Reorganizing for Pacification Support," MS (to be published by CMH).

features of the reorganization was the appointment of a regional director to each of the four corps areas, with full authority over all American civilians in his respective region and responsible directly to Latham.

Latham's organization was to last only a few months. In May 1967, Presidential advisor Komer's third alternative was adopted. General Westmoreland assumed full control of both the American civilian and military pacification effort. Komer became General Westmoreland's Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), with the rank of ambassador, and assumed full responsibility for the entire program.

*Measurements of Progress*

Since 1964, MACV had issued a monthly report, which attempted to depict in map form the status of pacification in South Vietnam. The map showed areas under five categories: 1. pacified; 2. undergoing pacification; 3. cleared of significant VC military units; 4. controlled by neither GVN nor the VC; and, 5. controlled by the VC. Although the American command together with the Embassy made minor modifications in format during 1965 and early 1966, Washington authorities had serious reservations about the objectivity and accuracy of the pacification reporting system.<sup>25</sup>

Independently, the Marine Corps developed its own criteria for pacification in the I Corps TAORs. In February 1966, General Walt inaugurated a reporting system which required subordinate commands to submit a monthly analysis of the degree of pacification in each village in its area of operations. The analysis was made on the basis of five general progress indicators:

1. Destruction of enemy units
2. Destruction of enemy infrastructure
3. GVN establishment of security
4. GVN establishment of local government
5. Degree of development of New Life Program

Each indicator was given a value of 20 points, with 100 points for the entire system. Each general criteria included a further breakdown. Under the heading of "Establishment of Local Government," there were the following subdivisions:

- a. Village chief and council in office . . . . . 4 points
- b. Village chief residing in village . . . . . 3 points
- c. Hamlet chiefs and councils in office . . . . . 4 points

- d. Hamlet chiefs residing in hamlet . . . . . 4 points
- e. Psychological operations and information program established . . . . . 3 points
- f. Minimum social and administrative organization . . . . . 2 points
- TOTAL . . . . . 20 points<sup>26</sup>

Each component of the system was dependent on the other, providing a balance to the total picture. No great achievement in the category "Establishment of Local Government" could be expected unless advances had also been made in the first category, "Destruction of Enemy Units." A high score in "Establishment of New Life Program Development" would only be possible if it were accompanied by gains in security and the establishment of local government apparatus in the villages. A score of 60 points for a village indicated that a "firm GVN/US influence" had been established, and if a village attained the mark of 80 points, it could be considered pacified.

The formulation of the Marine Corps indices of progress was to have an impact that extended beyond the confines of I Corps. In Washington, the Administration had established an interdepartmental committee, headed by George Allen of the Central Intelligence Agency, to come up with a common denominator to measure progress. The Allen study group visited III MAF in May and borrowed freely from the Marine system in preparing its own measurement indices. The result was the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES). After a field test in South Vietnam, the U.S. Mission Council, on 13 December, approved the implementation of HES throughout the country as soon as practical.<sup>27</sup>

Although the Allen concept had some very striking similarities to the Marine evaluation system, there were also some basic differences. The most important of these were the assigned report originators and the primary units to be measured. In the Marine report, the Marine field commander attempted to grade the pacification progress of each village in his TAOR. On the other hand, the HES report was made by the U.S. district advisor in conjunction with the South Vietnamese authorities; the American advisor and his Vietnamese counterpart attempted to evaluate each individual hamlet within their district.

There were other differences between the two reporting systems. HES utilized a letter grading procedure to measure the rate of pacification progress, as compared to the Marine numerical designation.

The HES grades ran from A to E with an A-rated hamlet indicating the highest degree of pacification. Yet, according to one Marine Corps source, both evaluation reports eventually complemented one another and told much the same story.<sup>28</sup>

Both reports were attempting to measure what was many was unmeasurable: how to quantify security, or how to give a numerical rating or letter grade to a man's devotion to a cause. Marine staff officers raised these same questions. At a 3d Marine Division briefing in April 1967, Lieutenant Colonel Edward R. McCarthy, the division civil affairs officer, observed:

We are required to furnish monthly, a report on the pacification progress of villages located in areas in which we operate. . . . As you can see, it requires a good deal of detailed information about each village and assigns a weight to each item. The total apparently gives a rating of pacification progress. This bothers us a good deal because it is difficult for us to obtain accurate data and the report is only a best estimate on our part. In many cases the score does not represent the real situation. Additionally, there is at least an inference that we are engaged in pacification operations in those villages upon which we report. In most cases this is not true; we are merely providing a modicum of security and conducting some military civic action. We are not equipped, for example, to remove the VC infrastructure, the key element of any pacification operation. We understand that a great deal of credence is placed in this report and that it was the forerunner of the even more detailed hamlet evaluation report which must now be completed every month by subsector and sector advisors. We recognize the pressures for quantifying this information but we hope that those at higher echelons are fully aware of the problems that are inherent in such an approach.<sup>29</sup>

The briefer's remarks placed the measurement reports in perspective. Both evaluation systems were useful tools; they provided American and South Vietnamese commanders and officials with an educated guess about where problems existed and where progress had been made; but the emphasis is on the word "guess." Both reports attempted to establish rational criteria to indicate the status of each village or hamlet. What could not be assessed was the fact that an individual's sense of security and loyalty was not necessarily dependent upon appeals to reason, but also depended upon emotional and psychological factors. The reports were able to furnish general trends in a given area, but could not be an absolute replica of reality, and indeed in most cases were inflated.<sup>30</sup> One Marine general noted, "There are various indices by which a hamlet is judged 'secured' or 'pacified': one of the most pragmatic



Marine Corps Photo A188021  
*LtCol Warren P. Kitterman, Commanding Officer, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, presents a gift to an elder of a Vietnamese hamlet in the Chu Lai sector. Progress in pacification depended very heavily on the presence of the Marine battalions.*

and useful is whether or not the chief sleeps in his hamlet at night."<sup>31</sup>

Much of the pacification program depended on whether the hamlet or village chief backed it and whether he felt secure in his position. Lieutenant Colonel Warren P. Kitterman, the commander of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, remembered that one hamlet chief told him: "I believe in what you are doing and will cooperate in every way; however, if I openly endorse your presence, what happens to me when you are gone?" The Marine battalion departed Chu Lai for Da Nang in early 1967 and Kitterman recalled: "The chief reminded me of what he had said, with a smile on his face. I understood."<sup>32</sup> This incident in microcosm illustrated the mercurial quality of pacification progress.

PART VII  
SUPPORTING THE TROOPS



## CHAPTER 16

# Marine Aviation in 1966

*Wing Organization and Expansion—The Pilot Shortage—Marine Aircraft: The New and the Old—Relations with the Seventh Air Force—Marine Air Control Systems—Air Defense—Air Operations*

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### *Wing Organization and Expansion*

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing was a widely dispersed organization in January 1966. Its headquarters, two fixed-wing tactical groups, MAGs-11 and -12, and two helicopter groups, MAGs-16 and -36, were all operating in I Corps in support of III MAF ground units. One helicopter squadron, HMM-363, was at Qui Nhon in II Corps under the operational control of the Commanding General, U.S. Field Forces, Vietnam. In addition, several other wing organizations, including the helicopter squadron serving with the Special Landing Force of the Seventh Fleet, were located outside Vietnam. Most of the out-of-country wing elements operated under the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (Rear), commanded by Colonel Harry W. Taylor, at Iwakuni, Japan. At this time, 1st MAW (Rear) consisted of Marine Wing Service Group-17 and one fixed-wing group, MAG-13, at the Marine Air Station, Iwakuni, and a Marine transport refueling squadron, VMGR-152, a Marine air control squadron, MACS-6, and the helicopter squadrons at Futema, Okinawa. According to Colonel Taylor, General McCutcheon, the wing commander, in actual practice still retained direct control of the units of the 1st MAW (Rear):

He directed the rotation of fixed-wing squadrons. He delegated and relieved the SLF helo squadrons. He transferred people back and forth. He directed the utilization of the KC-130s on Okinawa.<sup>1</sup>

The III MAF staff noted with concern that the wide dispersal of the wing had caused some fragmentation of the Marine air-ground team. Colonel Edwin H. Simmons, the III MAF G-3, observed in January 1966 that the dispersal and varied responsibilities of the wing, "although not precluding adequate support for III MAF, still had a detrimental ef-

fect on the Marine command's capability to pursue its primary mission."<sup>2</sup> General McCutcheon later observed that the wing's size had increased to such an extent that his staff could not be expected to manage men and equipment spread all over the Pacific.<sup>3</sup>

To ease General McCutcheon's burden, General Krulak ordered the dissolution of the 1st MAW (Rear) on 15 April. Colonel Taylor became the 1st MAW Chief of Staff while the commanding officer of MAG-13, Colonel Edwin A. Harper, became the senior Marine aviation officer in the Western Pacific outside Vietnam. He was responsible for the Marine aviation units not "in-country" and he reported directly to the newly reactivated 9th MAB.\* Colonel Harper and his successor, Colonel Douglas D. Petty, Jr., were charged with the administrative tasks pertaining to wing aviation not in Vietnam. In addition, MAG-13 served as a home base for squadrons as they rotated to and from Vietnam.\*\*

The 1st MAW still continued to grow during 1966. In January, the wing had eight helicopter squadrons and eight fixed-wing squadrons in Vietnam. By the end of the year, the number had grown to 21, 10 helicopter squadrons and 11 fixed-wing squadrons. An additional group headquarters also was added. Colonel Petty brought MAG-13 to Chu

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\*The 9th MAB was reactivated on 1 March 1966 and eventually assumed command of those major Marine ground and air components in the Western Pacific that were not deployed to Vietnam, with the exception of the 3d Force Service Regiment on Okinawa. For further discussion of the 9th MAB see Chapter 17. Another exception was MWSG-17. Although at Iwakuni until September, it remained under the direct operational control of the 1st MAW throughout this period.

\*\*The intratheater squadron rotation program was similar to that later inaugurated by the infantry units. Helicopter squadrons rotated from Futema, Okinawa, to either Vietnam or the Special Landing Force of the Seventh Fleet and vice versa. The fixed-wing squadrons rotated from Iwakuni, Japan, to Vietnam and back again.



Marine Corps Photo A421458  
*Col Douglas D. Petty, Jr. (left), Commanding Officer, MAG-13, poses upon his arrival at Chu Lai Airfield with the 1st Wing commander, MajGen Louis B. Robertshaw. The completion of the 10,000-foot main runway at Chu Lai in September permitted the stationing of another fixed-wing aircraft group at the base.*

Lai in September 1966.\* The wing's personnel strength was over 15,000 in December, an increase of nearly 6,000 over the January figure.

### *The Pilot Shortage*

The rapid deployment of Marine aviation units to Vietnam caused serious personnel problems. During his October visit to Vietnam, General Krulak noted that the two helicopter groups, MAGs-16 and -36, faced shortages in both pilots and certain critical ground personnel. The wing commander, Major General Louis B. Robertshaw, who had relieved General McCutcheon on 16 May, expressed his con-

cern to Krulak about the adequacy of the pilot replacement program. While visiting one of the Marine attack squadrons, General Krulak took the opportunity to have an informal discussion with the officers. He later remarked:

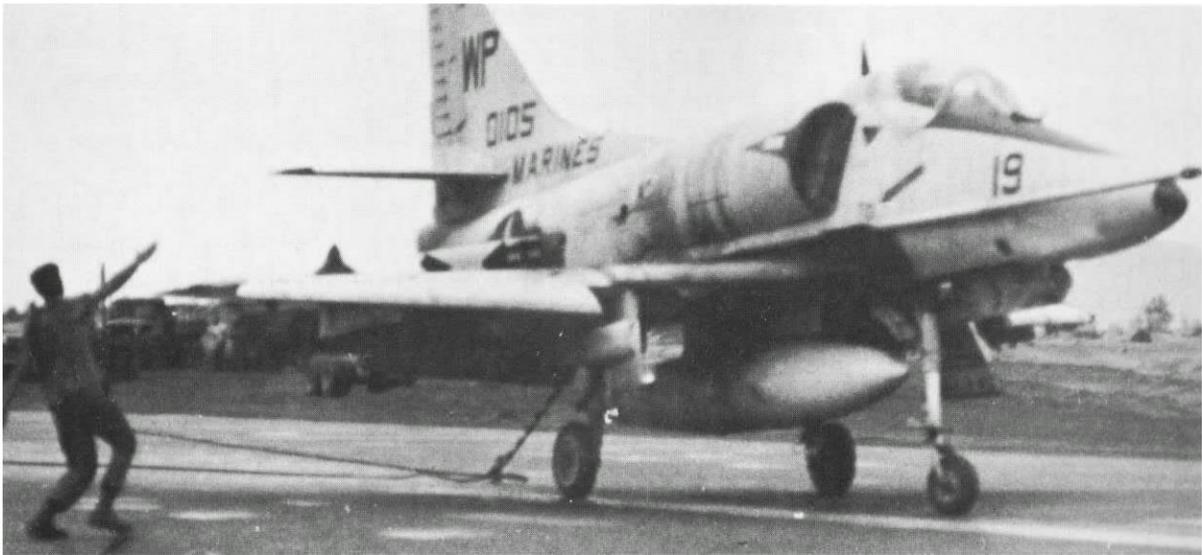
It was a fine group, and I gained many impressions from them; none particularly new. Their morale is high. None of them feel that they are working too hard, and all of them feel that their equipment is adequate. They are convinced of the wisdom of our actions in Vietnam and proud of their unit and loyal to the Marine Corps. However, several things trouble them, and it is these things which are causing much of our personnel attrition. Specifically they are apprehensive of the frequency with which they are going to have to return to Vietnam for another tour. They certainly do not like the thought of coming back twice before everyone else has gone once.<sup>4</sup>

By October, the pilot shortage had become so acute that the Department of Defense announced on the 17th that it would keep approximately 500 pilots and aviation maintenance officers in service for as long as an extra year.<sup>5</sup> In addition to deferring releases and retirements of Marine aviation officers, the Corps took other short-range actions to ease the situation. Certain aviation billets were filled by ground officers when feasible, and the number of pilots slated to enter professional schools was sharply reduced. Long-term measures included the shortening of the helicopter pilot training program, increasing the number of Marine pilot trainees at the Pensacola Naval Air Station, and turning over some of the training of jet pilots to the Air Force.<sup>6</sup>

Reviewing the major personnel events of the previous year at the July 1967 General Officers Symposium, Major General Jonas M. Platt, the Marine Corps Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, stated that the pilot shortage occurred almost overnight. He believed that the rapid buildup of new aviation units, additional overseas deployments, and the active recruitment of pilots by commercial aviation companies placed an unexpected strain on Marine pilot resources.<sup>7</sup> At the same conference, General McCutcheon, now Deputy Chief of Staff (Air), sardonically remarked: "Surely everyone knows there is no pilot shortage; it is merely that requirements exceed resources." McCutcheon then declared:

Requirements increased due to increased deployments, need for a pipeline, and approval for activation of new units both permanent and temporary. Resources have not kept pace. A requested increase in the pilot training rate was refused. Retention of aviators on active duty fell far below our earlier projections. This triple squeeze left us in a real bind.<sup>8</sup>

\*The completion of the permanent 10,000-foot airfield at Chu Lai, in addition to the SATs field, provided the additional space to accommodate MAG-13. MAG-15's Headquarters arrived at Iwakuni from the U.S. and relieved MAG-13 as the control headquarters for 1st Marine Aircraft Wing aviation outside Vietnam.



Marine Corps Photo A421254

*A Marine Douglas A-4 Skyhawk makes a Morrest landing at the Chu Lai SATS Airfield, similar to a landing on a carrier deck. SATS translates into short airfield for tactical support and is an expeditionary airfield characterized by a portable aluminum runway and aircraft landing and recovery devices.*

#### *Marine Aircraft: The New and the Old*

Accompanying the growth in personnel and squadrons in Vietnam was the introduction of several new types of aircraft during the year. As General McCutcheon later explained:

Aviation is a dynamic profession. The rate of obsolescence of equipment is high and new aircraft have to be placed in the inventory periodically in order to stay abreast of the requirements of modern war. In 1965, the Corps was entering a period that would see the majority of its aircraft replaced within four years.<sup>9</sup>

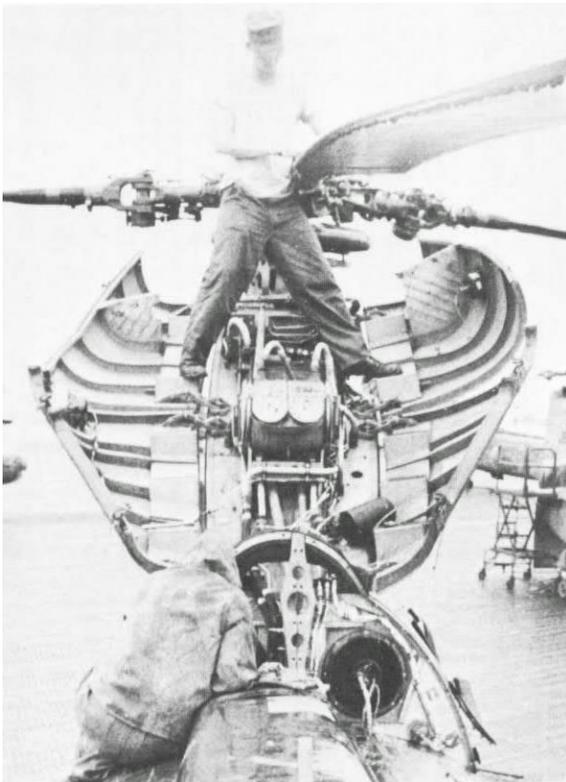
The first of the new aircraft to arrive in 1966 was the Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight. On 8 March, Lieutenant Colonel Warren C. Watson's HMM-164 flew off the USS *Valley Forge* (LPH 8) with 24 Sea Knight helicopters and moved to the Marble Mountain Air Facility near Da Nang.\* On 22 May, a second CH-46 squadron, HMM-265, arrived at Marble

*A Marine Boeing Vertol CH-46 twin-turbine, tandem-rotor transport helicopter from HMM-164, the first CH-46 squadron to arrive in Vietnam, refuels at Dong Ha Airfield during Operation Reno in May 1966. The propeller-driven aircraft facing the helicopter is a Douglas A-1 Skyraider still being flown by the South Vietnamese Air Force and U.S. Air Force air commando squadrons in 1966.*

Marine Corps Photo A187150



\*The CH-46 aircraft was designed to carry a four-man crew and 17 combat-loaded troops, approximately double the load of the older UH-34 helicopter transports. The CH-46 was a twin-turbine, tandem-rotor transport with a combat radius of 115 miles, and a cruising speed of 115 knots, approximately 25 knots faster than that of the UH-34.



Marine Corps Photo A421467

*A Marine mechanic makes adjustments on the rotor blades of a CH-46 helicopter at Marble Mountain Air Facility. During 1966, the Marines equipped these aircraft with newly designed air and fuel filters because of sand and dust getting into the engines and fuel systems. In 1967, rear tail sections on the aircraft began falling off, which required the Marine Corps to ground all CH-46s in Vietnam and return them to Okinawa for structural modification.*

Mountain. By the end of the year, there were four Marine Sea Knight squadrons in Vietnam, the two at Da Nang and HMMs-165 and -262 assigned to MAG-36 at Ky Ha.

After arriving in Vietnam, unforeseen technical difficulties developed with the CH-46. When operating close to the ground, the helicopter's rotors stirred up large quantities of sand and dirt which were sucked into the craft's compressor, burning out the engines. In May, a team of technical experts from the Boeing Vertol Corporation and the General Electric Corporation, the manufacturer of the turbine engine, arrived at Marble Mountain to investigate the situation. They devised an air filter to

be installed on the front of the engines. The first filter kits arrived in July. By this time, the Marines discovered that fine powdered sand and dust were also getting into the fuel system, causing erratic operation of the engines. By 21 July, the wing grounded all of the CH-46s, except for emergency flights. With the assistance of the Boeing Vertol Corporation and the Naval Air Systems Command, the Marines equipped all of the Sea Knight aircraft with both air and fuel filters by the end of September and solved these particular problems.<sup>10\*</sup>

Several new jet aircraft arrived in Vietnam during the latter part of 1966. These were the A6A Grumman Intruder attack aircraft;\*\* the EA6A, the electronic countermeasures version of the Intruder; and the RF-4B, the photo-reconnaissance model of the F4B Phantom II. The EA6A and RF-4Bs were assigned to VM CJ-1, providing the Marine Corps reconnaissance squadron with the most sophisticated aircraft in the U.S. inventory to carry out intelligence missions over both North and South Vietnam.

The arrival of VMF(AW)-242, the A6A Squadron, brought a much needed all-weather capability to the

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\*Colonel Robert J. Zitnik, who commanded VMO-6 and served on the MAG-36 staff in 1966, observed that "Sand and dirt damage was not new to helicopters. . . . Yet the H46 engines were the first engines to be damaged." Col Robert J. Zitnik, Comments on draft MS, dtd 6Jun78 (Vietnam Comment File). The problem with the sand and dirt was not to be the last of the troubles for the CH-46. Both the CH-46A introduced in 1966 and the CH-46D, a newer and more powerful version, which entered Vietnam in 1967, were grounded during 1967 when tail sections on both models started falling off in flight. During the time the aircraft were down, the entire "fleet" of CH-46 helicopters in Vietnam was rotated to Okinawa for structural modification. For further discussion of the problems with the CH-46, see LtCol William R. Fails, *Marines and Helicopters, 1962-1973* (Washington: Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, 1978), pp. 101-2, 121-24; LtCol Lane Rogers and Major Gary L. Telfer, draft MS, "U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1967," Chapter 11. See also Col Thomas J. O'Connor, Comments on draft MS, dtd 10Jun78 (Vietnam Comment File).

\*\*The A6A Grumman Intruder was a twin-jet, low-level attack bomber specifically designed to deliver weapons on targets completely obscured by weather or darkness. It was manned by a crew of two and could carry an 18,000-pound payload. It was equipped with a digital-integrated attack navigation system and a Kaiser electronic-integrated display system enabling the pilot to "see" targets and geographical features at night or in bad weather by means of two viewing screens in the cockpit which provided a visual representation of the ground and air below and in front of the aircraft.

wing. During the worst monsoon rains in December, the squadron's 12 A6As dropped nearly 38 percent of the total ordnance dumped over enemy targets by III MAF aircraft.<sup>11</sup> Major General Robertshaw, who just prior to assuming command of the wing had served a tour as Deputy Chief of Staff (Air) at Headquarters Marine Corps, in 1978 remembered that the A6As were introduced into Vietnam so as not to:

... deny support to Marines, yet subtle enough to protect them from Seventh Air Force's eager appetite to commit them primarily to the Northern Route Package Areas [selected bombing target areas in North Vietnam] prematurely. By installation of radar reflectors at various outposts and Special Forces forward bases and limiting their introduction north to the lower Route Package areas [targets in southern North Vietnam], an orderly progression to the most demanding capabilities of A6 [aircraft] was effected to final full exploitation.<sup>12</sup>

The arrival of the new aircraft did not mean the immediate retirement of the older craft. During 1966, the UH-34 transport helicopters continued to be the mainstay "in the troop lift department." One experienced helicopter commander commented that:

The H34s had been stripped of every possible item such as seat pads, windows, doors and whatever else could be spared in order to improve the troop lift capability. . . . These aircraft, with many times overhauled engines, were surprisingly effective under the extreme operating conditions—almost always at their maximum gross weight and frequently over the recommended hovering limits.<sup>13</sup>

*Two Sikorsky UH-34D Sea Horse transport helicopters are seen lifting off after bringing Marine riflemen into a landing zone. The older UH-34s continued to be the mainstay of helicopter troop lift during 1966.*

Marine Corps Photo A421623



Marine Corps Photo A421419

*A Marine F8-E Chance-Vought Crusader from VMF(AW)-232 prepares to attack a Viet Cong position in January 1966. Another Crusader, barely visible in the upper right of the picture, dropped the bomb which caused the explosion pictured here.*

One fixed-wing squadron, VMF(AW)-232, continued to fly the F-8E Chance-Vought Crusader.\* This swept-wing fighter, originally designed for high-speed aerial combat, nevertheless was a respectable close air support aircraft. It was equipped with 20mm cannon and was the only Marine aircraft in

\*The Crusader was eventually to be replaced by the F4B Phantom II.

Vietnam configured to carry a 2,000-pound bomb until the introduction of the A6A.

The workhorse for Marine close air support continued to be the Douglas A-4 Skyhawk. Colonel Jay W. Hubbard's MAG-12, which included four A-4 squadrons at Chu Lai, consistently maintained a high sortie rate. The A-4 was a small, highly maneuverable attack jet and extremely accurate bomber. It could carry a variety of ordnance, and its payload limitation was roughly 8,000 pounds.

The most versatile fixed-wing aircraft in the Marine inventory was the F-4B Phantom II. Although a relatively new addition to Marine aviation, Phantom squadrons were among the first to be deployed to Vietnam in 1965. By the end of 1966, new F-4B squadrons had arrived, one with MAG-11 at Da Nang and three with MAG-13 at Chu Lai. The F-4B was designed for both an air-to-air and air-to-ground role. It was one of the fastest interceptors in the world, but it could also carry a payload of nearly 16,000 pounds, second only to the A6A.

In addition to the 11 fixed-wing and seven helicopter transport squadrons, the 1st MAW by the end of the year had three observation squadrons

*Col Leslie E. Brown (right of picture), Commanding Officer, MAG-12, later relieved by Col Jay W. Hubbard, poses with his squadron commanders at Chu Lai in early 1966. The MAG-12 squadrons flew the highly maneuverable Douglas A-4 Skyhawk, which was the workhorse of Marine close air support in 1966.*

Marine Corps Photo A701486



Marine Corps Photo A189384

*An unarmed Bell UH-1E helicopter approaches an LZ in Operation Prairie. The unarmed "Hueys" were commonly called "Slicks," and used for a variety of missions, not the least of which was medical evacuation. Armed Hueys carried four fuselage-mounted M-60 machine guns and two to four 2.75-inch rocket pods to be used in LZ preparation and in a ground support role.*

(VMO) equipped with UH-1E helicopters.\* The Bell UH-1E or "Huey," as it was popularly known, was the only aircraft assigned to the observation squadrons. The VMO squadrons' mission had been extended beyond observation. Unarmed Hueys, commonly called "slicks," were used for a variety of purposes, not the least of which was medical evacuation. One former MAG-16 commander, Colonel Thomas J. O'Connor, remembered: "I recall having no "Hueys" at times for battalions, colonels, and generals. But the medevac helicopter was a sacred high-priority requirement."<sup>14</sup> Other Hueys were armed and assigned to provide helicopter escort, landing zone preparation, aircraft control for fixed-wing strikes, and close support of ground troops. The gunships were armed with four fuselage-mounted M-60 machine guns, two to four 2.75-inch

\*VMO-2 and -6 were located at Marble Mountain Air Facility at Da Nang and Ky Ha Air Facility at Chu Lai, respectively, during 1966. VMO-3 arrived at Chu Lai on 29 December 1966.



Marine Corps Photo A189763

*A Marine McDonnell F-4B Phantom II is shown in flight in April 1966. The Phantom was the most versatile of the Marine fixed-wing aircraft in 1966, designed as one of the fastest interceptors in the world and also capable of carrying a payload of 16,000 pounds.*

rocket pods, and two door M-60 machine guns—sufficient to provide an impressive volume of fire.

There was much debate within the Marine Corps about the use of the Huey as a close support weapon. Some commanders argued that there was a tendency on the part of some ground officers to call for Huey close air support when fixed-wing aircraft were available and more appropriate for the occasion.\*

In any event, the increased use of the Huey in a close air support and escort roles reduced its availability for observation and coordination missions. One 3d Marine Division staff officer, Colonel George E. Carrington, Jr., later commented that in

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\*General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., the Commandant of the Marine Corps during this period, observed in his comments that some of the opposition to arming the UH-1Es, "was due to the availability of Army armed Hueys to support USMC requirements—"if the Army can provide, why should we?" In October 1964, General Greene had directed the development of a high priority project to develop a weapons kit for Marine Corps UH-1Es. Gen Wallace M. Greene, Jr., Comments on draft MS, dtd 5May78 (Vietnam Comment File) and LtCol William R. Fails, *Marines and Helicopters, 1962-1973* (Washington: Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, 1978) p. 89. For a further discussion of this subject see, "Armed Helicopters," Issues Section, *Marine Corps Gazette*, May 1966, v. 50, no. 5, pp. 45-51 and Fails, *Marines and Helicopters*, pp. 85-91.

early 1966 the Marines were "short of AOs [air observers] and artillery observation spotter planes. The helicopters were too expensive, rare, and needed for other purposes and we suffered. . . ."<sup>15</sup> This situation was somewhat alleviated with the arrival in August of a detachment of 10 Cessna O-1C Birdog light fixed-wing observation aircraft which were assigned to Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron (H&MS) 16 at Marble Mountain. By October, the detachment supported all three Marine enclaves as well as the 3d Marine Division (Forward) at Dong Ha.<sup>16</sup>

Several other independent detachments of specialized aircraft also operated with the wing and most were assigned to the H&MS of the various groups. A detachment of eight Sikorsky CH-37 helicopters was attached to H&MS-16. The CH-37s were being phased out of the Marine inventory and being replaced by the newer Sikorsky CH-53 Sea Stallions. The wing also had seven C-117 twin-engine Douglas Skytrain transports which were attached to each of the groups, one each to H&MS-11, -12, -13, -16, and -36, and two to H&MS-17. These transports made the routine administrative and logistic flights between the Marine bases and were also employed as flare planes for night operations. One Marine aviator remembered that the crews at



Marine Corps Photo A186825

*A heavy Sikorsky CH-37 twin-engine helicopter is seen recovering a damaged UH-34. The CH-37s were being phased out of the Marine inventory and being replaced by the newer Sikorsky CH-53 Sea Stallion heavy helicopter.*

first threw the “flares out by hand until a more sophisticated chute device was made.”<sup>17</sup>

The KC-130 Hercules aircraft of VMGR-152 provided an even greater logistic lift capability for III MAF. With their 15-17-ton capacity, these transport planes shuttled men and material between bases in Vietnam, Japan, Okinawa, and the Philippines. Although permanently based on Okinawa, a detachment of four planes was always maintained at Da Nang. The KC-130 was primarily configured for in-flight refueling missions. In fact, it was this refueling capability of the Marine transports which originally allowed the Marine Corps to have the “Hercules” aircraft in its inventory. When the Marine Corps had initially obtained the aircraft there had been a debate between Air Force and Marine aviation circles whether the KC-130 was basically a tanker or a transport. The Marines used it as both.

#### *Relations with the Seventh Air Force*

A more significant debate between Marine and Air Force officers was over the control of Marine aviation in Vietnam. Much of this problem had been settled by the time the 9th MEB arrived at Da Nang in the spring of 1965. Admiral Sharp and General

Westmoreland, after some initial disagreement, worked out the basic guidelines in May 1965. Major General Joseph H. Moore, the Commanding General, 2d Air Division, later to become the Seventh Air Force, was assigned as the Deputy Commander USMACV (Air). In this capacity, he had “coordinating authority” for tactical air support in South Vietnam, but not operational control of Marine air.\* General McCutcheon, as Commanding General, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, was the III MAF air commander under General Walt and controlled all aircraft operating in support of III MAF forces. Marine ground units had first priority on 1st MAF aircraft. General McCutcheon furnished General Moore with a copy of all 1st MAF mission orders in order to assist the latter with his coordinating responsibilities. Once the wing had determined the number of missions to be flown in support of III MAF, the Marines notified MACV of any excess sorties which were available. The 2d Air Division was then able to task these aircraft to support other U.S. or allied forces. On 13 July 1965, General Westmoreland promulgated these concepts in his MACV Aviation Directive 95-4.<sup>18\*\*</sup>

During 1965, Generals McCutcheon and Moore made one other major agreement pertaining to American aviation in Vietnam. This understanding applied to air defense operations in the event of North Vietnamese air attack against the south. The Marines recognized General Moore’s overall air defense responsibility in his capacity as Mainland Southeast Asia Air Defense Regional Commander. Questions, nevertheless, remained about how control was to be exercised. These were settled on 6 August 1965. The Air Force was to have overall air defense responsibility, while the Marine wing commander was to designate which forces under his com-

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\*JCS Publication 2, *Unified Action Armed Forces* defines coordinating authority as: “A commander or individual assigned responsibility for coordinating specific functions or activities involving forces of two or more Services or two or more forces of the same Service. He has the authority to require consultation between the agencies involved, but does not have the authority to compel agreement.”

\*\*Although a new MACV directive 95-4 was promulgated on 25 June 1966, there was no change in the provisions relating to control of Marine air. The new order reflected the transformation of the 2d Air Division to the Seventh Air Force.

mand would participate in air defense. He agreed that the Air Force "would exercise certain authority over those designated resources to include scramble of alert aircraft, designation of targets, declaration of HAWK missile control status, and firing orders."<sup>19</sup> General McCutcheon observed that this understanding, combined with the MACV July directive, was to provide the basic policy for "command, control, and coordination of Marine aviation in Vietnam until early 1968 and they were entirely adequate as far as III MAF was concerned."<sup>20</sup>

The subject of air control was never a dead issue and the relationship between the Seventh Air Force and the Marines remained extremely sensitive throughout 1966. General Greene, the Marine Corps Commandant, remembered that on visits during the year to Saigon, he:

. . . contested this issue directly with General Westmoreland and General Moore. General Westmoreland always shifted the argument to General Moore—never making a decision about specifics himself. I became firmly convinced that General Moore was attempting to establish a precedent in Vietnam for taking complete control of Marine Corps aviation. . . .<sup>21</sup>

Major General Robertshaw, the wing commander, later wrote:

They [the Seventh Air Force] issued several directive messages limiting our freedom to bomb in and around the DMZ for instance. In each case we referred to 95-4, sent our reply to MACV vice Seventh Air Force who for some strange reason never used the MACV title in issuing such directives. Had he done so [limited the bombing] we would have been severely handicapped and might have had more trouble in conducting air operations as we desired within I Corps anywhere, anytime, and [against] any target. III MAF not only had the right to do so but the responsibility.<sup>22</sup>

Despite differences of opinion pertaining to the interpretation of the MACV directive, the fact remained that III MAF controlled Marine air until "single management" was introduced in the spring of 1968.

### *Marine Air Control Systems*

III MAF exercised control of its aviation assets in Vietnam through its tactical air direction center (TADC) at wing headquarters in Da Nang. The TADC monitored the employment of all Marine aircraft and determined what planes would be assigned to non-preplanned missions. The TADC carried out its mission through two subordinate agencies, the

tactical air operations center (TAOC) and the direct air support centers (DASCs).

While the TAOC, maintained by Marine Air Control Squadron 7 (MACS-7), was the wing's main control center for anti-air warfare and air traffic control, the DASCs were the centers for control of direct air support of ground forces. Two Marine air support squadrons (MASS-2 and -3) provided the personnel and equipment to operate and maintain the DASCs. Originally, a DASC was established with each of the two Marine divisions' organic fire support coordination centers at Da Nang and Chu Lai. When the 3d Marine Division moved to Phu Bai in October and assumed responsibility for the entire northern area, DASCs were established at the division's command posts at Phu Bai and at Dong Ha.

Sometimes smaller "modified" DASCs were created for special operations. For example, during Operation Double Eagle in January and February, General Platt's Task Force Delta established a "mini" DASC in the Johnson City logistic support area (LSA) so the task force could control aircraft assigned to it. During many other operations, airborne DASCs on board KC-130s were employed, when the distance from ground DASCs was such that normal ground-to-air communication was unreliable.

The Marine air support squadrons also provided air support radar teams (ASRTs) equipped with the TPQ-10 radar. The TPQ-10 equipment provided the Marine Corps with the capability to control air support regardless of weather conditions. With their radar the ASRTs could track and control an aircraft equipped with a receiver within a radius of 50 miles, and tell the pilot when to drop his ordnance. The A-4, A-6, and F-4B all carried these receivers. The Marines also used the TPQ-10 radar to guide helicopters to forward bases. By December 1966, the wing had five ASRTs in operation to provide an all-weather air support system to cover the entire ICTZ coastal region and much of the mountainous area to the west. A FMFPac report observed that during the worst of the monsoon season in I Corps, from October-December 1966, the teams controlled 4,993 sorties, 31 percent of the combat sorties flown by Marine aircraft.<sup>23</sup>

### *Air Defense*

In the unlikely event that the North Vietnamese decided to launch air strikes against vulnerable allied

targets in South Vietnam, the American command had made the necessary defensive arrangements and preparations to thwart any such attack. As the Mainland Southeast Asia Air Defense Regional Commander, the Commanding General, Seventh Air Force had the responsibility for air defense in South Vietnam. In I Corps, the Seventh Air Force exercised this jurisdiction through its control and reporting center (CRC) located on Monkey Mountain, east of the city of Da Nang on the Tiensha Peninsula. The air defense battle commander at the CRC reported directly to the Seventh Air Force Tactical Air Command Center at Tan Son Nhut Airfield near Saigon. He had the authority to designate aircraft as hostile, to scramble alert aircraft, to establish weapons control status for the Marine Light Antiaircraft Missile Battalions (LAAMs), and to coordinate both fighter interceptors and surface-to-air missiles against enemy aircraft. At the end of 1966, the Seventh Air Force air defense commander in I Corps could call on 69 Marine fighters, 55 U.S. Air Force fighters, 88 U.S. Army multiple .50 caliber or 40mm antiaircraft weapons, and two U.S. Marine LAAM battalions armed with HAWK missiles.<sup>24\*</sup>

In I Corps, the major ground antiair defense was centered around the Marine 1st and 2nd LAAM Battalions, located at Da Nang and Chu Lai respectively. Both battalions had deployed to Vietnam in 1965. Indeed, the 1st Battalion was one of the first contingents to enter Vietnam, arriving at Da Nang in February 1965. In September 1965, the 2d Battalion established its base of operations at Chu Lai. Each battalion had three firing batteries and had as its basic load 108 HAWK missiles (36 per battery) and another 70 in reserve. Both battalions came under the Marine Wing Headquarters Group-1 for administrative control. Each battalion also established its own Antiaircraft Operations Center which was responsive to the Air Force CRC on Monkey Mountain for air defense control and coordination. Both battalions maintained liaison officers with the CRC to enhance this coordination.<sup>25</sup>

At the beginning of 1966, the 1st LAAM Battalion at Da Nang under Lieutenant Colonel Clyde



Marine Corps Photo A421300  
*Marines of the 2d Light Antiaircraft Missile Battalion at Chu Lai make adjustments to three HAWK missiles mounted on their pod. These mobile, surface-to-air guided missiles were designed to defend against enemy aircraft flying at low altitudes.*

L. Eyer\*\* had a total strength of 479 officers and men. Its Headquarters Battery and Battery A were located on the airfield itself while Battery B was on Hill 327 to the west of the airbase. Battery C was in the northern part of the Tiensha Peninsula to the east of the Air Force CRC. To increase the effectiveness of its defensive coverage, the battalion moved Battery A to new firing positions on Hill 724, north of the Hai Van Pass, in August, after the Seabees had hacked out a base camp for the battery in the rugged terrain. At the same time, the battalion created an Assault Fire Unit with 15 missiles, which in September deployed to Hill 55, south of Da Nang, where it provided coverage for the Vu Gia River Valley.<sup>26</sup>

At Chu Lai, the 2d Battalion, totaling about 460 officers and men under Major Edward F. Penico,\*\*\* remained in basically the same positions throughout the year. Battery A was in position on Ky Hoa Island

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\*The acronym HAWK stands for Homing-All-the-Way-Killer. The HAWK air defense is a mobile, surface-to-air guided missile system designed to defend against enemy low-flying aircraft and short-range rocket missiles.

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\*\*LtCol Eyer later in the year was relieved by Major Thomas G. Davis, who in turn was relieved by Lieutenant Colonel Merton R. Ives.

\*\*\*Major Penico was relieved by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas I. Gunning at the end of July 1966.

north of Chu Lai while Batteries B and C were located respectively immediately north and south of the airfield. At the end of the year, the battalion planned to move Battery C to Hill 141, further southeast of the airfield to provide better antiair cover for the Song Tra Bong Valley.<sup>27</sup>

During the course of the year neither battalion had occasion to fire any of its missiles with the exception of the accidental discharge of two HAWKs in June at Da Nang. Both missiles "were command destructed after lift-off," with no damage done.<sup>28</sup> Each battalion, nevertheless, kept busy with antiair exercises and practice raids using Marine fixed-wing aircraft as "targets" to test the battalion control and communications system. For example, the 1st Battalion reported in December 1966 that since 1965 it had "engaged" 1,632 of the 1,751 "raids" conducted by friendly aircraft, a successful engagement percentage of 93.3 for that extended period.<sup>29</sup> The 2d Battalion at Chu Lai could boast of similar success.

By the end of 1966, the American command believed that its air defense capabilities were more than adequate to overcome any potential air threat. Specifically, in relation to the LAAM battalions, Admiral Sharp, on 27 August, in a reevaluation of Southeast Asia air defenses decided against a planned deployment of a fourth HAWK battery to each of the missile battalions.<sup>30</sup> Earlier, the battalions had received a new stock of missiles to replace their old, which were suspected of having cracked motor casings.<sup>31</sup> Major General Robertshaw, the 1st Wing commander, later observed that the LAAM battalions were "no small deterrent to the enemy. They had their moments, took their knocks, and prided themselves in being always ready."<sup>32</sup>

### *Air Operations*

While prepared defensively, the 1st MAW made a considerable offensive contribution to the overall U.S. military campaign in Vietnam during 1966. Marine helicopters transported both U.S. and allied forces into battle and sustained them logistically. Huey gunships provided close-in air cover while fixed-wing attack aircraft flew close air support, direct air support, and interdiction missions. Although its primary mission was the support of III MAF ground forces, the Marine wing in accordance with the MACV air directive played a significant role

in Seventh Air Force air operations, both in South Vietnam and out-of-country.

The statistics of Marine flight operations in 1966 present an almost herculean effort. Marine helicopters flew well over 400,000 sorties during the year, averaging more than 30,000 sorties a month. The number of Marine helicopter sorties reached over 40,000 in July when the ground war extended to the DMZ. In December, a fairly representative month, the wing's helicopters, in over 32,000 sorties of which 75 percent were in support of III MAF, transported over 47,000 passengers and lifted 3,549.9 tons of cargo. The Marines lost a total of 52 helicopters, 39 in combat, and had a total helicopter inventory in Vietnam at the end of the year of 234 aircraft.<sup>33</sup>

Fixed-wing jet operational statistics for 1966 also provide an impressive overview of that aspect of the Marine air war. Marine jets flew over 60,000 sorties during the year at a cost of 51 aircraft, 24 of which were shot down by enemy ground fire. Of this total number of sorties, approximately 43,000 supported III MAF and allied operations in I Corps while another 17,000 supported the Seventh Air Force air campaign over South Vietnam, Laos, and North Vietnam.<sup>34</sup>

During the first half of 1966, Marine senior commanders had become concerned about the number of missions that the 1st MAW contributed to the Seventh Air Force, especially to the bombing in the panhandle of southern Laos. In December 1965, as part of the overall "Steel Tiger" air interdiction campaign in Laos, General Westmoreland had inaugurated, with the implicit consent of the Laotian Government, a new bombing effort labeled "Tiger Hound." The concept called for Air Force small fixed-wing observation aircraft, flying up to 12 miles into southeastern Laos, to direct U.S. airstrikes on targets of opportunity.<sup>35</sup> Marine attack aircraft flew 3,629 Steel Tiger/Tiger Hound sorties in support of the Seventh Air Force during the first three months of 1966, over 25 percent of the total wing jet sorties for that period.<sup>36</sup>

Believing that the air campaign in Laos was having an impact on enemy infiltration, General Westmoreland in March presented a plan to Admiral Sharp and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to expand "Tiger Hound" operations to include the southern panhandle of North Vietnam, the so-called Route Package 1 (RP-1), extending 50 kilometers above the DMZ. Up

## 1st MAW Fixed-Wing Jet Sorties, 1966\*

Month	Total**	Support of III MAF and I Corps ARVN Units	Support of 2d AD/7th AF			
			Total	Steel Tiger/ Tiger Hound	Tally Ho/ Rolling Thunder	In- Country
Jan	4171	2304	1867	1010		857
Feb	4164	2732	1432	960		472
Mar	5550	2546	3004	1659		1345
Apr	4957	2444	2513	1380		1133
May	4428	2518	1910	1134		776
Jun	4538	3028	1510	926		584
Jul	5570	4613	957	284	404	269
Aug	5761	4699	1062	9	793	260
Sep	5696	4796	900	16	825	59
Oct	4766	4154	612	72	535	5
Nov	5097	4452	645	56	576	13
Dec	5422	4648	774	233	518	23
Total	60120	42934	17186	7739	3651	5796

\*Does not include ECM/ElInt or photographic sorties

\*\*Figures derived from 1st MAW ComdCs, Jan-Dec 1966

to this point, the air war over North Vietnam had been directly under the command of Admiral Sharp. Westmoreland, in effect, was asking to assume direct control of the air space over what he called the extended battlefield, the Laotian panhandle and southern North Vietnam. On 1 April, Admiral Sharp assigned to General Westmoreland the "primary responsibility for armed [air] reconnaissance and intelligence in the southernmost portion of Northern Vietnam." The other aspect of the Westmoreland plan continued to be discussed at the JCS and Department of Defense level.<sup>37</sup>

Just prior to Sharp's decision, Lieutenant General Krulak at FMFPac alerted the Commandant, General Greene, to the possibility of a new role for MACV in the air war over the north and the implications of such a role for Marine air. Krulak observed that although the 1st MAW was heavily committed to the "Steel Tiger" campaign over Laos, its activity in the "Rolling Thunder" strikes in the north had been limited to electronic intelligence and countermeasures and combat air patrols. While not voicing disagreement with an expanded MACV/Seventh Air Force air authority, Krulak was uneasy about Marine participation in a Seventh Air Force Rolling Thunder campaign. He stated: "There

will be the requirement for operating under two distinct sets of rules in two different geographical areas."<sup>38</sup>

At III MAF Headquarters, both General McCutcheon, the 1st Wing commander, and General Walt expressed reservations about the number of sorties that the wing supplied to the Seventh Air Force. On 7 April, McCutcheon radioed Krulak that he still had not heard from the Seventh Air Force about the way MACV would implement its air campaign in the north when it received the authority. The wing commander remarked, "I am sitting back on this one and waiting to see what they come up with." General McCutcheon then reported to Krulak the extent of Marine jet operations through March and declared that he was cutting down on the sortie rate, observing that he did not want to "push ops any higher and [did not] want to get in a bind on ordnance."<sup>39</sup>

Three days later, 10 April, the commander of the Seventh Air Force, General Moore, visited General Walt at Da Nang, and asked that the Marine command increase its monthly jet sorties for Seventh Air Force missions by 30 percent. Walt denied the request and took his case directly to General Westmoreland. The III MAF commander observed that during March, a record month for Marine fixed-

## VMCJ-1 Electronic Countermeasures, Electronic Intelligence, and Photo Sorties, 1966\*

Month and Aircraft Type	ECM in NVN		ElInt in NVN		ElInt in III MAF or In- Country		Photo support of III MAF	
	7th AF	7th Flt	7th AF	7th Flt	III MAF	In-Country	In-Country	Out-of-Country
<i>Jan66</i>								
EF10B	57	2	73					
RF8A							104	
<i>Feb66</i>								
EF10B	58	20	13	2	6			
RF8A							115	
<i>Mar66</i>								
EF10B	54	37	2			14		
RF8A							160	
<i>Apr66</i>								
EF10B	56	63	2	2				
RF8A							152	
<i>May66</i>								
EF10B	58	70	9			1		
RF8A							148	
<i>Jun66</i>								
EF10B	77	106	1					
RF8A							167	
<i>Jul66</i>								
EF10B	22	142	2		12			
RF8A							168	2
<i>Aug66</i>								
EF10B	15	219	2		1			
RF8A							175	3
<i>Sep66</i>								
EF10B	18	151	8		1			
RF8A							146	10
<i>Oct66</i>								
EF10B	9	94	6	4	8			
RF4B							2	
RF8A							141	2
<i>Nov66</i>								
EF10B	6	70		2	17			
EA6A	4	42	3		9			
RF4B							154	
RF8A							55	
<i>Dec66</i>								
EF10B	31	112			26			
EA6A	16	44			10			
RF4B								
RF8A							115	21
Totals	481	1172	121	10	90	15	1802	38

\*Figures from VMCJ-1 ComdCs, Jan-Dec66.

wing operations, the 1st MAW had given over half of its total sorties to the Seventh Air Force, of which over half supported the bombing campaign over Laos. General Walt frankly stated that he could not sustain that tempo of air operations. Walt estimated, given his resources in spare parts and ordnance, that he could only support a monthly rate of 4,700 sorties per month as compared to the 5,500 figure reached in March. Of these 4,700 sorties, the Marine command required about 2,500 for its own purposes. The remaining 2,000 sorties, Walt declared, would be given to MACV/Seventh Air Force: "You can frag us for whatever are deemed the priority targets, in or out of country. We will fly south, west, or north."<sup>40</sup>

True to Walt's word, 1st MAW fixed-wing attack aircraft during the next two months averaged a monthly sortie rate of 4,700, flying slightly above the mark in April and slightly below in May. Nearly half of these sorties were in support of the Seventh Air Force with close to 60 percent of those missions over Laos. General Krulak continued to worry about the implications of these statistics. In a message to General Walt on 10 June, he declared that he recognized the desire of III MAF to demonstrate Marine flexibility but wondered about the wisdom of providing such a large percentage of Marine fixed-wing operations to the Seventh Air Force. He observed that the CinCPac rationale for the number of Marine fixed-wing squadrons in Vietnam rested on the support required by III MAF ground forces. Krulak feared that the sortie figures could be used against the Marines in interservice differences over the employment of Marine air.<sup>41</sup>

The concerns voiced by Krulak soon became moot since the enemy buildup in northern I Corps absorbed more and more of the resources of both Marine air and ground units. In June, the wing flew over 4,500 jet sorties with over 65 percent of them in support of III MAF. During July, when the Marines began Operation Hastings in northern Quang Tri Province, the wing's attack sorties reached a peak of 5,570 with over 80 percent flown in support of Marine ground units. In Hastings alone, Marine jets flew 1,600 sorties, a record number up to that time for any one operation. At the same time, Marine jets began to fly strikes north of the DMZ. With the beginning of what could be called the "DMZ War," General Westmoreland received the authority to start under his control the bombing campaign of Route Package

1, code named "Tally Ho." Patterned after the "Tiger Hound" operations over Laos, the Seventh Air Force began to fly its first Tally Ho missions over North Vietnam on 20 July. Of the 950 sorties that the 1st MAW provided the Seventh Air Force during July, over 400 were in support of the Tally Ho campaign.<sup>42</sup>

The pattern of wing jet operations established in July continued through the end of the year. During this five-month period, even with the arrival of additional fixed-wing Marine squadrons, the wing still flew 80 percent of its sorties in support of Marine forces. Of the 4,000 sorties provided to the Seventh Air Force, 80 percent of them were Tally Ho missions, thus in effect, supporting the Marine DMZ campaign in Operation Prairie.<sup>43</sup>

One Marine Corps fixed-wing squadron, Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron (VMCJ)-1 played a unique role in the air war. Tasked with the missions of providing aerial photographic reconnaissance and locating and jamming enemy radars and communication networks, the squadron flew over 3,720 sorties during the year. About half of these sorties were photographic reconnaissance missions in support of III MAF flown by both the older Chance-Vought RF-8As, the photoplane version of the Crusader fighter, and the new RF-4Bs, which arrived in October. In contrast to the photographic missions, the vast number of the electronic countermeasure (ECM) and electronic intelligence (ElInt) sorties supported the Seventh Air Force and Seventh Fleet Rolling Thunder campaign over North Vietnam. VMCJ pilots, in both the older Douglas EF-10B, a modified version of the Navy F3D night jet fighter, and the new EA6A aircraft, which arrived in October, flew over 60 percent of these missions in support of the Seventh Fleet. Indeed, one senior Marine aviator, Brigadier General Hugh M. Elwood, who relieved Brigadier General Carl as assistant wing commander in April 1966, later commented, "it was a fact that Seventh Fleet did not launch against Hanoi until a VMCJ ECM plane from Da Nang was on station and doing its thing west of Hanoi."<sup>44</sup>

The Okinawa-based Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron (VMGR)-152, reinforced with a detachment from VMGR-353, also performed extensive but often unheralded services. In addition to over 130 refuelling missions, both north and south of the 17th Parallel, the Marine KC-130 transports

made over 13,880 flights during the year, over 10,550 of them in South Vietnam. In this period, the transports carried over 124 million pounds of cargo and ferried more than 115,400 passengers.<sup>45</sup> The high water mark for the squadron was the support that it provided for Operation Hastings. From 15 July to 4 August, the Marine KC-130s flew 1,229 missions into Dong Ha, carrying 14,190 passengers and 6,764.1 tons of cargo. During the first five days of the operation, 12 of the squadron's transports made 500 sorties, including 84 night landings at the dirt airstrip at Dong Ha.<sup>46</sup> General Elwood observed that Hastings for the Marine transports "became a crash, all-out effort . . . in the course of which some 20 odd engines were completely chewed up by the laterite at Dong Ha. . . . Hastings simply could not have been without the Marines' own organic air transports."<sup>47</sup>

This statistical review of Marine air operations in 1966 tells only part of the story; it reveals the magnitude of the wing's task, but little of the underlying human drama concealed by mere numbers. For this, we must look to the personal experience of the men themselves, such as that of Lieutenant Colonel House, the commanding officer of HMM-163, who was both awarded the Navy Cross and given a letter of reprimand for his exploits during the evacuation of the A Shau Special Forces Camp.\* Major Luther A. Lono, the VMGR-152 operations officer, in his casual description of KC-130 landings at the Dong Ha airstrip, captured the dangers and difficulties of his squadron's airlift of troops and materiel in Operation Hastings: "When we made our first night landing . . . the only lighting the field had was the lights of a jeep or truck at the approach to the runway. It was a little hairy." The Marines then used flare pots to light up the runway, "but the backwash from the engines kept blowing them out."<sup>48</sup>

In much the same manner, Major Billy D. Fritsch, an F-4 pilot from VMFA-323, told of his adventures during Hastings. On the afternoon of 15 July, Fritsch had just dropped his napalm canisters on three huts approximately 5,000 meters west of the Rockpile when a nearby Air Force forward air controller notified him that he was trailing smoke. The Marine pilot applied full power and pulled back on



Marine Corps Photo A421532  
*A Marine Lockheed KC-130 Hercules refueler transport passes a Marine air traffic control radar after making a ground-control approach landing at Phu Bai. During 1966, these large transports flew over 130 refueling missions both north and south of the 17th Parallel and carried over 124 million pounds of cargo and 115,400 passengers.*

the control stick, but the jet did not respond. When the Phantom failed to clear some tall trees, Major Fritsch and his backseat flight officer, First Lieutenant Charles D. Smith, Jr., ejected and parachuted to the ground. Thirty minutes later, the Marines were rescued by an Air Force evacuation helicopter. When asked to sum up his experience, Major Fritsch lightly remarked: "I highly recommend those ejection seats, they definitely work as advertised."<sup>49</sup> Incidents such as these gave an added dimension to the bare statistics of number of sorties during any given month.

\*See Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 17

# Artillery Support in 1966

*Organization and Employment, January-June 1966—The Guns Move North and Restructuring the Command, July-December 1966*

### *Organization and Employment, January - June 1966*

At the beginning of the year, only the 3d Marine Division's artillery regiment, the 12th Marines, was in Vietnam. Colonel James M. Callender, the regimental commanding officer, maintained his headquarters west of the Da Nang Airfield and operated directly under the division. There, the regiment ran the division fire support coordination center (FSCC) and had direct operational control of the two artillery battalions in the Da Nang TAOR, the 1st and 2d Battalions, 12th Marines. Two independent units were also under Callender's direct control: the 1st 8-inch Howitzer Battery (Self-Propelled) (-) and the 3d Platoon of the 3d 155mm Gun Battery (Self-Propelled).

The regiment's 3d Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Leslie L. Page, formed the nucleus of the Chu Lai Artillery Group. Lieutenant Colonel Page commanded the group which consisted of his own unit and the 3d Battalion, 11th Marines. The Chu Lai Artillery Group was under the operational con-

trol of General Platt's command group. The two artillery battalions provided direct support for the infantry regiments at Chu Lai; the 3d Battalion, 11th Marines for the 7th Marines and the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines for the 4th Marines. The 3d 155mm Gun Battery (SP) (-) and the 1st Platoon, 1st 8-inch Howitzer Battery, both attached to the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines, were responsible for general support artillery missions at the Chu Lai base. Lieutenant Colonel Page also had the added duty of directing FSCC operations for General Platt.

At Phu Bai, the 4th Battalion, 12th Marines provided the artillery support. The battalion, like the infantry battalion, the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, in the enclave, was under the operational control of the 3d Marines at Da Nang. Lieutenant Colonel Edwin M. Rudzis, the 4th Battalion commander, had under him a total of 24 artillery pieces, including 105mm howitzers, 107mm howitzers, and both towed and self-propelled 155mm howitzers.\* Another 105mm howitzer battery arrived at Phu Bai in early March and raised the total of guns to 30. Lieutenant Col-

\*See Chapter 4.

*A 155mm M109 self-propelled howitzer prepares to fire from a position near Phu Bai in 1966. Empty shell casings can be seen in the right foreground. The 155mm howitzers had an approximate range of 15,000 meters.*

Marine Corps Photo A188624





Marine Corps Photo A187340

*Sgt Leroy Lavoie from the 1st Battalion, 12th Marines fires a 105mm howitzer in support of Marine infantry in the An Hoa sector south of Da Nang. The 105mm M101A1 is a general purpose light artillery piece with a maximum range of 11,000 meters.*

onel Rudzis later remarked, "that if the Infantry is the Queen of Battle, then at this time, the artillery [at Phu Bai] was a Duke's mixture."<sup>1</sup>

This ad hoc arrangement of III MAF artillery remained in effect for only a brief period. With the incremental arrival of the 1st Marine Division units at Chu Lai, there began a reshuffling of both infantry and artillery battalions between the three enclaves. The 1st Division artillery regiment, the 11th Marines, assumed command of the artillery at Chu Lai and, at the end of March, Lieutenant Colonel Page moved his 3d Battalion Headquarters to Phu Bai. Lieutenant Colonel Rudzis and his 4th Battalion command group then departed for Da Nang where he took over control of two of his own batteries, K and L, and the 1st 155mm Gun Battery (SP). By June, the Marines had achieved a semblance of unit integrity, with 3d Marine Division artillery in most cases supporting 3d Division infantry units and 1st Division artillery its own infantry battalions.

Lieutenant Colonel John B. Sullivan's\* 11th Marines was responsible for artillery support in the

Chu Lai TAOR while Colonel Callender's 12th Marines supported the Da Nang and Phu Bai TAORs. At Chu Lai, Lieutenant Colonel Sullivan had three of his organic battalions under his command: the 2d Battalion, 11th Marines in direct support of the 5th Marines; the 3d Battalion, 11th Marines in direct support of the 7th Marines; and the 4th Battalion, 11th Marines in general support of the Chu Lai TAOR. Colonel Callender, on the other hand, had all of his organic artillery battalions under his command, as well as the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines in direct support of the 1st Marines at Da Nang. The other artillery units at Da Nang had the following missions: 1st Battalion, 12th Marines in direct support of the 3d Marines; the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines in direct support of the 9th Marines; the 4th Battalion, 12th Marines in general support. At Phu Bai, the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines was in direct support of the 4th Marines.\*\*

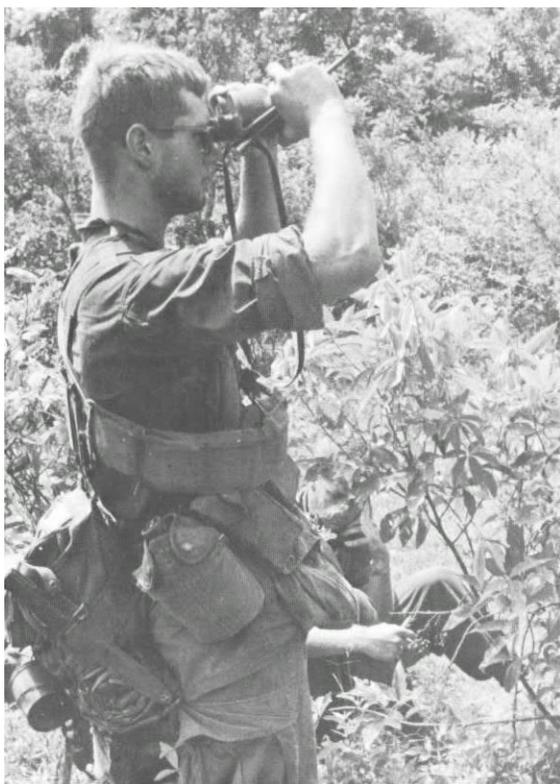
Although the organization of the III MAF artillery arm was conventional, the nature of the war added a new dimension to its employment. Since there were no frontlines in the sense of a conventional war, artillery had to be able to fire in all directions within the TAOR. The proximity of large airbases and populated areas added restrictions; flight patterns and the possibility of killing innocent civilians were major considerations in the use of artillery.

By mid-1966, both the 11th and 12th Marines had developed several techniques for dealing with these realities. Both the 1st and 3d Division FSCCs put a premium on cooperation and coordination with the wing's DASCs and the ARVN FSCCs in their vicinity. After determining that restrictive fire plans and fire zones were too cumbersome for both Marine air and artillery, the artillery units initiated a procedure called Save-A-Plane to avoid hitting friendly aircraft. The battalion or regimental FSCC involved would radio when and where artillery was going to fire. After receiving this message, it was the pilot's responsibility to avoid the restricted firing areas.

Similarly, procedures were worked out with the South Vietnamese so that Marine artillery could res-

\*Colonel Peter H. Hahn brought the 11th Marines Headquarters to Vietnam on 16 February and assumed command of the artillery units at Chu Lai on 1 March. Lieutenant Colonel Sullivan assumed command of the 11th Marines on 17 June, relieving Colonel Hahn.

\*\*The 5th Marines had arrived in Vietnam in May and assumed control of the TAOR formerly held by the 1st Marines. The latter regiment, which had relieved the 4th Marines at Chu Lai at the end of January, moved to Da Nang in June. The 4th Marines assumed command of the Phu Bai TAOR on 26 March. See Chapters 4 and 8.



Marine Corps Photo A187767  
*A Marine forward artillery observer directs fire in support of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines during Operation Virginia near Khe Sanh. His radioman can be seen sitting in the background relaying target information to the artillery battery.*

pond effectively in support of their infantry units. By February 1966, the 3d Marine Division reported that much of the red tape involved in supporting ARVN troops had been eliminated. Colonel Callender's 12th Marines was able to respond quickly to fire support requests from the ARVN 51st Regiment operating south of the Da Nang base. Prior to that time, it had been necessary for the Marines to obtain clearance from the Da Nang Special Sector Headquarters.<sup>2</sup> By midyear, both the 11th and 12th Marines were supporting ARVN infantry units as a matter of course.

Artillery batteries not only remained in support of infantry units within the TAORs, but often deployed outside of the TAORs either to support specific operations or outposts. Double Eagle provided an excellent example of Marine artillery's mobility. During the operation, more than 45 artillery displacements were made. According to General

Platt, who commanded Task Force Delta in that operation, the batteries were "rapidly displaced inland by helicopter or laterally, in small boats and craft . . . in order to keep the deep-ranging infantry within artillery firing fans."<sup>3</sup> By June, far-flung Marine offensive operations had become routine. Infantry battalions and artillery batteries were married into large task forces, operating far from the Marine bases.

### *The Guns Move North and Restructuring the Command, July-December 1966*

With the movement of the 3d Marine Division north of the Hai Van Pass and the assumption of both the Da Nang and Chu Lai TAORs by the 1st Marine Division, the artillery regiments, like all the other components of the two divisions, underwent a major realignment. The 12th Marines moved to the DMZ area, but retained a provisional artillery battalion consisting of two 105mm howitzer batteries, a 107mm mortar battery and the 1st 155mm Gun Battery at Phu Bai. Colonel Benjamin S. Read,\* the 12th Marines commanding officer, established his headquarters at Dong Ha where his 4th Battalion provided general support. His 1st Battalion at the "artillery plateau," which later became Camp Carroll, furnished direct support to the 3d Marines, and the 3d Battalion, divided between Cam Lo and Con Thien, directly supported the two infantry battalions in the eastern DMZ area. Two U.S. Army artillery battalions, the 2d Battalion, 94th Artillery, and the 1st Battalion, 40th Artillery, armed with 175mm guns (SP) and 105mm howitzers (SP), respectively, reinforced the general support fires of the 4th Battalion, 12th Marines.\*\*

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\*Colonel Read assumed command of the regiment from Colonel Callender in July 1966. The new regimental commander had commanded a battery of the 15th Marines in WW II on Guam and Okinawa. In Korea, in 1950, he commanded an 11th Marines battery.

\*\*One battery, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 13th Marines, was stationed at Khe Sanh in direct support of the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines. Individual batteries of the 13th Marines, the artillery regiment of the 5th Division, arrived in-country with battalions of the 26th Marines. These batteries, like the battalions of the 26th Marines, represented no basic reinforcement of Marine units in Vietnam. They replaced individual batteries of the 11th or 12th Marines, which rotated either to Okinawa or the SLF as part of the intratheater transplacement system. See Chapter 18.



Marine Corps Photo A187980

*Marines from Company K, 3d Battalion, 4th Marines pose on 10 November 1966 (the Marine Corps Birthday) in front of a new sign, carrying the new designation of the former "artillery plateau," renamed Camp J. J. Carroll in memory of the former Company K commander. Capt Carroll died in the assault on "Mutter" Ridge in October.*

Assuming the responsibility for both the Da Nang and Chu Lai TAORs severely strained the 11th Marines. The regiment assumed command of its 1st Battalion at Da Nang, as well as the 2d Battalion, 12th Marines at the same base. In addition, the 1st 8-inch Howitzer Battery at the air base came under the regiment's command. Colonel Glenn E. Norris, an experienced artilleryman fresh from service with the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group on Taiwan, described the problems at his new command post at Da Nang in this manner:

When we moved to the Da Nang TAOR I felt there was a deficiency, especially in heavy artillery . . . we operated with only three 8-inch howitzers and three 155mm guns. As you know, these weapons were old and it was quite a job to keep them up. Six weapons, considering their age and maintenance, were not satisfactory.<sup>4</sup>

At Chu Lai, Colonel Norris had little worry about long-range artillery support. The October arrival of Battery A, 2d Battalion, 94th Artillery (USA), with its four 175mm guns, reinforced the 4th Battalion,

*Men from Battery H, 3d Battalion, 12th Marines fill sand bags to place around their 105mm howitzer positions at Dong Ha in May 1966. The artillery battery had accompanied the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines to northern I Corps during Operation Reno, a prelude to the larger deployment north in July.*

Marine Corps Photo A187147





Marine Corps Photo A187834

*Marines from Battery D, 1st Battalion, 13th Marines fire in support of the 1st Battalion, 26th Marines during Operation Prairie in September 1966. Individual batteries of the 13th Marines accompanied the battalions of the 26th Marines into Vietnam.*

11th Marines, which was providing general support for the Chu Lai base and the Korean Marines further south.\* One Marine provisional battery of four towed 155mm howitzers was at the Quang Ngai Air Base near Quang Ngai City providing general support for the 2d ARVN Division operating in that area.\*\*

Although the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 11th Marines continued to support the 5th Marines and 7th Marines, respectively, at Chu Lai, individual batteries or platoons operated outside the TAOR. For example, Battery F, 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, stationed four 105mm howitzers at the Tien Phouc Special Forces Camp to furnish direct support to the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion's operations. During November, two 105mm howitzers from Battery H, 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, moved out of the Chu Lai TAOR to Ha Thanh Special Forces Camp in the mountains 15 miles west of Quang Ngai City.

The move of the 11th Marines Headquarters to Da Nang left only a headquarters detachment with Task Force X-Ray, causing a void in the command and control of the widely dispersed Chu Lai artillery.

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\*In addition to its organic 155mm howitzers (SP), the 4th Battalion had the 3d 8-inch Howitzer Battery (SP) of six 8-inch SP howitzers and the 3d 155 Gun Battery (SP) with six 155mm guns under its operational control.

\*\*This battery was also under the operational control of the 4th Battalion, 11th Marines.

General Krulak had recognized this from the very beginning and notified General Walt that he was asking for authority to move the 1st Field Artillery Group (FAG) from Okinawa to Chu Lai. He explained, "This is a pretty able outfit. It has 22 officers and 127 enlisted; communications, motor transport and an operations platoon that includes a fire direction, survey, and meteorological capability." The FAG arrived at Chu Lai on 30 November and the next day, took control of all of the Chu Lai artillery from the 11th Marines (Rear). Lieutenant Colonel Joe B. Stribling, Norris' executive officer, assumed command of the new organization from Lieutenant Colonel Joseph M. Laney, Jr.\*

The new command functioned smoothly. Lieutenant Colonel Stribling observed in his December report that the FAG was directing supporting fires for the defense of the Chu Lai base as well as for operations outside of the TAOR, including support for the ARVN, Koreans, Stingray operations, and search and destroy operations.<sup>6</sup>

These adjustments did not alter the fact that a significant proportion of Marine artillery was in northern Quang Tri Province at the end of the year. Of more than 250 artillery tubes assigned to the two artillery regiments, over 80 pieces, ranging from 4.2-inch mortars to the U.S. Army's 175mm guns,

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\*Lieutenant Colonel Laney, who was junior to Stribling, became the FAG's executive officer.



Marine Corps Photo A188030

*Marines from Battery M, 3d Battalion, 12th Marines fire their 155mm M114A towed howitzers in October 1966 from positions at the Marine "artillery plateau" (redesignated the following month to Camp J. J. Carroll). Marine artillery fired over 28,600 rounds during the month in support of the infantry in the DMZ sector. This expenditure was exceeded in December by 6,000 rounds.*

were strung along the DMZ. Although Marine infantry contact with enemy troops in the area dropped sharply from September and October, the artillery effort did not diminish. In fact, the 12th Marines fired approximately 8,000 more rounds in Quang Tri Province during December than in October.\*

In Thua Thien Province, two changes in the artillery organization occurred in December. First, the 4th Battalion, 12th Marines assumed control of the artillery at Phu Bai. Lieutenant Colonel David G. Jones, the battalion commander, later recalled that General Kyle wanted "a 'numbered battalion' headquarters" there and, on 17 December, Jones established his new command post at the base.<sup>7</sup> One week later, another battalion headquarters, the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines, took command of the ar-

tillery committed to Operation Chinook in northern Thua Thien.

The continued depletion of the artillery at Da Nang and Chu Lai to counter the enemy in the north caused some difference of opinion within the Marine command. General Nickerson, the commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, in a message to General Walt on 30 November, observed that the artillery at both Da Nang and Chu Lai was insufficient and that the situation at Da Nang would become even worse. He pointed out that the Army artillery battery which supported the battalion from the 503d Airborne Battalion was leaving with that unit and he was receiving no replacements or reinforcements.\*\*

\*The regiment fired 10,388 missions, expending 36,869 rounds during December, as opposed to 6,643 missions and 28,430 rounds during October. See 12th Marines, Table of Ammunition Expenditures and Types of Missions Fired, encl 2, 12th Marines AAR, Operation Prairie I, dtd Feb67.

\*\*Although the 1st Armored Amphibian Company had arrived from the U.S. with 12 LVTH-6s, an armored amphibian assault vehicle mounting a 105mm howitzer, the company represented no true reinforcement for the Da Nang TAOR. Upon the arrival of the company, a platoon of six LVTH's that had been at Da Nang since 1965 moved to the DMZ. Of the remaining two platoons of the company, one stayed at Da Nang while the other joined the SLF.

General Nickerson stated that he needed at least seven direct support batteries at Da Nang instead of six and declared that the "shortage of general support artillery in Da Nang continues to be critical." The 1st Division commander considered it inadvisable to move a general support battery from Chu Lai to Da Nang and requested reinforcement from "external resources."<sup>8</sup> Although sympathetic to General Nickerson's predicament, General Walt was forced to deny the request. The III MAF commander declared that the artillery allocation was "appropriate in light of assets available." He further stated that there was little likelihood of III MAF receiving any additional artillery in the foreseeable future.<sup>9</sup>

Despite General Nickerson's reservations, the tactical deployment of his artillery was such that it could counter any likely attempt by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong to overrun Marine positions. The most lucrative targets for Marine supporting arms were provided by the more conventional war in the DMZ where division faced division, rather than the counterinsurgency campaign in the heavily populated area south of Da Nang. In any event, Marine artillery spanned the length of I Corps from the DMZ to Quang Ngai and in the words of Shakespeare: "The cannon have their bowels full of wrath, and ready mounted are they to spit forth their iron indignation."<sup>10</sup>

## CHAPTER 18

# Men and Material

### *Manpower—Logistics, Medical Support, and Construction*

#### *Manpower*

By the beginning of 1966, all of the Armed Forces were feeling the drain on manpower resources. Hanson Baldwin, the military analyst for the *New York Times*, wrote in February 1966, "The Nation's armed services have almost exhausted their trained and ready military units, with all available troops spread dangerously thin in Vietnam and elsewhere."<sup>1</sup>

Baldwin's article touched on the sensitive issue of raising enough troops to fulfill General Westmoreland's increasing Vietnam requirements. In December 1965, Secretary McNamara had approved the deployment of 184,000 troops to Vietnam during 1966, nearly twice the number of American troops already there. Throughout 1966, various echelons of the American command, from the President to MACV, studied and restudied alternative deployment plans. Considerable debate existed within the U.S. Government about the even-

tual size of the American commitment, but, by June 1966, President Johnson and Secretary McNamara had made two important decisions. They rejected any callup of the Reserves and established the projected strength of American forces in Vietnam for the end of the year to be 390,000 men. According to these projections, by December 1966 General Westmoreland would have 79 maneuver battalions and supporting air and ground units under his command.\*

The Marine Corps found itself in the same manpower dilemma as its sister Services. The Corps was committed to a 70,000-man force in Vietnam, which meant that by the end of the year, the entire 1st and 3d Marine Divisions and most of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing would be in Vietnam. Compounding the difficulty for the Marine Corps was the fact that the tour of the individual Marine was 13 months. Not only were new units being deployed to Vietnam, but replacements for Marines whose overseas tours were almost over also had to be sent to Vietnam.\*\* Thus the actual number of Marines that served in Vietnam

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\*This represented an increase of approximately 22,000 troops, including four maneuver battalions over previous projections. During 1966, several deployment plans were approved and then modified. These had several designations, i.e., Phase II, Phase IIA, and Program 3. Other plans were still being studied. For a detailed account of the overall U.S. planning efforts, see "U.S. Ground Strategy and Force Deployments 1965-67," *Pentagon Papers*, bk 5, sec. IV-C-6, v. I, pp. 25-51. Maneuver battalions referred to both tank and infantry battalions. On 21 December 1966, MACV had 69 infantry and 10 tank battalions. At least one of the Service chiefs, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., the Commandant of the Marine Corps, disagreed with the decision not to call up the Reserves. In his comments, General Greene refers to this decision as "a fatal mistake. . . ." Gen Wallace M. Greene, Jr., Comments on draft MS, dtd 5May78 (Vietnam Comment File).

\*\*In September 1965, the Marine Corps ended its peacetime intertheater battalion rotation between the Eastern Pacific and Western Pacific and went to an individual replacement system,

although a modified intratheater battalion rotation among battalions assigned to the SLF, Vietnam, and Okinawa was established. Colonel John P. Lanigan, who served as the 3d Marine Division G-1 in 1966, observed that the establishment of the individual replacement system "required a complete reshuffling of personnel between battalions in WestPac [code named Operation Mixmaster]. . . . This had a rather drastic and undesirable effect on the integrity and morale of the battalions concerned." Commenting on this problem from the FMFPac perspective, Colonel John E. Greenwood, who served on both the III MAF and FMFPac staffs, remembered that General Krulak, CGFMFPac at the time, "maintained that the Marine Corps should never again stabilize units or adopt a policy of unit rotation. . . . His [Krulak's] conclusion—organize in peacetime, the way you must organize and operate in war." Col John P. Lanigan, Comments on draft MS, dtd 8Jun78 and Col John E. Greenwood, Note on Lanigan Comments, dtd 12Jun78 (Vietnam Comment File). See Shulimson and Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1965*, p. 117 for discussion of the old transplacement system and Operation Mixmaster.



Marine Corps Photo A187876

*While their gear is being lowered from a troop transport, men of the 1st Battalion, 26th Marines wait on board a landing craft before going ashore at Da Nang. The 26th Marines, part of the newly formed 5th Marine Division, arrived in the Pacific in August and during the remaining months of the year, its battalions replaced other battalions in Vietnam as part of the intratheater battalion transplacement system.*

during 1966 was much larger than 70,000. Since there was no Reserve mobilization, the Marines were authorized to accept some draftees and also expand their authorized strength from 231,000 to 286,000.<sup>2</sup>

In December 1965, Secretary McNamara had approved the reactivation of the 5th Marine Division; personnel were to come, partially, from the new augmentation allowed the Marine Corps. On 1 March 1966, the Defense Department officially announced the formation of the division. The base commander of the Marine Base at Camp Pendleton, California, Major General Robert E. Cushman, Jr.,

became the Commanding General, 5th Marine Division, in addition to his other duties.

On 28 July, BLT 1/26, the first unit of the division to be deployed, arrived at Okinawa and became the SLF battalion, relieving BLT 3/5. The 3d Battalion was sent to Chu Lai, bringing III MAF to a strength of 18 battalions, the total authorized for the Marine command in 1966. In August, RLT 26 Headquarters arrived at Okinawa and BLT 2/26 relieved the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines at Da Nang. The latter battalion departed Vietnam for Okinawa. These forces represented no reinforcements for III MAF, but reestablished the Pacific command's capability to meet contingency situations.

Even the earlier deployment of the 1st Marine Division in 1966 had not eased the III MAF manpower situation. Because of the intricacies of the individual replacement system, both the 1st and 3d Divisions were understrength by midyear. In June the 1st Marine Division reported that the average strength of an infantry company was 2.8 officers and 151 enlisted.\* The 3d Division furnished generally the same figures for the month, stating that its average company strength was 2.9 officers and 148 enlisted men. During July, these averages remained at the same level. By August, both Marine divisions indicated that the average infantry company strength had risen to 4.3 officers and 155 men for the 3d Division and 3.8 officers and 160 men for the 1st.<sup>3</sup> By the end of the month, the 1st Marine Divi-

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\*The authorized strength of a Marine infantry company was six officers and 210 enlisted men. Several former battalion commanders commented on the manpower shortages in their respective units. Lieutenant Colonel Emerson A. Walker, who commanded the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines at Da Nang, remembered that he lost 85 percent of his officers and 75 percent of his senior noncommissioned officers within a 60-day period. Another officer, Colonel Birchard B. Dewitt, who commanded the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, recalled that in June 1966, he had only 14 officers in his battalion, including the battalion surgeon and chaplain: "Each infantry company had *one* officer except India which had the luxury of having two." Lieutenant Colonel Ralph E. Sullivan, who commanded the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, observed, "Rifle company strengths . . . do not begin to tell the story. You might have 148 enlisted on the rolls of a rifle company, but by the time you subtracted those sick, lame, and lazy, R&R, etc., etc., and etc., you were lucky to put 110 men in the field." LtCol Emerson A. Walker, Comments on draft MS, n.d. [Jun78], Col Birchard B. Dewitt, Comments on draft MS, dtd 6Jul78, and LtCol Ralph E. Sullivan, Comments on draft MS, dtd 9May78 (Vietnam Comment File).

sion was almost at authorized strength, but the 3d was still short 2,000 men.<sup>4</sup>

By October 1966, General Walt was faced with an expanded war. The Marines were moving toward the DMZ, while still conducting major operations and maintaining the southern TAORs. In addition, programs such as combined action were draining men from infantry units. Colonel Chaisson, the former III MAF G-3, stated that although the personnel shortage did not inhibit assigning battalions to a specific mission, "It was a matter of how far people can be pushed."<sup>5</sup>

The presence of the 26th Marines units in the Western Pacific provided some help. It allowed FMFPac to reinstitute the intratheater rotation program which had ended the previous March.\* Under the system, the SLF battalion would relieve a battalion in Vietnam; the latter battalion would displace to Okinawa; a fresh battalion on Okinawa would then become the new SLF battalion with the Seventh Fleet. From August to December 1966, six battalions participated in the program. By the end of the year, all three battalions of the 26th Marines were in South Vietnam.\*\* Although not providing General Walt with additional troops, this intratheater transplacement of battalions allowed him, at least periodically, to refurbish his forces.

During this period, Generals Greene and Krulak also took measures to expedite the movement of personnel to Vietnam. After a visit to III MAF in October, General Krulak reported that the Commandant had inaugurated an increase in programmed replacements which would ease the situation by the end of the year.<sup>6</sup> One of the first steps that Headquarters Marine Corps took was to defer the activation dates of the 5th Marine Division units, with the exception of the 26th Marines, from 1966 to 1967.<sup>7</sup> This allowed the Marine Corps to divert individual Marines who would have been assigned to these units to the Southeast Asia manpower pool. In January 1967, the manpower situation had improved to the extent that most battalions had 1,200 to 1,300 Marines, in comparison to a strength of about 800 men a few weeks before.<sup>8</sup> By July 1967, the Marine

Corps could boast that it had completed both the scheduled buildup to a total strength of 286,000, as well as programmed deployments to the war zone, without missing any target dates.<sup>9</sup>

### *Logistics, Medical Support, and Construction*

By the beginning of 1966, the rapid buildup of Marine forces had created a grim logistic situation. Shortages occurred in spare parts, fuel, and certain types of ammunition. The wear and tear on equipment caused by heavy usage, heat, sand, and humidity, compounded by the monsoons, created additional frustrations.<sup>10</sup> Complicating the situation even more was the slow unloading of vessels in the undeveloped I Corps ports. For example, cargo unloaded at Da Nang had to be reloaded on LSTs in order to be landed at the shallow draft ramp at Chu Lai. At the beginning of December 1965, 17 ships were in Da Nang Harbor unloading or waiting to be unloaded. The figure had been reduced to 12 by the end of 1965, but seven of these ships had been in port longer than two weeks and four had been there for over a month. General Walt described the III MAF logistic status as follows: "We were operating on a 'shoe string'—a critical period—when only exceptional ingenuity, initiative and extremely hard and dedicated labor kept the supplies flowing to the fighting troops."<sup>11</sup>

Many of the difficulties had been anticipated by the Marine and Navy commanders. Vice Admiral Edwin B. Hooper, at that time Commander, Service Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, commented that he had initiated a number of actions in November 1965 to ease the unloading problem. These included a program for all-weather packaging and pallet loading of cargoes for ships destined for Da Nang or Chu Lai. In December he requested that the Military Transport Management Terminal Service (MTMTS) in San Francisco "assemble full ship loads for direct sail to Da Nang," and that MTMTS segregate Chu Lai cargo so that it could be handled expeditiously at Da Nang. He also instituted a program at Subic Bay for unloading cargo from deep-draft ships onto LSTs. The admiral assigned four LSTs to shuttle supplies between Subic, Da Nang, and Chu Lai. The unloading situation was resolved by close cooperation between the Navy and Marines. Admiral Hooper visited General Walt in December 1965,

\*See Chapter 4.

\*\*The 3d Battalion, 26th Marines arrived in the Western Pacific during October.



U.S. Navy Photo K-34274

*An aerial view of the Da Nang River, going past Museum Landing Ramp to the Bridge Cargo Facility at Da Nang. Da Nang was second only to Saigon as a port in Vietnam.*

*A Navy petty officer stands on a "city block" of C-Rations at a Da Nang pier. The Naval Support Activity, Da Nang was responsible for common item support for U.S. forces in I Corps.*

U.S. Navy Photo K-31372



afterward noting that General Walt was particularly cooperative — as always:

I briefed him and key staff officers after dinner at his quarters then on a hill west of Da Nang. He offered the help of his troops whenever needed, and then took steps to improve the flow of trucks during peak periods. The Marine shore party did its part until the last remnant at Da Nang was relieved. . . .<sup>12\*</sup>

As a result of these steps, by the end of January 1966, General Walt could report that the Chu Lai backlog had been reduced to the lowest figure in over five months.\*\* In late February, the III MAF

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\*The Marine shore party was attached to the Naval Support Activity, Da Nang, which was responsible for common item support to U.S. forces in I Corps as well as the operation of the unloading activities of all beaches and ports in I Corps. Until the Support Activity reached full strength on 11 March, elements of the 3d Shore Party Battalion assisted the Navy in the unloading of ships at Da Nang. Until 1 April, the Naval Support Activity, Da Nang reported directly to General Walt in his capacity as Naval Component Commander. See Chapter 1 and Shulimson and Johnson, *Marines in Vietnam*, 1965.

\*\*In relation to the situation at Chu Lai, Admiral Hooper observed, "I don't believe that anyone who was not there at the time can appreciate the difficulties of getting supplies in by sea and over the beach, especially during the Northeast Monsoon Season . . . . The shuttling of supplies by sea by NavSupAct [Naval Support Activity], Da Nang and beach operations were tough and go for a long time, especially since the dredge we requested from Saigon, and expected momentarily, kept being delayed. . . . It was not until mid-January 1966 that a 11-foot deep pass had been made through the shoal water at the mouth of the Troung River, and not until 20 March that a 14-foot channel was available." VAdm Edwin B. Hooper, Comments on draft MS, n.d. [May78] (Vietnam Comment File).



Marine Corps Photo A371256

*An aerial view of Force Logistic Support Group Bravo at Chu Lai. The group was a component part of the III MAF Force Logistic Command and provided centralized control of supplies, construction, and administrative support at Chu Lai.*

commander was able to declare that for the first time there were no ships in the Da Nang Harbor waiting to be unloaded.<sup>13</sup> Admiral Hooper commented, "From there on in [late February 1966], no other port ever matched the performance of Da Nang."<sup>14</sup>

The Marine Corps had initiated several of its own measures to ease the logistic strain. Late in 1965, General Krulak introduced the Red Ball and Critipac programs. The Red Ball system, started 22 September 1965, had as its basic purpose the identification of the critical logistical problems in the Western Pacific. When an important item was found to be in short supply it was given a Red Ball, or high priority, designation. All FMFPac supply echelons were then alerted and individual action officers were assigned to monitor the status of these items. These officers had the responsibility of insuring that the Red Ball item was shipped to Vietnam as quickly as possible. FMFPac inaugurated the Critipac system in November 1965. Under this concept, the Marine Corps Supply Center at Barstow, California sent each major Marine unit in Vietnam, usually battalion-size, one 400-pound box of critical supplies normally required on a routine basis, but rapidly expended by the deployed units.<sup>15</sup>

Both of these systems continued to be refined after their inception. At the beginning of 1966, General Walt had declared that only those repair parts for equipment, the loss of which would substantially reduce unit combat effectiveness, could be placed in Red Ball status. The III MAF commander also made similar recommendations for the Critipac program. The Red Ball system had improved the stock level of critical supplies to the extent that the criteria for Red Ball now included such items as "blank forms and typewriters."<sup>16</sup> During March, General Walt ordered III MAF to computerize Red Ball records to reduce his headquarter's administrative workload.<sup>17</sup> At the end of the month, General Greene formally recognized the FMFPac Red Ball program and ordered all Marine supply activities to support the system.<sup>18</sup>

The most important logistic development during this period was the establishment of the Force Logistic Command on 15 March. Until that time, Colonel Mauro J. Padalino's Force Logistic Support Group (FLSG) had been the central supply agency for III MAF. During 1965, the FLSG had grown from slightly less than 700 personnel to more than 3,000 officers and men by the end of the year. Based



U.S. Navy Photo K-34273

*An aerial view of Force Logistic Support Group Alpha at Da Nang. The group performed the same services at Da Nang as Bravo did at Chu Lai.*

on the nucleus of the 3d Service Battalion, the FLSG had been reinforced by 1st Service Battalion units and elements of the 3d Force Service Regiment.\* The FLSG Headquarters was at Da Nang while two Force Logistic Support Units (FLSU) were established at Chu Lai and Phu Bai. As early as September 1965, General Krulak was of the opinion that it was necessary to transform the FLSG into a Force Logistic Command, but the first steps toward the transformation were not taken until early 1966. In mid-January, Colonel Padalino chaired a three-week conference at FMFPac Headquarters in Honolulu at which a mission, and provisional Tables of Organization (T/O) and Equipment (T/E), for the new command were determined.<sup>19</sup> On 19 February, General Krulak provided General Walt the basic guidance for the establishment of the logistic command.

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\*The 3d Force Service Regiment was responsible for logistic activities on Okinawa. Although separate units of the regiment were stationed in Vietnam, the regimental flag never left Okinawa. The 1st Service Battalion was the logistic support battalion of the 1st Marine Division, just as the 3d Service Battalion supported the 3d Marine Division. As indicated in the text, the service battalions became part of the Force Logistic Support Group which operated directly under III MAF rather than the divisions.

General Walt's headquarters published its standing operating procedures on 13 March and the Force Logistic Command (FLC) came into existence two days later.<sup>20</sup>

The establishment of the FLC was more of a change in name than function. At Da Nang, the FLSG became FLSG Alpha and remained under the command of Colonel Padalino. He also retained control of the FLSU at Phu Bai. The FLSU at Chu Lai became FLSG Bravo which reported directly to the FLC. Colonel George C. Axtell, Jr., formerly General Walt's III MAF Chief of Staff, assumed command of the FLC.<sup>21</sup>

One of the basic problems facing the new command was the lack of covered storage space. To alleviate the situation, III MAF allocated nine of the first 12 Butler buildings to arrive in Vietnam to the logistic command.<sup>22</sup> By the end of April, FLC had funded over 40 million dollars for facilities construction. The funding included the development of an entirely new cantonment for FLSG Alpha at Da Nang. Seabees of the 30th Naval Construction Regiment (NCR) had already erected 16 Butler buildings in the logistic group's new location on Red Beach, seven miles northwest of the old FLSG site. At Chu Lai, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 4

from the 30th NCR was working on semipermanent construction for FLSG Bravo. In addition, the FLC had contracted with civilian firms for construction of a second ammunition supply point at Chu Lai and for the improvement of the existing ammunition supply point at Da Nang, as well as the construction of a second Da Nang ammunition supply point.<sup>23</sup>

By midyear, the FLC was in full operation. Despite the disruptions of the spring political crisis, the construction program was generally on schedule. More significantly, the command had grown to a strength of over 5,300 officers and men; nearly 2,000 personnel had joined since March. During this period, the III MAF logistic organization processed more than 127,000 requisitions. In addition, the FLC began to perform limited 4th echelon maintenance of deadlined equipment which previously had to be evacuated to Okinawa for repair.<sup>24</sup>

The true test of the Marine logistic organization came when Marine operations moved into northern Quang Tri Province. During Operation Hastings, for

*A view of the III MAF ammunition dump at Dong Ha. With the movement of the 3d Marine Division to the DMZ sector, the Marines established another logistic support area.*

Marine Corps Photo A188161



example, more than 4,000 tons of supplies were flown from Da Nang to the makeshift airfield at Dong Ha. Furthermore, two Navy barges ferried over 240 tons of ammunition to Dong Ha from Marine stockpiles at Da Nang.<sup>25</sup> General Westmoreland expressed his surprise at the Marine logistic flexibility to General Krulak. According to General Krulak:

In connection with deep operations of the Hastings variety, General Westmoreland commented that he had been concerned earlier with the possibility that the Marines might be incapable of sustaining such large endeavors logistically. He observed that their excellent logistic performance throughout Hastings had gratified and reassured him. I replied that basically, the Marines have a balanced logistical system, capable of sustaining operations such as Hastings.\*<sup>26</sup>

With the continuation of the DMZ war and the movement of the 3d Marine Division north, the Dong Ha logistic base expanded. In early October, the Dong Ha Logistic Support Area (LSA) contained a sizeable ammunition dump as well as a rations dump, operated by a 150-man team. The Marine logisticians had prepared plans for the buildup of the Dong Ha LSA to provide a 30-to-45-day level of supply to support division units operating in the DMZ area. Colonel Axtell noted that the Marine command was examining the feasibility of removing a sand bar blocking the Cua Viet River so that LCUs could enter and leave the stream and resupply Dong Ha on a 24-hour basis.<sup>27</sup> Admiral Hooper commented that when the water was low, shifting sand bars blocked the way upstream, but Naval Support Activity, Da Nang mounted a crawler crane with a "clam shell" on a LCU for dredging and was able to keep the river route open. The Naval Support Activity and the FLC provided the Marines with over 35,000 tons of supplies via the water passage to Dong Ha.<sup>28</sup>

By the end of the year, the logistic organization in the northern two provinces had been revamped. The FLSU at Phu Bai had become FLSU-2, responsible for logistic support at Phu Bai and Dong Ha, as well as the Marine battalion at Khe Sanh. FLSU-2 was now a major subunit of the FLC. Its new status was

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\*For a detailed account of Operation Hastings, see Chapter 10.

officially recognized on 1 December when the unit became independent of FLSG Alpha reporting directly to the FLC. By the end of December, the unit had reached a strength of nearly 900 men, over a third of whom were engaged in support of the Prairie Operation.<sup>29</sup>

By the end of 1966, the Marine Corps had completed major modifications of its logistic system to support Marine combat operations in the five northern provinces. Its world-wide logistic network extended from Albany, Georgia, and Barstow, California, through the 3d Force Service Regiment, Okinawa, and then to the I Corps Tactical Zone. The III MAF FLC monitored all logistic activities under its control with electronic data processing systems.

Despite the refinements in the logistic system, shortages still existed in certain areas. Colonel Franklin C. Thomas, Jr., commanding officer of MAG-11, observed that high-level statistical analysis did not always reflect the needs of the units in the field. He recalled:

It took me a long time to find out why we could only obtain 250-pound bombs when we consistently requisitioned 500-, 750-, and 1,000- pound bombs. All we had in any numbers were 250's and so that is what we were using, although for most of our targets they were almost ineffective. Finally, it became apparent that our resupply was being done on the basis of our usage reports rather than from our requisitions. To my shame I began falsifying my usage data, and within two months we began to receive the heavier weapons which increased our effectiveness (not to mention our morale).<sup>30</sup>

In a somewhat lighter vein, Colonel James M. Callender, the commander of the 12th Marines, remembered that during an inspection trip, General Krulak asked one of the artillery section chiefs if he had any problems:

The sergeant's reply was "only one, General; I'm trying to clean this 105mm howitzer with a 90mm bore brush!" . . . within three days, the 12th Marines had a corner on most of the bore brushes in the western world.<sup>31</sup>

Even with shortages, III MAF was able to support all tactical operations and Marine logisticians by the end of the year had initiated remedial actions. At the end of 1966, the FLC and the 3d Force Service Regiment were filling 85 percent of all requisitions. Maintenance also improved; the deadline rate for combat-essential material was reduced from over 12 percent to eight percent by the end of December,

although the deadline rate of Marine engineer equipment and generators still remained high. One Marine logistician, Colonel Edward L. Bale, Jr., the 1st Marine Division G-4, summed up the logistic situation as follows: "III MAF was faced with supply, maintenance, construction tasks not previously confronting Marine Corps forces. The ability to support the combat elements from CONUS via Okinawa with the limited stock fund assets, maintenance, and construction was, in many ways, remarkable."<sup>32</sup>

Colonel Axtell, who was relieved as commanding officer of the FLC by Brigadier General James E. Herbold, Jr., described the role of the FLC in the following words:\*

The FLC has a role to provide an organization by relieving the operational commander of many of the day to day details in services. We think of it as a maintenance and supply function, but there are also other attendant services that can be provided to relieve divisions and wings . . . such as a transient center . . . handling reports, and an administrative headquarters to administer force units. I would like to suggest the FLC in its role reflects the capability of the Marine Corps to organize and adjust its forces to use the minimum of resources to accomplish a task.<sup>33</sup>

No logistic discussion would be complete without an account of the medical support provided by the Navy. Responsible for all medical assistance to the Marines, naval medical personnel managed all of the III MAF medical facilities down to the individual battalion and squadron aid stations. At the lowest level, a Navy corpsman accompanied each Marine rifle platoon into action. Part of the Marine division organization, two medical battalions, the 1st and 3d, reinforced at the end of 1966 by the 1st Hospital Company, were responsible for the Marine intermediate medical facilities at Chu Lai, Da Nang, Phu Bai, and later in the year at Dong Ha, as well as direct support for individual operations. Commanded by a Navy doctor, each battalion consisted largely of naval personnel reinforced by a few Marines for administrative and support purposes. For the most serious and more complex cases, the Naval Support Activity, Da Nang ran its own hospital. Opening in

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\*General Herbold, an experienced logistician, was Chief of Staff of the Marine Corps Supply Activity, Philadelphia prior to his promotion on 8 September 1966 to brigadier general. He assumed command of the FLC on 3 October 1966.

January with only 50 beds, this hospital had room for over 400 beds at the end of the year. Besides X-ray and modern laboratory facilities, the hospital had departments and clinics in neurosurgery; urology; eye, ear, nose, and throat ailments; and preventive medicine. In March 1966, the newly refitted hospital ship *Repose* (AH 16) arrived off I Corps to provide additional medical support for the Marines. With 560 beds, the *Repose* had medical facilities and equipment to rival a modern hospital in the United States. During Operations Hastings and Prairie, Marine helicopters often evacuated casualties directly from the battlefield to the *Repose* with as many as 98 brought on board the ship in one day.<sup>34</sup>

The operating room, like the battlefield, had its dramatic moments. One of the more spectacular involved the removal of a live grenade from the throat of a wounded Marine private on 20 December 1966 at the 3d Medical Battalion facility at Da Nang. Apparently the grenade entered the Marine's mouth in a downward trajectory, broke the jaw, and lodged into the heavily-muscl'd part of the tongue, pushing aside the voice box. Since the X-ray only showed a gray opaque object in the throat, the naval surgeon, Lieutenant Commander James G. Chandler, was unaware of the presence of the grenade until he made his incision. At first, Chandler thought the object to be some sort of detonator and consulted with another surgeon. The two doctors then decided that "it would be pretty safe to remove anything which had cracked the jaw." With his forceps unable to secure the object, Chandler used his fingers and "popped it into his hand." The Navy surgeon recalled that he then asked what the thing was and "someone said a M-79 grenade." Carrying the grenade gingerly in his left hand, Chandler then walked out of the operating room to a ditch some distance from the medical facility. He gently placed the grenade inside the ditch, "took about four steps calmly and then ran like hell." A Marine demolition team later safely exploded the live grenade. The patient also recovered.<sup>35</sup>

Although the Navy doctors and corpsmen played a large role in the Marine Corps civic action program, treating well over a million South Vietnamese civilians in 1966, their greatest and most important contribution was the saving of the lives of the wounded. With the use of the helicopter, a wounded Marine, on the average, could expect to be at a

medical facility within a half hour after the evacuation aircraft was requested.<sup>36</sup> Of the nearly 6,400 Marines and sailors of III MAF wounded during 1966, 214 died of their wounds, a mortality rate of less than four percent.<sup>37</sup> The following excerpt from the Navy Unit Commendation awarded to the 3d Medical Battalion applied as well to the entire Navy medical support in I Corps:

The officers and men . . . despite shortages of personnel and medical supplies—and adverse conditions of heat, humidity and monsoon rains—succeeded in reducing the mortality rate of wounded U.S. Marines to the lowest figure in wartime history.<sup>38</sup>

Another unsung effort was the massive construction work in I Corps accomplished by the Navy construction battalions (Seabees), civilian construction firms, and Marine engineer battalions. The Seabees

*Marines during Operation Texas carry a wounded comrade to a waiting evacuation helicopter in March 1966. A wounded Marine, on the average, could expect to be at a medical facility within 30 minutes after the helicopter was requested.*

Marine Corps Photo A186817





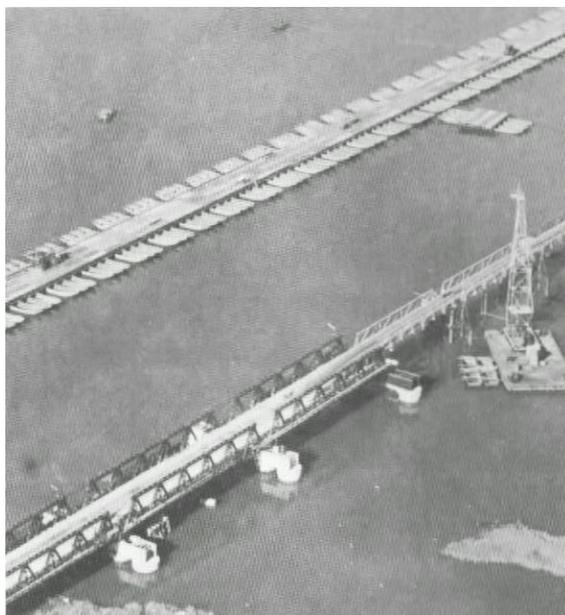
Marine Corps Photo A187510

*Navy Seabees are seen at work constructing hard-back tents in the base area of the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines at Da Nang. Seabees and civilian construction firms were largely responsible for the building of the large base facilities in the Marine enclaves.*

and the civilian contractors were largely responsible for the building of the large base facilities at the various Marine enclaves and airfield construction including the extension of the Da Nang runway and 10,000-foot permanent airfield at Chu Lai.\* They helped to modernize port facilities with the construction of three deepwater piers, all of which were

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\*During 1966, nearly 1,295,000 square feet of storage and maintenance facilities were built. Colonel Fred J. Frazer, the 1st MAW G-4, observed that although most of the construction was under Navy control, "III MAF and the Wing were extremely active in the planning and the allocation of construction resources." Col Fred J. Frazer, Comments on draft MS, dtd 16Jun78 (Vietnam Comment File). At least one Marine officer, Colonel Drew J. Barrett, Jr., who served both as Commanding Officer, 9th Marines and III MAF G-3, had his reservations about the extent of the base buildup in Vietnam: "The theatres, big messes, supermarket PX's, pools, bowling alleys, and the like merely created targets for the enemy, and additionally built up a fixed-base attitude in the minds of everyone except frontline troops. For what these installations cost us we could have provided three or four R&R's [Rest and Recuperation] for everyone and retained a lean and mean attitude." Col Drew J. Barrett, Jr., Comments on draft MS, dtd 5May78 (Vietnam Comment File).



Marine Corps Photo A189769

*Marine engineers construct a pontoon bridge across the Da Nang River. The new bridge, together with the old permanent one, connects the Tiensha Peninsula with the main base at Da Nang.*

operational by the beginning of 1967 and increased the Da Nang port capacity by 5,140 short tons per month.<sup>39</sup>

Marine engineers also made their contribution. By the end of 1966, five Marine engineer battalions were in Vietnam: the 1st and 3d Engineers supported the 1st and 3d Marine Divisions respectively, while the heavy engineer battalions, the 7th, 9th, and 11th, operated directly under III MAF.\*\* During the year the engineers built 107 miles of new roads, improved 1,582 miles of existing roads, and erected 48 bridges of all types, ranging from foot treadways to Class-60 bridges capable of supporting Marine M-48 tanks. They assisted the Seabees and

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\*\*The 3d and 7th battalions were in Vietnam at the beginning of the year. The 1st Engineer Battalion arrived with the 1st Division in March. The 9th Engineers deployed to Vietnam in May and assumed responsibility for the larger engineering tasks at Chu Lai while the 7th operated in the Da Nang area. The 11th did not arrive until November 1966 and moved to Dong Ha, where it reinforced the hard-pressed 3d Engineer Battalion in the struggle along the DMZ.



Marine Corps Photo A187722

*A Marine sweeps a road with a mine detector while the rest of the squad follows him. The men are students at the mine warfare school established by the 3d Engineer Battalion at Da Nang to reduce mine casualties.*

private firms in base construction at Chu Lai and Da Nang. At Dong Ha and Khe Sanh, they assisted in the improvement of base areas, as well as the improvement of the airfield facilities at both locations. Moreover, Marine engineers provided combat support to the infantry by conducting daily road sweeps,

and mine clearing, and destroying enemy tunnels.\* Perhaps the best summation of the entire I Corps support effort, including that of the engineers, in 1966, is contained in the following excerpt from a 1st MAW report: "Much was accomplished, much more remains to be done."<sup>40</sup>

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\*Lieutenant Colonel Conway J. Smith recalled that through June 1966, "the young Marines of the 3d Engineer Battalion performed daily mine sweeps over more than 20 miles of tactical roads. These same Marines also provided demolition support during most infantry operations. They also constructed more than 600 weapons bunkers and built up an additional 48 miles of tac-

tical roads and 60 pioneer bridges. In addition to this, a cadre of engineer mine warfare NCOs conducted a mine warfare school which instructed and indoctrinated more than 4,500 Marine (and some Army) personnel in the technicalities of Viet Cong mines and booby traps." LtCol Conway J. Smith, Comments on draft MS, dtd 9Jun78 (Vietnam Comment File).

