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FMF PAC: Operations of U.S. Marine
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OPERATIONS OF U. S. MARINE FORCES

VIETNAM

MARCH 1966



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This is a summary of activities of US Marine forces in Vietnam for the month of March 1966. Its purpose is to update similar reports covering periods from March 1965 through February 1966.

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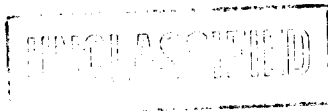
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~~SECRET~~SUMMARY

The distinguishing characteristic of Marine operations in Vietnam during the month of March was the mobility and rapidity of reaction exhibited in combat actions, extending from Thua Thien province in the north to the mouth of the Saigon River. These endeavors varied from helilifted squad size attacks to riverine operations in the Rung Sat swamp to heliborne operations approaching division size.

In March, Marine helicopters flew 33,268 sorties, and lifted 47,883 US and Vietnamese personnel. Fixed wing aircraft flew 5,637 sorties in support of US and Vietnamese ground operations, and in missions over Laos and North Vietnam, making March by far the most active month of the war for Marine aviation. Sixteen ground operations of battalion size or larger were carried out, accounting for 1,038 enemy killed, 18 captured and 113 weapons seized.

The Marine campaign continued to place heavy attention upon grinding away the Viet Cong infrastructure, and providing an environment of security for the population. This effort was substantially assisted by the large unit operations, but was pivoted primarily on the day and night saturation campaign of small counter guerrilla operations which exceeded the previous month by 25%. These numbered 11,245, of which 6,884 were small unit search and destroy operations and patrols, and 4,361 were ambushes. All told, they accounted for at least 385 guerrillas killed. At the same time, the complementary civic action program continued to grow in scope, and to strengthen the counter guerrilla and pacification efforts, as intelligence reports and cooperation of the rural population led to more effective weeding out of the Viet Cong.

Contrasted with the very slowly improving situation in the countryside, growing political unrest appeared during the month in the cities of Danang and Hue, following the

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dismissal by the Vietnamese National Military Council of General Nguyen Chanh Thi as Commander of I Corps. Although these activities included a non-violent strike at the Port of Danang, they had not by the end of the month, had a significant effect on Marine logistic or combat operations, although it was plain that continued unrest in the area would soon affect our activities directly and adversely.

As the March reporting period closed, the Special Landing Force was actively engaged in the Rung Sat, the newly arrived 1st Marine Division Headquarters had assumed responsibility for the Chu Lai area and fifteen Marine battalions were engaged in offensive operations in I CTZ. III MAF, meanwhile, was striving to maintain a posture of noninvolvement in the growing political struggle.

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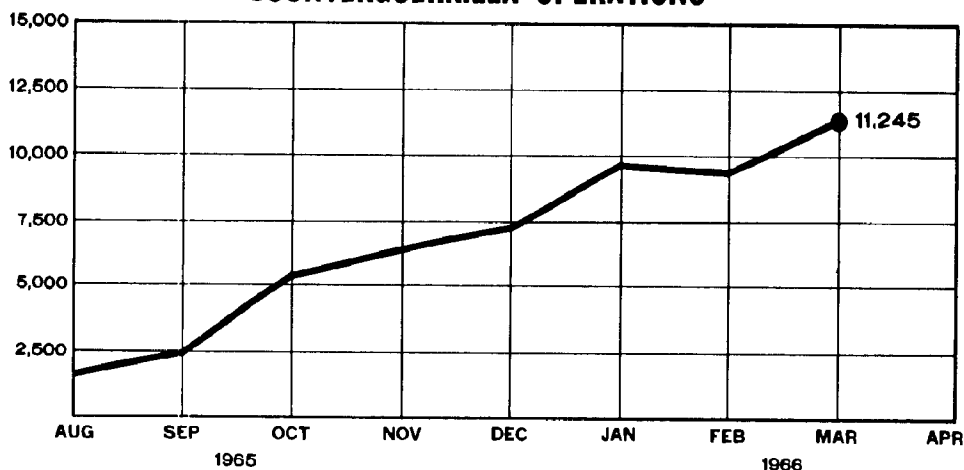
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COUNTERGUERRILLA OPERATIONS

The frequency and regularity of III MAF counter-guerrilla operations increased steadily during March. Despite a heavy commitment of forces in fifteen operations of battalion size and larger, the number of patrols, ambushes, and search and destroy missions increased from a first week total of 1,918 to 2,999 during the final seven days. The monthly total of 11,245 was a 37% increase over the 8,946 small unit actions conducted in February.

COUNTERGUERRILLA OPERATIONS

Although the pace of III MAF counterguerrilla activity increased markedly during the month, the overall pattern remained much the same. It continued to be a tedious effort, demanding great patience and attention to detail. These operations rarely produce dramatic individual results, but taken in sum they comprise the steps which are driving out the guerrillas and providing at last a solid foundation for the overall pacification program. The following are typical of the 20 to 30 contacts made daily during the month throughout the Marine areas.

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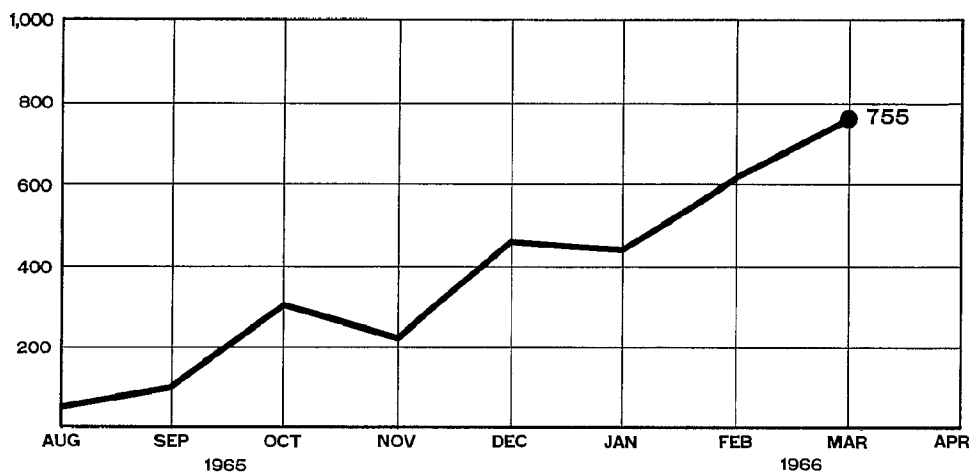
--On 22 March, a squad patrol south of Danang, hearing a nearby firefight between another Marine patrol and a number of VC, attacked the VC position and at the same time called for reinforcements. Five squads joined the attack. Results: 7 VC KIA and 4 weapons captured, including two submachine guns.

--A Marine and ARVN platoon sized patrol near Danang, moving in response to a report on 14 March that a VC assassination squad was in the area, apprehended ten suspects, one of whom was wanted for participation in an earlier assassination.

--A Marine squad west of Chu Lai located, ambushed and ultimately killed 3 VC on 17 March, taking 4 weapons from the dead VC.

During March, contacts like these were achieved on 755 separate occasions. This figure, like the overall pace of counter guerrilla activity, has risen steadily. An important factor in this increasing rate of contact is the growing confidence of the rural population, whose reports on VC movement and location are essential to the counter guerrilla effort.

COUNTERGUERRILLA OPERATIONS WITH CONTACT



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The maneuverability which characterized Marine large unit operations during the month was also apparent in the counter guerrilla campaign and especially in the small "Sparrowhawk" actions. In March, as in earlier months, enemy contacts were exploited by small units, often of squad size, nicknamed Sparrowhawk, patrolling the airspace over Marine areas in helicopters or standing by in alert areas for immediate launch orders. As a quick reaction force to assist ARVN or other units requiring help, or to press attacks on targets acquired by the Sparrowhawk force itself, these small unit operations tend further to strengthen the protective umbrella held over the countryside and make it progressively more difficult for the guerrilla to operate and find safe haven. Here are some examples of typical Sparrowhawk actions carried out in March:

--On 14 March, when a district chief reported that VC and VC sympathizers were organizing to seize rice from the villagers, a platoon was dispatched to apprehend the VC. As they started to flee, a heliborne Sparrowhawk force blocked their escape; 65 individuals were apprehended.

--On 29 March, a squad from Company K, 3d Bn, 3d Marines, assisting in protection of the rice harvest, was fired upon by VC. Sparrowhawk was requested and subsequently dispersed the VC, capturing one of them.

--On 28 March, when an aerial observer began to receive ground fire, a Sparrowhawk squad landed and, with other Marines nearby, assisted in the seizure of a number of documents and ammunition, killing 3 VC and wounding an estimated 5 more.

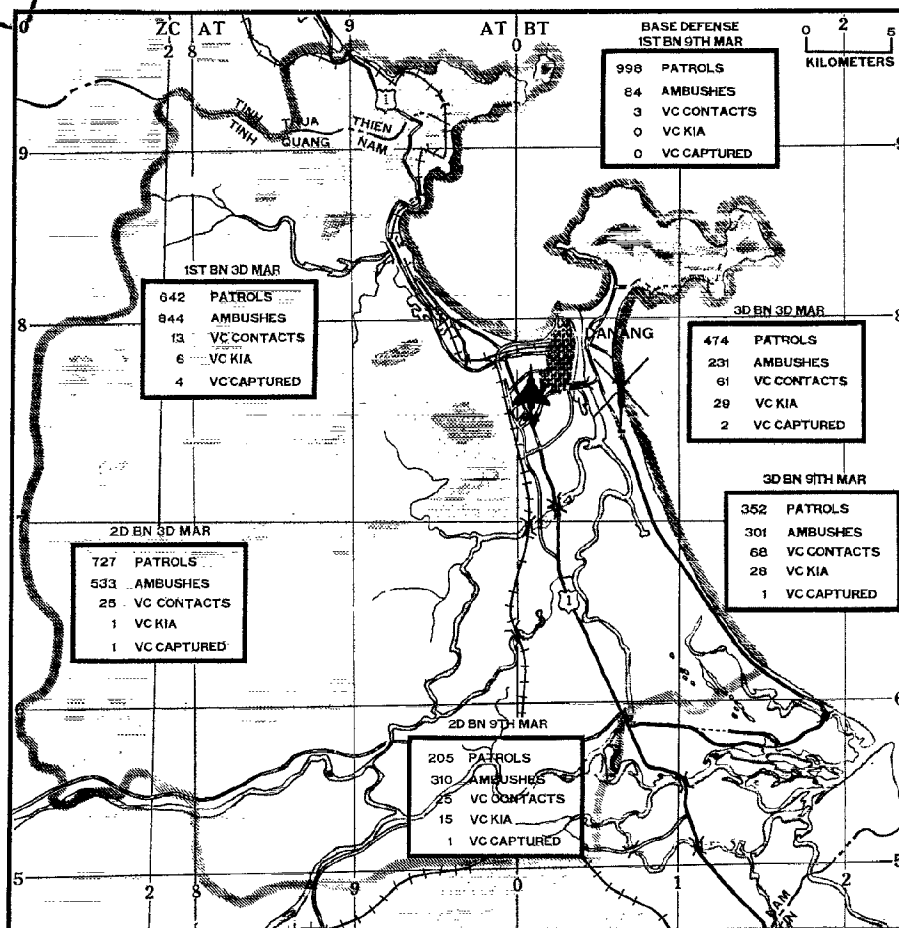
A March summary of overall counter guerrilla activity by the individual battalions of III MAF is presented on the pages that follow.

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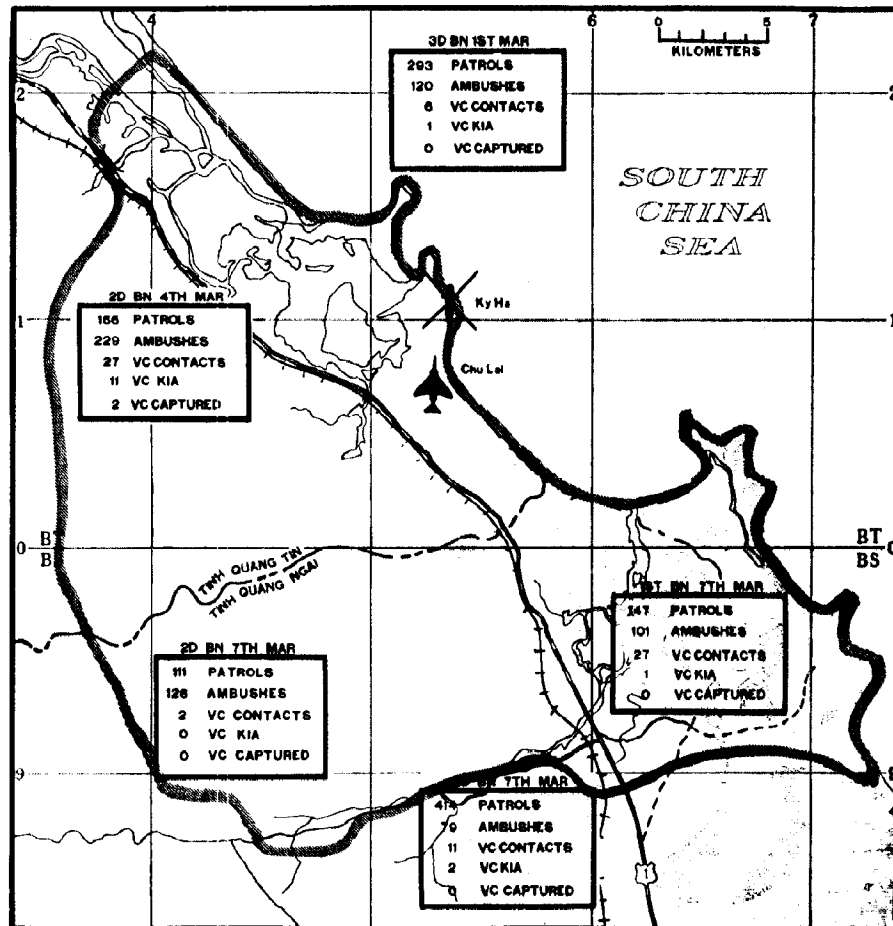
COUNTERGUERRILLA ACTIVITY WITHIN THE DANANG TACTICAL AREA



The six infantry battalions at Danang conducted an average of 114 patrols and 74 ambushes each day during March. The majority of the contacts occurred in the heavily populated area south of the Danang Air Base.

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COUNTERGUERRILLA ACTIVITY WITHIN THE CHU LAI TACTICAL AREA

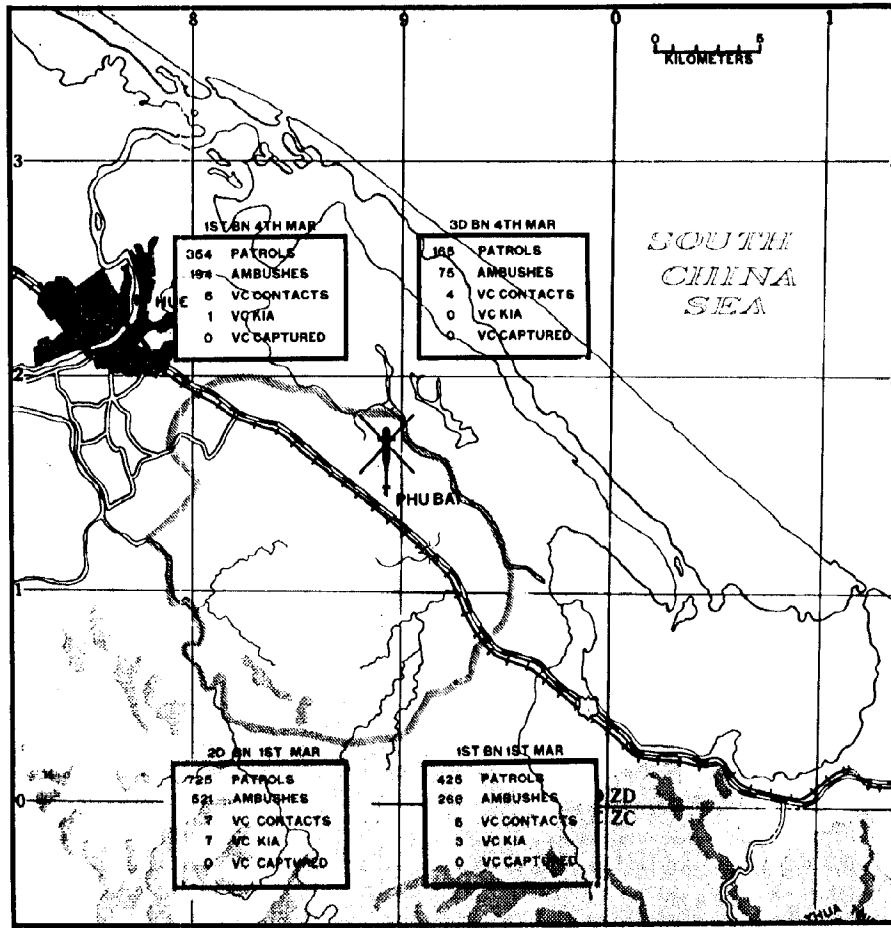


The five infantry battalions at Chu Lai conducted a daily average of 36 patrols and 21 ambushes during the month. The decreases from the previous month's totals are, primarily, a result of the heavy commitment to the large unit operations Utah, Texas, and Indiana for a significant portion of the period.

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COUNTERGUERRILLA ACTIVITY WITHIN THE PHU BAI TACTICAL AREA



At Phu Bai the four battalions conducted a daily average of 53 patrols and 34 ambushes.

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~~SECRET~~LARGE UNIT OPERATIONS

In March, Marines in Vietnam carried out sixteen operations involving units of battalion size or larger. All were operations which struck deep into Viet Cong secret base areas, exploited late intelligence on enemy unit locations or else were mounted in response to ARVN emergency requests for assistance. The speed with which these operations were carried out was made possible by the homogeneous character of the Marine air/ground team, which was also combined, on one major operation (Jack Stay), with the long range mobility, self-sufficiency and endurance of the amphibious task force.

The capability to carry out operations of this size over long distances and on short notice underscores the great strides which have been made since September 1951 when Marines in Korea introduced airmobile operations into actual combat. At that time the helicopter movement of a thousand Marines eight miles across the battlefield in a day marked a milestone in military mobility. In contrast, this month in Operation Texas, III MAF helicopters lifted 917 Marines into the combat area in 3 hours. Altogether, during the month of March 1966, III MAF helicopters lifted almost 48,000 troops-the equivalent of 44 infantry battalions, and delivered over four million pounds of cargo to those troops.

The three large unit operations of March which dealt the heaviest blows to the enemy exploited this maneuverability. These were Operations Utah (page 14), Texas (page 15), and Indiana (page 16).

The execution phase of Operation Utah began on 3 March 1966, when intelligence was developed which tended to

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confirm the presence of the 21st North Vietnamese Army Regiment in the rugged terrain northwest of Quang Ngai city. By 0900 the following morning, the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines and the 1st ARVN Airborne Battalion had been landed, and by 1000 contact had been established with the enemy. In all, 8 infantry battalions plus a large number of supporting troops were eventually employed. In Operation Utah, Marines accounted for 358 enemy killed, and ARVN units accounted for another 228.

In the same general area, later in the month, Operation Texas was conducted. During the early morning hours of 19 March, large Viet Cong units had attacked An Hoa outpost manned by Vietnamese Regional Force troops. Through the 19th the battle for An Hoa continued and Marine helicopters were heavily committed throughout the day delivering reinforcing units and evacuating the wounded. By nightfall it appeared doubtful that the defenders of An Hoa could continue to hold. Nevertheless, during the night, plans were made to support the garrison. By 0930 the following morning, 20 March, the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines and the 5th ARVN Airborne Battalion had been landed by helicopter 1000 meters from An Hoa. Meanwhile, the enemy had withdrawn and moved out toward the south. To intercept these units, the 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines was landed seven kilometers south of An Hoa at 210900. The vertical envelopment was successful. The battalion was able to engage the enemy and, in the intensive action which followed, killed 405 enemy troops and seized 23 weapons.

Later in the month, the Viet Cong again attacked in northern Quang Ngai province. Early in the morning of 28 March, the Commanding General, 2nd ARVN Division reported that the 3rd Battalion, 5th ARVN Regiment was

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heavily engaged with a large enemy force and requested assistance. III MAF responded and, by shortly after two o'clock the same afternoon, the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines had assembled, prepared and issued its operation order, moved to the objective area by helicopter, landed in the enemy's rear and achieved contact. In the ensuing heavy action Marines killed 69 Viet Cong or North Vietnamese troops and seized 19 weapons. This operation was designated Indiana.

These operations are described pictorially on the pages that follow.

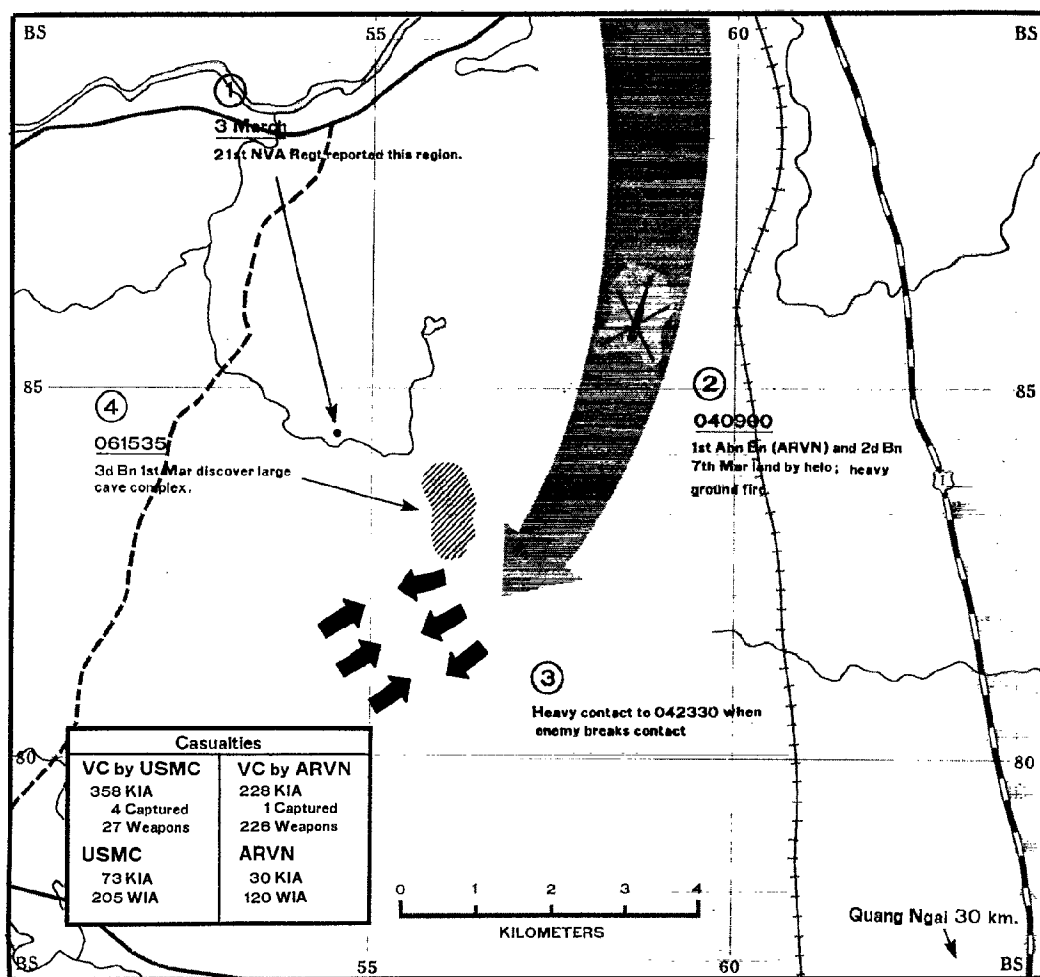
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OPERATION UTAH 4-7 MAR

**3 March**

Intelligence reports 21st NVA Regt located 30 km. NW of Quang Ngai. Note ①

4 March

0900-1st Abn Bn (ARVN) and 2d Bn 7th Mar begin landing from MAG-36 helos. Heavy ground fire. Note ②
1000-Contact with enemy; believed 21st NVA Regt with estimated 2000 troops.

1525-3d Bn 1st Mar helilifted to area.

1530-2nd Bn 7th Mar engaged in heavy contact through afternoon and evening.

2330-Enemy breaks contact and withdraws. Note ③

5 March

0800-2d Bn 4th Mar lands by helo; joins 2d Bn 7th Mar and 3d Bn 1st Mar in search and destroy operations throughout day; intermittent contact.

1440-1st Bn 7th Mar moves overland from Chu Lai to objective area.

6 March

1535-3d Bn 1st Mar discovers elaborate cave complex; one hidden bunker 15 by 35 feet; number of Chi com weapons and numerous documents. Note ④

7 March

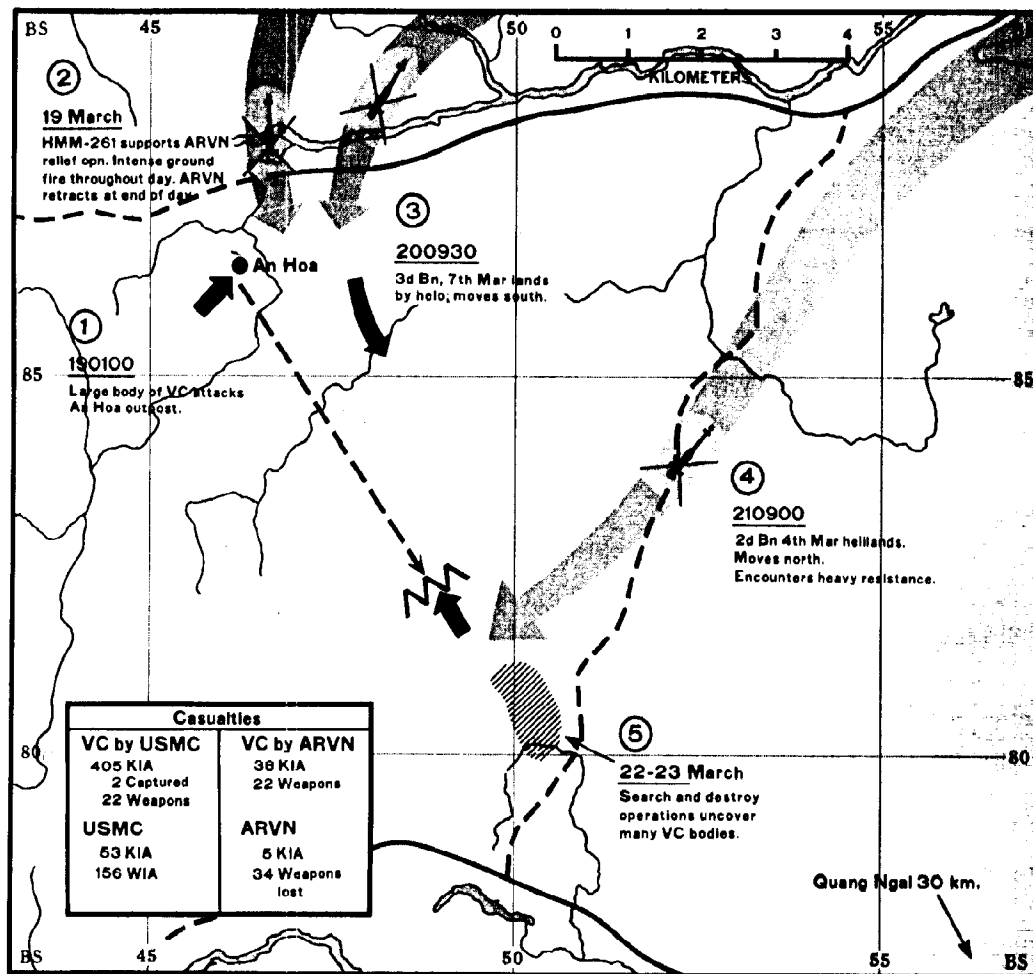
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OPERATION TEXAS 20-25 MAR

19 March

Approx 0100-VC force attacks and overruns An Hoa outpost, communication lost. Note ①
 -HMM-261 lifts ARVN in and evacuates wounded. Intense ground fire throughout day. 7 aircraft hit, 5 crewmen wounded; ARVN successfully retracted. Note ②

20 March

-Marines and ARVN move to assist An Hoa. 5th Abn Bn (ARVN) and 3d Bn 7th Mar lands 1,000 meters north of outpost. No contact. Move out toward south. Note ③

21 March

0900-2d Bn 4th Mar land southeast of An Hoa. Links up with 3d Bn 7th Mar. Encounter heavy resistance. 155 mm howitzers and Marine aircraft bombard. Bns move out at 1445. No further significant contact. Note ④
 1600-3d Bn 1st Mar lands by helo.

22-23 March

-Search and destroy operations uncover many VC bodies. Note ⑤

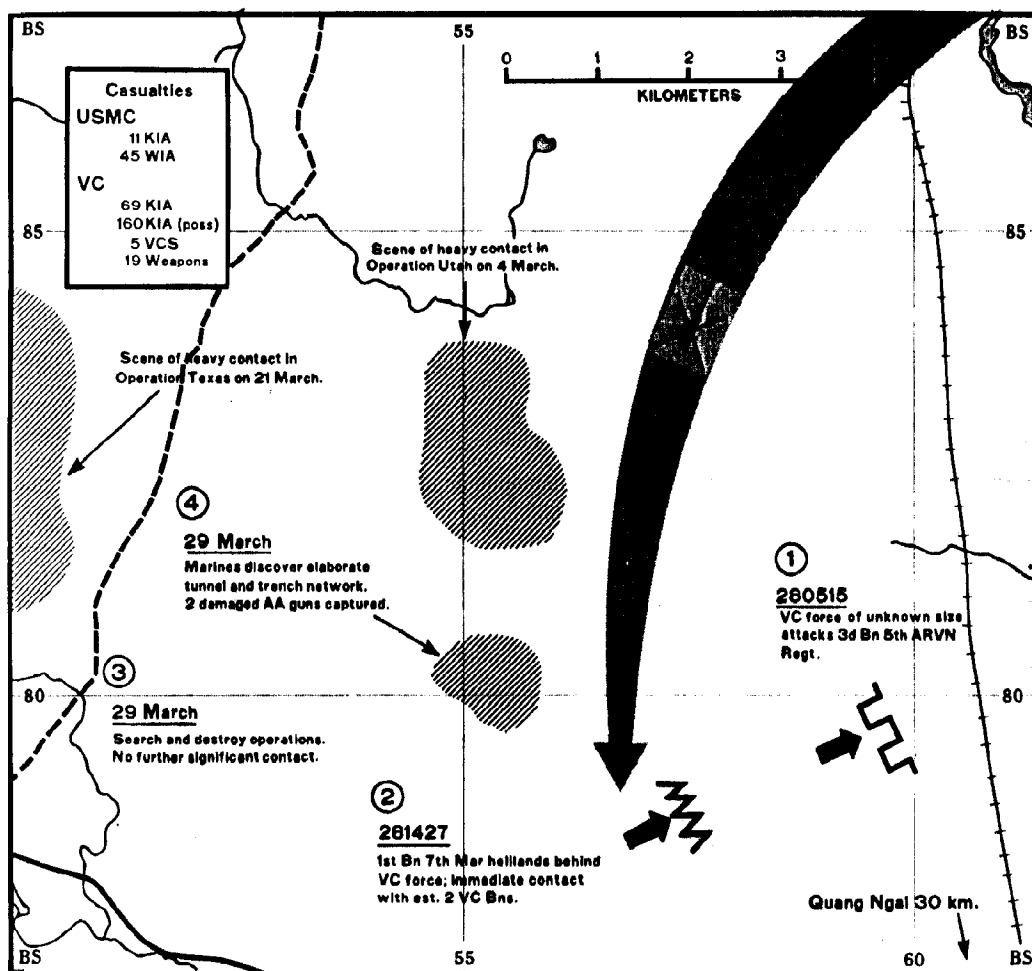
24-25 March

-Units retracted.

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OPERATION INDIANA 28-30 MAR

28 March

- 0515- VC force of unknown size attacks 3d Bn 5th ARVN Regt. CG 2d ARVN Div requests assistance from III MAF. Note ①
- 1427-1st Bn 7th Mar lands behind VC force estimated as 2 Bns, makes immediate contact. Note ②

29 March

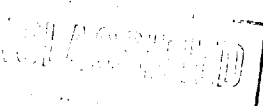
- Search and destroy operations. Note ③
 - Many tunnels and trenches discovered. 2 damaged AA guns captured. Note ④
- 1055-2d Bn 7th Mar heli-landed into objective area by 30 UH-34D's of MAG-36. Bns conduct search and destroy operations against minor resistance.

30 March

- 1415-Operation terminated. Bns retracted.

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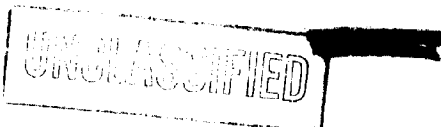
Meanwhile, 400 miles to the south, other Marines were conducting an operation in terrain far different from the hills and valleys of Quang Ngai province.

Operation Jack Stay began on 26 March as assault elements of the Special Landing Force, Seventh Fleet, landed in the Rung Sat mangrove swamp of Saigon, marking the ninth combat landing by the force in six months.

The SLF, as part of the Amphibious Ready Group is a balanced, self-sustaining fighting unit with the capability of landing assault forces simultaneously by surface craft and helicopters. Its battalion landing team (BLT) and helicopter squadron of 24 aircraft has substantial fire power; there are 2000 small arms, 138 machine guns, 38 106mm recoilless rifles (including 5 ONTOS carrying 6 guns each), 8 mortars, 12 artillery pieces and 5 medium tanks.

In addition to the nine actual amphibious landings which it has made since September 1965, the SLF also stood by off-shore as a back up force for the 1st Air Cavalry Division during its arrival in Qui Nhon. Later, the SLF provided the mobile reserve for the III MAF operation Blue Marlin and, during the October coup in Indonesia, the force was moved toward that area for possible employment in evacuating U. S. nationals, should that become necessary. The 26 March landings in the Rung Sat highlight the SLF's unique capability and underscore the mobility of the amphibious task force.

The Rung Sat area, designated the Rung Sat Special Zone (RSSZ) by the Vietnamese, has been a Viet Cong trouble spot for the past six to eight months. The area is roughly circular in shape, about 20 miles across, and lies along the major waterways connecting Saigon and the South China Sea. It is covered throughout with heavy mangrove growth which, in some areas, is so dense as to

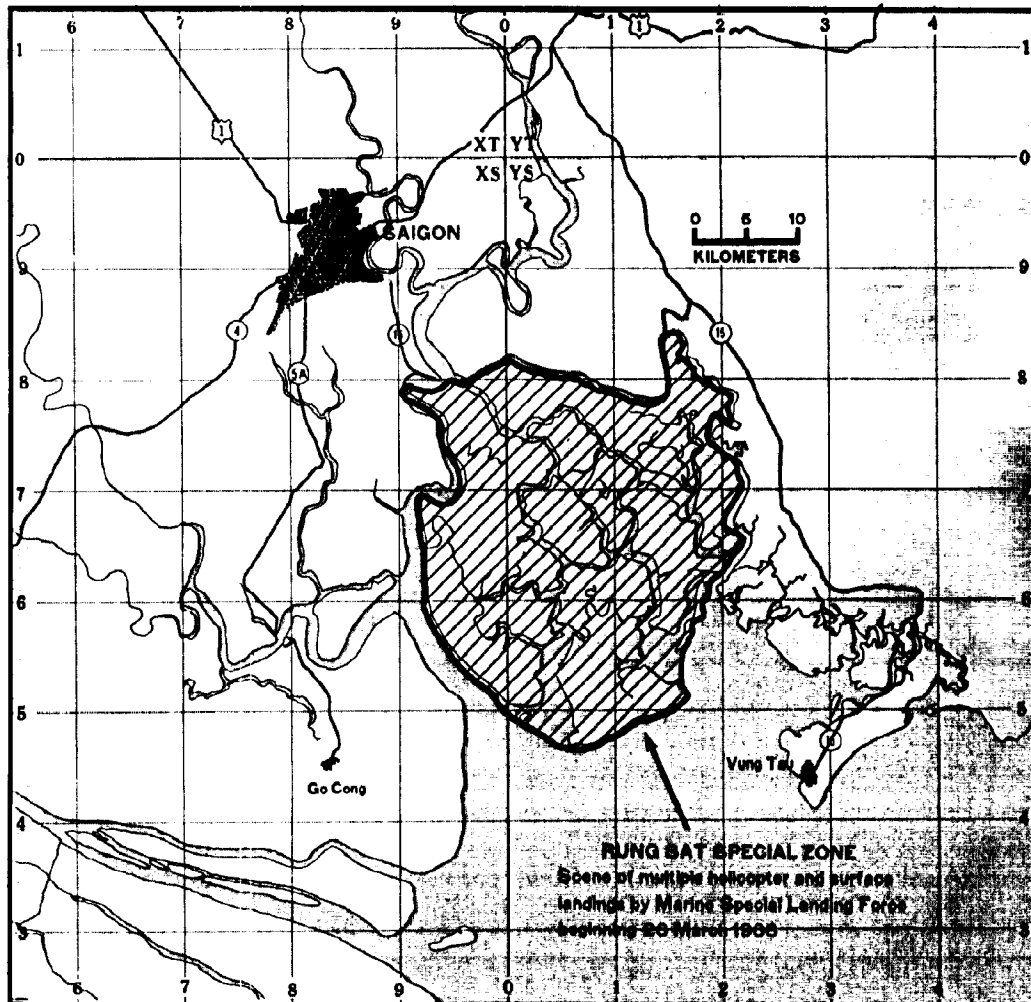
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make surface movement virtually impossible. It is largely inundated at high tide.

AREA OF OPERATION JACK STAY



There is no road or trail network in the Rung Sat, but the area is laced with a complex pattern of rivers and canals, many so narrow as to be hidden from overhead observation. For the past several months Viet Cong forces estimated at about 1000 in number had been operating with impunity in the Rung Sat and in both adjoining

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provinces. They had regularly attacked nearby Vietnamese outposts and isolated Vietnamese military units, ambushed relief columns and attacked transient international shipping enroute to Saigon, withdrawing afterward into the difficult terrain of the interior. The purpose of the Marine amphibious landings was to disrupt these VC operations.

Only light resistance was encountered on D-Day (26 March) and on D+1, following surface and heliborne landings in the southern extremity of the Rung Sat. On the 28th the Marines shifted their forces fourteen miles to the northwest in a heliborne landing which touched down immediately after a B-52 strike against a suspected guerrilla base. Three days later Marines drove farther into the mangrove swamps with a three company surface assault to destroy a Viet Cong rear guard. Continuing this push, they discovered a fortified village, 2 arms factories, and a guerrilla camp which included a third arms factory, a hospital training area, plus a number of fresh graves.

At the close of the month, Jack Stay was still underway and destruction of the guerrilla facilities was continuing. Marine ambushes continued to take toll of the Viet Cong, while planning was progressing toward introduction of the 4th and 5th Vietnamese Marine Battalions into the northwest portion of the Rung Sat, to operate in conjunction with the U. S. Marines.

Casualty figures, as of 31 March, were 41 VC KIA and an additional 26 reported as possible KIA. Marine and Navy casualties were 4 KIA and 22 WIA.

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The forward movement of the III MAF civic action program continued to grow during March, improving existing programs and developing increased participation in self-help projects by the Vietnamese people. Pursuit of this effort resulted in more than 171,000 Vietnamese benefitting from the humanitarian efforts of Marines - over 136,000 people received medical, subsistence, education and evacuation assistance, while more than 35,000 were aided through the distribution of thousands of pounds of food, clothing and soap, and cash donations.

As in past months, medical assistance accounted for a large part of the total effort - 84,035 people were treated; some 13,000 more than the preceeding month. In addition, 136 English language classes were conducted for 3,328 Vietnamese; twenty-eight dental students and thirty medical students from the Hue Medical School received special training by III MAF medical and dental personnel. Continuing in the field of education, III MAF undertook to improve and expand vocational training opportunities in Danang. Special efforts were initiated to include the maximum number of refugees, of which there are more than 5,000 in the Danang tactical area, in the training program, thereby assisting with their resettlement and readjustment.

Equally important was the emphasis placed on self-help projects. A total of 33 self-help projects were sponsored or supported by Marines as the Vietnamese people demonstrated a desire and willingness to help themselves with the aid of Marine technical assistance and support. Significant among these beneficial projects, which reflect accurately the desires and needs of the villagers, are the following:

- The security fence built around the hamlet of An Trach (1) and the defensive moat constructed around La Bong (1).

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- The bulletin board erected - at Marine suggestion - by residents in Yen Bac, which provided a medium for disseminating news and information.

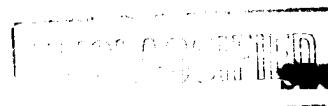
- The culvert and fishing boat dock built in Da Man to improve the economic self-sufficiency of the village.

- The shower willingly built by villagers in Da Man after the relationship of cleanliness to good health was demonstrated by Marines.

- The rebuilding of the tidal breakers in Ky Lien and Ky Hoa, washed away by wave action, to restore arable lands which had been damaged by salt water.

In the past, the attitude of the Vietnamese Armed Forces toward the people has not fostered the concept that the military was acutely interested in the well being of the people. However, a directive recently issued by the Minister of War and Construction requires that civic action activities be included in the programs of the armed forces with a view toward obtaining the support of the rural populace in defeating the communists and restoring security. This could be a major advance in the war for the support of the people.

Another advance in winning the people made by the GVN, which was strongly supported by III MAF, is represented in the revised policy regarding the use of GVN Military Civic Action Program (MILCAP) funds. In the past the fund was used for a variety of purposes including indemnification for war damage; psychological warfare entertainment; gifts; and repair of public facilities. Funds are now being used exclusively for indemnifying people who are victims of combat activity of Vietnamese Armed Forces or Free World Military Assistance Forces. The revised policy increases the ceiling on claims that can be paid at the local level and provides for an improved administration



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of the program.

These advances represent a growing awareness on the part of the GVN that killing VC, without making a concerted effort to gain the support, respect and confidence of the people - a basic objective of the III MAF civic action program - cannot achieve a true victory.

The National Priority Revolutionary Development Area in I Corps Tactical Zone (the Ngu Hanh Son Pacification Campaign) located in the southern part of the Danang tactical area, registered moderate progress despite continued organizational problems and a critical shortage of GVN security forces to move in and capitalize upon the Marine efforts.

The completion of 5,362 meters of protective fence, the clearing of 27 garden plots, the establishment of five health stations, and the organization of a combat youth squad are representative of the small, but positive, advances in the pacification campaign.

The effort made to resolve problems that have plagued the campaign was moderately encouraging. The assignment of two 40-man Revolutionary Development Cadre Teams represents a small improvement in the security posture of GVN forces. In addition, prior to his dismissal as the Commanding General, I Corps (ARVN) General Thi had taken positive steps to rejuvenate the leadership of the campaign when he addressed campaign officials and stressed the need for intensified action. As a result, the Quang Nam Province Chief, who is responsible for the prosecution of the campaign, expedited approval of 450,000 piastres for nine self-help projects which are now actually going ahead in nine of the hamlets undergoing pacification.

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Joint Coordinating Council operations during March again proved of value in achieving mutual understanding between U. S. and GVN agencies. Through the medium of the Port of Danang Committee, plans for military and civilian development of the port were coordinated at the local level and mutual approval obtained. In addition, the continued cooperation of U. S. agencies with GVN efforts to control black market activities in the I Corps Tactical Zone, especially in the Danang area, was ensured during a recent Council meeting.

III MAF is again protecting the villagers while they harvest their spring rice crop. It will be recalled that a similar operation in the fall of 1965, called Golden Fleece, kept over half a million pounds of rice from falling into VC hands - about 90% of the rice the VC had stolen the previous year, when the harvesters were without protection. Golden Fleece II calls for USMC and ARVN forces to clear the harvest areas and to prevent VC movement into them, primarily by heavy small unit patrols, ambushes, and company sized search and destroy missions.

Although the harvest had barely begun by the end of the month, the VC had already attempted, on two occasions, to interfere with the harvest and seize rice. However, ground patrols and alert reserve forces quickly positioned by helicopter drove them off.

This close relationship between the counter guerrilla and civic action programs was the basis for the picture of progress that was developing slowly in the rural areas of I CTZ. In the Danang area, the portion considered 60% pacified rose from 26 square miles in February to 45 square miles in March. In the Chu Lai area, the February assessment revealed no population groups with pacification levels above 20%, while in March 36,069

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rural Vietnamese were considered to be in the 40% and 60% categories. In Phu Bai five villages were assessed in March as 80% pacified; in February there had been none.

These assessments are based on examination in detail of five equally weighted indicators, as applied to each village within each tactical area. These indicators are:

- Destruction of enemy military units
- Destruction of enemy infrastructure
- Establishment of local security by the Vietnamese
- Establishment of local governments by the Vietnamese
- Status of New Life Development Program

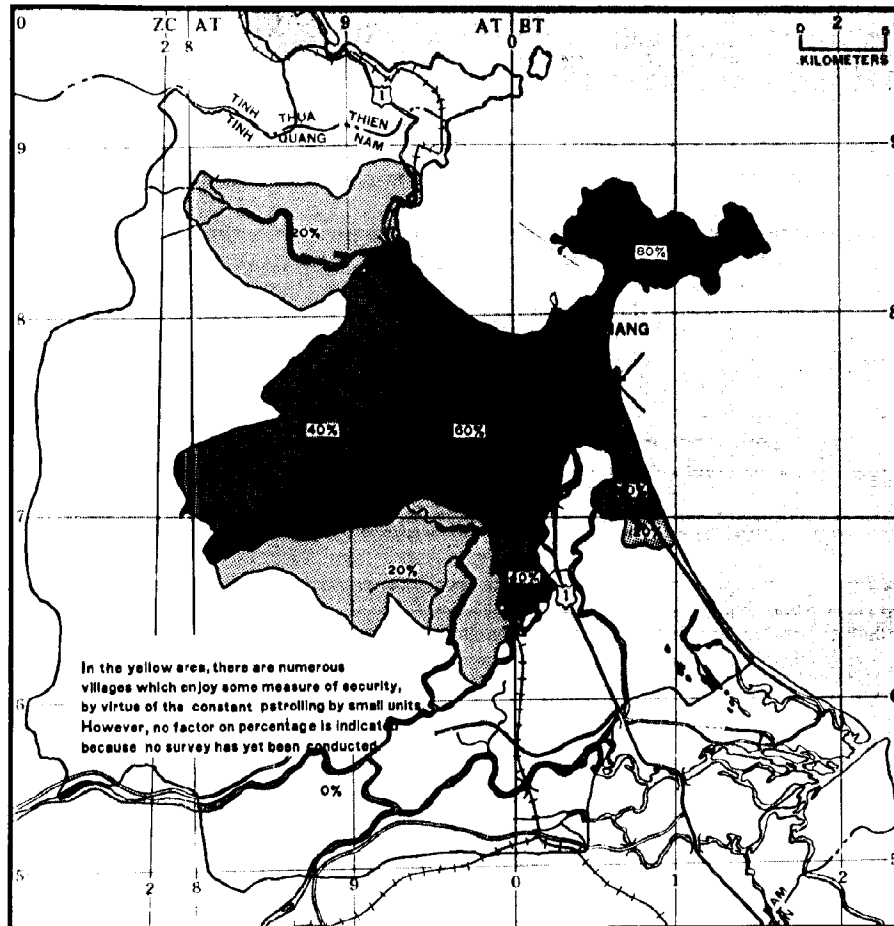
A detailed description of this evaluation system is contained in the February 1966 report of this series. Charts on the following pages display the pacification status, assessed according to this system, for the three Marine areas at the end of February and the end of March 1966.

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PACIFICATION STATUS-DANANG TACTICAL AREA



PERCENT PACIFIED	SQUARE MILES			CIVILIAN POPULATION			VILLAGES		
	FEB	MAR	CHANGE	FEB	MAR	CHANGE	FEB	MAR	CHANGE
* 0%	457	428	-29	94,491	95,489	+998	53	47	-6
20%	57	56	-1	36,258	35,054	-1,204	9	8	-1
40%	18	31	+13	16,100	17,483	+1,383	4	7	+3
60%	26	45	+19	19,036	53,539	+34,503	5	9	+4
80%	31	29	-2	175,000	210,000	+35,000	1	1	—
100%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	589	589	—	340,885	411,565	+70,680	72	72	—

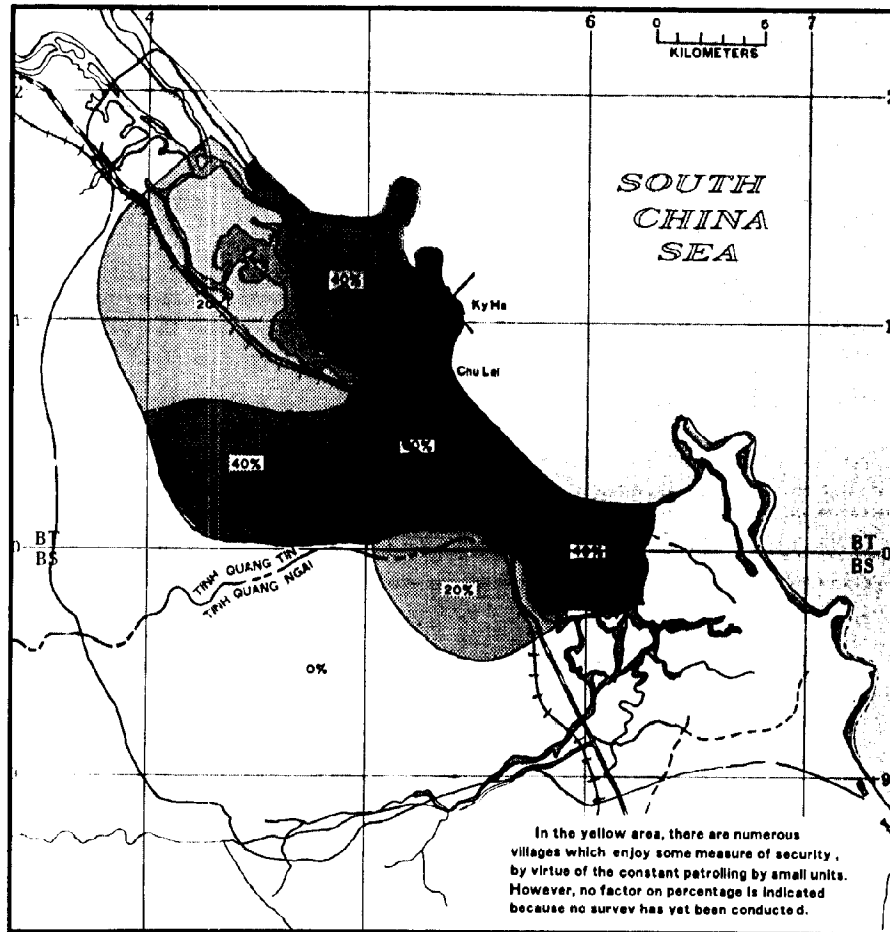
* The regions in the 0% category are those in which effort is being applied, but where no survey has been conducted yet, or where the pacification level has not yet reached 20%. Villages in those areas which have been analyzed vary from 0% as high as 17% pacified.

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PACIFICATION STATUS - CHU LAI TACTICAL AREA



PERCENT PACIFIED	SQUARE MILES			CIVILIAN POPULATION			VILLAGES		
	FEB	MAR	CHANGE	FEB	MAR	CHANGE	FEB	MAR	CHANGE
* 0%	244	193	-51	91,145	58,460	-32,685	21	16	-5
20%	30	34	+4	21,824	18,240	-3,384	5	3	-2
40%	—	25	+25	—	26,802	+26,802	—	5	+5
60%	—	22	+22	—	9,267	+9,267	—	2	+2
80%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
100%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	274	274	—	112,769	112,769	—	26	26	—

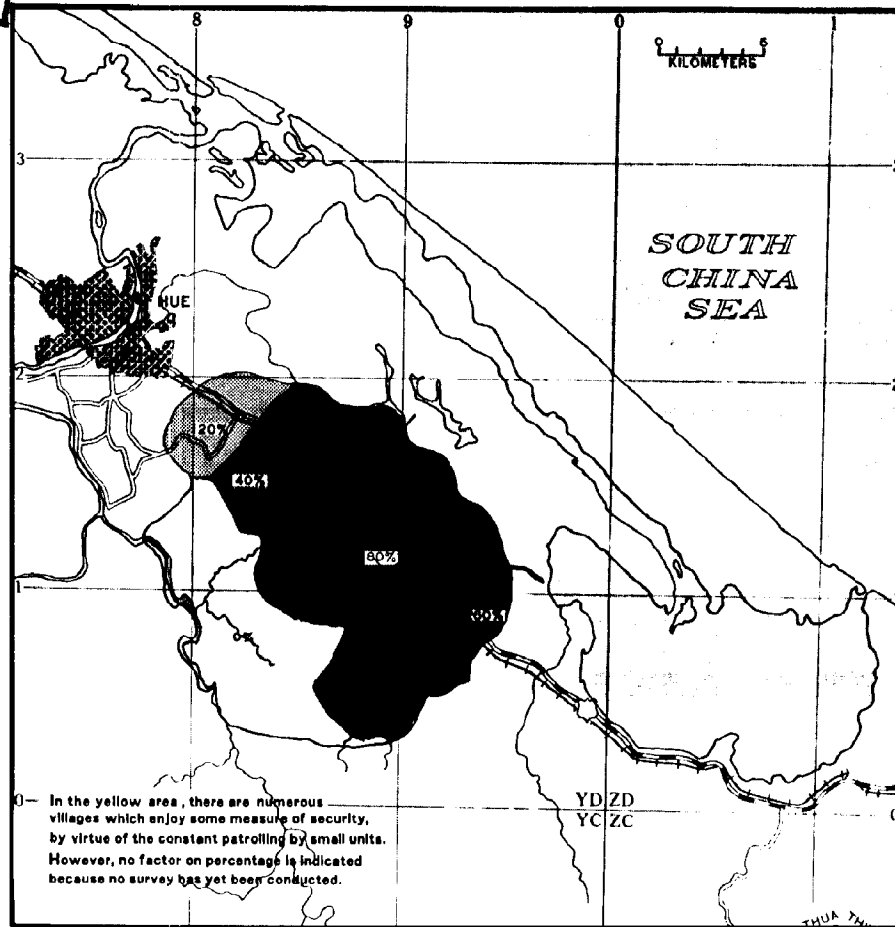
* The regions in the 0% category are those in which effort is being applied, but where no survey has been conducted yet, or where the pacification level has not yet reached 20%. Villages in those areas which have been analyzed vary from 0% to as high as 17% pacified.

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PACIFICATION STATUS-PHU BAI TACTICAL AREA



PERCENT PACIFIED	SQUARE MILES			CIVILIAN POPULATION			VILLAGES		
	FEB	MAR	CHANGE	FEB	MAR	CHANGE	FEB	MAR	CHANGE
* 0%	22	22	-	17,740	17,760	+20	4	3	-1
20%	25	7	-18	11,852	4,055	-7,797	2	1	-1
40%	-	8	+8	-	7,551	+7,551	-	1	+1
60%	38	1	-37	23,486	483	-23,003	5	1	-4
80%	-	47	+47	-	23,229	+23,229	-	5	+5
100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	85	85	-	53,078	53,078	-	11	11	-

* The regions in the 0% category are those in which effort is being applied, but where no survey has been conducted yet, or where the pacification level has not yet reached 20%. Villages in those areas which have been analyzed vary from 0% to as high as 17% pacified.

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AIRFIELD SECURITY

During March, as before, III MAF defense of the five major U. S. air facilities in the I CTZ comprised a balanced combination of strong close-in positions and far ranging offensive actions. Significant changes in the defensive alignments at Phu Bai and Chu Lai, however, were made during the month as new units arrived and some of those already in country were repositioned.

At the end of February the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines was the sole infantry unit defending the airfield at Phu Bai. On 31 March this force had been augmented by the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines; 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines; and two companies from 1st Battalion, 4th Marines. All of these forces are now controlled by the 4th Marines Regimental Headquarters which also arrived at Phu Bai in March. Small unit operations, conducted in all parts of the Phu Bai tactical area, continued to play a major role in this effort. In all, these units conducted 2, 727 patrols and ambushes, an average of over 87 each day.

At Danang the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines continued as the Air Base Defense Battalion, conducting 1,082 patrols and ambushes in the immediate area surrounding the Danang and Marble Mountain fields, an average of over 34 such operations each day. The remaining five battalions conducted an additional 4,624 ambushes and patrols throughout the tactical area.

The anti-government demonstrations which occurred in the I CTZ during late March were of particular concern to the Danang Air Base Defense Battalion. As a precautionary measure, in case the demonstrators moved against American installations, the reserve platoon was equipped with gas masks and riot control agents. While the demonstrations did increase in size and intensity

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during the month, none were directed against the airfields and the specially equipped reserve platoon was not utilized.

At the southernmost Marine area, Chu Lai, the responsibility for defense of the bases was assumed by the 1st Marine Division on 29 March. Three defensive sectors were established, made up of those occupied by the 1st and 7th Marines, plus the newly established Chu Lai Defense Command Sector. All units at Chu Lai assist in defending the air bases; however, the Chu Lai Defense Command, which was established on 31 March, is specifically responsible for the close-in protection of Chu Lai and Ky Ha. This new organization is composed of two rifle companies from the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines and two platoons each from the 1st Tank and 1st Anti-Tank Battalions. A Command Group from Headquarters Battalion, 1st Marine Division was activated to control the activities of these units. During the month, in operations aimed at keeping the VC off balance and preventing their assembling for attack on the key installations, the five infantry battalions conducted a total of 1,786 patrols and ambushes in the tactical area, an average of over 57 each day.

An unsuccessful attack was made in the Chu Lai area at 0215 23 March, when an estimated 25 Viet Cong attempted to penetrate the positions of Company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines located about 900 meters from the northwestern side of the airfield runway. The attack was initiated by 21 rounds of 60mm mortar fire, 6 rifle grenades and several hundred rounds of small arms fire. Marines immediately returned about 200 rounds of small arms fire, illuminated the area with ninety-nine 81mm mortar rounds and repulsed the attack. No airfield facilities or aircraft were damaged, although one Marine was killed by enemy small arms fire and 5 others were wounded in the fire fight. Subsequent patrols apprehended 7 Viet Cong suspects, and found fifteen 60mm mortar

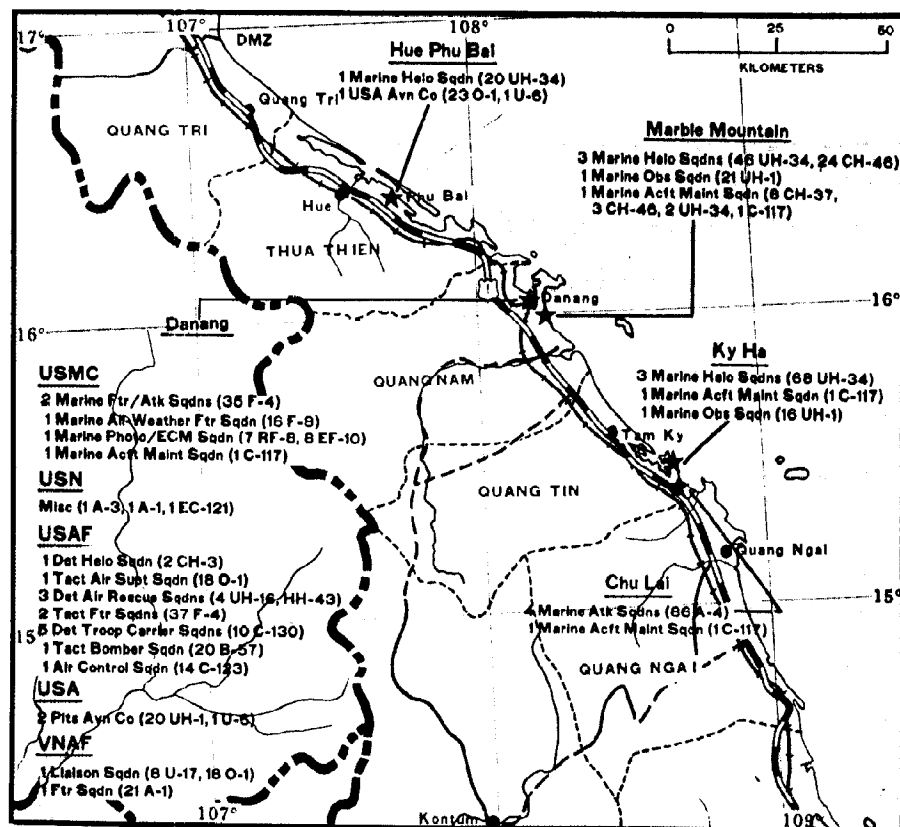
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rounds that appeared to have been misfires, 2 Chicom rifle grenades, 3 Chicom concussion grenades, 18 spent .30 caliber casings, one pair of wirecutters and two one-half pound blocks of TNT equipped with pull-type fuzes.

**AIRCRAFT POPULATION AT THE FIVE MARINE AIRFIELDS
IN I CTZ AS OF 31 MARCH 1966 ***



* Numbers of USMC aircraft include 10 in Period Aircraft Rebuild (PAR).

As in previous months, the majority of aircraft operating from the five fields in the Marine airbase complex were those of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. On 31 March there were 366 Marine, 109 U. S. Air Force, 45 U. S. Army, 3 U. S. Navy, and 45 Vietnamese Air Force aircraft operating from these facilities.

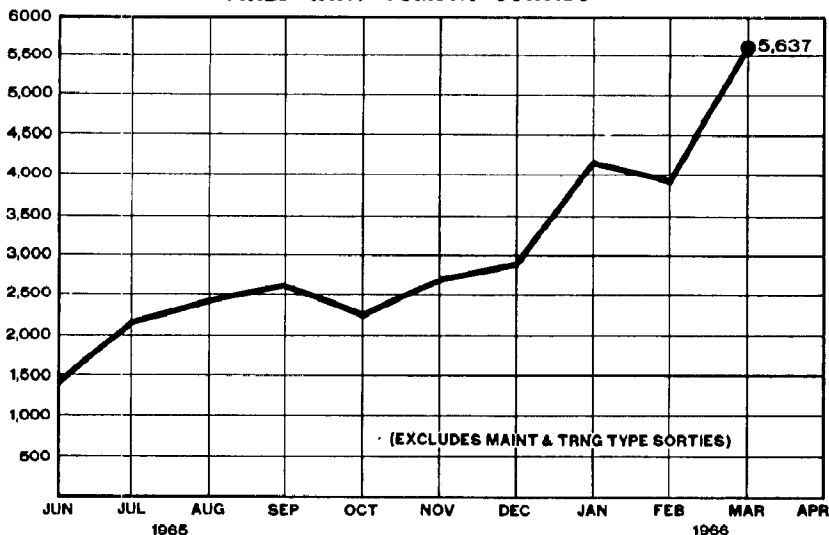
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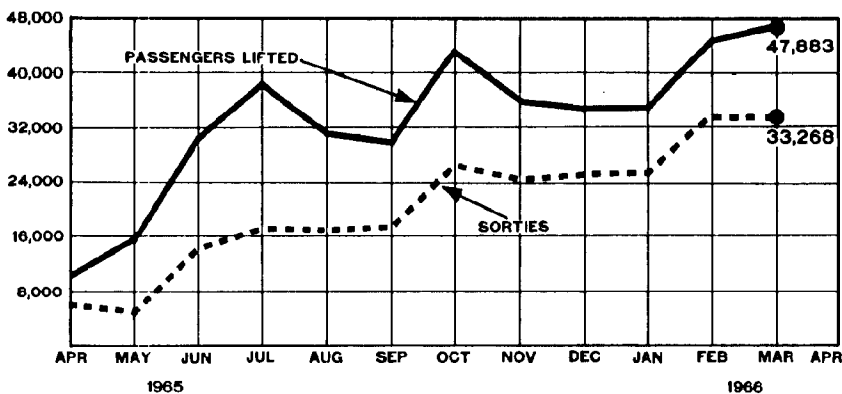
During March Marine fighter and attack planes set a new high for the number of offensive sorties flown in a single month - 5,637. This is more than one thousand sorties above the previous high of 4,190 flown in January.

FIXED WING COMBAT SORTIES



Marine helicopter sorties were slightly below the record set in February, but the total of 33,268 was still considerably above the previous high of 26,534 flown in December.

HELICOPTER SORTIES AND PASSENGERS LIFTED

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Through March, 1st Wing aircraft operating from the key bases continued to play an important part in the war, often in support of ARVN operations or in response to ARVN requests for help. A noteworthy example is the four-day emergency operation in support of the Vietnamese outpost at A Shau which was attacked and later overrun by a large Viet Cong force.

A Shau was a remote outpost located some sixty miles west of Danang deep in the rugged mountains, astride a major communist resupply route. The 400 defending troops had first heard the sound of digging shortly after 0200 on the morning of 9 March. At about 0300, the Viet Cong attacked with a force of three battalions. Shortly afterward the post lost communications. By 0930 communications were re-established and at 1055 emergency ammunition resupply was requested.

Air fire support, aerial resupply and air evacuation missions, with Marines playing a major role, began shortly after noon. On 9 and 10 March Marine fixed wing aircraft flew ninety-two sorties in support of the besieged troops on the ground.

Unfavorable weather and intense enemy ground fire made the rescue costly. The first USMC aircraft lost, a helicopter on an emergency evacuation mission, was shot down at 1830 on 9 March. Its crew was rescued by another Marine helicopter. Later, VMA-311 lost an A-4C when the pilot crashed into the mountains in the thick overcast during a bombing attack. Flying into the hotly contested airstrip to evacuate the defenders, Marine helicopter squadrons lost a total of 3 UH-34's. The crews were all rescued later by other Marine aircraft.

In all, sixty-nine U. S. and Vietnamese troops were brought out by Marine aircraft by 11 March. Returning on 12 March after the camp had been completely overrun, HMM-163 helicopters rescued an additional thirty-eight survivors.

In addition to the above, wing aircraft contributed significantly to the air campaign in North Vietnam and Laos, flying 171 sorties in North Vietnam and 1,595 sorties as part of the Steel Tiger program.

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LOGISTICS

All aspects of the III MAF logistic operation were substantially improved during March. The steady improvement can be attributed to good weather, increasing availability of storage and other logistic facilities, improvements in the flow of vital materials, increases in supply stock levels, a greater respect for and adherence to good supply discipline by all hands, and the continuous actions by all those concerned with providing supplies and services.

Force Logistic Command: To provide a logistic organization to satisfy the expanding needs of III MAF and to make optimum use of available assets, the Force Logistic Command (FLC) was established in RVN on 15 March. This is a provisional command, created by expansion of the previously existing FLSG arrangement. The FLC consists of a headquarters, located near the III MAF Command Post, a functional Force Logistic Supply Group in each major Marine area, and a Force Logistic Support Unit at Phu Bai. The FLC is under the command, less operational control, of CG, FMFPAC and under the operational control of CG, III MAF. The mission of the FLC is to provide sustained logistical support to III MAF organizations, to provide staff augmentation and self sustaining balanced mobile logistic support elements in support of tactical forces of III MAF up to and including brigade size when deployed on independent missions, and to provide logistic support to other organizations as may be directed.

Port Facilities: No major facilities were completed for use during this period; however, work progressed on all projects and improvements were made to existing facilities. Work continued on the LST/LCU unload facility by the Tourane River bridge. It is 38 percent completed. Dredging of the approaches to the ramps contin-

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ued with two dredges in use. It is expected that use of the facility to unload LCU's will be inaugurated in April. Continued progress is also being made on other LST and small boat unloading points at Danang East and at the Museum area, and dredging operations at the site of the first deep water pier on Observation Point have commenced. At Chu Lai the entrance channel to the LST unloading facility has been dredged to a depth of 14 feet, and work is continuing to develop the channel to a depth of 20 feet. This facility can now accommodate four LST's simultaneously and, on 20 March, there were actually four LST's at the ramp, discharging cargo. One new area of concern for port facility development was addressed during March; this was for new and improved facilities in the vicinity of Hue. The force buildups and the prospects of increased tactical operations in the northern provinces of the ICTZ require that a protected LST unloading facility be developed prior to the next monsoon season. CG, III MAF and COMNAV-SUPPACT, Danang have initiated requests to secure these facilities.

Supply: A general influx of items previously regarded as being in short supply has substantially improved the supply status in III MAF.

Class I - - Supply levels of subsistence items continued to grow and, at the end of March, were considered as adequate to support current and anticipated future operations. Organic refrigerated storage continues to limit the on-hand stocks of fresh and frozen ration components to less than seven days of supply.

Class II - - Improvement in the supply of equipment and hardware items is evident in the continued improvement in the initial fill rates of requisitions at the Force Logistic Support Groups and the Third Force Service Regiment. This initial fill rate in the Force Logistic Support Groups

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has progressed from 21 percent in January, to 27 percent in February, and to 33 percent in March. At the same time the initial fill rate at the 3rd FSR on Okinawa was 33 percent in January, 45 percent in February, and 45 percent in March. During March the Force Logistic Support Group - Bravo at Chu Lai continued to expand to accept the supply requirements to support additional forces being introduced. Six Butler buildings are currently being constructed at Chu Lai to house Class II stocks. Also during the month the source of supply for the Force Logistic Command for some common, housekeeping type items was changed from 3rd FSR on Okinawa to Naval Support Activity, Danang.

Class III and IIIA -- Sufficient assets were on hand to satisfy all requirements.

Class IV -- Supply of field fortification materials improved and some buildup of stock levels was accomplished, in addition to satisfying daily demands to support tactical operations.

Class V and VA -- Assets of Class V (ground ammunition) continued to be maintained at 45 days of supply in RVN. In Class VA 250 and 500 pound low drag bombs, 2.75 inch rocket pods, and 5 inch Zuni rockets remain in short supply. Where possible, substitute items are being used. A technique, called Complete Round Shipment (CRAMSHIP), for direct movement of Class VA from CONUS to Danang has been initiated to improve availability of Class VA items. The first CRAMSHIP arrived at Danang on 18 March.

CRITIPAC: The CRITIPAC special supply program has been in operation for the past five months. This program combines a "push" type supply system based on knowledge and continued feedback of specific requirements. In this manner critical, fast moving, routinely

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required supplies are provided in a single box each month for each of the major units (battalions/squadrons and separate companies) in III MAF. The program has been well received by the using units, and has bridged shortage gaps in items which are of common and critical demand. Most importantly, the receipt of CRITIPAC boxes has resulted in improved supply availability and the removal of needed equipment from deadline. The program has been evaluated as a success, and it is proving to be an excellent complement to the normal requisitioning, or "pull" type supply system.

Maintenance: With receipt of new equipment and increased availability of repair and replacement parts, the availability of equipment in III MAF improved during March. The special support programs such as RED BALL and CRITIPAC continued to provide much needed, critical items to assist in reducing deadline rates.

Action has been initiated to increase 4th and 5th echelon maintenance capabilities in WESTPAC, both internally and through expanded Interservice Support Agreements. The 3d Force Service Regiment on Okinawa will perform limited 5th echelon maintenance, and increased 4th echelon work will be performed by the Force Logistic Command in RVN.

Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific/First Marine Amphibious Corps (Forward) has been directed to coordinate and supervise the construction aspects of expanding the maintenance facilities on Okinawa and to coordinate arrangements with Ship Repair Facility, Yokosuka, for rehabilitation and rebuild of generators and certain motor transport items. The Force Logistic Command has been directed to evaluate the 4th echelon maintenance being performed in country to determine what additional work at this level can be performed with a minimum build-up

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of facilities, tools, and personnel.

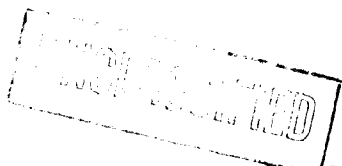
Medical: There were 172 hospital beds available, as of 31 March, at the NAVSUPPACT Hospital at Danang. The present capacity, together with the contemplated availability of the USS REPOSE (AH-16) in the area, has decreased the casualty loads on existing facilities and the necessity for expediting casualty evacuation to out-of-country hospitals.

Engineer Operations: Generally fair weather during March facilitated road improvement, particularly on the Monkey Mountain Road. Roads were watered, or shot with asphalt, for dust control in built-up areas. The access road to the China Beach recreation area was 80 percent completed at the end of March. Crushed rock production continued to be inadequate to meet all construction requirements. Rock crushing plants available consist of three 200 ton per hour (TPH), two 75 TPH, three 50 TPH, and two 15 TPH.

A new tentative bridge site across the Tourane River has been selected approximately 200 feet north of the existing bridge. The final site will be determined as a result of an engineering study. A preliminary bridge design, using prefabricated bridge sections in order to expedite construction, has been completed by the OICC, RVN.

Movement and Resupply: The buildup of forces in RVN continued during March. During this period the Headquarters of the 1st Marine Division, 7th Motor Transport Battalion, 3rd Amphibian Tractor Battalion (-), HMM-164, 1st Force Recon Company, BLT 3/4, and a number of smaller units arrived at Danang, Chu Lai and Phu Bai. A total of 4487 personnel were introduced into RVN utilizing 16 amphibious ships in the process. In addition the

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USNS GENERAL WEIGEL arrived at Danang on 9 March with 2,012 replacement personnel for III MAF.

During the month of March the average daily cargo discharge rate at Danang was 5197 M/T. This resulted in a new record of 161,096 M/T of cargo being unloaded in a single month at Danang. The previous record was 127,547 M/T unloaded in the month of January 1966. Experience in unloading cargo vessels at Danang has led to the determination that a 20-30 thousand M/T of backlogged cargo, aboard shipping in the harbor, is required to optimize the cargo mix in unloading operations. On 28 February there were three ships in port at Danang. During March, 28 ships arrived and 22 ships completed unloading operations and departed. Nine ships were in port on 31 March with a cargo backlog of 23,785 M/T. The backlog on 28 February was 12,565 M/T, and the average daily backlog for March was 20,955 M/T.

The Military Airlift Command cargo channel between Kadena, Okinawa and Danang was utilized to move 593 S/T of high priority cargo. Marine aircraft and the 315th Air Division moved an additional 1354 S/T, for a total of 1947 S/T of airlifted cargo from areas outside Vietnam to Danang, Chu Lai and Phu Bai.

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STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS

1. PHU BAI - There was considerable increase in the strength of USMC forces as the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines arrived from Okinawa on 18 March and additional units were repositioned to Phu Bai from Danang and Chu Lai. Units arriving from other tactical areas included the 4th Marines Regimental Headquarters (26 March), the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines (2 March), and two companies and the headquarters of 1st Battalion, 4th Marines (13 March).

There was no change to the tactical area.

ENEMY ORDER OF BATTLE

<u>Confirmed</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Probable</u>		
<u>Within 25 miles</u>			<u>Within 25 miles</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Feb</u>
Regt Hq	1	0	Regt Hq	0	0
Battalions	7	2	Battalions	0	1
Companies	2	2	Companies	2	2
Total Strength	3,695	995	Total Strength	150	550
<u>Within 25 to 50 miles</u>			<u>Within 25 to 50 miles</u>		
Sub-Region Hq	1	1	Regt Hq	0	0
Regt Hq	0	0	Battalions	5	4
Battalions	4	4	Companies	3	3
Companies	12	12			
Total Strength	2,765	2,665	Total Strength	2,265	1,545
<u>Grand Total to 50 Miles</u>	6,460	3,660	<u>Grand Total to 50 Miles</u>	2,415	2,095

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A comparison of the February 1966 and the March 1966 confirmed enemy order of battle indicates that there has been an increase of 2,800 enemy personnel within a fifty mile radius of the Phu Bai tactical area. The increase was caused by the confirmation of the 95th "B" NVA Regiment, the 810th NVA Battalion and the northern movement of the 70th Battalion, 1st VC Regiment. All are within fifty miles of the Phu Bai airfield.

2. DANANG - On 1 March VMFA-542 arrived from Iwakuni, Japan in a normal inter-theater rotation. VMFA-323 departed Danang for Iwakuni on 5 March. On 2 March the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines left for Phu Bai. The arrival of HMM-164 at Marble Mountain from CONUS on 13 March marked the first Marine squadron equipped with CH-46 helicopters to operate in Vietnam.

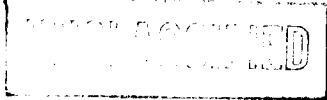
There was no change to the tactical area.

ENEMY ORDER OF BATTLE

<u>Confirmed</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Probable</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Feb</u>
<u>Within 25 miles</u>			<u>Within 25 miles</u>		
Regt Hq	0	0	Regt Hq	0	0
Battalions	3	2	Battalions	3	3
Companies	5	8	Companies	2	2
Total Strength	2,190	1,540	Total Strength	1,425	925
<u>With 25 to 50 miles</u>			<u>Within 25 to 50 miles</u>		
Regt Hq	2	1	Regt Hq	1	1
Battalions	8	6	Battalions	4	5
Companies	10	11	Companies	2	2

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Total Strength 4,865 3,115 Total Strength 2,650 3,050

Grand Total to
50 Miles 7,055 4,655 Grand Total to
50 Miles 4,075 3,975

A comparison of the February 1966 and the March 1966 confirmed enemy order of battle shows that there has been an increase of 2,400 enemy personnel within a fifty mile radius of the Danang tactical area. This increase in confirmed strength figures is due to the confirmation of the 95th "B" NVA Regiment and the 810th NVA Battalion, both of which are within fifty miles of the Danang airfield.

3. CHU LAI - During the month numerous elements of the 1st Marine Division arrived from Okinawa and CONUS. These units included the 1st Hospital Company (8 March), the 7th Motor Transport Battalion (11 March), 1st Dental Company (18 March), 3d Amphibious Tractor Battalion (20 March), 1st Service Battalion (21 March), 1st Medical Battalion (23 March), 1st Shore Party Battalion (23 March), 1st Engineer Battalion (23 March), 1st Tank Battalion (26 March), 1st Reconnaissance Battalion (26 March) and the 1st Anti-Tank Battalion (27 March). The 4th Marines Regimental Command Group and two companies along with the headquarters of the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines departed for Phu Bai on 26 and 13 March respectively.

There was no change to the tactical area.

ENEMY ORDER OF BATTLE

<u>Confirmed</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Probable</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Feb</u>
<u>Within 25 miles</u>			<u>Within 25 miles</u>		
MR-V Hq	1	0	Regt Hq	0	0
Regt Hq	2	0	Battalions	2	2

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Battalions	10	5	Companies	0	0
Companies	11	9			
Total Strength	6,559	2,110	Total Strength	600	600

Within 25 to 50
Miles

MR-V Hq	0	1
Regt Hq	0	1
Battalions	5	7
Companies	9	13
Total Strength	3,400	5,229

Within 25 to 50
Miles

Regt Hq	0	1
Battalions	3	6
Companies	0	0
Total Strength	1,300	2,800

Grand total to
50 Miles

9,959	7,339
-------	-------

Grand total to
50 Miles

1,900	3,400
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In comparing the February 1966 and the March 1966 confirmed enemy order of battle, it is seen that there has been an increase of 2,620 enemy personnel within a fifty mile radius of the Chu Lai tactical area. This increase in confirmed strength figures is due to the confirmation of the 21st NVA Regiment and a strength increase for the 80th Battalion, 1st VC Regiment.

4. VIET CONG LOSSES FOR MARCH 1966

<u>This period</u>		<u>Total to 31 Mar</u>
1,382	KIA	4,890
54	VC (Captured)	673
793	VC (Suspects)	5,072
85	WIA	446

5. CIVIC ACTION STATISTICS

<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>		<u>Total to 31 Mar</u>
70,891	84,035	Persons Given Medical Treatment	409,049

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9	77	Persons Given Medical Training	234
63	80	Construction Projects	367
51,012	44,595	Pounds of Food Distributed	256,625
9,220	9,945	Pounds of Soap Distributed	72,146
6,208	9,394	Pounds of Clothing Distributed	158,211
56	81	Critically Ill Civilians Evacuated	4,646
55	136	English Language Classes Conducted	309
\$916	\$1,884	Cash Donations	\$23,014
14,113	45,338	Persons Fed	100,241
2,250	3,120	Students Supported	13,357

6. III MAF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>		<u>Total to 31 March</u>
5,719	6,788	Patrols	31,904
3,165	4,361	Ambushes	18,782
254	136	Sniper Posts	1,009
2	2	Regimental or Larger Opns	17
5	13	Battalion Opns	61
62	96	Company Opns	562
4,262	5,637	Offensive Air Sorties	30,301
33,466	33,268	Helo Transport Sorties	234,463

7. III MAF STRENGTH - 312400 MARCH

Danang	30,783
Chu Lai	19,416
Hue Phu Bai	<u>4,147</u>
Total	54,346

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8. LOGISTICS

a. Supply Levels at End of Period:

	DANANG	CHU LAI	PHU BAI
Class I (1000 of rations/ days of supply)			
MCI (Rations)	775/31	543/32	136/27
B Rations	425/17	598/30	92/18
A Rations	22/1	20/1	7/1
Class III & III A (BULK): (1000 gallons/days of supply)			
JP-4	210/2	322/5	40/10
AVGAS	58/6	106/9	106/11
MOGAS	104/9	192/14	31/10
DIESEL	64/6	36/2	19/6
<u>Class V and VA:</u>			
Ground Ammo (days of supply)	45	45	45
250 lb bombs (number of bombs)	4,266	3,217	-
500 lb bombs (number of bombs)	336	1,849	-

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Launcher w/19 2.75 in. rockets	70	45	-
Launcher w/4 5 in. rockets	1,311	802	-

b. Resupply Status

(1) Surface shipping status (Danang)

Cargo unloaded (March)	-161,096 M/T
Average daily discharge rate	- 5,197 M/T
Ships in port 28 February	- 3
Ships arriving during March	- 28
Ships unloaded during March	- 22
Ships in port 31 March	- 9
Cargo backlog 28 February	- 12,565 M/T
Cargo backlog 31 March	- 23,785 M/T
Average cargo backlog (March)	- 20,955 M/T

(2) Air Shipping Status

Cargo lifted into RVN (March)	- 1,947 S/T
Cargo awaiting lift on Okinawa as of 1 April	- 301 S/T

c. RED BALL Summary (March)

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Items at beginning of period - 278

Items added - 132

Items removed - 95

Items remaining at end of period - 315

d. Maintenance (March)

Items evacuated from RVN -1,582

Items repaired at 3rd FSR -1,366

Items returned to CONUS from 3rd FSR - 262

Items disposed of on Okinawa - 825

e. Construction Projects

Roads rehabilitated or constructed -Maintenance and improvement to existing roads.

Bridges constructed -2 Class 60 completed and 1 under construction.

Wells drilled -5 completed and 4 in progress.

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Covered storage, NSA
(Includes maint. facilities)

-134,000 sq ft
completed and
250,000 sq ft
under construc-
tion.

Covered storage, III MAF
(Includes maint. facilities)

-44,000 sq ft
completed and
140,000 sq ft
under construc-
tion.

Ammo storage facilities

-ASP #1 64%
completed;
ASP #2 70%
completed.

POL storage tanks, 10,000 BBL

-Danang 3 com-
pleted; Chu Lai
2 completed;
and 1 under
construction
at Marble Mt.

Status Of:

400 bed hospital
(Marble Mt)

-71% completed.

Water supply distribution
system

-73% completed.

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CONCLUSIONS

Marine forces made slow but perceptible progress in March. Sixteen battalion size offensives, coordinated protection of the rice harvest balanced with intensive counter-guerrilla effort, and a growing civic action effort all took their toll of the Viet Cong, eroding his strength and challenging his initiative.

Operations of the Marine Special Landing Force in the Rung Sat area south of Saigon again validated the use of the amphibious task force in raids along the coast of Vietnam.

Through 31 March, the political demonstrations had small effect on III MAF operations.

The logistic condition of III MAF is sound, and improving.

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