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OPERATIONS OF U. S. MARINE FORCES

VIETNAM

MARCH 1968



FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC

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This is a summary of activities of US Marine Corps forces in Vietnam for the month of March 1968. Its purpose is to update similar historical reports covering the period from March 1965 through February 1968.

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UNCLASSIFIEDSUMMARY

Centered primarily in the DMZ region and along the lines of communication within I Corps Tactical Zone, the 15 large unit operations conducted in March by the five divisions of III MAF and the two Special Landing Forces of the 7th Fleet accounted for a total of 5,456 enemy killed, a monthly enemy toll exceeded thus far in the war only by last month's large unit operations total of 6,512 enemy dead.

Combat in the DMZ region during March continued the pace established in the first two months of the year. The Marine garrison at Khe Sanh, supported by a combined arms effort which saw, during the period 20 January - 31 March, 103,500 tons of bombs and 102,660 rounds of III MAF artillery placed on enemy elements ringing the combat base and its outposts, by end-month had broken the enemy encirclement. On 31 March, to complete the destruction of enemy units in the Khe Sanh area and to reopen Route 9, III MAF launched Operation PEGASUS. To the east, coordinated Marine and ARVN operations in the coastal region of the DMZ kept the vital Cua Viet - Dong Ha waterway open, thus maintaining the flow of logistic support to the 81,948 III MAF personnel now deployed north of the Hai Van pass.

Complementing III MAF large unit operations were the 17,545 Marine small unit counter guerrilla actions. Indicative of the month-long enemy effort to avoid contact was the toll taken by the 12,460 patrols, 4,883 ambushes, and 202 company size Marine operations during the month: 669 enemy killed and 173 weapons captured, as compared to the February record monthly small unit toll of 1,398 enemy killed, and 25 prisoners and 342 weapons captured. In addition to these actions, 102 Marine STING RAY patrols were conducted during March. These teams directed 16 air strikes

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and 244 artillery missions on enemy units in the hinterland, accounting for an additional 214 enemy dead at a cost of two Marines killed and nine wounded and evacuated.

On 10 March, the Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force was divested of operational authority over his organic tactical aviation forces, and the mission direction of all strike and fixed wing reconnaissance aircraft of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing was assumed by COMUSMACV's Deputy for Air Operations, the Commanding General, 7th Air Force. An analysis of the evolution of this single manager concept for the control of all US fixed wing tactical air in Vietnam is contained in the Air Operations chapter, as is a comparison of the Marine tactical air control system employed in I Corps Tactical Zone prior to 10 March, and the Air Force tactical air control system under which Marine strike and reconnaissance aircraft have operated in I CTZ since that date.

Despite the far-reaching changes undergone by the air control system in March, fixed wing pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing flew 7,603 combat and combat support sorties during the month, of which 6,732 were attack sorties flown in support of the III Marine Amphibious Force. Marine helicopter pilots, aided by improved weather conditions in all but the northern sector of I CTZ, contributed 44,084 sorties to the III MAF air effort, lifting over 53,000 troops and 6,900 tons of cargo.

The combined GVN/US Operation RECOVERY continued its progress in restoring the I Corps area to normal after the Tet enemy offensive. More clearly defined statistics have revealed that civilian casualties, and damage done to civilian property during the Tet offensive, actually were not as critical as originally reported. A comparison of the initial estimates and the actual statistics is contained in the Revolutionary Development and Pacification chapter of this

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edition. III MAF's civic action efforts, a vital link in the total RECOVERY operation, during the month provided over one million meals to civilians in I CTZ.

With five US divisions deployed in I CTZ, COMUSMACV on 10 March established Provisional Corps Vietnam (PCV). Subordinate to, and functioning under the operational control of, the Commanding General, III MAF, Provisional Corps Vietnam was assigned authority over the 3d Marine Division, the 101st Airborne Division, and the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). Headquartered at Phu Bai, PCV is responsible for operations in I CTZ north of the 1st Marine Division's tactical boundaries.

The March activation of two additional platoons brought the total number of Combined Action Platoons now in I CTZ to 84. These combined Popular Force/US Marine units in March conducted 2,672 night patrols and ambushes, and 1,765 day patrols, accounting for 108 enemy killed, and 83 prisoners (a monthly record) and 38 weapons captured.

The enemy's known weapon and food staple losses to III MAF units during the first three months of 1968 have increased geometrically over the same period in 1967. 4,804 enemy weapons and 324.61 tons of rice have been captured thus far in 1968, compared to the 660 weapons and 83.6 tons of rice captured during the same period in 1967.

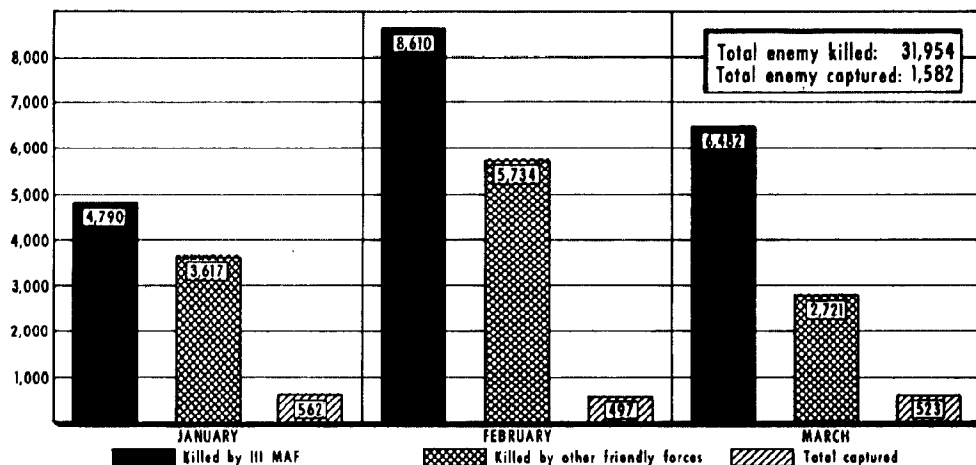
Coupled with these material losses, and perhaps even more serious a psychological blow to the enemy formations, was the increasing evidence of the enemy's inability to honor his long standing pledge to his troops, the promise of decent burials for those killed in action. On 16 March, for example, III MAF infantry units 12 miles southeast of Chu Lai discovered 69 unburied Viet Cong dead. Similarly, in northern I CTZ, III MAF infantry on 29 March, seven miles west of Hue, came upon 31 unburied enemy infantry troops.

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As indicated on the graph below, operations of III MAF units and the two Special Landing Forces during the period 1 January - 31 March 1968 have resulted in 19,882 enemy killed, while Vietnamese forces and Republic of Korea Marines in I CTZ accounted for an additional 12,072 killed. During this same 91 day period, 1,582 enemy (265 North Vietnamese soldiers and 1,317 Viet Cong) were captured in I Corps Tactical Zone.

ENEMY TROOP LOSSES IN I CTZ 1 JAN - 31 MAR 1968



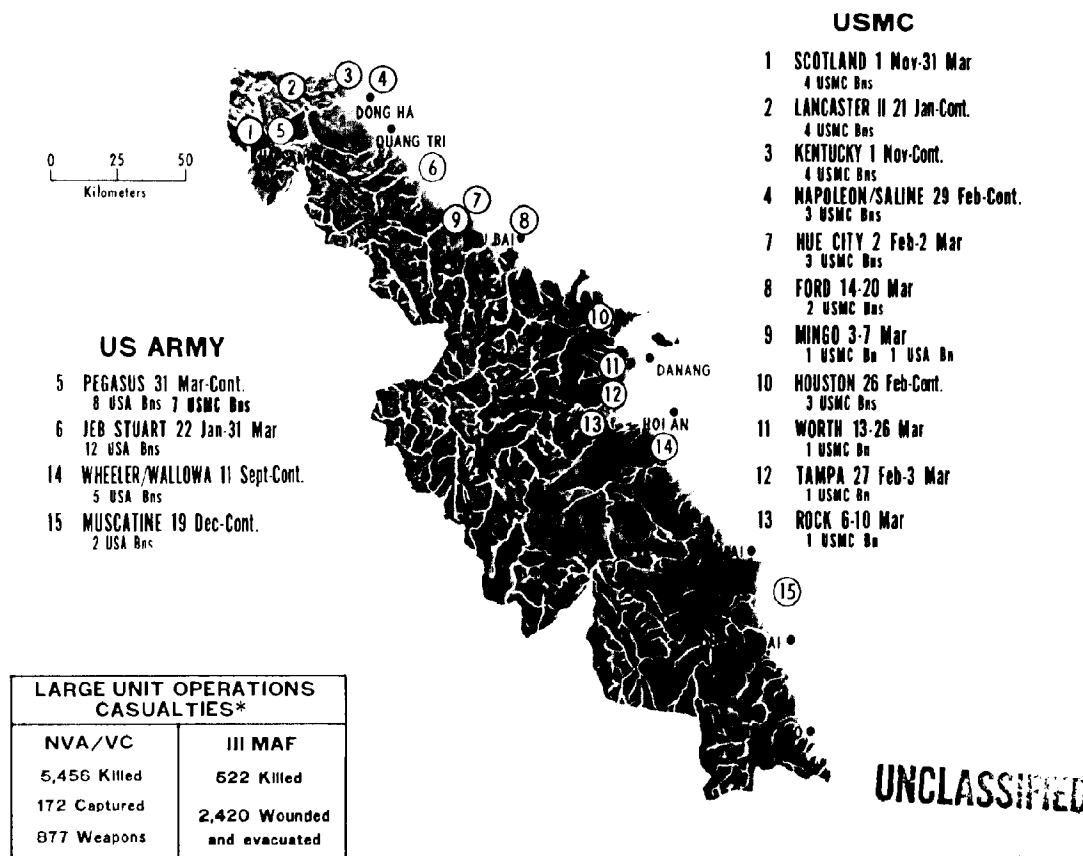
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LARGE UNIT OPERATIONS

III MAF large unit operations engaged the enemy primarily in the DMZ region and along the lines of communication from the Hai Van pass north to Dong Ha. Concentrating the offensive effort against the NVA threat to Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces, III MAF forces arrayed against the enemy in northern I CTZ included one Marine division, two US Army divisions, and both 7th Fleet Special Landing Forces, ashore in the DMZ region since late-January. End-March marked the launching of a combined III MAF/ARVN offensive to destroy enemy forces in the Khe Sanh area.

The locations of the 15 III MAF large unit operations conducted during March are shown on the map below.

III MAF AND SLF OPERATIONS - MARCH 1968

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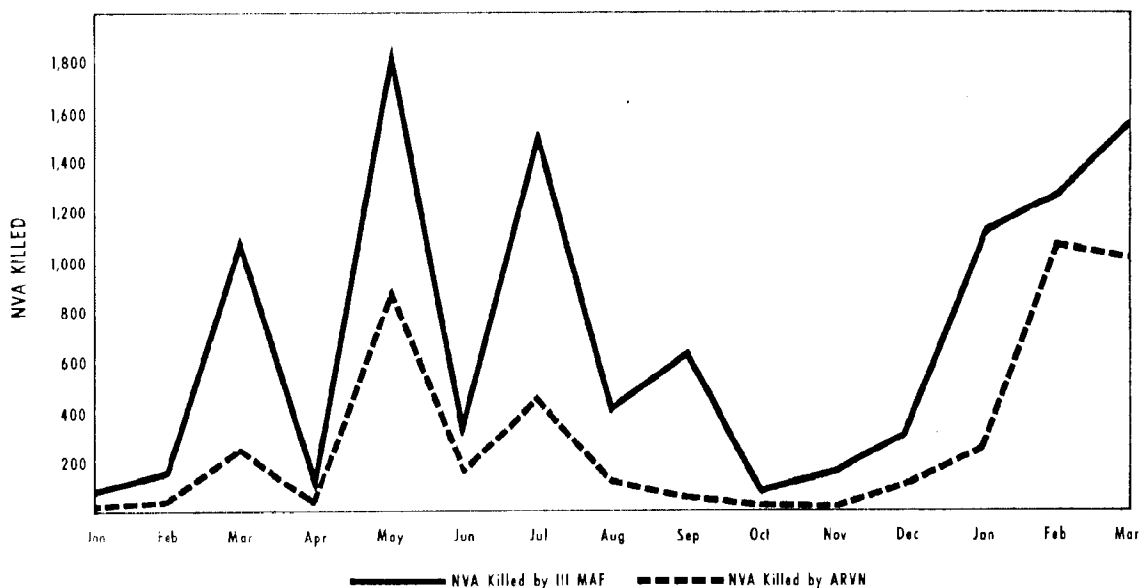
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Operations in the DMZ Region

Paralleling the action of the two preceding months, operations north of Route 9 during March were marked by periods of intense combat in the Khe Sanh, Con Thien, and Cua Viet areas. Despite the confirmed presence south of the Ben Hai river of at least four NVA divisions (the 325C, 304th, 320th, and 324B), Marine and ARVN offensive efforts united to deny the enemy opportunity to mass the forces needed to launch a major ground attack. Favored by improving weather conditions, the friendly air-ground campaign cost the enemy nearly 2,600 killed during the month in the DMZ area.

The following graph displays the increasing cost in manpower paid by the enemy in his attempt to sustain a large invasion force south of the Ben Hai river thus far in 1968, compared with his 1967 effort, when his forays were of reduced size and shorter duration.

**NVA KILLED BY III MAF & ARVN IN DMZ AREA
JANUARY 1967 - MARCH 1968**



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UNCLASSIFIED-Operation SCOTLAND (Khe Sanh)

During March the NVA threat to Khe Sanh was broken -- the enemy bid for a major victory thwarted by a coordinated combined arms counteroffensive. Unable to generate significant offensive momentum in the face of the US delivery of over 54,000 tons of bombs and 36,000 rounds of artillery against his positions during the month, the enemy by end-March found his position at Khe Sanh gravely compromised.

A series of unsuccessful attacks, aimed primarily at positions manned by the 37th ARVN Ranger Battalion, was the extent of enemy attempts to breach the Khe Sanh perimeter during March. Forestalled in his attempts to mount effective attacks against the Khe Sanh garrison, the enemy was forced to confine his major activity to shelling the combat base and its high-ground outposts and, in Dien Bien Phu fashion, to extending a network of trenches to the defensive wire.

In an effort to escape the effects of aerial bombing, and obviously applying the lessons learned at Con Thien in September 1967, the enemy tactics at Khe Sanh included the positioning of major troop elements and ammunition and supply installations well within 3,000 meters of the Marine perimeter. In displacing his positions well forward of those areas which he expected to be attacked from the air, the enemy reasoned that completion of his trenching and shelling efforts would see his battalions largely intact for the final assault against Khe Sanh.

The enemy tactics were unsound. To supplement the observed delivery of close-in artillery and air attacks during periods of good visibility, Marine fixed wing aircraft, controlled by air support radar teams (ASRT's), and artillery attacked known and suspected enemy positions within 500

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meters of the perimeter during hours of reduced visibility. Further, the heavy bomb loads of the Strategic Air Command B-52's were dropped as close as 750 meters from the Marine fighting positions.

The results were impressive. Hundreds of secondary explosions and fires attested to the destruction of ammunition and supply stocks and undoubtedly caused casualties among troop units maneuvering in the area. Marine patrols, sweeping the enemy trenches behind artillery and air attacks, uncovered evidence of the hurried evacuation of many dead and wounded NVA soldiers, while incoming Brou tribesmen, seeking refuge at the combat base, reported widespread fragmentation and concussion casualties among the enemy formations.

Maneuver action on the ground began to achieve hard results on the 24th. At 1200, a platoon patrol from Company B, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines attacked and overran a well-bunkered enemy platoon two miles north of the combat base, killing 31 NVA. Two days later, two squads from the same battalion, moving to occupy a listening post shortly after first light, engaged an NVA company at close range. Supported by both air and artillery, the Marines accounted for 26 enemy killed during the brief fire fight. Friendly casualties in the two engagements were eight killed and seven wounded and evacuated.

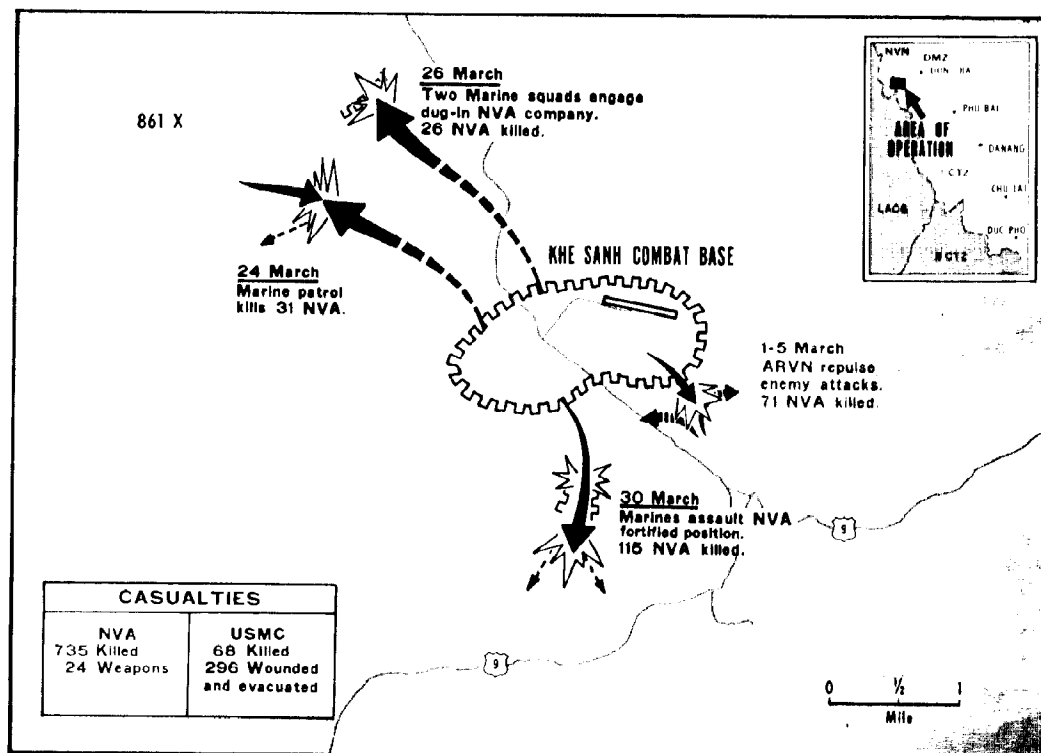
At 0837 on the 30th, Company B, 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, located and attacked an NVA battalion in trenchlines one mile south of the combat base. The resulting four-hour action cost the enemy 115 killed, while Marine casualties in the close fighting were nine killed and 42 wounded and evacuated.

The map on the following page portrays the major combat actions in the Khe Sanh area during March.

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OPERATION SCOTLAND: MARCH 1968



Signalling the end of substantial NVA occupation of the terrain surrounding Khe Sanh, Operation SCOTLAND terminated on the 31st, being superseded by the combined US/ARVN Operation PEGASUS/LAM SON 207. This offensive, controlled by the 1st Cavalry Division, was launched to complete the destruction of enemy units remaining in the Khe Sanh area, and to reopen Route 9 from Ca Lu to the combat base, thus reestablishing the land LOC between Dong Ha and Khe Sanh.

At 0801 on the 31st, the 26th Marine Regiment moved out in the attack to seize the high ground to the south and

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west of the Khe Sanh combat base, while the 1st Cavalry Division and a three-battalion ARVN airborne task force began air landing to the east and south, to establish fire support bases for offensive operations and subsequent linkup with the Khe Sanh garrison. Simultaneously, the 1st Marine Regiment commenced the attack westward from Ca Lu along Route 9, followed closely by Marine engineers and Seabees.

Highlighting the action in the first six days of Operation PEGASUS was the battle for Hill 471, a mile and one-half south of the combat base. Preceded by extensive artillery and air attacks, the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, at 0600 on 4 April, assaulted and seized the hill, killing 30 NVA. From 1720 until 2400 on the 4th, the enemy fired 192 rounds of mixed artillery, mortars and rockets at the Marines on Hill 471, and at 0515 on the 5th launched a battalion-size ground attack in an attempt to retake the position. The Marine counterattack repulsed the NVA battalion, and artillery and air attacks were directed against enemy escape routes. NVA losses in the attack on the hill were 122 killed and 3 prisoners and 47 weapons captured. Marine casualties on the 4th and 5th were seven killed and 33 wounded and evacuated. With the exception of two of the wounded, all of the Marine casualties resulted from the enemy artillery, rocket, and mortar fire on the night of the 4th.

Enemy contact elsewhere in the Khe Sanh area was sporadic, limited primarily to brief fire fights with small enemy units, and to long range sightings of large units, which were attacked by air and artillery. Clearly attempting to avoid large scale combat, the enemy abandoned large quantities of weapons and ammunition, along with large numbers of NVA dead killed by supporting arms fires. By 8 April, when US Army units linked up with Marines at the combat base, enemy losses were counted as 829 dead and 413 weapons seized. However,

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although the enemy has lost the battle for Khe Sanh, he retains substantial combat power in the area and the final destruction or ejection of his forces will involve considerable time and combat effort.

In retrospect, the enemy was defeated at Khe Sanh by the combined US air effort of 103,500 tons of bombs delivered by 24,449 fixed wing sorties and by 102,660 rounds of III MAF artillery -- all in support of resolute ground action. His units constantly attacked by round-the-clock application of US fire power, the enemy, from 20 January to 31 March, was never able to marshal more than a battalion for a single, concentrated attack.

Much of the credit for fragmentation of the enemy effort at Khe Sanh belongs to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. During the period 20 January - 31 March, Marine air flew 7,078 sorties against the Khe Sanh enemy, with over 6,000 of these sorties, or approximately 85%, delivered against targets located within a nine mile radius of the Marine perimeter. This critical area received a total of about 44% (nearly 11,000 sorties) of the total US air effort in support of Khe Sanh -- thus Marine air accounted for approximately 57% of the close air support provided the Khe Sanh garrison.

-Operation KENTUCKY

Attacking to sever the enemy's north-south lines of communication in the Con Thien-Gio Linh area, Marines in Operation KENTUCKY for the third successive month inflicted substantial damage against regular NVA units south of the Ben Hai river. As clearing March weather increased the exposure of enemy units to aerial and ground surveillance, and facilitated the maneuver of armored vehicles, Marine patrols ranged deep into the DMZ to interdict NVA routes of march and supply lanes. Faced by tank-accompanied

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infantry on the ground and subjected to constant attacks by air, artillery and naval gunfire, enemy forces in the area at end-month were displaying a reluctance for large scale combat.

The month's major contact developed on 3 March, when two companies of the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, patrolling approximately 3,000 meters apart, attacked enemy units between Con Thien and Gio Linh. In the ensuing five hours, NVA losses were 162 killed and one captured, while two Marines were killed and 12 wounded and evacuated in the fighting.

At 1155, Company K engaged what appeared to be two or three enemy snipers a mile and one-half southwest of Gio Linh. When the maneuver to eliminate the snipers revealed the presence of more than a platoon of enemy dug in along a wide front, two platoons of Marines, accompanied by three tanks, were deployed from strongpoint A-2 (near Gio Linh) to exploit the contact. Arriving at 1445, the reinforcing elements linked up with Company K for a coordinated tank-infantry assault to overrun the enemy positions.

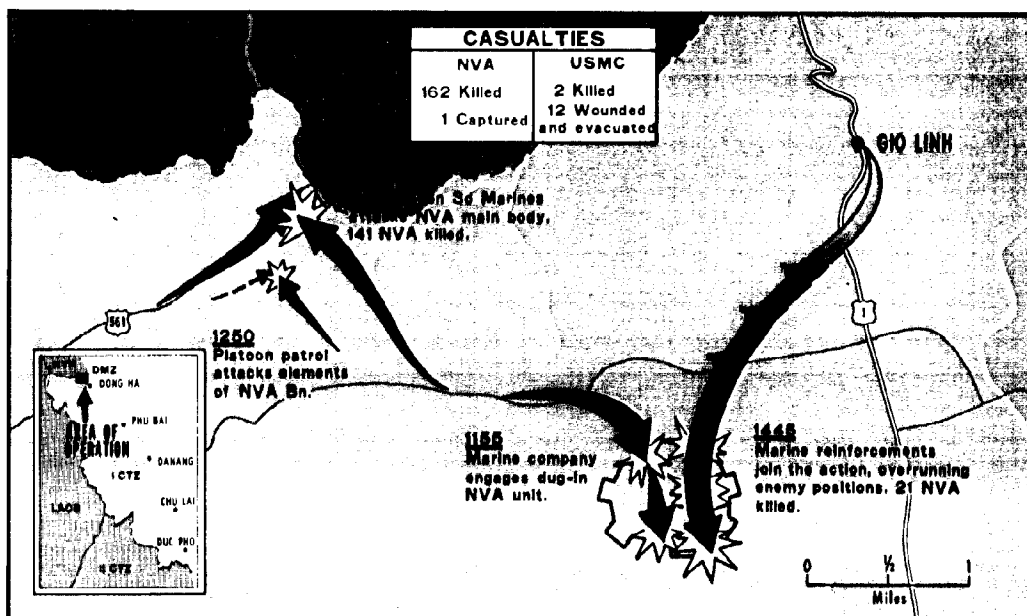
The Company L engagement at 1250, 3,000 meters to the northwest, also began as a small contact. Observing a squad-size NVA element moving north, two and one-half miles northeast of Con Thien, a platoon patrol maneuvered to intercept, simultaneously calling an artillery mission to fix the enemy in place. Within minutes, however, when it became obvious that the Marine platoon had developed the flank security of an NVA battalion, the remainder of Company L joined the action. Assisted by an aerial observer controlling the supporting fires of air and artillery and reporting on the enemy's movements, the company killed 141 NVA, nine of which were credited to the long range fire of a Marine sniper during the enemy's withdrawal at 1630. Friendly losses were one killed and seven wounded and evacuated.

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The map below illustrates the action in the KENTUCKY area on 3 March.

OPERATION KENTUCKY: 3 MARCH 1968



Large contacts were infrequent during the remainder of the month, as NVA elements elected to avoid serious engagement. Marine patrols continued to harry small enemy units in and near the DMZ, and controlled numerous artillery, mortar, and air attacks against enemy patrols operating beyond the range of effective small arms fire. An exception, involving a battalion-size NVA unit, occurred on the 16th.

Company M, 3d Marines and Company C, 4th Marines, on a coordinated sweep two miles west of Gio Linh, engaged the enemy battalion with air and artillery support. Covered by nearly 400 rounds of 105mm artillery fired from North Vietnam, the enemy

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battalion deployed approximately one company to fight a delaying action, while the main body withdrew northward. Taking advantage of the inaccuracy of the hastily delivered enemy artillery support, the Marines assaulted into the enemy trenches, killing 83 NVA before contact was broken at 1530. Marine casualties were two killed and 11 wounded and evacuated.

-Operation NAPOLEON/SALINE

Violent and sustained combat took place in the coastal region east of Route 1. There, Marine Operation NAPOLEON/SALINE combined with a series of ARVN operations of the LAM SON series to render the enemy's campaign to interdict the Cua Viet river traffic both costly and unsuccessful. During March, three Marine battalions and elements of the 1st and 2d Regiments, 1st ARVN Division killed 1,474 NVA and captured 22 prisoners and 386 weapons -- and on 27 March a new daily cargo tonnage record was established on the Cua Viet river.

Attacking west along the north bank of the Cua Viet, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines was heavily engaged by 0630 on the 1st with an enemy battalion occupying a fortified village midway between Cua Viet and Dong Ha. Employing artillery and air support to neutralize the enemy's heavy automatic weapon, rocket, and mortar fires, the Marines were obliged to assault from bunker to bunker throughout the day. The movement of two Marine tanks to the west side of the Ben Ngu river (one of a network of Cua Viet tributaries) provided momentum to the assault, which overran the final portion of the objective shortly after dark. Subsequent mopping up operations and sweeps of the area accounted for a total of 127 NVA killed, four captured and 29 weapons seized. Marine casualties were also heavy - 25 killed and 87 wounded and evacuated on the 1st.

The attack continued to the west, with 2d Battalion, 4th Marines replacing 3d Battalion, 1st Marines on 5 March.

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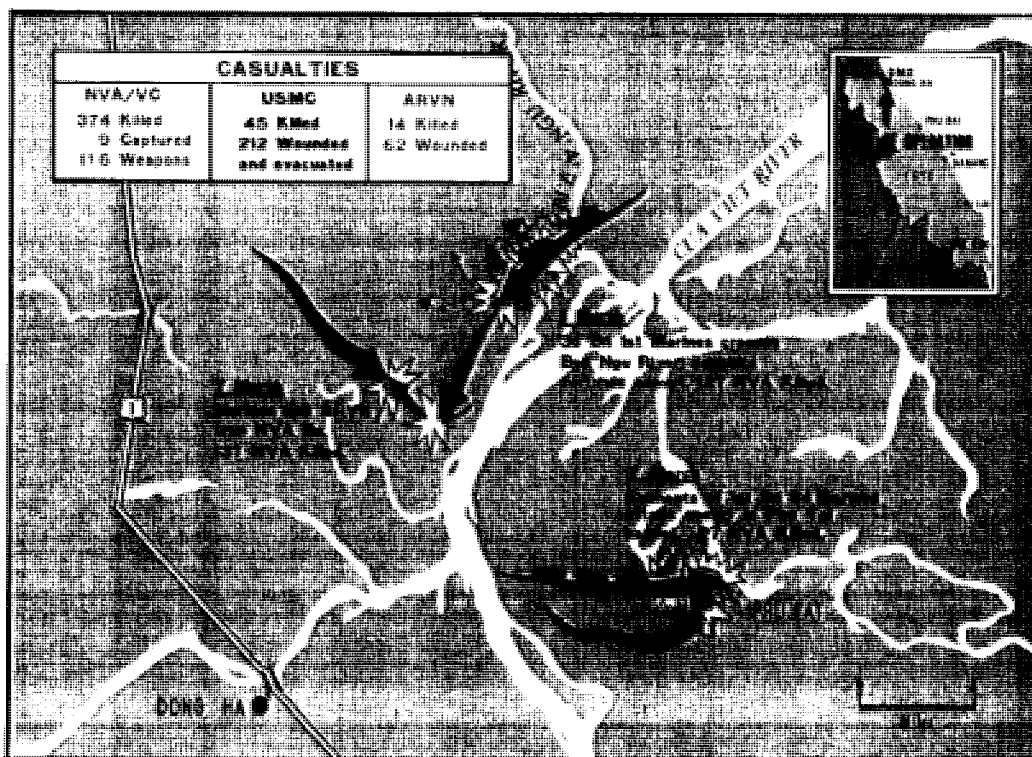
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On 7 March, a large NVA force, retreating ahead of the Marine advance, was attacked from the northwest by ARVN Operation LAM SON 192. The ensuing coordinated ARVN/Marine action cost the enemy 137 killed.

Also on the 7th, 1st Battalion, 3d Marines, patrolling the south banks of the Cua Viet, deployed a company to Phu Tai in response to local intelligence reports of enemy in the hamlet. When Company A reached the hamlet, four miles east of Dong Ha, and found it occupied by an NVA company, amphibian tractors were dispatched with a second Marine company as reinforcement. Maneuvering under the supporting fires of air and artillery, the Marines utilized the amphibian tractors to breach the mined hedge-rows surrounding the hamlet, and assaulted through the enemy positions, killing 27 NVA and capturing 22 weapons.

The map below portrays the results of Marine and ARVN operations in the Cua Viet area during the period 1-8 March.

OPERATION NAPOLEON/SALINE: 1-8 MARCH



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Heavy fighting continued through the remainder of the month, as enemy forces were unable to avoid contact with patrolling Marine and ARVN units. Major engagements were fought by three ARVN battalions of the 2d Regiment, which killed 305 NVA during 10-12 March. On 18 March, 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, having moved to its attack positions under the cover of darkness, trapped an NVA battalion two miles northeast of Dong Ha, and killed 130 in a day-long battle. At end-month, an NVA battalion, apparently attempting to return to the sanctuary of North Vietnam, was fixed in place by artillery and naval gunfire, and subsequently routed by the ARVN, with enemy casualties counted at 188 dead.

Operations South of Quang Tri City

III MAF large unit operations from Quang Tri City south, conducted generally along the trace of Route 1, had the dual mission of (1) restoring the security of both land and water lines of communication to pre-Tet conditions, and (2) by destroying enemy forces in the adjacent areas, preventing further interdiction of the roads and waterways. Vital to the successful prosecution of the war in northern I CTZ, those LOC's have assumed even greater significance with the deployment of two US Army divisions into the two northern provinces. Activated by COMUSMACV on 10 March, Provisional Corps Vietnam (PCV), a subordinate element of III Marine Amphibious Force, consists of the 3d Marine Division and the US Army's 101st Airborne Division and the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). With a strength of over 62,000, the major combat and logistic support requirements of PCV require a dependable system of land and water lines of communication.

Large scale combat was uncommon in the LOC clearing operations, as major enemy forces generally avoided engagement. Suffering from diminished combat

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strength and logistical exhaustion as the result of his unsuccessful Tet offensive, the enemy's major occupation during March was recruitment of manpower and replenishment of his stocks of ammunition and supplies. Sporadic attempts to interdict both road and water routes were largely failures. National Highway 1 remained open to traffic from 2 March through the end of the month.

Between Quang Tri City and Hue, the 1st Cavalry Division Operation JEB STUART continued to achieve good results in the coastal plains between the two cities as well as in the Ba Long valley northwest of Hue and in the river avenues of approach to Hue from the west and southwest. Ranging over a wide area, this 12 battalion force engaged NVA and VC units in numerous contacts which, during March, accounted for over 1,000 enemy killed.

In the coastal plains of Thua Thien province, from Route 1 east to the sea, ARVN, ARVN Rangers, and Vietnamese Marines conducted a series of operations aimed at the destruction of enemy forces seeking recruits and food. Eight of these search and destroy operations accounted for 234 enemy killed and 92 weapons seized during March.

In the Phu Bai area, the heliborne landing of two Marine battalions, one each at the northern and southern extremities of the area of operations, launched Operation FORD on 14 March. Directed at destruction of the 804th VC Battalion (Main Force), Operation FORD featured a series of alternating north and south heliborne and ground thrusts to pin the enemy against established blocking positions, and generated sporadic contact with small enemy units. The major action was triggered on the afternoon of 18 March three miles northeast of Phu Bai, where Company E, 3d Marines blocked the escape to the north of elements of an enemy battalion. Attacking from the south,

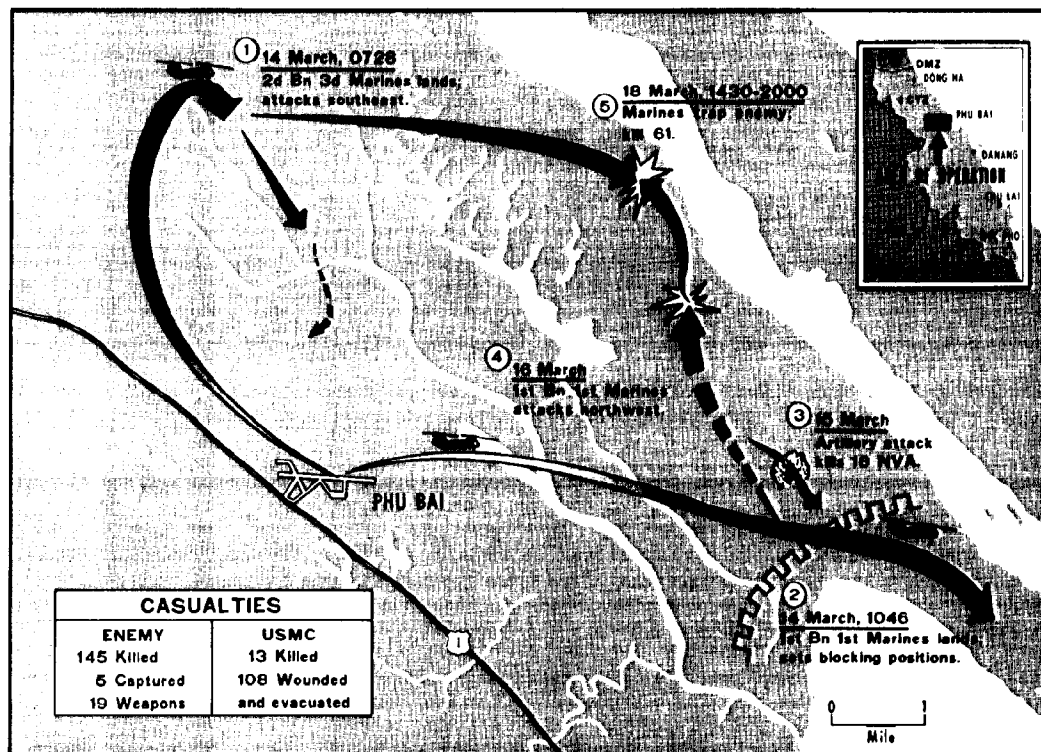
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1st Battalion, 1st Marines maneuvered to exploit the engagement, directing air and artillery attacks against possible enemy avenues of egress. When the enemy broke contact after dark, 61 NVA had been killed by the Marine assault, with an additional 21 dead counted during an area search on the next day.

Portrayed on the map below are the scheme of maneuver and results of Operation FORD during the period 14-20 March.

OPERATION FORD: 14 - 20 MARCH 1968



To the south, in the Hai Van pass area, the 5th Marines continued Operation HOUSTON with little contact for the second consecutive month.

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An exception occurred at 0333 on the 31st when the 804B Battalion, reinforced by sapper units, launched a mortar and rocket supported assault against two Route 1 bridges, a Combined Action unit, and ARVN security elements six miles south of Phu Bai. Bearing the brunt of the attack were the Troui river bridge, guarded by one ARVN and one Marine squad, and bridge number 4, one mile to the north, held by a squad of Marines. Reinforced by elements of Company B, 5th Marines, friendly forces repulsed the attacks, killing 59 VC and capturing one prisoner, 15 weapons, and 15 satchel charges. Operation HOUSTON casualties were 14 Marines killed and 34 wounded and evacuated.

Although not directly related to the campaign to secure the I CTZ lines of communication, Operation WORTH, a 7th Marines heliborne/ground assault into the Happy Valley region west of Danang, cost the enemy heavily and denied him an important avenue of approach to the Danang area. Enemy units known to operate in the area include the 368B NVA Artillery/Rocket Regiment, which periodically attempts to mount rocket attacks against Danang, and the 31st NVA Regiment, recently infiltrated from North Vietnam.

The Marines, reinforced by two squadrons of US Army armored cavalry, did not encounter enemy forces in strength during Operation WORTH. However, the mobile, heliborne infantry forces, supported by reconnaissance elements, achieved hard results. Enemy losses to this 13-26 March effort were 167 killed, two captured, and 21 weapons seized. A reflection of the enemy's reluctance to remain and fight in the area was the 21 March discovery by a Marine patrol of two NVA dead left behind and rigged with M-26 grenades as a trap for attacking friendly forces. This unusual tactic (heretofore, NVA and VC units have rarely left their dead unburied on the battlefield) caused no casualties.

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The increased combat power derived from the January - February addition to III MAF of two US Army divisions and a Marine Regimental Landing Team produced substantial dividend. Carrying the battle to the enemy south of the Hai Van pass, and penetrating hitherto enemy dominated areas in the two northern provinces, the III MAF large unit offensive campaign has killed 15,642 enemy thus far in 1968 -- nearly equal to the 16,420 NVA/VC killed in all of the large unit actions in 1967. Under-scoring III MAF's improved combat flexibility, was the launching, without serious degradation of III MAF offensive posture elsewhere in I CTZ, of the multi-regiment Operation PEGASUS in western Quang Tri province.

Although expending his regular and main force troops at roughly six times the 1967 rate (2,594 enemy killed by large unit operations during last year's first three months) the enemy has remained unsuccessful in his bid for a victory in I CTZ. In fact, this wholesale sacrifice of front line units has resulted in a reduction of his combat skills, as evidenced by the low training level and the youth of captured NVA soldiers, the willful abandoning of weapons on the battlefield (3,179 captured by III MAF large unit operations in 1967; 3,193 seized already in 1968), and the failure, despite the presence of four divisions, to mount a coordinated attack in the DMZ area.

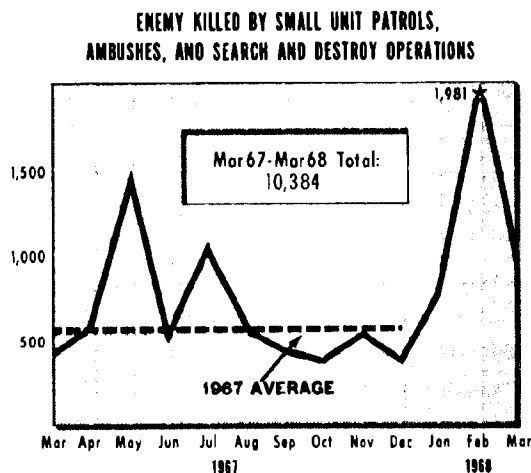
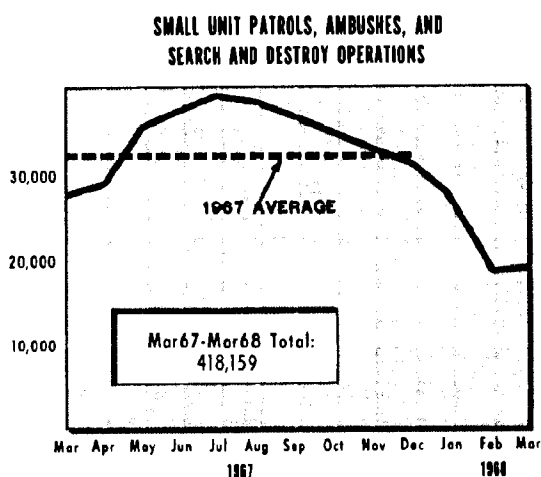
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SMALL UNIT COUNTERGUERRILLA OPERATIONS

Although the level of counter guerrilla operations in I CTZ during March remained consistent with the previous month, the nature and the pace of these operations had changed considerably from the first half of February, when Marine and US Army units blunted and then defeated the enemy's main attack against Danang. In March, III MAF small unit operations returned to the slow and difficult task of weeding out Viet Cong guerrillas and their North Vietnamese replacements from the villages and hamlets of I Corps Tactical Zone. Toward this end, the 19,072 patrols, ambushes, and company size operations throughout I CTZ in March resulted in 812 enemy killed, and the capture of 57 prisoners and 999 weapons. Of equal importance, however, these operations involved close and frequent contact by III MAF personnel with the Vietnamese people in the densely populated coastal plains region. Here, the continuing US presence and unrelenting operations against the guerrillas, serve as reminders to the people of the enemy's Tet defeat, and of the GVN/US determination to ensure the local security of the people.

The two graphs below portray III MAF counter guerrilla operations from March 1967 through March 1968.



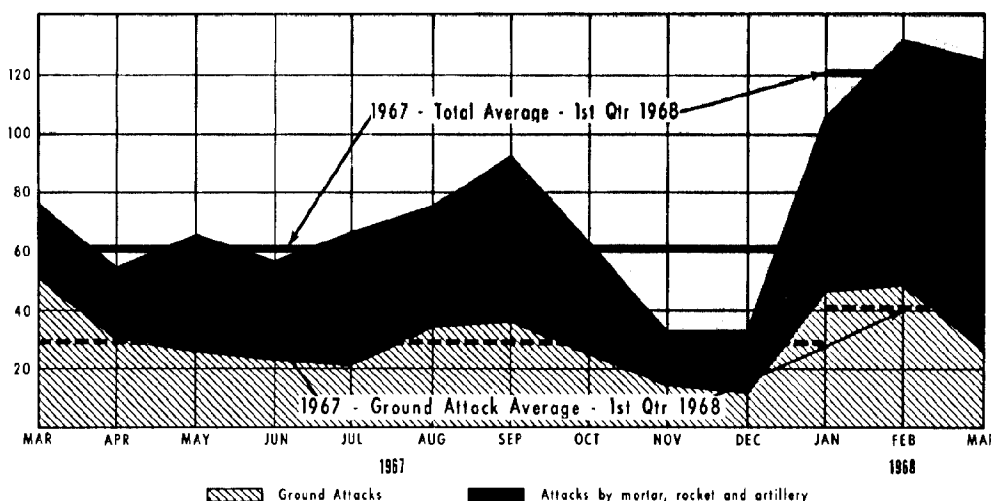
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Enemy Activity

Contrasting with the high level of III MAF activity, enemy ground attacks against civilian and military targets during the month decreased by 47% (26 attacks compared with 49 attacks in February). Enemy attacks-by-fire, however, increased slightly, with 99 occurring during March, as opposed to 82 in February. Forty-eight of these attacks-by-fire were initiated in Quang Tri province, where the enemy expended 9,590 rounds of mixed caliber mortar, rocket, and artillery fire - 62% of which (5,929 rounds) was directed at Marine and ARVN units deployed at Khe Sanh, the main arena of combat in I CTZ during March.

ENEMY ATTACKS IN I CTZ: MAR 1967 - MAR 1968



The decrease in enemy activity was also reflected in his slackened campaign against the I CTZ lines of communication. Only six interdictions were reported in March (compared to the 1967 monthly average of 21 and the January-February 1968 monthly average of 43), and all were directed against the main north-south artery, Route 1.

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As evidenced by the decline in his overt operations, the enemy's attention in March appears to have focused on his attempts to replenish his Tet-depleted war materials. The extent of these efforts was demonstrated on 1 March, when four steel hulled trawlers attempted a simultaneous delivery of weapons and other supplies into coastal South Vietnam. One of these turned back before it entered the territorial waters of RVN, while the remaining three were destroyed.

Also on the 1st, two enemy junks carrying 62 rifles and over 7,200 rounds of small arms and mortar ammunition were captured by Marine amphibian tractors and a US Navy patrol boat near the mouth of the Cua Viet river.

STING RAY Operations

STING RAY operations, devised by III MAF in May 1966 as a means of extending Marine fire power into enemy-dominated hinterland areas, have thus far accounted for 2,453 enemy killed, at a cost of 77 Marine lives. During March, 102 STING RAY patrols produced the second highest monthly total of enemy killed to date, 214 enemy dead, while losing two Marines killed and nine wounded and evacuated. To achieve these results, the teams directed 16 air strikes and 244 artillery missions on the enemy, and on several occasions attacked enemy units with their organic team weapons.

An example of this Marine fire support coordination occurred on the afternoon of 31 March, when a 1st Reconnaissance Battalion STING RAY team, manning an observation post in the mountains 12 miles northwest of Danang, sighted a Viet Cong platoon moving along National Route 545 toward Danang. The team immediately took the enemy under attack with small arms fire, killing one and pinning

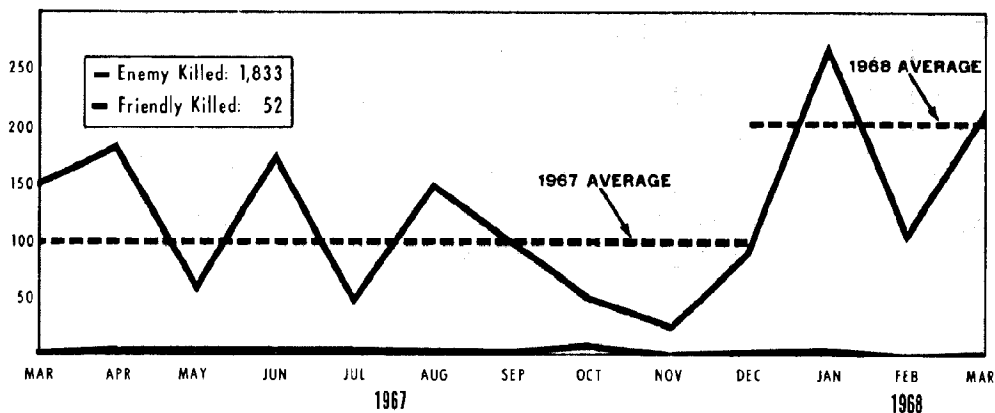
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the remainder in the target area while artillery fires and air strikes were requested. A-4E Skyhawks from Marine Aircraft Group 12, under the control of an airborne observer, responded to the team's request and, coordinated with artillery fires, attacked the pinioned enemy platoon, killing an additional nine Viet Cong. There were no Marine casualties.

The graph below shows both friendly and enemy casualties resulting from STING RAY operations since March 1967.

STING RAY CASUALTIES: MAR 1967 - MAR 1968



The value of STING RAY teams as a source of information, particularly information relating to enemy troop movements, was illustrated during a STING RAY patrol which spent six days on station in the mountains 18 miles south of Danang. During the period 11-17 March, the team observed a total of over 1,600 enemy and, in five separate incidents, coordinated the supporting arms attacks which killed at least 122 of the enemy.

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Kit Carson Scouts

At end-March, 194 Kit Carson Scouts, an increase of six from the previous month, were employed by III MAF. These Scouts participated in 777 patrols during the month, and were directly responsible for locating 41 mines, 32 caves and tunnels, two weapons, two enemy supply caches, killing one NVA soldier, and apprehending 18 suspected Viet Cong. In addition, the Scouts conducted 29 psychological operations broadcasts in the villages, and held 62 classes on Viet Cong tactics for various III MAF units.

Because of their familiarity with the terrain and the people in the area in which they are operating, the Scouts have proven effective in conveying the government's programs to the populace. During March, for example, one Scout assigned to a unit in Duc Duc district, 19 miles southwest of Danang, persuaded four enemy to surrender and take advantage of the Chieu Hoi program.

Another instance in which a Scout's familiarity with his operating area proved valuable, occurred at the Khe Sanh combat base. The Scout, assigned to the 26th Marines, was a former NVA soldier who had been stationed in the Laotian border area west of Khe Sanh for nearly six years before defecting to the GVN. His background enabled him to provide valuable information of NVA and VC locations along Laos' highway 921, which terminates at the South Vietnam border, 16 miles southwest of Khe Sanh. Additionally, being a Brou tribesman, he was able to elicit information on the enemy from the taciturn Brou refugees flowing through the Khe Sanh region.

Intelligence Volunteered by Vietnamese Civilians

An example of Vietnamese civilians volunteering information occurred early on the morning of 27 March,

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when the chief and several civilians of Thuan Hoa village, four miles north of Hue, reported to a US Navy patrol boat on the Hue (Perfume) river, that 90 Viet Cong had forced their way into their riverside village the night before. The civilians, resentful of the enemy's destruction and terror, stated that the VC planned to fortify the village and, subsequently, to interdict river traffic. Choosing not to support the enemy, the villagers had fled from their homes, seeking help from the armed boats patrolling the river. This information, freely given by the civilians to the patrol boat crew, triggered an immediate sweep of the area by Popular Force and III MAF units, supported by US Navy patrol boats and armed Marine helicopters. The sweep resulted in 50 VC killed and two prisoners captured.

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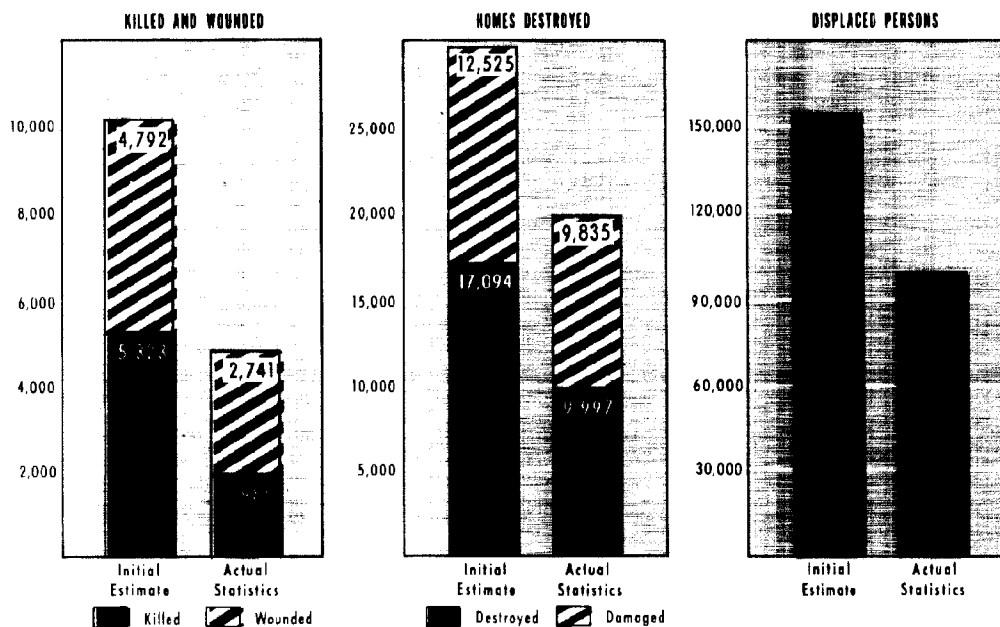
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REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT AND PACIFICATION

The situation in I CTZ improved substantially during March, as the combined GVN/US Operation RECOVERY effort progressed toward returning the corps area to normal after the enemy's Tet offensive. Concurrently, as the facts became known, it was evident that the enemy offensive had caused less devastation than originally reported.

A refinement of statistics pertaining to civilian casualties in the wake of the offensive revealed there were 4,729 civilians killed or wounded (previously reported: 10,115), 19,832 houses destroyed or damaged (previously reported: 29,619), and 99,910 persons displaced throughout I CTZ (previously reported: 159,133). Although these data portray a serious measure of human suffering, the situation is not as critical as was predicted. A comparison of the initial estimates and the actual statistics is depicted on the following graphs.

TET OFFENSIVE CIVILIAN CASUALTIES AND DAMAGE IN I CTZ
INITIAL ESTIMATES VS ACTUAL STATISTICS



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Operation RECOVERY

GVN and US agencies continued operations to restore normalcy in I CTZ after the enemy's Tet offensive. Initiated early in February to provide emergency relief to the thousands of civilian victims, the program was reoriented during mid-March toward accomplishing a substantial reconstruction effort. This reorientation does not preclude continued relief in areas where it is necessary, but it is designed to induce constructive efforts at reestablishing a normal pattern of life in I CTZ.

Part of the Operation RECOVERY plan allows for the payment of settlements to temporarily displaced persons desiring to rebuild their homes. These settlements vary, depending upon the individual's locale. In Hue, such persons are entitled to 10,000 piasters (\$85 US), 20 sheets of roofing tin, and ten bags of cement. Elsewhere in I CTZ, citizens are allotted 5,000 piasters (\$42 US), ten sheets of roofing tin, and ten bags of cement.

By end-March, substantial progress had been achieved in the recovery of I CTZ, and particularly in Hue, the site of the greatest devastation.

-During the month, 20,150 bags of cement and 58,720 sheets of roofing tin were shipped to Hue for distribution under the plan for resettlement of temporarily displaced families.

-In Hue, 830 families received reconstruction materials, and all displaced persons received temporary relief payments. Elsewhere in I CTZ, over 1,400 families were issued either all, or a portion, of their authorized settlement.

-III MAF units, pursuing civic action efforts, fed over one million meals to civilians, compared to the monthly

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average, since January 1967, of 500,000 meals fed.

-More than 21,000 tons of commercial rice were transported to civilian markets in the five provinces, assisting in the reestablishment of economic stability in I CTZ. Of this, 4,100 tons were shipped to Hue; there were also more than 20,000 bags of grain and beans shipped as relief commodities to Hue.

-By 1 March, the Hue City hospital was again in operation. On the 5th, 500 pounds of medical supplies were delivered to the hospital; thereafter, medical supplies reached the hospital at the rate of 200 pounds a day.

-On 8 March, CG, I Corps modified the 1700-0700 Corps-wide curfew to 1900-0700, with the exception of Hue, where the 1700-0700 curfew remained in effect.

-In Quang Ngai province, two inefficient district chiefs were replaced and two village chiefs, suspected of collaboration with the VC, were dismissed.

Except for Hue, the recovery program has returned I CTZ about to the pre-Tet condition. General clean up in Hue, the initial phase of the recovery operation there, was completed on 25 March. Over 6,000 unburied or improperly buried dead civilians and enemy soldiers were interred; tons of debris and rubble were cleared from the streets; water and electrical services were returned to satisfactory operating condition; and unexploded ordnance was disposed of safely. And now the second and third phases of the operation, the repair of public buildings and reconstruction of private homes, are underway.

Although reconstruction of the I Corps area was the primary concern during February and March, the GVN and III MAF did not concentrate all their resources on recovery

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operations, as is exhibited below.

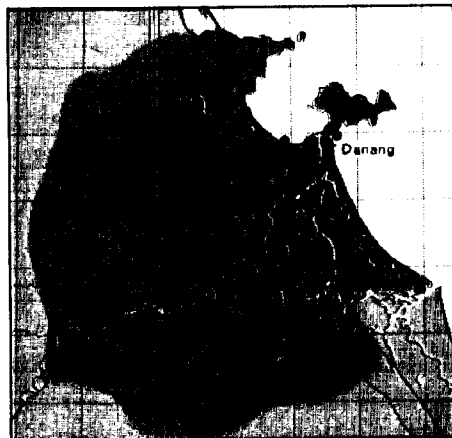
Combined Action Program

Continued expansion of the Combined Action Program resulted in the activation during March of two platoons and two companies. At the end of the month, there were 1,465 Marines and US Navy corpsmen and 2,206 Popular Force soldiers organized into 84 Combined Action Platoons, 17 Combined Action Companies, and three Combined Action Groups. The locations of all the combined action units throughout I CTZ are depicted on the map on the following page.

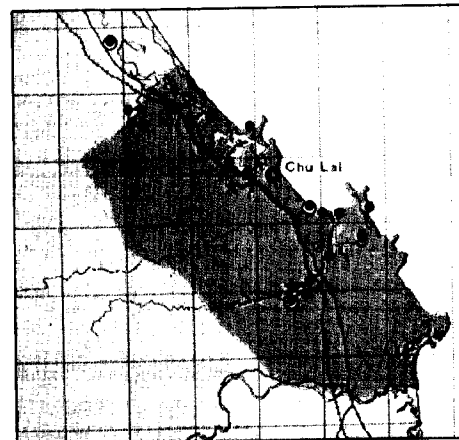
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COMBINED ACTION UNITS - 31 MARCH 1968



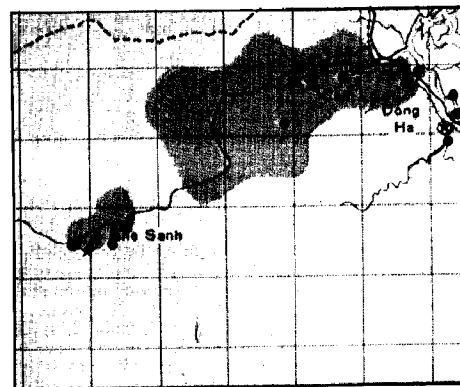
DANANG			
UNITS	NUMBER	STRENGTHS	
		USMC	RVN
GROUP HQ	1	68	-
COMPANY HQ	9	50	-
PLATOONS	40	502	1,132
TOTAL STRENGTH		620	1,132



CHU LAI			
UNITS	NUMBER	STRENGTHS	
		USMC	RVN
GROUP HQ	1	51	-
COMPANY HQ	3	18	1
PLATOONS	18	262	524
TOTAL STRENGTH		331	525



PHU BAI			
UNITS	NUMBER	STRENGTHS	
		USMC	RVN
GROUP HQ	1	57	-
COMPANY HQ	2	36	-
PLATOONS	16	277	396
TOTAL STRENGTH		370	396



DONG HA/KHE SANH			
UNITS	NUMBER	STRENGTHS	
		USMC	RVN
GROUP HQ	-	-	-
COMPANY HQ	3	25	-
PLATOONS	10	119	153
TOTAL STRENGTH		144	153

LEGEND

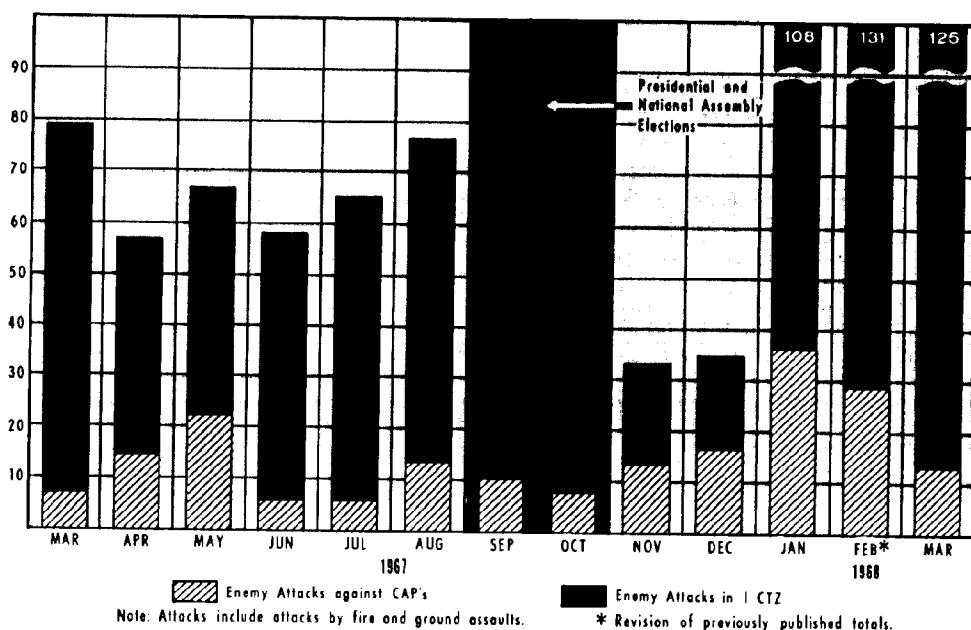
- GROUP HQ
- ★ COMPANY HQ
- ⊙ COMPANY HQ (ACTIVATED SINCE 1 JAN 68)
- PLATOON
- ⊙ PLATOON (ACTIVATED SINCE 1 JAN 68)

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At end-March, combined action units were providing security for more than 280,000 Vietnamese civilians in the I Corps area. As the program continued to expand, and as its influence over the civilian population continued to grow, so the enemy persisted in his endeavor to destroy the Combined Action Program. Between the time of his failure to defeat the nationwide elections, last September and October, and the end of February, the enemy directed over 30% of his attack effort in I CTZ against combined action units. As a result of his effort the enemy lost 862 of his local and main force guerrillas killed. During March, as illustrated on the graph below, the enemy initiated but 13 attacks, or only ten percent of his total attacks in I CTZ for the month, against combined action units.

ENEMY ATTACKS IN I CTZ/AGAINST CAP'S



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The enemy's diminished attack effort had little effect on the Combined Action Program, as the combined Marine/Popular Force platoons continued their campaigns against the Viet Cong infrastructure in CAP areas of responsibility.

-One day after the 8 March activation of CAP 1-3-8, ten miles south of Chu Lai along Route 1, a former enemy rallied to the platoon. When the Chieu Hoi returnee disclosed information concerning the enemy's local organization, the CAP immediately dispatched a patrol to exploit the information. With the assistance of the rallier, the patrol located a Viet Cong tunnel complex, and captured three enemy soldiers, including a VC platoon sergeant who had several documents of intelligence value on his person. Subsequent searches in the area uncovered two other small enemy camp sites, and led to the capture of two more enemy.

-At 0720 on the 11th, a patrol of CAP 3-2-1 observed a seven-man Viet Cong force, four miles south of Phu Bai. Setting a hasty ambush, the patrol attacked the enemy with small arms fire and grenades, killing one and capturing four prisoners and four weapons. This rapid reaction typifies the tactical proficiency gradually being engendered in the Popular Force participants in the Combined Action Program.

-On the 25th, a group of civilians voluntarily informed CAP 2-1-2 of the location of an enemy rocket firing site. Acting on this information, the platoon located and captured two 122mm rockets, complete with boosters and fin assemblies, seven miles southwest of the Danang air base.

This last incident of invaluable information flowing from the villagers to the local combined action defense force, is but one example of the intelligence bonus attained through the Combined Action Program. In retrospect, the III MAF and ARVN success in sundering the enemy's Tet offensive against the city of Danang illustrated the value of this CAP/village rapport, which has been developing since the program's activation in the summer of 1965. An evaluation by CG, III MAF and CG, I Corps of the intelligence gained through CAP channels,

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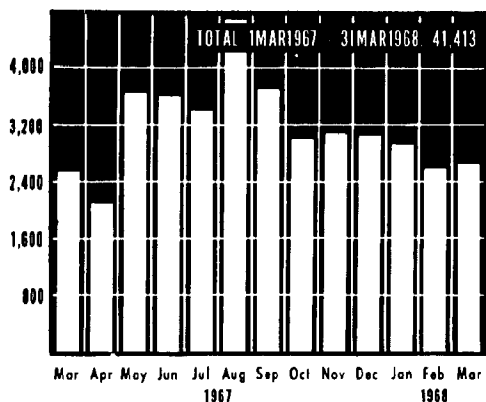
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as well as other information sources in the total I CTZ intelligence apparatus, generated the cancellation by COMUSMACV of the Tet-standdown in I CTZ. Subsequently, although the enemy gained a certain degree of surprise by timing his offensive to coincide with the Tet holiday, it was the alert posture of ARVN, RF, PF, and USMC forces in Danang, in anticipation of an attack, which enabled a rapid reaction, defeating the enemy endeavor.

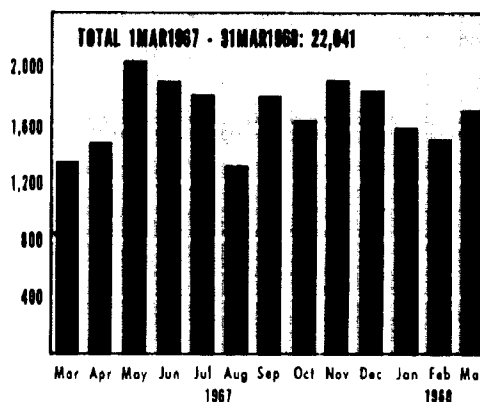
Additional indicators of the aggressive spirit of the Combined Action Platoons in I CTZ are illustrated on the following graphs. CAP's conducted 2,672 night patrols and ambushes and 1,765 day patrols during March, accounting for 108 enemy killed, a record 83 prisoners captured, and 38 weapons seized.

COMBINED ACTION UNIT ACTIVITY

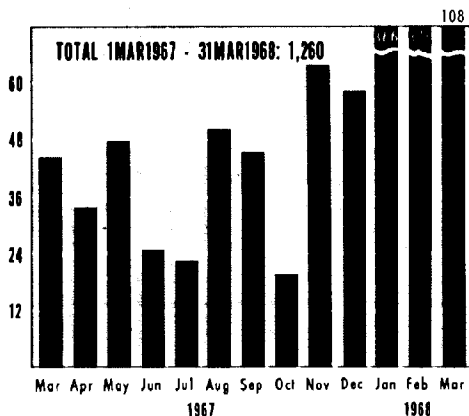
NIGHT OPERATIONS



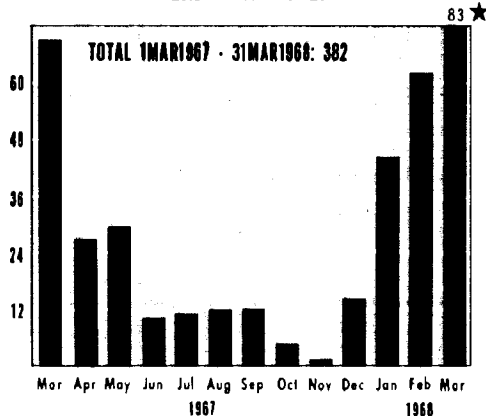
DAY OPERATIONS



ENEMY KILLED



ENEMY CAPTURED



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Pacification

The pacification status of III MAF areas remained at approximately the same level at end-March as it was at the end of February. A total of 18 villages experienced an increase in pacification, while 15 villages experienced a decrease. At the end of the month, there were 742,000 civilians living in 85 secure villages in III MAF areas.

-In northern I CTZ, the GVN relocated, to more secure areas, the populations of Cam Hoa, Cam Hieu, Cam Thanh, and Cam Xuan villages in order to establish a free fire zone in the area west of Dong Ha.

-The Phu Bai, Danang, and Chu Lai areas remained relatively stable. Fourteen of the 191 villages in these areas experienced an increase on the III MAF evaluation scale, while three experienced a decrease.

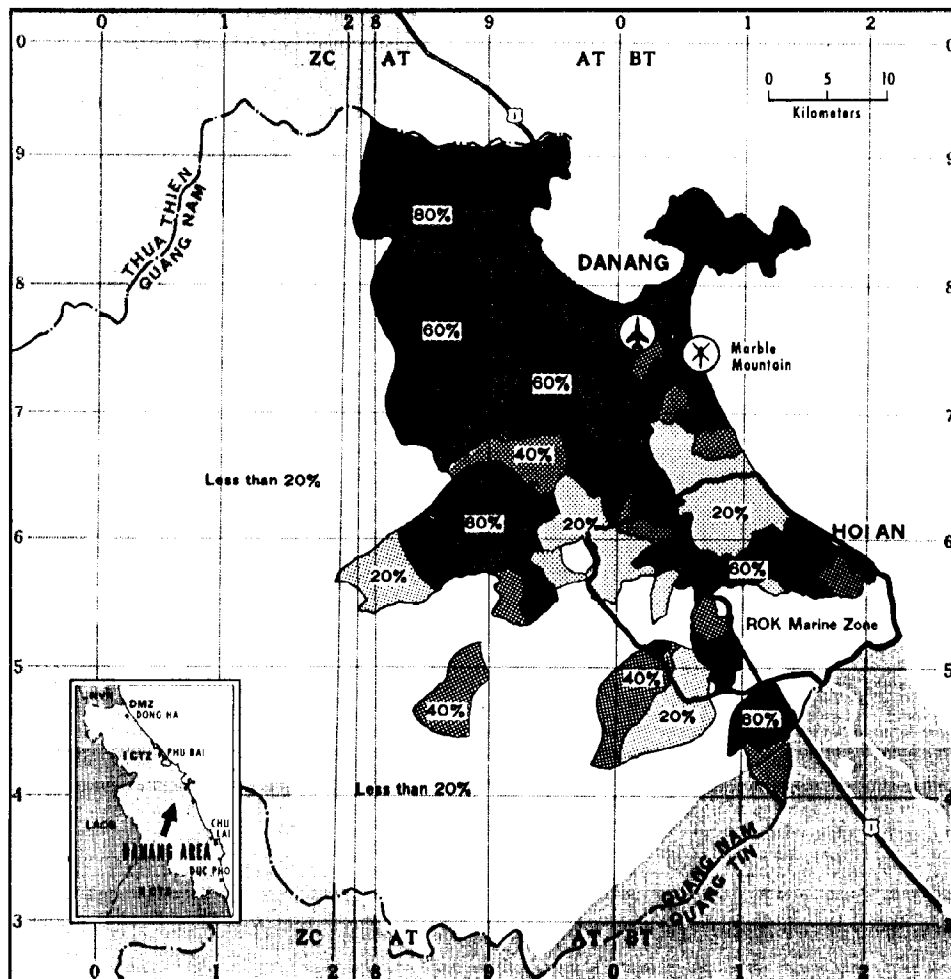
-A census revision in the Duc Pho area decreased the overall secure population of I CTZ by 3,000 people, from the 745,000 civilians considered secure at end-February.

On the following six pages are maps, illustrating the pacification status of the five III MAF areas, and nine graphs, depicting the progress achieved by the people of I CTZ in developing security, government, welfare, and economic stability for their villages.

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PACIFICATION STATUS - DANANG AREA



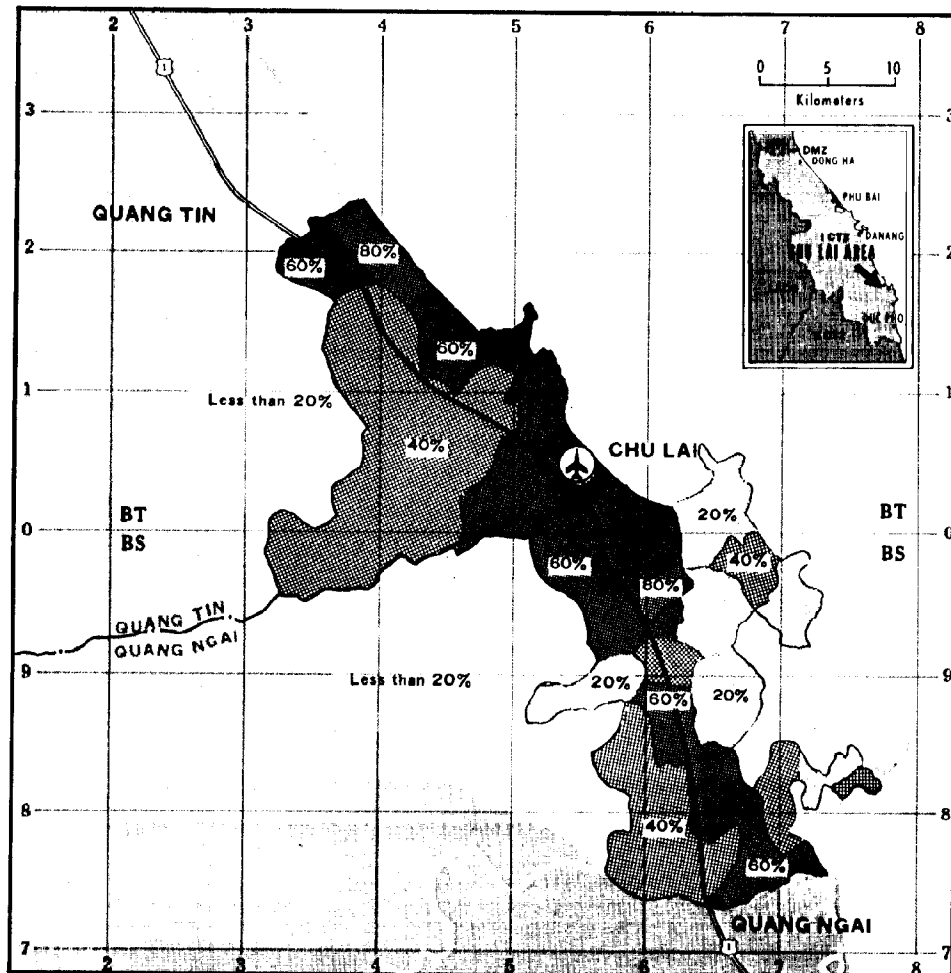
PERCENT PACIFIED	SQUARE MILES			CIVILIAN POPULATION			VILLAGES		
	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68
Under 20%	630	645	664	132,088	193,926	204,680	32	44	45
20%	65	83	73	79,446	55,464	70,634	17	13	15
40%	102	83	43	93,031	66,422	44,385	18	15	11
60%	75	86	113	66,337	89,175	111,478	15	16	19
80%	127	151	155	366,533	409,640	394,568	22	24	22
100%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	999	1,048	1,048	739,437	814,527	825,745*	104	112	112

* Revised Census

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PACIFICATION STATUS - CHU LAI AREA



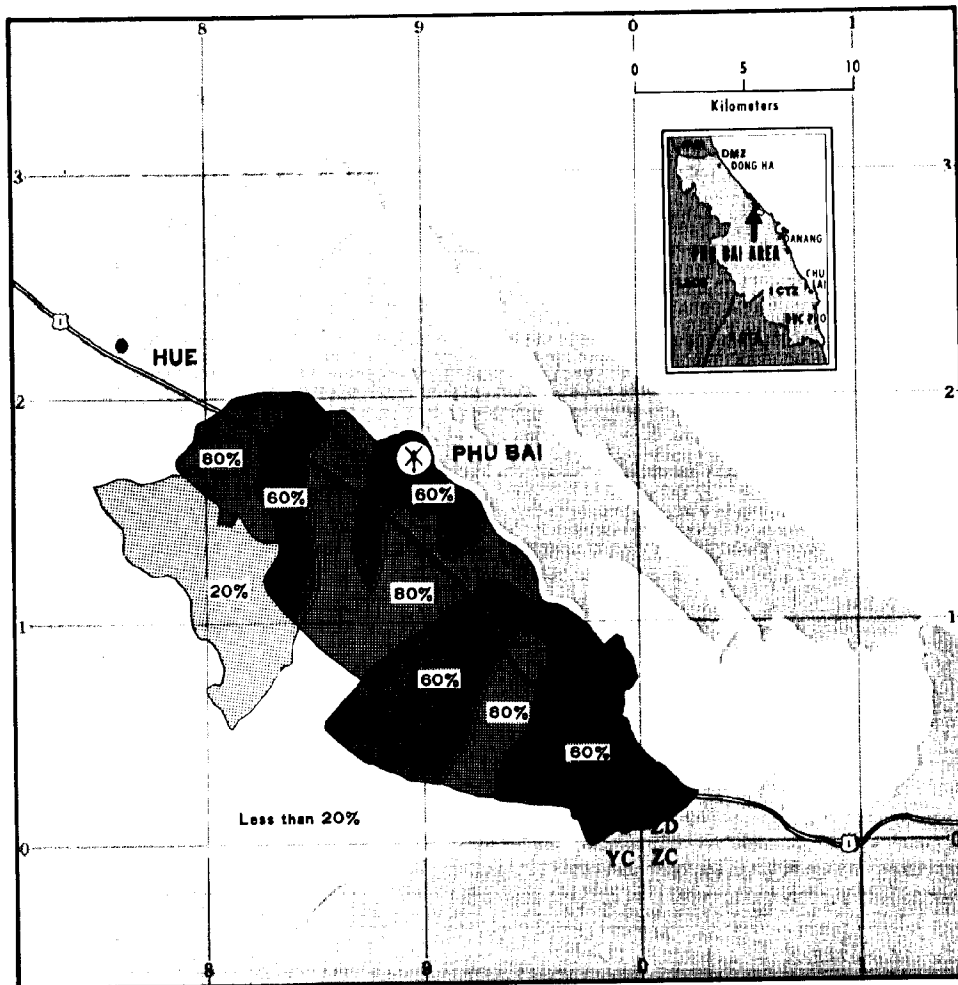
PERCENT PACIFIED	SQUARE MILES			CIVILIAN POPULATION			VILLAGES		
	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68
Under 20%	156	213	248	63,389	85,940	87,386	19	22	23
20%	105	43	55	52,289	24,475	39,226	10	5	6
40%	53	96	133	36,962	60,151	74,441	7	8	11
60%	85	57	100	41,705	51,567	74,312	7	11	15
80%	133	124	12	75,736	57,291	11,058	14	11	2
100%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	532	533	548	270,081	279,424	286,423	57	57	57

* Revised Census

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PACIFICATION STATUS - PHU BAI AREA

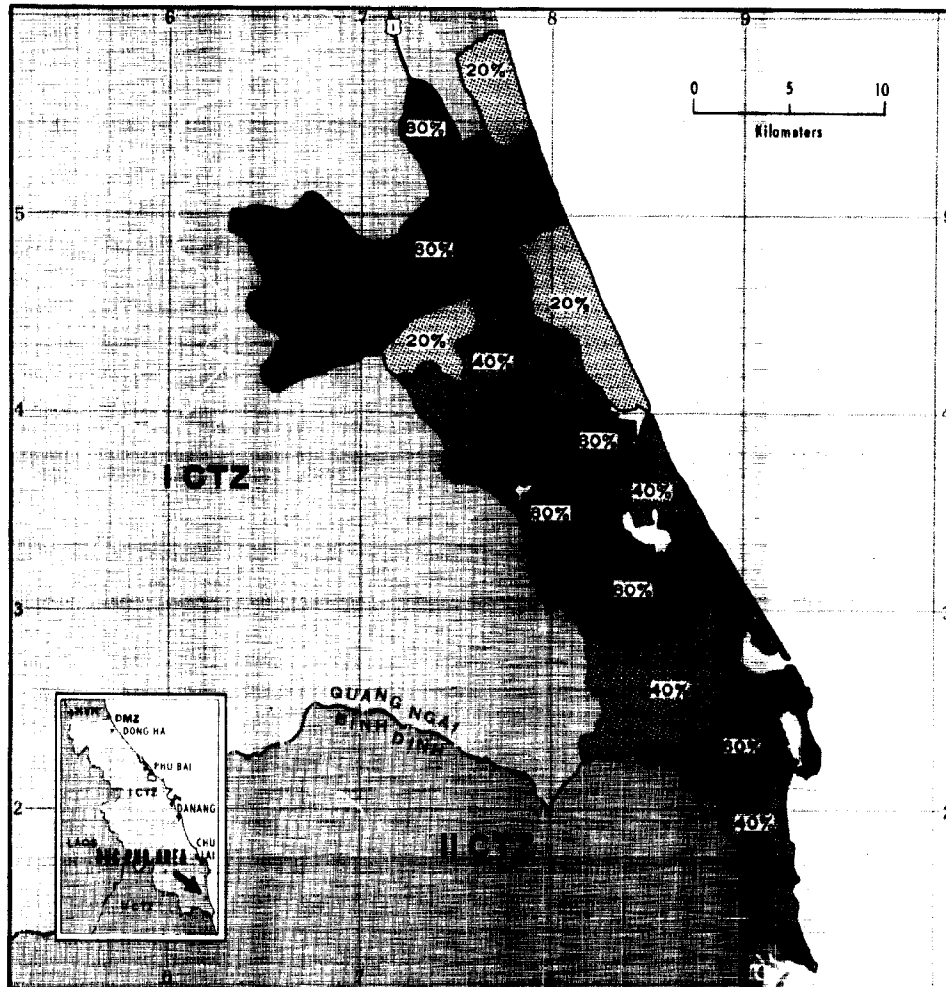


PERCENT PACIFIED	SQUARE MILES			CIVILIAN POPULATION			VILLAGES		
	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68
Under 20%	41	35	35	10,381	11,199	11,199	11	11	11
20%	41	17	17	9,524	3,585	2,678	2	1	1
40%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
60%	24	63	71	14,345	29,003	39,675	2	4	6
80%	56	47	39	33,787	22,734	17,954	7	6	4
100%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	162	162	162	68,037	66,521	71,707	22	22	22

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PACIFICATION STATUS - DUC PHO AREA



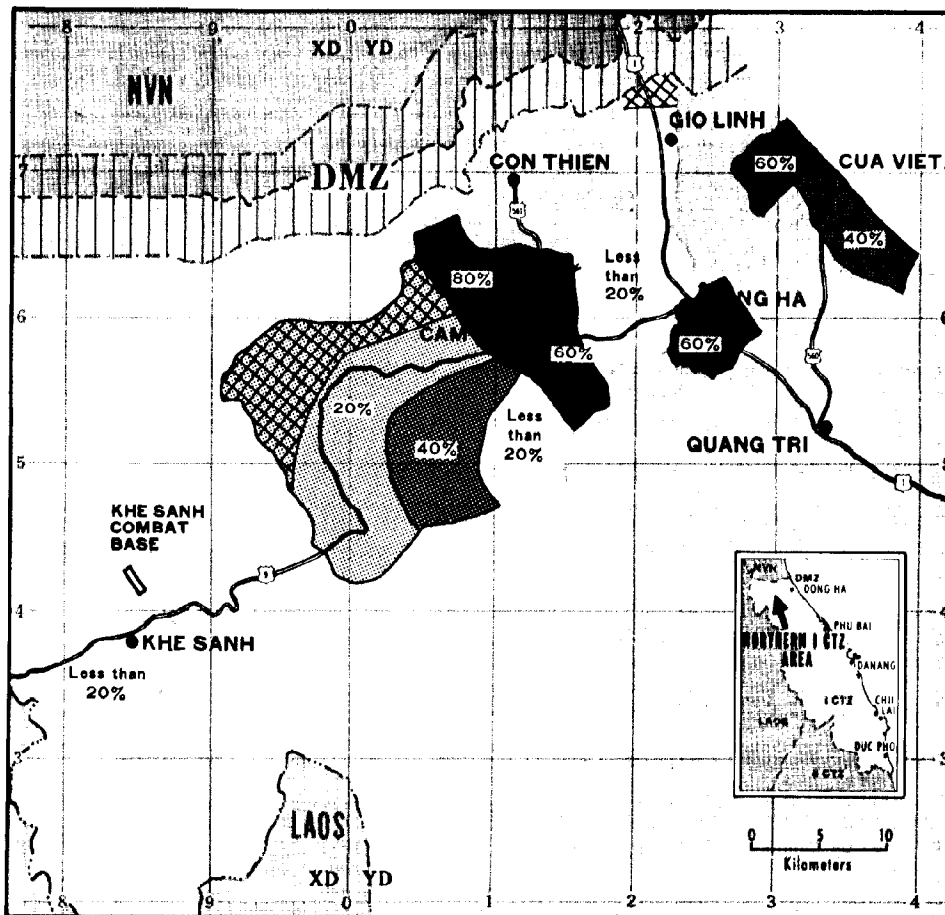
PERCENT PACIFIED	SQUARE MILES			CIVILIAN POPULATION			VILLAGES		
	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68
Under 20%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
20%	43	36	23	32,799	28,466	28,810	6	6	4
40%	—	89	45	—	54,711	29,246	—	8	6
60%	—	32	77	—	18,669	40,404	—	4	6
80%	—	5	17	—	7,133	16,163	—	1	3
100%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	43	162	162	32,799	108,879	114,643 *	6	19	19

* Revised census.

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PACIFICATION STATUS - NORTHERN I CTZ



Note: The black hatch on the map above identifies unpopulated regions of graded villages which are subject to periodic NVA penetration.

PERCENT PACIFIED	SQUARE MILES			CIVILIAN POPULATION			VILLAGES		
	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68	MAR-67	SEP-67	MAR-68
Under 20%	—	51	144	—	5,275	24,179	—	3	15
20%	—	13	20	—	4,641	2,054	—	1	1
40%	95	44	30	5,982	14,719	6,998	4	3	2
60%	119	63	34	19,884	17,216	15,032	7	6	4
80%	23	37	34	13,654	15,277	12,803	3	3	2
100%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	237	208	262	39,520	57,128	61,066*	14	16	24

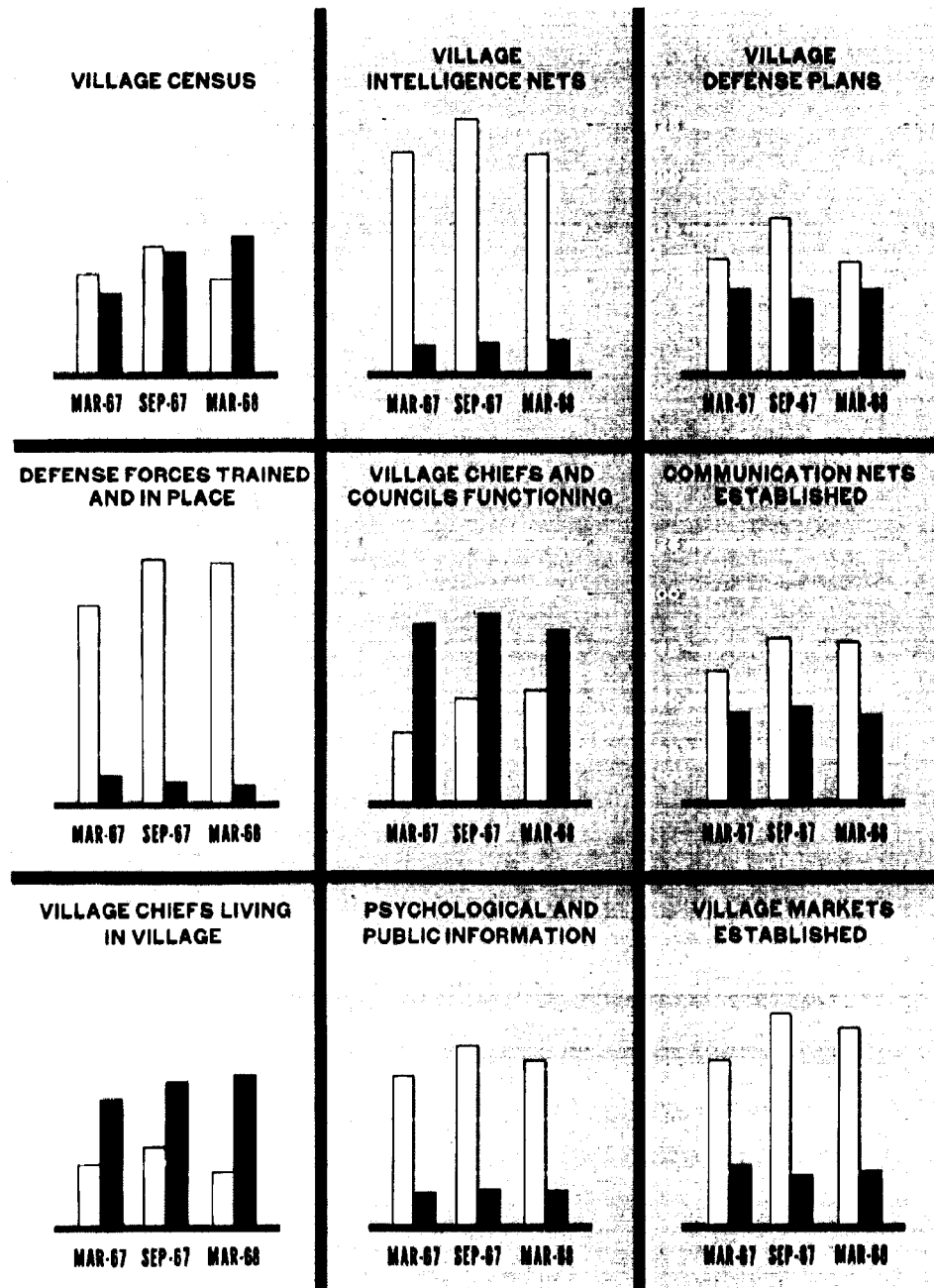
* Revised census

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PACIFICATION PROGRESS IN III MAF AREAS

□ PARTIALLY COMPLETE ■ COMPLETE



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Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation (ICEX) Program

It has now become clear that the enemy infrastructure throughout I CTZ suffered extensive losses, totaling well over 500 hard core Viet Cong cadre, during and subsequent to his Tet attacks. A major factor behind these damaging losses was the substantial intelligence contribution by the network of District and Provincial Operations and Intelligence Coordination Centers (DOICC/POICC), functioning within the I Corps Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation (ICEX) Program.

Details of the ICEX contribution are only now becoming fully available. In Quang Tri, for example, 11 district or provincial Viet Cong cadre were confirmed as killed or captured during February and 17 other middle or high level VC were captured in March. All told, infrastructure losses in the province have totaled at least 131 Viet Cong since Tet.

Another major area of ICEX accomplishment is Danang, where the ICEX contributed a warning which permitted US and Vietnamese units to meet and repel the Tet attacks. Although the total number of VC infrastructure members eliminated through the ICEX effort during February is not known, it is certain that they included the capture of the executive officer of the 402d Sapper Battalion, a Viet Cong Main Force unit which was to play an important role in the Tet plan. Additionally, the deputy chief of the communist "Danang City Committee" was captured. During March, 28 infrastructure members were identified and killed or captured in Danang through ICEX efforts. Elsewhere in Quang Nam province, 30 more VC cadre were uncovered in March.

Farther south, in Tam Ky, ICEX had developed an effective network of informants who operated as 14 teams of three men each, patrolling hamlets surrounding the city prior to Tet. Each team carried an HT-1 radio, with which to transmit intelligence regarding enemy movements. Again, partly as a result of this effective ICEX effort, the enemy suffered the loss of 239 men during February. In March, DOICC accounted

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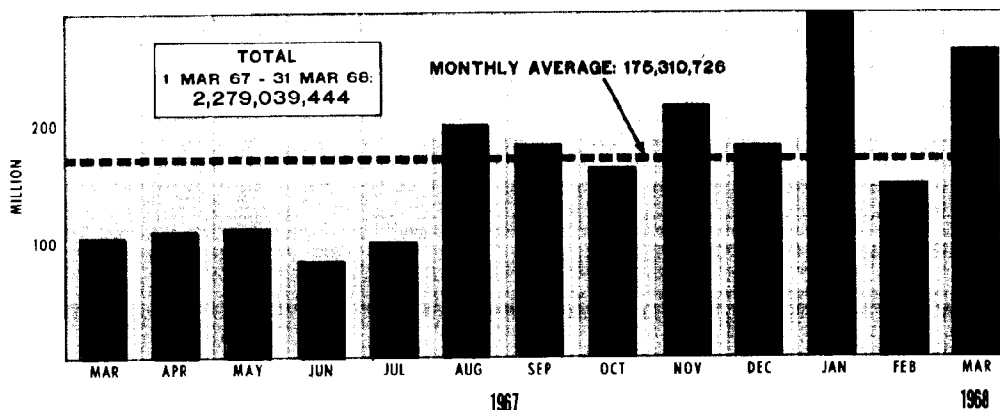
for the capture of an additional 42 Viet Cong infrastructure members in Quang Tin province.

In southern I CTZ, the Quang Ngai police chief also acted on ICEX-originated information, to close in on a Viet Cong intelligence net. The result was 47 top level enemy killed or captured before the end of February and 48 others eliminated during March. The prisoners included the Viet Cong province committee security section, and individuals assigned by the VC to be chief and deputy chief of a "Democratic and Peace Front," which were to govern the city if the enemy attacks had succeeded in eliminating the legitimate government.

Psychological Operations

In March, III MAF and GVN psychological operations in I CTZ were oriented to exploit VC/NVA atrocities, to publicize the Chieu Hoi program, and to encourage nationalism among the civilians throughout the corps area. To accomplish these objectives, over 268 million propaganda leaflets were disseminated, more than 1,000 aerial and ground broadcasts were conducted, and 327 visual presentations were shown. As illustrated on the graph, the level of leaflet distribution was 93 million higher than the monthly average since 1 March 1967, and only slightly below the record 299 million leaflets disseminated in January 1968.

PROPAGANDA LEAFLET DISTRIBUTION - I CTZ



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The resentment engendered among the people by the Tet brutalities, aided psychological operations during the month. This resentment was displayed in Quang Dien, eight miles north of Hue. On 22 March, this village, which previously had been a Viet Cong stronghold, was the scene of a spontaneous anti-Viet Cong demonstration by more than 100 civilians, parading with GVN flags and banners, protesting enemy actions, and proclaiming support for their government. In southern I CTZ, a similar attitude was demonstrated by Vietnamese civilians; during 72 separate instances, the people voluntarily turned in weapons and munitions to III MAF units, reducing the enemy arsenal by 189 assorted weapons, including a 75mm recoilless rifle and two 122mm rockets.

To exploit these attitudes, III MAF employed Psychological Operations Exploitation Teams (POET's) to expeditiously gather information on VC atrocities for use in psychological operations. For example, on 4 March, a POET was dispatched to Thanh Xuan refugee hamlet, 19 miles southwest of Danang, to gain data concerning a VC attack which resulted in 35 refugees killed and 88 others wounded. Based on this incident, leaflets and tape recordings were produced, and subsequently disseminated over the target area, conveying the theme "The VC Destroys-The GVN Builds." On 5 March, a POET gathered data concerning a VC attempt to kidnap a pregnant 19-year-old girl and coerce her into joining the Viet Cong in Quang Nam province. The girl's mother objected and was summarily murdered; the girl, resisting the VC abduction, was beaten, shot, and left for dead. Using the information the POET obtained, leaflets were produced and distributed over the area, condemning the ruthlessness of Viet Cong terror tactics.

A civilian bus, six miles southwest of the Danang airbase, was destroyed by a Viet Cong mine on 31 March. This act of terrorism cost the lives of 12 civilians and wounded 14 more. Once again a POET was dispatched to the scene to obtain information for use in exposing VC atrocities against the civilian population.

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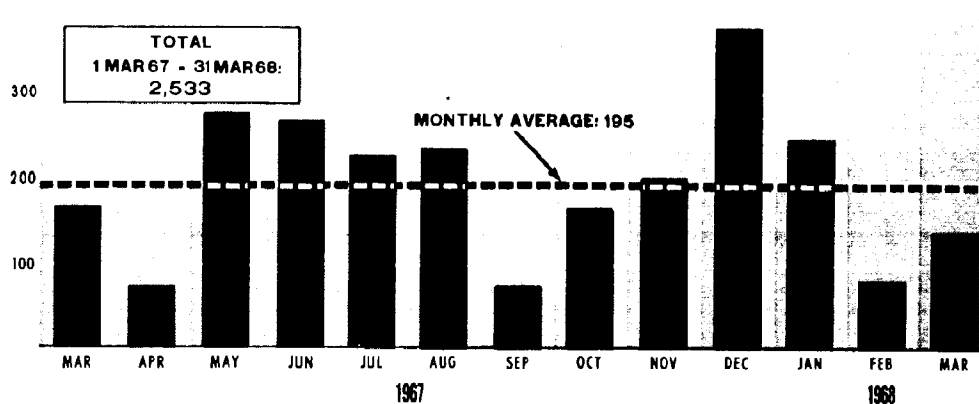
~~UNCLASSIFIED~~Chieu Hoi Returnees

During the month, 138 former enemy rallied to the GVN, seeking amnesty and rehabilitation. These defections, representing a 60% increase over the 86 defections in February, continued to be below the monthly average, since 1 March 1967, of 195 returnees. Additionally, ralliers surrendered 54 weapons, a 70% increase over the monthly average of 32 weapons surrendered during the last five months of 1967.

Reasons for the low defection rate included the residual animosity generated by the Tet offensive, which probably caused many prospective defectors to be wary of civilian reaction to them, and the possibility of a renewed widespread enemy offensive, which might offer promise of success to those dissidents in the enemy's formations.

A graphic portrayal of the Chieu Hoi returnee rate in I CTZ over the past 13 months is presented below.

CHIEU HOI RETURNEES - I CTZ

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Revolutionary Development

As of 4 April, the GVN was revising the 1968 Revolutionary Development plan, in accordance with modifications proposed by district and provincial officials throughout the Republic. Most hamlets included in the original plan will be retained; however, two significant alterations are anticipated: (1) an adjustment downward in the level of development to be achieved in each type hamlet (new life, consolidated, and constructed); (2) the redesignation of some first semester hamlets as second semester hamlets. These two changes will allow more civilians to feel government influence during the year.

Even though the plan is not complete, the RD effort is continuing. Behind a protective screen of offensive operations by Vietnamese Armed Forces units in direct support of Revolutionary Development, RD teams have already initiated the I Corps 1968 campaign. By end-March, there were 147 RD teams in I CTZ, 132 (or 90%) of which were actively engaged in hamlet development. A breakdown of RD team utilization in I CTZ at month's end is shown below.

RD TEAMS IN I CTZ - MARCH 1968

<u>Province</u>	<u>RD Hamlet</u>	<u>Refugee Relief</u>	<u>Operation RECOVERY*</u>	<u>Not Assigned**</u>	<u>Total</u>
Quang Tri	16	-	-	-	16
Thua Thien	21	1	-	-	22
Quang Nam	33	-	1*	-	34
Quang Tin	25	-	-	-	25
Quang Ngai	<u>37</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>50</u>
Total	132	1	10	4	147

* Includes providing security at province and district headquarters.

**Recently returned from the national RD training center at Vung Tau.

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ARVN Support of Revolutionary Development

At the end of March, 16 ARVN battalions, with a total personnel strength of 9,000 soldiers, were committed to direct military support of the Revolutionary Development campaign in I CTZ. These battalions conducted a record 48 operations during the month, 12 in northern I CTZ, 22 in central I CTZ, and 14 in the national priority province of Quang Ngai. This compares favorably with the posture of the ARVN Revolutionary Development support effort prior to Tet, when, in January, 15 ARVN battalions conducted 33 operations in support of RD.

Overall, ARVN RD support efforts in March reflected a renewal of the high offensive level of pre-Tet operations. This was particularly true in Thua Thien province, where, due to the battle for Hue, RD support activity was curtailed during February. During March, four support operations were conducted within the provincial RD priority area. Highlighting these was Operation LAM SON 188, conducted by the 3d ARVN Regiment, between 4 and 25 March, in the Quang Dien area north of Hue; the operation resulted in 79 enemy killed, three prisoners captured, and 31 weapons seized.

In Quang Tri province, the 1st ARVN Regiment's Operations LAM SON 187 and LAM SON 190, conducted east of Quang Tri City, achieved significant results. Cumulatively, these operations accounted for 230 NVA and VC killed, two captured, and 67 weapons seized.

Revolutionary Development support operations in Quang Tin province were highlighted by a four-day 6th ARVN Regiment operation conducted in the provincial RD priority area. The operation resulted in 75 enemy soldiers killed and six prisoners and 11 weapons captured.

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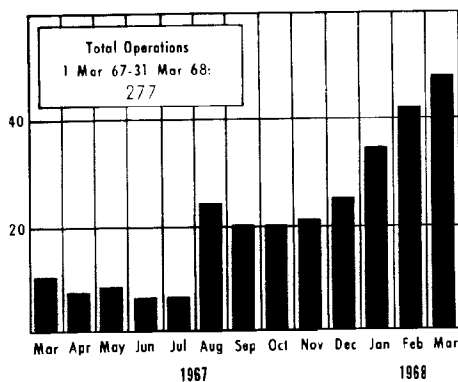
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Characteristic of ARVN operations in support of the national priority campaign in Quang Ngai province, was Operation QUYET THANG 142, a 4th ARVN Regiment operation conducted on the 12th and 13th of March. The operation netted 60 enemy killed and 16 weapons captured.

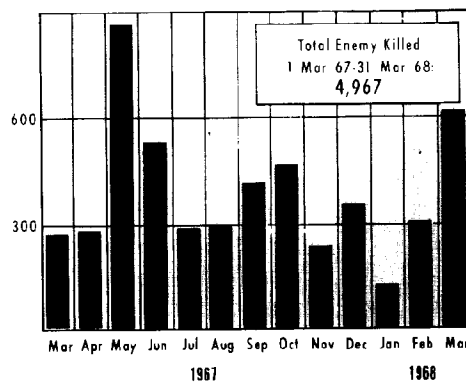
As displayed on the graphs below, the 48 RD support operations conducted during March by ARVN battalions in I CTZ, accounted for 618 enemy killed and 117 prisoners and 178 weapons captured.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF ARVN UNITS IN SUPPORT OF REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT

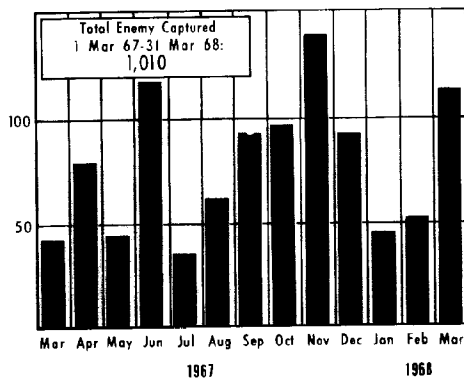
BATTALION OPERATIONS CONDUCTED



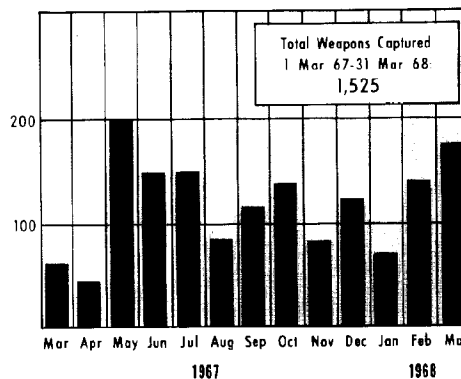
ENEMY KILLED



ENEMY CAPTURED



WEAPONS CAPTURED



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UNCLASSIFIEDBASE DEFENSE

With the exception of one missile attack on Danang, enemy actions against the major Marine bases during the month produced no lasting effect on Marine operations.

The efforts in the Danang area began at 0100 on 4 March when the 7th Communication Battalion, seven kilometers southwest of Danang, received nine rounds of 122mm rocket fire which wounded one Marine. Thirty-five minutes later, the Force Logistic Command, nine kilometers northwest of Danang, received six 122mm rockets. One Marine and five US soldiers were killed and nine Marines and eight US soldiers received minor wounds in this attack. The Marble Mountain air facility was hit at 0255 when 35 122mm rockets fell on the base, damaging one Marine CH-53 beyond repair and inflicting lesser degrees of damage on ten CH-53's, 15 CH-46's and 12 UH-1E's. Two US Army OV-1's sustained substantial damage, and one hangar received moderate damage. During this attack, one rocket landed on the nearby Naval Support Activity Hospital, wounding five patients and two Navy corpsmen, and damaging two wards of the hospital.

Eleven days later, during a 30 minute period in the early morning hours of the 15th, 20 122mm rockets landed on the Quang Tri airfield. Two soldiers and one USAF airman were wounded, nine UH-1E's, five UH-34's, and two O-1's received light or minor damage, and the aircraft parking apron was cratered in eight places. Marine armed helicopters and artillery immediately engaged the suspected firing positions, 13 kilometers southwest of the airfield. A subsequent daylight search of this area revealed five firing positions, five aiming stakes and ten rocket fuzes, but no visible evidence of casualties among the enemy's rocket unit personnel.

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At 0145 on the 21st, a total of 20 mortar and rocket rounds impacted at Phu Bai, wounding two Marines and causing minor damage to a support building. On the 26th, Phu Bai was again the target, as 65 mixed rounds of mortar and rocket landed on the complex. Twenty-five rockets hit the airfield, killing three Marines and wounding 26. Two CH-46's and one C-117 received minor damage.

One noteworthy action of the Marines' continuing counterrocket activity occurred on 7 March. At 2025, a squad from Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, in an ambush position 13 kilometers southwest of Danang air base, attacked 90 to 100 enemy moving northwest, toward Danang. The enemy fled and were immediately brought under artillery and small arms fire by a second Marine ambush 500 meters away. Nine enemy were confirmed killed and three 122mm rockets were captured during this action, and a subsequent search of the area revealed sections of two additional rockets.

On six occasions during the month, III MAF units captured either intact rockets or rocket components:

-A cache containing 28 rockets (122mm), two cans of ignition cartridges, and two fuzes was captured in the mountains overlooking the Nui Loc Son basin, 13 kilometers north of Nui Loc Son on 3 March.

-On 20 March, four motors, three warheads and three fuzes for 122mm rockets were found 13 kilometers southwest of Chu Lai.

-In the Danang area on 26 March, a Combined Action Platoon located four 122mm rocket motors, two warheads and two fuzes, nine kilometers southwest of the air

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base. Also on the same day, two other rocket motors were uncovered by a Marine patrol.

-On 27 March, three 122mm rockets were captured 14 kilometers west of Nui Loc Son.

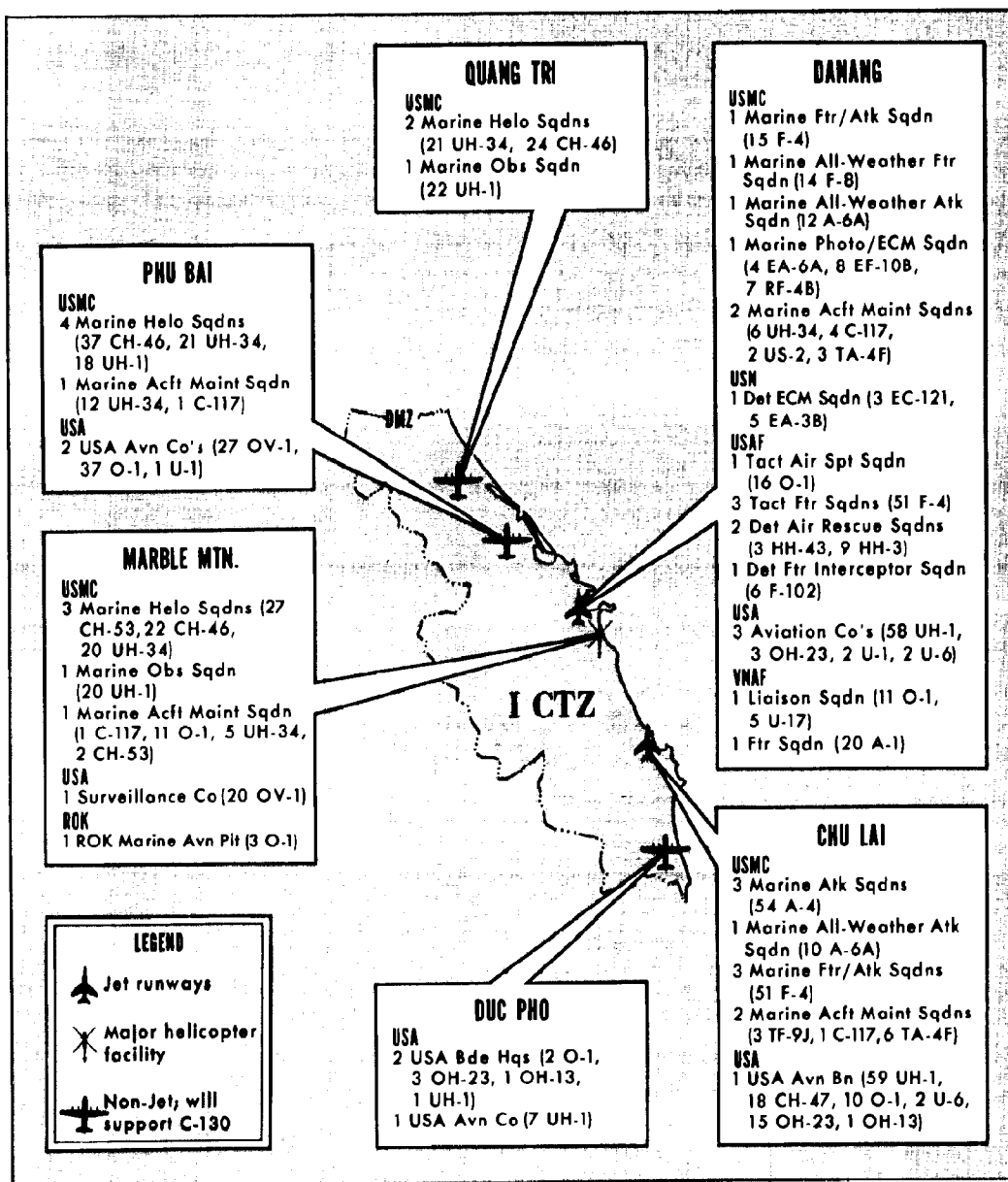
-A Marine reconnaissance unit captured one 122mm rocket, with launcher, while on patrol 11 kilometers south-west of Phu Bai on 30 March.

The map on the following page depicts the location of aircraft at the major bases in I CTZ as of 31 March.

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AIRCRAFT POPULATION AT MAJOR I CTZ AIRFIELDS AS OF 31 MAR 1968



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AIR OPERATIONS

During March, the number of fixed wing sorties flown by pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, and helicopter sorties flown by pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and the two Special Landing Forces, reflected the intensity of operations in the I Corps Tactical Zone. Fixed wing combat and combat support sorties totaled 7,603, surpassing by more than 800 the number (6,788) flown during February. Marine helicopter pilots recorded equally impressive totals, logging 44,084 sorties, the highest number flown since August 1967.

Fixed Wing Operations

The Marine fixed wing effort in-country was comprised of 2,525 close air support sorties, 2,440 direct air support sorties, 694 reconnaissance sorties and 802 helicopter escort, interdiction, and air defense sorties. The attack sorties delivered 10,004 tons of bombs in support of ground units, the highest amount since July 1967, when a record 10,235 tons were dropped. Of the total attack effort, 48% was focused in the critical northwestern corner of Quang Tri province.

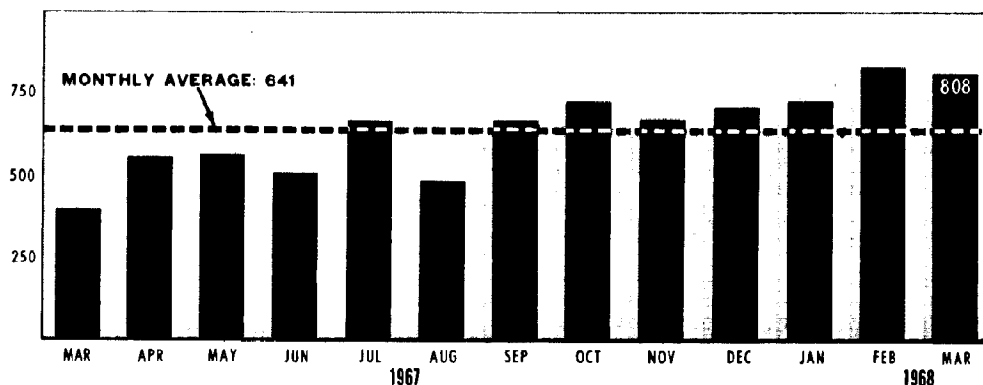
Marine out-of-country operations totalled 1,142 sorties. Of these, 969 sorties were attacks against enemy targets in the Route Package I region of North Vietnam and the Steel Tiger region of Laos, while the remaining 173 sorties were reconnaissance, electronic counter measure, escort, and combat air patrol flights in the same areas.

The A-6A Intruders of VMA(AW)-242 and 533 continued to fly a high number of sorties, 808, only 21 sorties short of the record flown during February 1968. The graph on the following page portrays the monthly number of A-6A sorties since April 1967.

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MONTHLY MARINE A-6A ATTACK SORTIES MARCH 1967 - MARCH 1968



Helicopter Operations

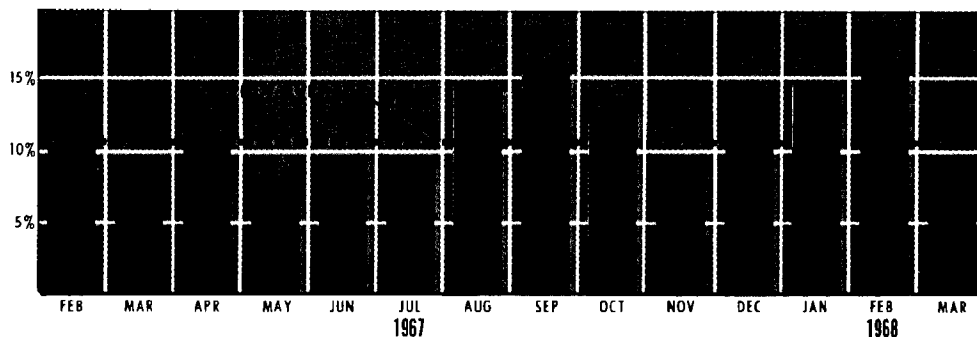
March saw a substantial increase in the number of Marine helicopter sorties flown (44,084), compared to the 1967-1968 monthly average of 41,471 sorties. The increase was attributable in part to the intensity of ground operations, and to improved weather conditions in all but the northern portion of the I CTZ. Support provided to ground units through this high level of flight operations included the lifting of over 53,000 troops and 6,900 tons of cargo.

The drawdown of helicopter flight hours from Marine support decreased during March, amounting to 6.9% of the total hours flown, compared with February's 12.9%. The largest portion (64%) of this non-Marine support was provided to the 2d ROK Marine Corps Brigade. On the following page is a graph showing the portion of total Marine Corps helicopter sorties flown in support of other than Marine units since February 1967.

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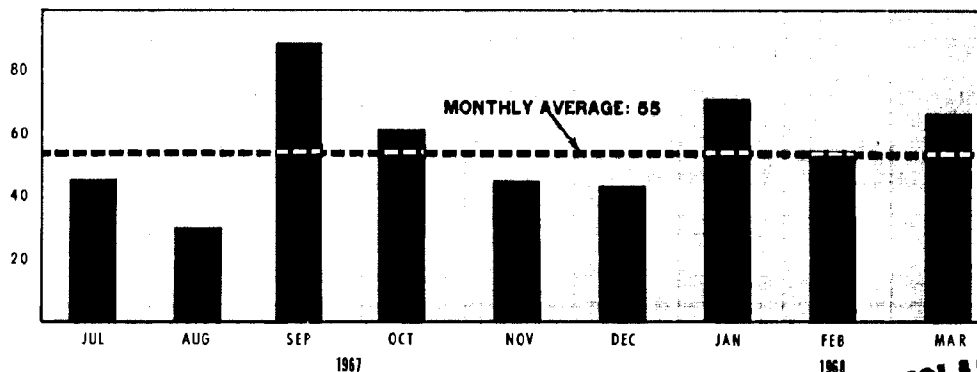
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**MONTHLY PERCENT OF MARINE HELICOPTER SORTIES
IN SUPPORT OF OTHER THAN MARINE FORCES
FEB 1967 - MAR 1968**



The 32 assigned CH-53 helicopters, each capable of lifting in excess of 9,000 pounds, continued to provide deployed Marine forces a tactical heavy lift capability by transporting over 7,435 personnel and lifting over 3,207 tons of cargo during the month. In addition, they retrieved 18 helicopters, downed in non-secure areas, which might otherwise have required destruction in place. An additional 48 helicopters were administratively lifted during the month by the CH-53. This total, 66, compares with 55 retrievals during February and 70 during January. Below is a graph showing the monthly total of aircraft retrieved by CH-53 helicopters since July 1967.

**AIRCRAFT RETRIEVED BY MARINE CH-53'S
JULY 1967 - MARCH 1968**



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Aircraft Losses

During March, three fixed wing aircraft and 14 helicopters were lost due to enemy antiaircraft fire, and one helicopter was damaged beyond repair during the enemy rocket attack against the Marble Mountain Air Facility on 4 March. These losses brought the total number of Marine aircraft lost due to direct enemy action during the period March 1965 through March 1968, to 86 fixed wing and 146 rotary wing aircraft.

The intensity of the battle in the I CTZ during the first three months of 1968 was evident by the number of reported enemy antiaircraft fire incidents (2,954), and by the high number of aircraft (42) lost due to this fire. This three month total was substantially higher than the previous highs of 2,088 antiaircraft incidents during the 1st Quarter of 1967 and of 24 aircraft lost during the 2d Quarter of 1967.

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The Single Manager Control of
Tactical Air Resources in
The Republic of Vietnam

On 7 March 1968, COMUSMACV directed that all Marine fixed wing strike and reconnaissance aircraft, and their associated Marine air control assets, be assigned, effective 10 March 1968, to the mission direction of his Deputy for Air Operations, the Commanding General, 7th Air Force. Implementation of this program of single manager (Air Force) control of tactical air resources throughout South Vietnam began on the designated date, evolved over the following three weeks, and finally achieved full operational status on 1 April.

This decision required a major departure from the Marine Corps' basic principle of organization for combat. The related circumstances are recited in the paragraphs to follow.

The Marine Combat Control System

The III Marine Amphibious Force was designed, equipped, and trained as a combatant entity, in conformance with the basic Marine air-ground team principle of exploiting, under a single tactical command, the capabilities for infantry maneuver, helicopterborne mobility, and the immediate control and coordination of organic attack aircraft and artillery. For the Marine infantry commander in Vietnam, the battle zone has always been three dimensional, encompassing both the terrain upon which he has been obliged to fight, and the inseparable, terrain-controlling airspace above. By means of an uncomplicated and responsive system of air and ground combat control, the Marine infantry commander has been able to weave artillery and air support quickly and effectively into his pattern of ground maneuver. Concurrently, this system of combat control has enabled him to coordinate the supporting fires of naval guns, and has ensured coordination of the movement of supporting helicopters and reconnaissance aircraft safely through the battle zone. He thus has been able to blend into

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the battle that form and degree of combat power necessary to achieve his operational purpose at any point in geography and any point in time.

Initial Air Support Directives of CINCPAC and COMUSMACV

Within this III Marine Amphibious Force total control system, the flexibility and adaptability of Marine air has enabled III MAF to respond to the CINCPAC directive¹ for the conduct and control of close air support operations, under which two and a half years of combat in Vietnam were conducted. While endorsing the COMUSMACV Air Force component commander as coordinating authority for tactical air support and air traffic control in South Vietnam, this CINCPAC guidance prescribed that the responsiveness of the close air support effort and of its integral control agencies would not be degraded. This directive was effectively executed, as exhibited by the Joint Chiefs of Staff study of 19 February 1966, which made a comparative, on-site, analysis of both the Marine and Air Force systems of air control. Significantly, this study² concluded that "both systems are configured appropriately to perform their assigned missions, and the close air support provided by each system in South Vietnam has been highly satisfactory in respect to quantity, quality, timeliness, and results achieved".

The desire of COMUSMACV to preserve the demonstrated combat power of the Marine air-ground force was implicit in his revised directive³ (originally issued on 13 July 1965) for command, control, and coordination of US air operations in the Republic of Vietnam. While reserving to himself the function of determining when "major emergency or disaster" might require that temporary operational control of all US air resources be placed under his Air Force component commander, COMUSMACV stated that "It is not the

- 1) - CINCPAC message 242345Z April 1965 (S)
- 2) - JCS Close Air Support Study Group Report (S) entitled "A Comparative Analysis of Marine Corps and Air Force Close Air Support Performance in South Vietnam" (U)
- 3) - COMUSMACV Directive (C) Number 95-4 of 6 Feb 1966, "Aviation Air Operations in RVN" (U)

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intent of this directive to alter or modify current Service concepts for allocation and control of air resources." Acknowledging both the position of the Commanding General, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing as the Tactical Air Commander for the Commanding General, III MAF, and the effectiveness of the Marine organic air control system, COMUSMACV directed that "Commanding General, III MAF will exercise operational control over all USMC aviation resources" and, further, that "USMC (air) resources will be allocated through Marine command channels for the support of USMC operations."

During almost three years of Vietnam combat, the fulfillment by Commanding General, III MAF and by Headquarters, USMACV of these stated responsibilities ensured both effective employment of Marine air and the coordinated integration of Marine air with the total Vietnam air effort. Analysis of the Marine fixed wing effort of 1967, for example, reflects a high level of Marine participation in the overall air effort, responding to the COMUSMACV injunction that those Marine air resources not required for support of III MAF operations should be declared to the MACV Air Force component commander, for subsequent allocation in support of other forces. Specifically, of the nearly 80,000 Marine fixed wing sorties flown in calendar year 1967, over 18,000 - 22% - were flown for purposes other than support of Marines. These sorties were executed largely outside of I CTZ, and mainly under the direction of the 7th Air Force in operations against North Vietnam and enemy lines of communication in Laos. Had COMUSMACV or the 7th Air Force so elected, all or any part of this considerable number of sorties could have been devoted to close troop support operations within RVN. That they were not was purely an elective matter, reflecting the flexibility with which the MACV headquarters was endowed under the original CINCPAC and MACV air control directives.

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USMC and USA Application of Organic Air Support Assets

The total effectiveness of the Marine tactical air effort in I CTZ during calendar year 1967, a year marked by expanded combat and a concurrent infusion of US Army units, was paralleled by application of the Army's own close air support philosophy in the same region. With respect to organic capabilities, both the US Army and the US Marines were found applying the same basic techniques, with US Army helicopter gunships and observation aircraft addressing, within their capabilities, the same functions for Army ground units as do Marine fighter, attack, and reconnaissance aircraft for Marine ground units. The fundamental difference between the two air support systems resides in the nature and power of the resources employed, and not in the manner in which their power is delivered on the enemy. Thus, while Marine fixed wing attack aircraft, directed and coordinated by Marine controllers, provided the full spectrum of close support to Marine ground units, Army ground formations employed their organic helicopter gunships for their immediate attack aircraft fires, planning on supplement of these fires by fixed wing support provided by the Air Force.

Air Force response to the Army ground unit commander's request for air support was, and is, channeled through the Air Force tactical air control system, operated in conjunction with Army forces. The outward similarities of the Marine and Air Force air control systems have, since the beginning of the Vietnam war, been the basis for Air Force discussions, comparisons, and, finally, recommendations, all based on the conviction that the COMUSMACV Deputy for Air Operations should control all US fixed wing tactical air in Vietnam, and that Marine aviation forces should be operationally separated from their parent III Marine Amphibious Force command, and assigned to the operational control of 7th Air Force.

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Evolution of the COMUSMACV Single Manager System for
Control of Tactical Air Resources in South Vietnam

On 18 January 1968, COMUSMACV⁴ informed CINCPAC that he was considering assigning operational control of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, less its helicopters, to his Deputy for Air Operations, the Commanding General, 7th Air Force. Citing the increasing deployment of Army forces into I Corps Tactical Zone, the then-impending major battle in I CTZ, and the need to achieve a more flexible capability for possible shifts of his air effort, COMUSMACV expressed his belief that the situation in I CTZ required an immediate major change in the control of tactical air.

Recognizing that dissolution of the Marine air-ground force in the face of the growing enemy presence in I CTZ would hazard the success of Marine operations in the five northern provinces, CINCPAC⁵ directed re-examination of the COMUSMACV proposal citing, in turn, the efficacy of the then-current CINCPAC ground rules⁶ for the conduct and control of close air support in South Vietnam.

Thereafter, on 20 February 1968, at Danang, the COMUSMACV Deputy for Air Operations briefed the Commanding General, III MAF, on his plan for assumption of operational control and coordination of the tactical aircraft (less helicopters and, now, transport aircraft) of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. This briefing was followed, on 22 February, by a more detailed exposition of the plan (particularly as it related to the forthcoming establishment in north I Corps Tactical Zone, of Provisional Corps Vietnam), by 7th Air Force staff members. After two days of appraisal, on 24 February the Commanding General, III MAF, convinced that loss of operational control of his organic Marine strike and reconnaissance aircraft assets would degrade his combat effectiveness, again reiterated to COMUSMACV his non-concurrence in the Air Force proposal.⁷

4) - COMUSMACV message 180009Z January 1968 (S)

5) - CINCPAC message 181145W January 1968 (TS)

6) - CINCPAC message 242345Z April 1965 (S)

7) - CG, III MAF message 241256Z February 1968 (TS)

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On 26 February, however, COMUSMACV⁸ re-submitted the proposal to CINCPAC, this time in the form of a plan calling for appointment of a single manager for control of tactical fixed wing air resources throughout Vietnam.

The plan was delivered to CINCPAC headquarters by a general officer from the 7th Air Force who, on 27 February, presented the substance of the plan in a short briefing to CINCPAC and to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The latter, coincidentally, was in Honolulu enroute to Washington after an official visit to South Vietnam.

Four days later, on 2 March, and after making changes in the basic plan to ensure that immediate requests were not required to be sent to Saigon and that III MAF proposals for improvement of the arrangement, or, conversely, III MAF dissatisfactions with the employment of Marine air assets, would be brought directly to the attention of both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, CINCPAC⁹ approved generally the COMUSMACV proposal.

As subsequently published by COMUSMACV,¹⁰ and with the directed date of implementation set as 10 March 1968, the single manager arrangement for control of tactical air resources removed from Commanding General, III MAF, the operational authority over his tactical aviation forces. The Marine helicopter and airlift assets and the US Army's helicopters and fixed wing reconnaissance aircraft were not affected by this arrangement; however, the mission direction of the following III MAF air assets was passed to the 7th Air Force:

- a. All Marine strike aircraft.
- b. All Marine reconnaissance aircraft.
- c. The Marine tactical air control system, as required.

- 8) - COMUSMACV letter (S) MACJ00 of 26 February 1968, subject: "Single Management of Strike and Reconnaissance Assets" (U)
- 9) - CINCPAC letter (S) 3 over Ser: 00488 of 2 March 1968, Subject: "Single Management of Strike and Reconnaissance Assets" (U)
- 10) - COMUSMACV letter (S) MACJ00 of 7 March 1968, subject: "Single Management of Strike and Reconnaissance Assets" (U)

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Upon receipt of the implementing MACV directive, during the evening of 9 March, III MAF moved swiftly to comply with the reorganized system of tactical air control. That the hastily instituted single manager system was unable completely to assume its requisite functions until 1 April was due, in part, to the lack of opportunity for planning, coordination, assembly of resources, and for execution of necessary systems and communications test exercises prior to the directed date of implementation. During the month, as the various complexities of the new system came to light and as solutions to them were sought, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing continued its support missions, flying 6,732 fixed wing attack sorties in support of III MAF and its newly activated subordinate, the Provisional Corps Vietnam (PCV).

Comparison of the Two Systems

As the Marines in I Corps Tactical Zone moved to implement the single manager system, looking always toward the ultimate welfare of the man in the foxhole, it became evident, while the two systems employed similar organizational terminology, that a fundamental difference existed: the new system was primarily a producer oriented effort, while the one it supplanted was a consumer oriented one. This consumer orientation was central to the proven combat success of the Marine system and underlay its complete responsiveness to the desires of the supported ground commander.

Subsequent comparison of the two systems will polarize on the two elements common to both systems:

Preplanned Air Support

Immediate Air Support

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-Preplanned Air Support

To the Marine in I CTZ, preplanned means exactly that, integration by the ground commander of close air support into his planned maneuver in the same manner as artillery or naval gunfire support. He counts on it to be there at the right time, and delivered by a pilot who has already been briefed for the task. Precise close air support is a cardinal element of his tactical plan and, if it is diverted to meet a need elsewhere, his operation is compromised. In any case, if there is a diversion undertaken, the decision to do so is taken by commanders in the ground chain of authority.

In this sense, the III Marine Amphibious Force system for preplanned requests was responsive to the basic Marine Corps formula, being keyed to the ground commander's schedule for the planning of his daily operations. The responsiveness of this system was portrayed by the fact that the ground commander was able to transmit his requirements for preplanned air support as late as 8 P.M. on the night preceding his operation.

In contrast, under the newly implemented system, anything that is not categorized as an immediate need is called preplanned, whether it is a strike in Laos or a block of sorties put into the air and destined for support of a specific commander or geographic area. Additionally, responsiveness of the system to preplanned requirements of the ground commander decreased appreciably, as evidenced by the fact that the minimum required time for submission of preplanned air support now varies from 38 hours in advance - for radar controlled aircraft attacks - to over 50 hours in advance for preplanned visually controlled aircraft attacks.

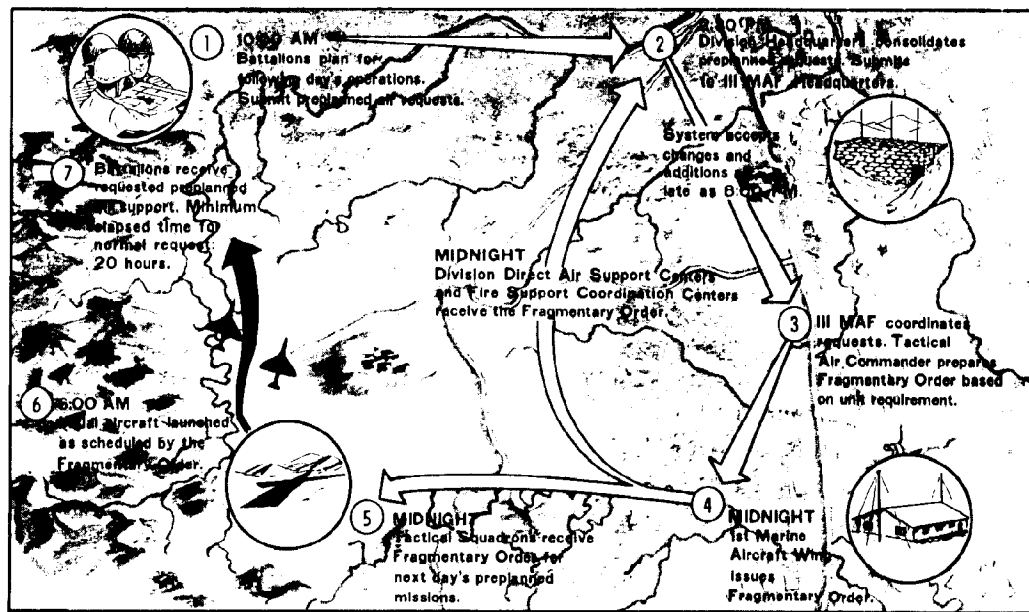
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The extended time period now required for the submission, evaluation, consolidation, and final transmission of air support requests up the layered air control chain to the Saigon-based Tactical Air Control Center, and the return processing of the allocated air support, permits the combat-engaged ground commander little flexibility for integration of air support into his plan of maneuver. The current technique may be described as a "push" system, where aircraft are deliberately scheduled for low priority targets while their diversion for use against targets of higher priority is informally contemplated.

A comparison of the two systems for preplanned air support requests is illustrated below and on the adjoining page.

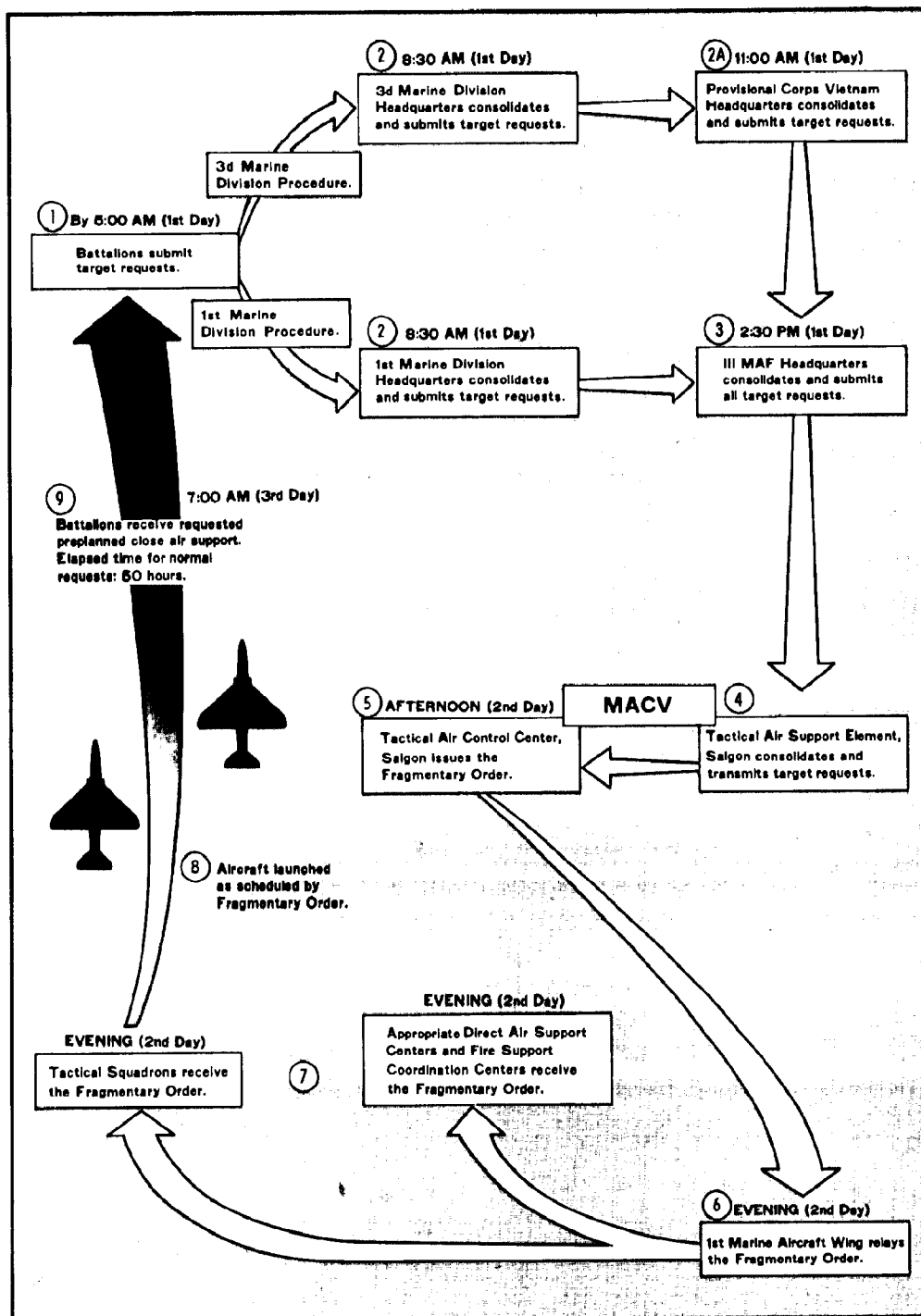
III MARINE AMPHIBIOUS FORCE SYSTEM FOR PREPLANNED AIR REQUESTS PRIOR TO 10 MARCH 1968



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USAF SYSTEM FOR PREPLANNED AIR REQUESTS AFTER 10 MARCH 1968



Fragmentary Order includes Air Support Radar Team controlled missions beginning 7:00 PM (2nd Day).

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A comparison of the foregoing charts illustrates the simplicity of the system prior to 10 March, and exhibits the time differential in the submission of preplanned requests by the ground commander. Under the single manager system he is required to submit his routine preplanned requests 50 hours (2 days) in advance -- some 30 hours sooner than under the previous system. Additionally, it is noted that the single manager system is different for each Marine division; whereas, under the previous system, procedures were standardized.

The requirement for passing preplanned requests through added agencies, including the Tactical Air Support Element and the Tactical Air Control Center located in Saigon, increases the possibility for incorrectly scheduling preplanned aircraft attacks when and where they are most needed in the tactical battle. Examples of the errors and confusion implicit in the increased layering occurred on 8-9 April, when five aircraft were incorrectly programmed in Saigon to be controlled by the Danang Direct Air Support Center, rather than the Phu Bai Air Support Radar Team as requested, thus requiring other sorties to be diverted to Phu Bai. In a second instance, three aircraft were programmed to be controlled by the Phu Bai Air Support Radar Team, when the request had been for their direction to the Khe Sanh Air Support Radar Team. Also on 9 April, two aircraft were programmed, and arrived, for a time-over-target of 8 A.M., while the requested time was 9 A.M. The planes had insufficient fuel to loiter until it was time to initiate the requested mission. These are practical, undramatic examples of the adverse effects upon the engaged ground units of greater layering in the request and control arrangements. And, so far as can be discerned, there have been no countervailing benefits to the front line forces.

Finally, the keystone of the III Marine Amphibious Force system for preplanned air requests prior to 10 March was reliability. An analysis of the single manager system during the 19-day period from 3 to 22 April (over two weeks

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after the system was implemented) reveals that only 37% of the preplanned targets requested by the ground commander received Saigon's approval for execution and, of those targets approved, only 50% were actually attacked. Saturday, 20 April, was a typical day; 172 preplanned targets were requested by Marine ground commanders. 64 targets were approved. Of these 64, only 31 were attacked.

-Immediate Air Support

Prior to 10 March 1968, the Marine system for providing immediate air support in response to a ground commander's emergency request, was focused at the Marine Division level. The Direct Air Support Center at each Division, keyed to the ground commander's immediate needs and operating in concert with the Division commander's Fire Support Coordination Center, was the principal air control agency within the Division area and provided the immediate link between the ground commander and the supporting air commander. The 1st Marine Division Direct Air Support Center supported ten maneuver battalions, and the 3d Marine Division Direct Air Support Center supported fourteen maneuver battalions. When the tempo or the remoteness of combat operations warranted, subsidiary Direct Air Support Centers were established to facilitate responsiveness to the ground need. An example was the activation of such a center at Khe Sanh.

To meet the immediate air support requests of the ground units, the III Marine Amphibious Force maintained ground alert aircraft ready for immediate take off when called. These planes were completely fueled and carried those types of ordnance proven most effective for meaningful, close-in support of troops in combat with the enemy. For example, alert aircraft on five minute standby were configured so that an option of bombs, napalm, rockets, or 20mm ammunition was available to the ground commander. When the Marine alert aircraft were launched, others, similarly fueled and armed, were moved to the "hot pad", thus reconstituting the ground alert.

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Additionally, under the Marine system during periods of intense combat activity, airborne alert aircraft, with pre-briefed pilots fully knowledgeable of the combat situation, were positioned over the critical battle zone to provide, within minutes, the needed air fire support. As an alternative, in cases where ground alert aircraft would not be sufficiently responsive, preplanned missions, if airborne, could be diverted. This latter contingency however, was regarded as by far the least desirable, since it deprived another ground commander of a vital element of his tactical plan, and possibly at a critical moment. In any event, aircraft were diverted only on approval by the ground chain of authority. Where a question of priority arose - whether it were better to divert a preplanned attack at the expense of the initial requester - it was the ground commander who made the decision, not the air control system.

Under the newly implemented single manager system, immediate close air support is provided primarily by diverting preplanned sorties already airborne - sorties previously thought important enough to warrant commitment of the aircraft. The diversion, moreover, if it is to emphasize timeliness, must compromise with the factors of fuel state, ordnance load, pilot briefing, or all three. In the long run, the aircraft which arrives at the target under this method must certainly be a less effective combat mechanism from the ground Marines' viewpoint. One early index of performance illustrates this difference in providing immediate air support. During the period 1 January - 10 March 1968, only five percent of all Marine immediate air requests were fulfilled by this less effective diversion method; however, during a specimen period, 5-11 April (after the new system went into effect), 77% of the Marines' immediate requests were met by diversions. But more important, under the single manager system, the decision to divert usually is made by an air control duty watch officer whose knowledge of the ground tactical situation is incomplete, who is not in a position to determine the effect of his diversion on

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the ground action, and who, in any case, has no responsibility for the effect on the ground combat of his diversion decision.

Where the III Marine Amphibious Force system was focused at the Division level, the single manager system is focused at the Corps level. Thus, in the critical northern provinces, two additional links are imposed on the Marines' immediate request chain -- the Direct Air Support Center at Provisional Corps Vietnam and the Direct Air Support Center at I Corps. The Provisional Corps Vietnam Direct Air Support Center at Phu Bai must coordinate the requests for 33 maneuver battalions. Correspondingly, the senior I Corps Direct Air Support Center, at Danang, through which all I CTZ requests now are processed, supports, in addition to these 33 northern area battalions, 60 additional maneuver battalions -- 23 US/ROKMC and 37 ARVN. Thus, while the single manager system was designed specifically to accommodate periods of intense combat activity, it has created a far greater burden on the key control activities.

While both systems use the term Direct Air Support Center (DASC) to describe the agency through which air requests are funneled and coordinated, the functions of these two agencies are markedly different. The Marine DASC, integrated with the Division commander's Fire Support Coordination Center, has been, in essence, an agency of the ground commander, the nerve center for his air support, the agency through which he has orchestrated his entire supporting air effort with his ground maneuver and supporting artillery and naval gun fires. The Marine DASC is in direct communication with the tactical fixed wing aircraft, as well as with the helicopters which move through the same air envelope. It is also in direct communication with the Marine forward air controllers either with assault ground units or airborne. It is thus able, in fact, to coordinate and to control all air activities within the ground commander's combat zone. From his command post, the ground commander has instant decision

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over every aspect of his fire support, be it on the ground or in the air. It was this control flexibility, for instance, which enabled III MAF to institute the Save-a-Plane procedure through which the DASC insured safe passage of all aircraft through and around those airspaces rendered hazardous by friendly artillery and naval gunfire.

During the period 1 January to 5 March 1968, over 15,000 Marine, Navy, and Air Force sorties were flown in support of the Khe Sanh combat base, coordinated and controlled without difficulty by the established Marine system. Further, during the September 1967 battle for Con Thien, 3,618 Marine, Navy, and Air Force sorties were flown into a 20 square mile area in less than a month. In addition, 127,000 rounds of artillery and 6,100 rounds of naval gunfire were delivered into the area. There were no coordination or control difficulties experienced by the ground commanders.

Under the single manager system, the senior I Corps DASC (at Danang) has functioned essentially as an extension of the 7th Air Force Tactical Air Control Center in Saigon - managing those air resources allocated by the 7th Air Force to the northern area. Remotely located from the ground commander, it has not been an instrumentality of ground combat decision, nor has it maintained direct communication with aircraft, relaying its directions through still other air control agencies. Thus, while it has performed its air management function in the manner intended by 7th Air Force, I DASC has operated to a large extent, independent of the ground commander's authority. This fact had begun, before the end of the month, to manifest itself unfavorably.

For instance, on 28 March, US Air Force C-130 aircraft on Khe Sanh resupply missions were delayed for several hours due to artillery fire in the Khe Sanh corridor. The Direct Air Support Center located with the Provisional Corps Vietnam headquarters was unable to coordinate the C-130 flights with the artillery fires. The situation was resolved only by the cancellation of all artillery fires in the corridor, with the consequent adverse effect on the ground action.

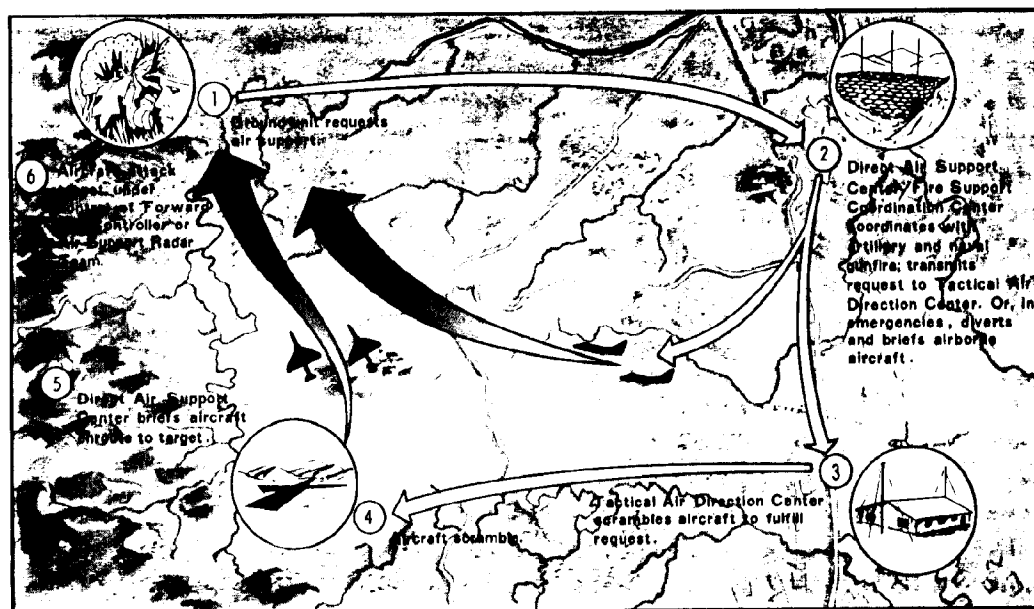
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Similarly, in the same region on 5 April 1968, a near disaster was averted only because, for some unknown reason, bombs that were dropped failed to explode. In this instance, the 26th Marines had submitted a preplanned request to Provisional Corps Vietnam for a visual close air support attack mission on 5 April to support their tactical plan. At 0200 on 5 April, the 26th Marines cancelled the request because of forthcoming Marine maneuver into the target area. However, at 1205 on the 5th, ten hours after the cancellation had been submitted, radar controlled attack aircraft delivered 24 five hundred pound bombs on the target area, by now actually occupied by the maneuvering Marine ground elements. Fortunately, the bombs failed to detonate and no Marine lives were lost. The cancellation had not worked its way upward and back downward through the layered air control system.

A comparison of the two systems for immediate air support is illustrated below and on the adjoining page.

III MARINE AMPHIBIOUS FORCE SYSTEM FOR IMMEDIATE AIR REQUESTS PRIOR TO 10 MARCH 1968

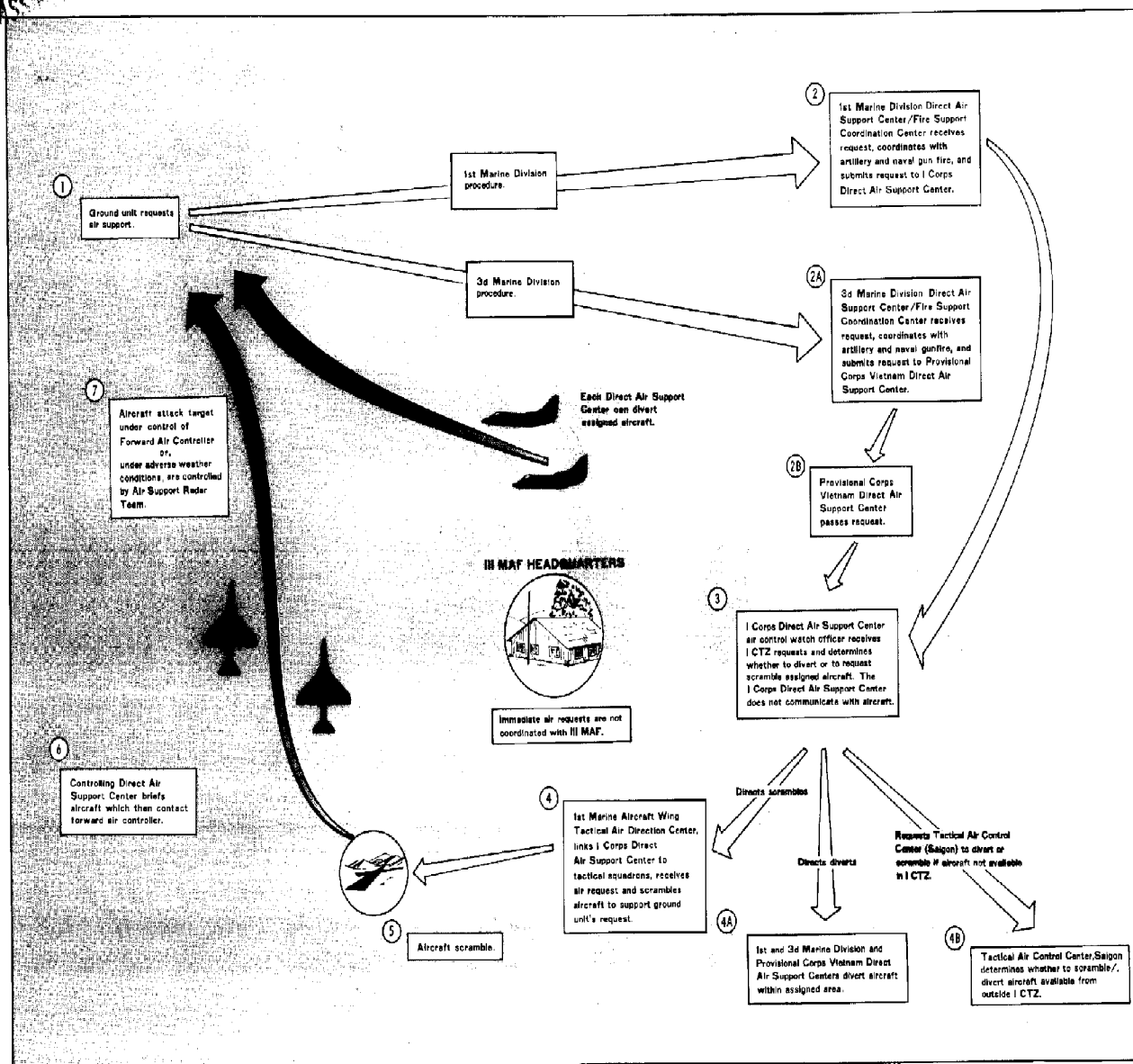


System identical in both 1st and 3d Marine Divisions.

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USAF SYSTEM FOR IMMEDIATE AIR SUPPORT AFTER 10 MARCH 1968



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Comparing the foregoing diagrams discloses that while the old III MAF system, employed in each of the Marine Divisions, was both direct and uniform, the single manager system (due to its added control agencies) is more complex and employs different procedures for the 1st and 3d Marine Divisions.

The I Corps Direct Air Support Center, operating as an independent air control agency, directs subordinate control agencies to divert aircraft, while diversions under the III MAF system, when necessary in emergencies, were approved only in the ground chain of authority through the Direct Air Support Center. An example of diversion not validated by the responsible ground commander, and exercised by controllers not responsible for the ground battle's outcome, occurred on 29 March during the heavy close in fighting at Khe Sanh. During one five hour period, fourteen sorties pre-planned for the Khe Sanh area were diverted from their scheduled missions without coordination with the ground commander. Thus, fourteen other replacement sorties had to be scrambled to support the Khe Sanh battle, with a consequent loss in time.

During March, Marines directed their energies toward making the newly established Air Force air control system perform. By the end of the month there was no evidence that the anticipated performance goals of improved flexibility and coordination would be attained. However, it was already evident that the imposed system had the following ineludible weaknesses:

- It is producer oriented, rather than consumer oriented.

- It is, inherently, more complex and hence, less responsive to the ground commander's requirements.

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-It places primary reliance for fulfillment of immediate air support requests, on aircraft diversions.

And, as a consequence, and based on very brief experience, it was clear by the end of the month that even if the single manager system performs perfectly, it has to remain less effective, for Marine purposes, than the system it replaced.

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LOGISTICS

A measurable improvement took place in the logistic situation in northern I CTZ during March. The opening of Route 1 from Danang to Dong Ha, the US Navy's resolute efforts in keeping supplies moving on the Cua Viet and Hue (Perfume) rivers, and opening of the Logistic Over the Shore (LOTS) site near Quang Tri City were major factors contributing to the increased delivery of supplies to the northern area.

Logistic Support in Northern I CTZ

On 31 March 1968 there were 81,948 III MAF personnel north of the Hai Van pass, almost double the number (41,801) in this region at end-1967. This rapid build-up of Marine and Army forces had serious impact on the logistic support being provided by the Marines' Force Logistic Command to units in northern I CTZ.

During this build up, and as mutually agreed by representatives of III MAF, the Marine Force Logistic Command, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, and Naval Support Activity, Danang, support methods were established to ensure maximum utilization of the logistic capabilities in northern I CTZ. Agreement was quickly reached that Class I (Rations), III (Petroleum), and V (Ammunition) supply items would be provided from common Marine Corps and Army dumps to all units, as required. Class II (General Supply Items) and IV (Special Items) would be furnished by the respective Service.

This arrangement also provided that III MAF units in the Phu Bai area would be supported through the Marine Force Logistic Support Group Alpha; Dong Ha area units

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would receive their support through the Marine Force Logistic Support Group Bravo; and units in the region from Hue to Quang Tri City would be supported through the US Army's General Support Group, Quang Tri.

The Force Logistic Command has been augmented with US Army personnel and equipment since the build up began on 17 January. Motor transport, cargo, and petroleum units were placed under the operational control of Force Logistic Support Groups Alpha and Bravo, and liaison detachments were established at the Groups to coordinate Army support requirements. This augmentation is being reduced as the Danang Army Support Command incrementally assumes responsibility for support of Army units. It is expected that the Danang Army Support Command will assume responsibility for Class I items of supply by 20 April.

Although the enemy's March endeavors to interdict I CTZ roads were comparatively light, he expended great effort in his attempts to halt waterborne convoys on the Cua Viet river between Dong Ha and Cua Viet. These moves ranged from the usual small arms, recoilless rifle, and mortar fires, to the laying of a bamboo barrier across the river on 4 March, and the use of frogmen in minelaying operations on 11 March. With the exception of one LCM-6 minesweeper sunk on 14 March, the enemy's anti-boat activity (which resulted in five craft damaged and one other, in addition to the LCM-6, sunk) all occurred during the first five days of the month. Reduction of the enemy threat required the employment of two Marine infantry battalions, a Marine amphibian tractor battalion, and US Navy river patrol craft in clearing operations along this major logistic artery. Evidence of the success of this joint security operation was the new daily record for tonnage throughput established at Dong Ha on 27 March, when 2,616 S/T were landed, thus surpassing the eight month old record of 2,613 S/T set on 25 July 1967.

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At approximately 0800 on 10 March, incoming enemy artillery ignited 150 S/T of ammunition at Cua Viet. The subsequent explosion and fires killed one American and wounded 22 others, and destroyed a messhall, a communications van, one 30-ton crane, one rough terrain forklift, and 47 of the site's 64 10,000-gallon POL bladders. Communications were restored within 30 hours, and by end-month 60% of the requisite reconstruction had been completed.

Initiation of operations at the Army LOTS site at Thon My Thuy (Wunder Beach) on 6 March materially assisted in the increased logistic flow to northern I CTZ. On 17 March a pontoon causeway was installed and it operated at maximum capacity for eight days, until damaged by heavy surf. Repairs were made within four days, however, and the causeway resumed operation. Over 10,000 S/T of material was introduced through the facility during the period 17-31 March.

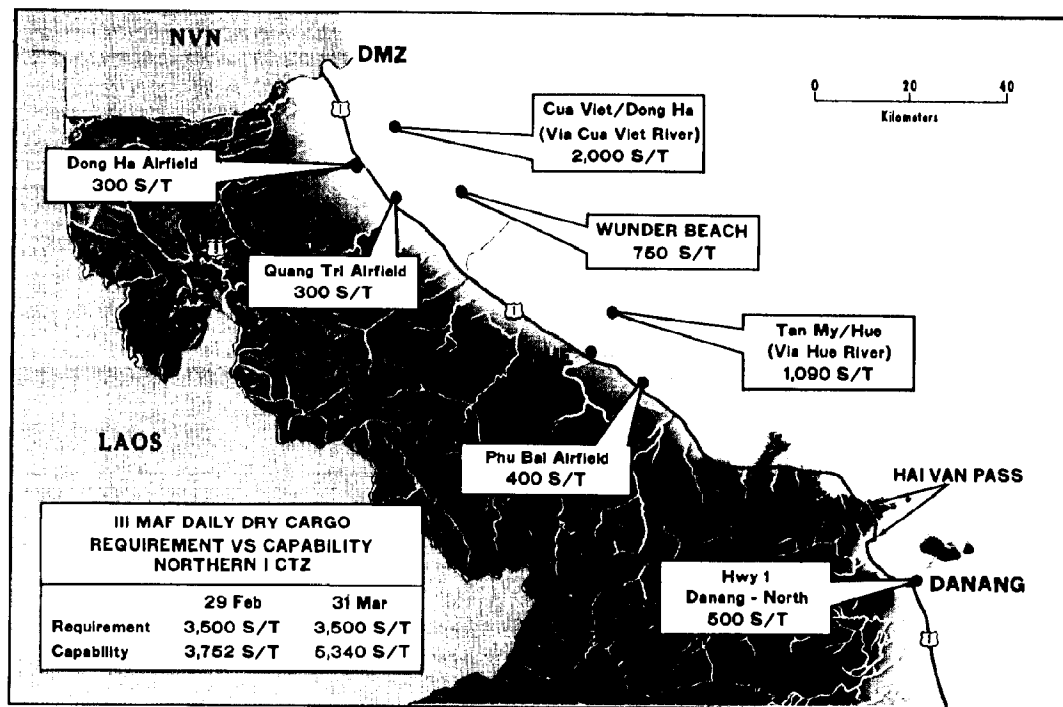
On 19 March the initial phase (two ramps) of the Tan My LST facility opened for operations, boosting the capacity of Hue/Tan My to 1090 S/T per day. Beneficial occupancy date for the two other Tan My LST ramps is 11 April. This, coupled with the opening of additional LCU ramps in early April, is expected to increase the daily throughput capability of Hue/Tan My to 1660 S/T per day.

Based on the March performance of the various cargo delivery and handling methods, and the addition of new facilities, the approximate amount of dry cargo that can be delivered to/and accepted by III MAF logistic installations north of the Hai Van pass each day is indicated on the following map.

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NORTHERN I CTZ DAILY DRY CARGO THROUGHPUT CAPABILITY 31 MARCH 1968



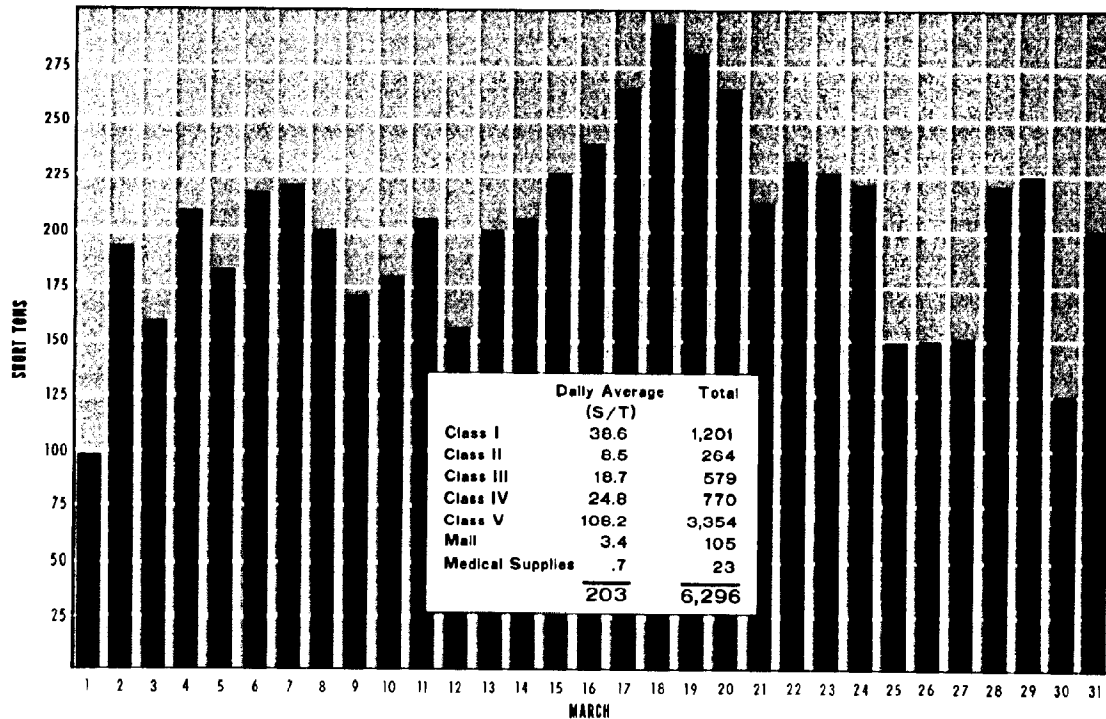
-Resupply of Khe Sanh

Resupply of the Khe Sanh combat base during March was exclusively by aircraft, with 6,296 S/T of cargo being delivered, an increase of 1,966 S/T over the 4,330 S/T delivered in February. The daily resupply effort for March is illustrated on the graph on the following page.

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DAILY RESUPPLY OF KHE SANH 1 - 31 MARCH 1968



In addition, 876 passengers were transported to Khe Sanh and 148.5 S/T of retrograde cargo, primarily air delivery equipment, were shipped from the base.

The average number of days of selected supplies on hand at Khe Sanh throughout March is listed on the following page.

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<u>CLASS-I</u> (Rations)	<u>Days of Supply</u> <u>On Hand</u>	<u>CLASS V</u> (Ammunition)	<u>Days of Supply</u> <u>On Hand</u>
MCI	19.9	60mm	47.9
B Rations	7.7	81mm	26.9
		4.2"	34.5
<u>CLASS III</u> (Fuels and Lubricants)		105mm	21.8
		155mm	21.0
AVGAS	3.0		
JP-4	9.4		
MOGAS	10.8		
DIESEL	8.5		

Of the 1,133 aircraft logistic sorties flown during March in support of the base, 660 were flown by Marine helicopters and 473 by Air Force transport. Air delivery methods (conventional parachute drop, Low Altitude Parachute Extraction System (LAPES) and Ground Proximity Extraction System (GPES)) were utilized for 431 of the Air Force sorties.

-LAPES and GPES

The Low Altitude Parachute Extraction System (LAPES) was used initially on 16 February and, by 31 March, 244 S/T of cargo had been delivered to Khe Sanh by this method. The system utilizes near ground parachute extraction of cargo and permits the delivery of cargo into areas which, for any combination of reasons, cannot be resupplied by any other method. The operation at Khe Sanh has been particularly effective since it minimizes the time the aircraft is exposed to enemy fire. On a single pass, payloads varying from 4,000 to 18,000 pounds per platform of ammunition, rations, fuel drums, or 500-gallon containers may be extracted either singly or in tandem. A drag chute extracts the load from the aircraft, which flies 3 to 6 feet above the ground, and the cargo skids to a rest, decelerated by the chute. Both the C-130 and the

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C-123 aircraft are capable of using this delivery method.

A Ground Proximity Extraction System (GPES) for aerial delivery resupply was installed 1,620 feet off the west end of the runway at Khe Sanh and went into operation on 30 March. GPES involves the use of a cable, similar to the type used for an arrested landing, stretched across the runway or landing zone. Any aircraft with a rear cargo ramp can utilize the system for resupply delivery. The aircraft flies in low over the cable, with a hook down. When the hook, which is attached to the cargo, engages the cable, the cargo platform is extracted. Loads of up to 27,000 pounds, on single or tandem connected platforms, may be delivered on one pass of the aircraft.

As of 10 April, 14 GPES deliveries had been made to Khe Sanh, unloading a total of 135.4 S/T of supplies and equipment. This means of delivering cargo is fast, and harmless to the cargo. A crate of eggs was included in the first delivery. Only two eggs were broken.

Supply

3d FSR processed 63,071 requisitions during March, had a 35% fill rate and there were 35,989 obligations held at the end of the month. Force Logistic Command processed 69,934 requisitions, had a 60% fill rate and there were 82,740 obligations outstanding on 31 March.

Class I (Rations) - Levels were adequate to support all III MAF operations.

Class II (General Supply) - Sufficient quantities were on hand throughout the period to provide adequate support to III MAF.

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Class III (Fuels and Lubricants) - While the quantity of POL on hand was never critical, occasional losses were experienced due to enemy fire. However, at no time was it ever necessary to curtail or halt any III MAF operations due to shortage of POL.

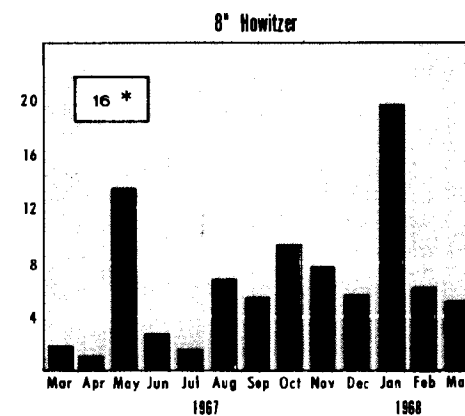
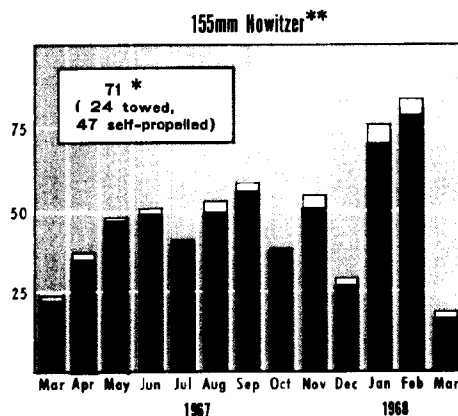
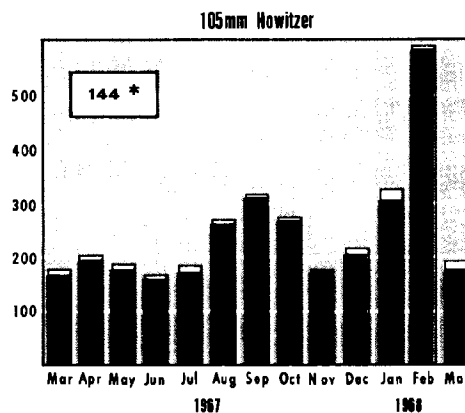
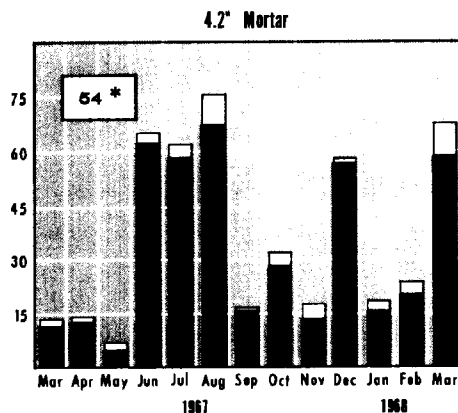
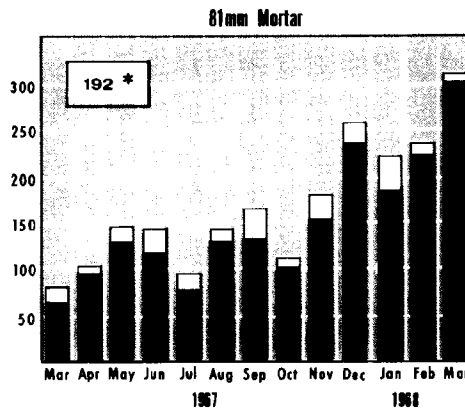
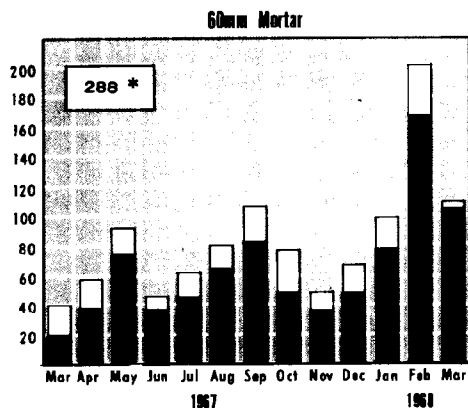
Class IV (Special Items) - Quantities on hand were adequate to support all III MAF requirements.

Class V (Ammunition) - Air munitions were maintained within the CINCPAC monthly allocations and ground munition stock levels remained essentially at the 45 day level. The graphs on the following page depict the monthly expenditure of selected types of ground ammunition since March 1967.

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FLC ISSUE OF SELECTED TYPES OF AMMUNITION
MARCH 1967 - MARCH 1968
(THOUSANDS OF ROUNDS)



*In-country inventory of Marine weapons: 31 March 1968.
**Illumination includes issue for 155mm Gun

■ High Explosive □ Illumination

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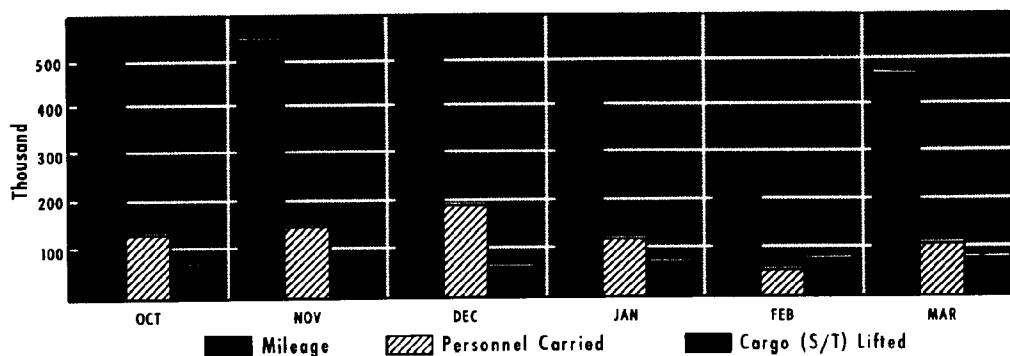
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Motor Transport Operations

On 2 March, Route 1, closed since the beginning of the Tet offensive, was reopened and Rough Rider convoys from Danang to northern I CTZ resumed. Despite tactical considerations, which restricted convoys to 50 vehicles in each serial, with a two hour interval between convoys, the Rough Rider operations delivered an average of 280 S/T per day during March.

The operations of the five motor transport battalions supporting III MAF during the past six months are summarized in the following graph.

**OPERATIONS OF MARINE MOTOR TRANSPORT BATTALIONS
OCT 67 - MAR 68**



During March, 23 urgently required M51A2 dump trucks were delivered to III MAF, as were two M49A2 fuel tankers. The introduction of the M151A1 to replace the existing 1/4 ton fleet was again held in abeyance due to a lack of the initial issue of spare parts for the vehicles. There are now 1,442 M151A1's on Okinawa, ready for shipment to III MAF.

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when 90% of the initial provisioning is on hand. At month's end, 46% (a 3% increase over February) of the initial provisioning was in place. The chart below reflects the current status of replacement vehicles scheduled for delivery to III MAF.

III MAF GROUND VEHICLE REPLACEMENT STATUS 31 MARCH 1968

VEHICLE TYPE	NUMBER REQUESTED	AWAITING SHIPMENT AT USMC INSTALLATIONS	AT CONUS PORTS OF EMBARKATION OR ENROUTE	ARRIVED RVN
Truck, ½ Ton M274A2 (Mechanical Mule)	656			656
Truck, ¾ Ton M151A1 (Replaces Mighty Mite & M38 Jeep)	1,442	1,442*		
Truck, 2½ Ton, 6X6 Multifuel M35A2C	760		70	690
Truck, Tanker, 2½ Ton, 6X6 Multifuel M49A2C	75			51
Truck, Tanker, Water, 2½ Ton, Multifuel M50A2	24	2		20
Truck, Shop Van, 2½ Ton, 6X6 Multifuel M109A3	63	21		40
Truck, Dump, 5 Ton, Multifuel M51A2	237		14	210
Truck, Tractor, 5 Ton, Multifuel M52A2	202			129
Truck, 5 Ton, 6X6 Multifuel M54A2C	635		45	206
Truck, Wrecker, 5 Ton, Multifuel M543A2	86		4	61
Truck, Telephone Maint, 2½ Ton, V-17	8	2		
Truck, Earthbore, 2½ Ton, V-18	9	2		

*Positioned on Okinawa awaiting spare parts provisioning.

Engineer Operations

Engineer activity in March was focused on repair of the lines of communication damaged by the enemy Tet offensive. Bridge construction and repair was extensive; the accomplishments recorded during the month are listed on the following page.

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BRIDGES CONSTRUCTED

<u>LOCATION(Area)</u>	<u>LENGTH</u>	<u>CLASS</u>	<u>TYPE</u>
Danang	58' -4"	25/30	M4T6 Fixed
Danang	28' -4"	50/55	M4T6 Fixed
Hue	231'	20	M4T6 Float
Phu Loc	150'	30	M4T6 Float
Phu Loc	45'	25	M4T6 Fixed
Chu Lai	40'	60	Steel stringer
Chu Lai	33'	60	M4T6 Fixed (Bypass)
Dong Ha	26'	60	Steel stringer
Chu Lai	80'	60	Steel stringer
An Lo	15'	30	M4T6 Fixed

BRIDGES UNDER CONSTRUCTION

<u>LOCATION(Area)</u>	<u>LENGTH</u>	<u>CLASS</u>	<u>TYPE</u>
Chu Lai	380'	60	Timber
Chu Lai	228'	60	Timber

BRIDGES REPAIRED

<u>LOCATION(Area)</u>	<u>LENGTH</u>	<u>CLASS</u>	<u>TYPE</u>
Danang	20'	60	Timber
Danang	841'	50/55	M4/M4T6 Float
Danang	81' -4"	50/55	M4T6 Fixed
Danang	18'	60	M4 Fixed span
Danang	195'	50/55	Class 60 super- structure
Dong Ha	30'	30	M4T6 Fixed

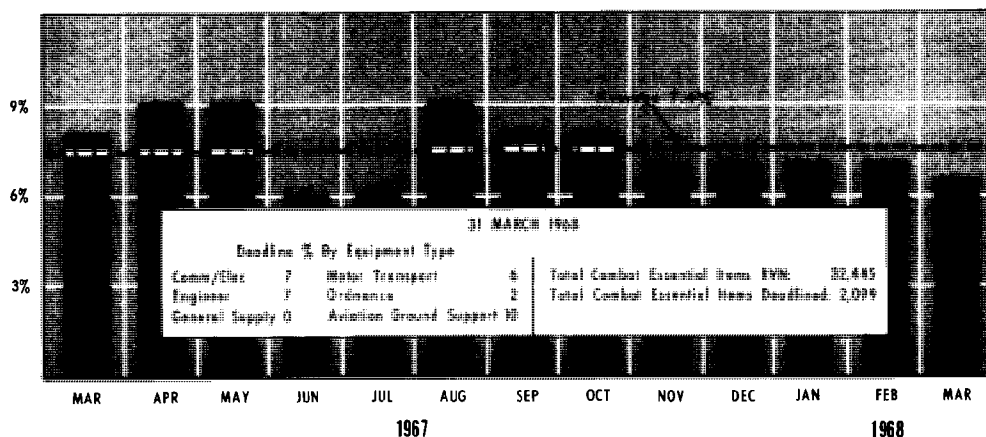
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Maintenance

An improved balance of maintenance effort between the Force Logistic Command and 3d Force Service Regiment (3d FSR), better weather conditions, and vigorous application of first echelon (user) maintenance, all contributed to the March decrease in the level of deadlined equipment. The percentage of Marine combat essential equipment on deadline during the past year is depicted on the following graph.

COMPOSITE MATERIAL DEADLINE RATE OF MARINE COMBAT ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT MARCH 1967 - MARCH 1968



Seven contact instruction teams from the Marine 3d and 5th FSR's, the 5th Marine Division, the 2d Logistic Command, US Army, Okinawa, the Redstone Arsenal, and the Naval Ordnance Systems Command visited III MAF during March. Six of the teams provided technical assistance associated with the operation and maintenance of engine generators, Hawk missiles, M109 Howitzers, M18 Gun Direction Computer, SATS weapon loaders, and telephone and teletype equipment. The seventh team assisted with the technical aspects of the Class V renovation program.

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UNCLASSIFIEDAviation Logistics

The Chu Lai ICE CUBE (avionics test equipment calibration) complex, which was damaged in the enemy Tet campaign, was restored to a full operational capability during March.

The program to install secure voice and radar beacon equipment in F-4 aircraft that have previously received Shoe-horn Delta Modification (electronic countermeasure equipment) was resumed in March after a brief termination in February. It is planned that three F-4's per week will undergo the re-cycle modification program at NAS Atsugi.

March was highlighted by the introduction of the final phase of the Maintenance Material Management (3M) system to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. A management tool, the computerized 3M system enables aviation commanders at all levels to monitor and more effectively control their aircraft maintenance efforts. Examples of the data now immediately available to these commanders are current information on aircraft maintenance schedules, parts usage, manpower utilization, aircraft readiness and flight hours.

The periodic rehabilitation of selected items of ground support equipment program (GSE), conducted by COMFAIR-WESTPAC, continued, as 21 items of 1st Marine Aircraft Wing equipment were inducted during the month, and 12 items were returned.

There were 39 aircraft undergoing Progressive Aircraft Rework (PAR) at aircraft plants in Japan at the end of March. Nineteen other aircraft were undergoing repair of battle damage at maintenance activities or repair facilities in the Philippines and Japan.


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The number of aircraft, by type, undergoing repair of combat damage and PAR, and the number of months between major overhauls (the PAR Cycle) is given below.

	<u>PAR</u>	<u>PAR CYCLE</u>	<u>REPAIR OF BATTLE DAMAGE</u>
A-4	10	18	1
F-4	6	15	2
RF-4	2	15	-
F-8	-	15	2
C-117	1	26	2
US-2	1	18	-
UH-1E	3	25	3
UH-34	-	26	2
CH-46	15	16	5
CH-53	-	20	1
O-1	-	31	1
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	38		19

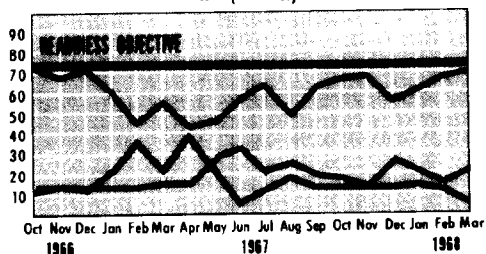
1968 NORS/NORM data for selected Marine aircraft in WestPac are displayed on the following page.

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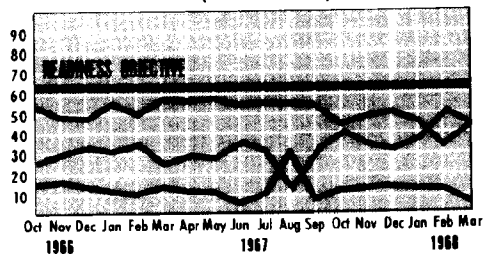
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NORS/NORM RATES - WESTPAC AIRCRAFT

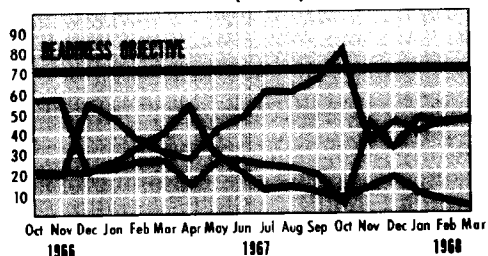
A-4 (ATTACK)



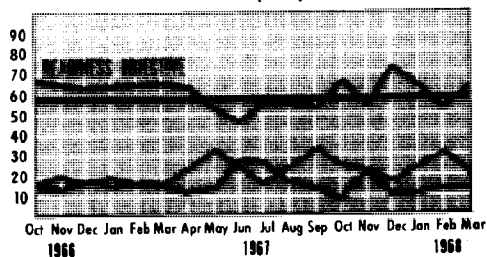
F-4 (FIGHTER-ATTACK)



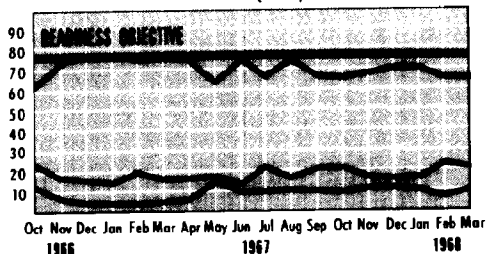
F-8 (FIGHTER)



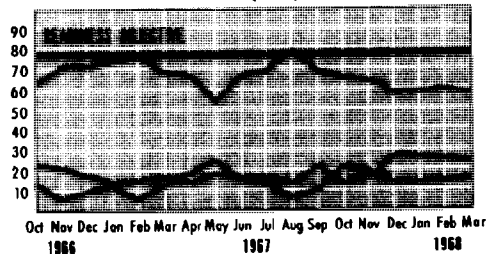
CH-46A (HELO)



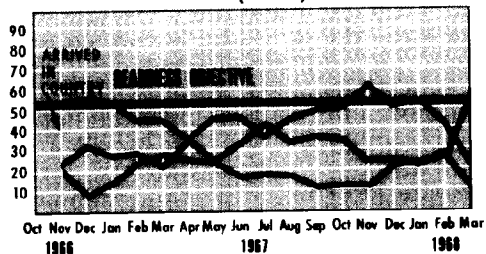
UH-34D (HELO)



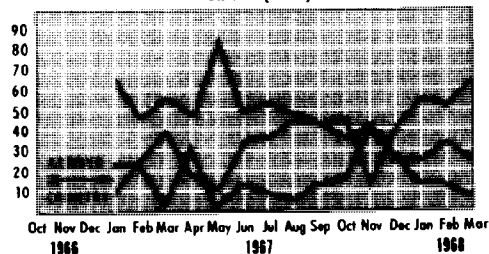
UH-1E (HELO)



A-6A (ATTACK)



CH-53A (HELO)*



* Readiness Objective not established.

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~~UNCLASSIFIED~~CONCLUSIONS

-The enemy's lack of appetite for combat in March, and the casualties inflicted upon the Khe Sanh enemy, although substantial, give no reason to believe he will forego harassment and attacks by fire against our forces and bases in northern I CTZ.

-The resiliency of the civilian populace within I CTZ, and the degree of its enmity toward the enemy, has heretofore been underestimated.

-The single manager system for control of all US fixed wing tactical aircraft in Vietnam as yet gives little promise of providing more effective tactical air support of III MAF ground combat units.

-The joint efforts of Army, Navy, and Marine logistic agencies continue to achieve daily improvement of the logistic situation in northern I CTZ. Considering the geographic realities of the region, the troop elements north of the Hai Van pass are being supported in excellent fashion.

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~~UNCLASSIFIED~~STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS - MARCH 19681. ENEMY ORDER OF BATTLEa. I CTZ/DMZ Summary

The confirmed enemy combat strength in I CTZ and the DMZ area increased considerably during the month; at end-March, this strength was estimated at 44,025 (37,215 North Vietnamese and 6,810 Viet Cong), a net increase of 7,985 over the 36,040 enemy estimated in the region at the end of February. Factors contributing to this increase included the acceptance, as confirmed units, of elements of two NVA divisions in the DMZ area, and an NVA artillery (rocket) battalion in Quang Tin province. Acceptance of these confirmed units, plus replacements for already established units, added 13,885 combat personnel to the enemy order of battle. Offsetting these accretions were deductions during the month totalling 5,900 enemy, encompassing casualties assessed against identified units and the downward adjustment of the strength now attributed to the average NVA regiment.

Significant enemy movements during the period involved two regiments of the 324B NVA Division, which relocated to Thua Thien from the DMZ/Quang Tri province area, and two battalions of the 29th Regiment, 325C NVA Division, which redeployed from the Khe Sanh area to the vicinity of the A Shau valley.

Reports received during the month continued to predict renewed enemy offensive operations throughout northern I CTZ, with Khe Sanh, Quang Tri City, Hue, and Danang as principal targets. Renewed offensive operations reportedly were to commence during March or early April. Agent reports referred to the new offensive as a "third phase", and suggested the phase would be spectacular in magnitude. These reports also suggested tanks were to be employed in support of ground forces, possibly as far south as Hue. North Vietnamese air and a reported "secret weapon", possibly the FROG (free

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rocket over ground) were also reported ready for employment by the NVA, in support of its pending ground activities.

-Enemy Lines of Communication

The enemy needs a significant victory in I CTZ; however, to win such a victory, his tactical forces must be capable of conducting sustained operations against GVN and III MAF front line units. In order to ensure this, the enemy must have the ability adequately to resupply and reinforce his engaged formations in a timely manner.

As a result of these considerations, the enemy, before Tet, commenced improvement of his lines of communication into the Khe Sanh area, from the southern panhandle region of Laos. Subsequent to the Tet defeat of NVA forces in Hue, the enemy has made a concerted effort to expand the road network leading eastward out of the A Shau valley.

Route 9, the highway link between Laos and the Republic of Vietnam in northwestern Quang Tri province, is the axis around which the enemy has developed his road network into the Khe Sanh area. Using Ban Dong, a Laotian village near Route 9 as a focal point, two new east-west roads, both paralleling Route 9, have been constructed. The northern road leads to a mountainous area ten miles west-northwest of the Khe Sanh combat base, and the southern road, which actually originates from Route 92 eight miles south of Ban Dong, extends to the Pone river (the border between Laos and RVN), and probably beyond, to the vicinity of Khe Sanh village. Approximately 30 miles of road have been upgraded in developing this network, which was designed to handle the flow of men, equipment, and supplies the enemy realized would be necessary to reduce the Marine combat base at Khe Sanh. The southern road was probably used to convoy the troops and tanks with which the enemy attacked the Special Forces/CIDG camp at Lang Vei in early February. Since 1 January 1968, there have been a total of 26 sightings of enemy truck and tracked vehicle movements along these lines of communication.

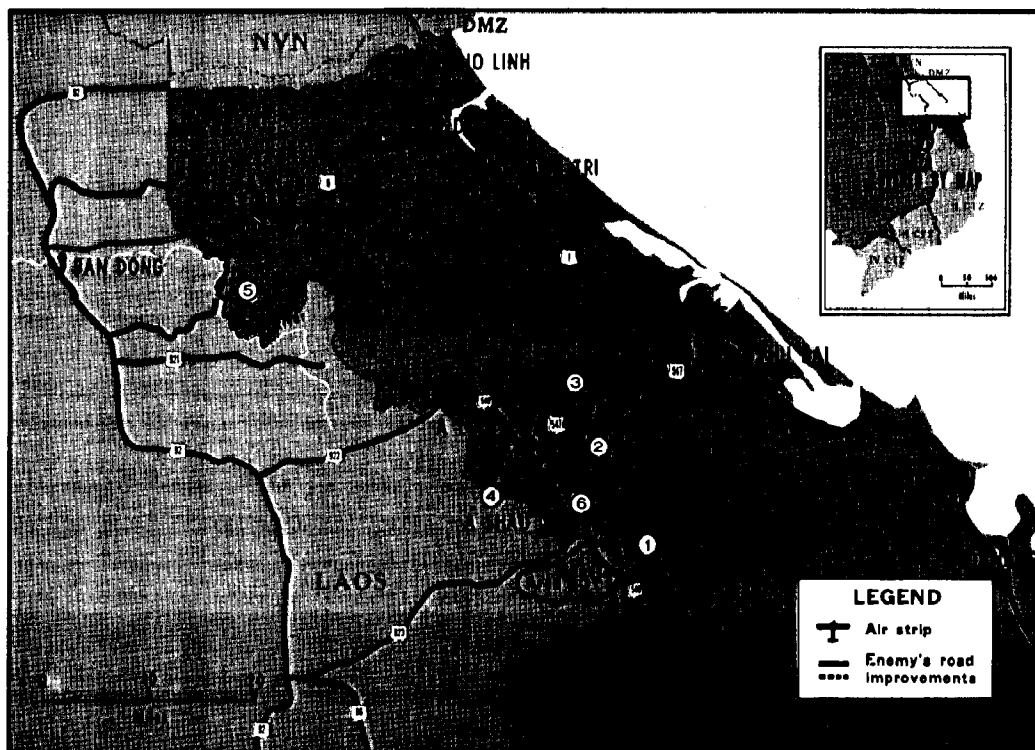
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Twenty-five miles southwest of Hue is the A Shau valley, which, as an enemy marshalling area, poses a serious threat to the populated coastal plain of northern I CTZ. Enemy engineer efforts have upgraded both Route 548 within the valley, and Routes 547 and 547A, both leading from the valley toward Hue. Also under development is an extension of Route 548 to the south, toward Base Area 607 in Laos, near the Thua Thien and Quang Nam provincial boundary. Enemy construction and road improvement efforts in the A Shau valley area constitute a determined effort to develop a road system capable of supporting major assaults on Hue, Quang Tri City, and Danang.

The enemy's efforts in development of lines of communication in northern I CTZ are depicted on the following map.

DEVELOPMENT OF ENEMY LINES OF COMMUNICATION IN NORTHERN I CTZ



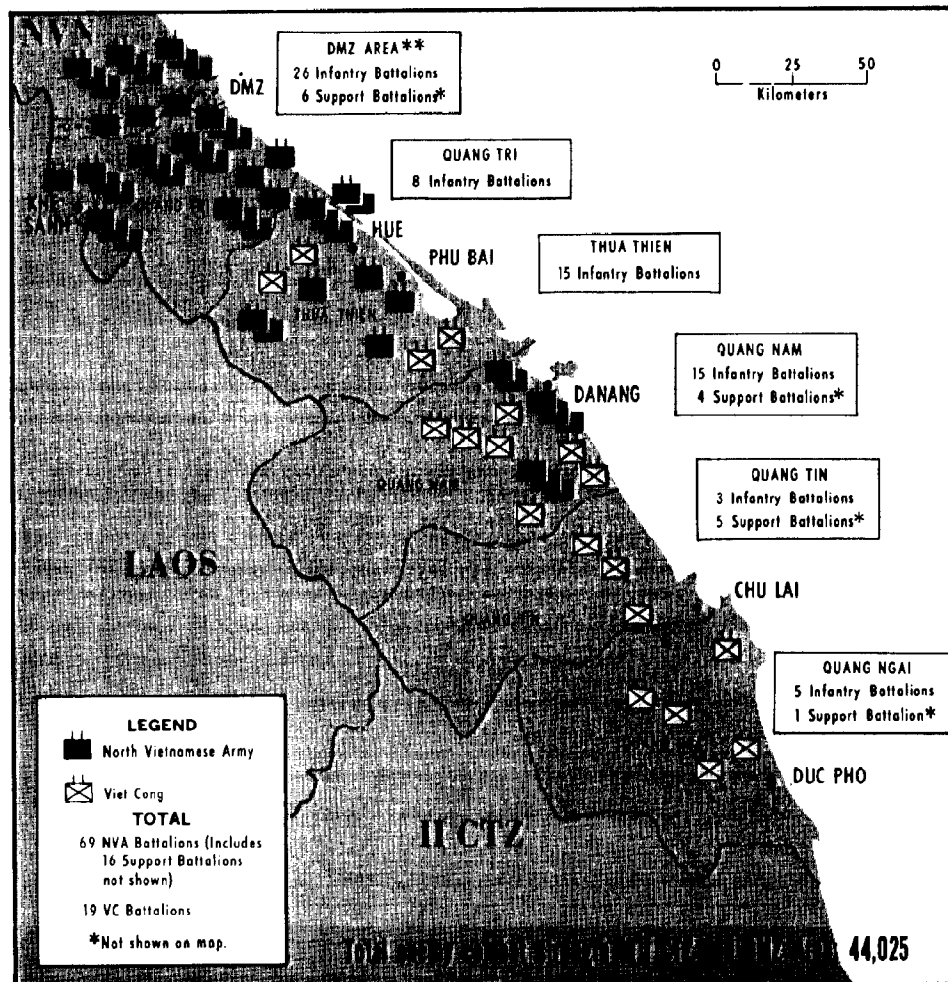
- ① 13 February: Route 548 and its new extensions to the south open and serviceable.
- ② 28 February: Route 547 open and serviceable from To Bat to a point 18 miles to the east.
- ③ 29 February: Route 547A, a bypass road of 2½ ton truck capability, is completed.

- ④ 12 March: Using steel planking from A Luoi airfield, Route 548 being upgraded between A Luoi and A Shau.
- ⑤ 16 March: A tank trail between the Pone River and Khe Sanh village is partially completed.
- ⑥ 2 April: Approximately 1,000 laborers working on the Route 548 extension; this route now motorable to the head of Happy Valley.

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Following are five maps illustrating the enemy order of battle at the end of March. General locations of enemy infantry battalions throughout I CTZ and the DMZ area are pictured on the first of these maps, and the specific locations of enemy units are portrayed on the succeeding maps.

ENEMY BATTALIONS IN I CTZ/DMZ AREA



** The DMZ area includes that portion of Quang Tri province which lies north of Route 9, the DMZ itself, and the Vinh Linh Special Zone in North Vietnam. NVA units operating in this vicinity are considered DMZ AREA UNITS.

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b. DMZ/Quang Tri Province

At the end of the month, the confirmed enemy combat strength in the DMZ/Quang Tri province area was estimated at 26,080, reflecting an increase of 3,615 over the February estimate of 22,465. Several factors were considered in determining this revised strength: the acceptance of the 320th NVA Division, and elements of the 304th NVA Division, as confirmed units with an estimated combined strength of 9,445 enemy personnel, and the addition of 1,815 replacements, for a total enemy order of battle accretion of 11,260. This increase was partially offset by deductions of 7,645, due to the shift of four enemy regiments (with a combined strength of 5,730) out of the area, and the assessment of 1,915 casualties against identified enemy units.

Major movements of enemy units noted in the DMZ area and Quang Tri province during March were:

- The 90th Regiment, 324B NVA Division, which moved from the DMZ area near Con Thien to the vicinity of Hue in Thua Thien province.

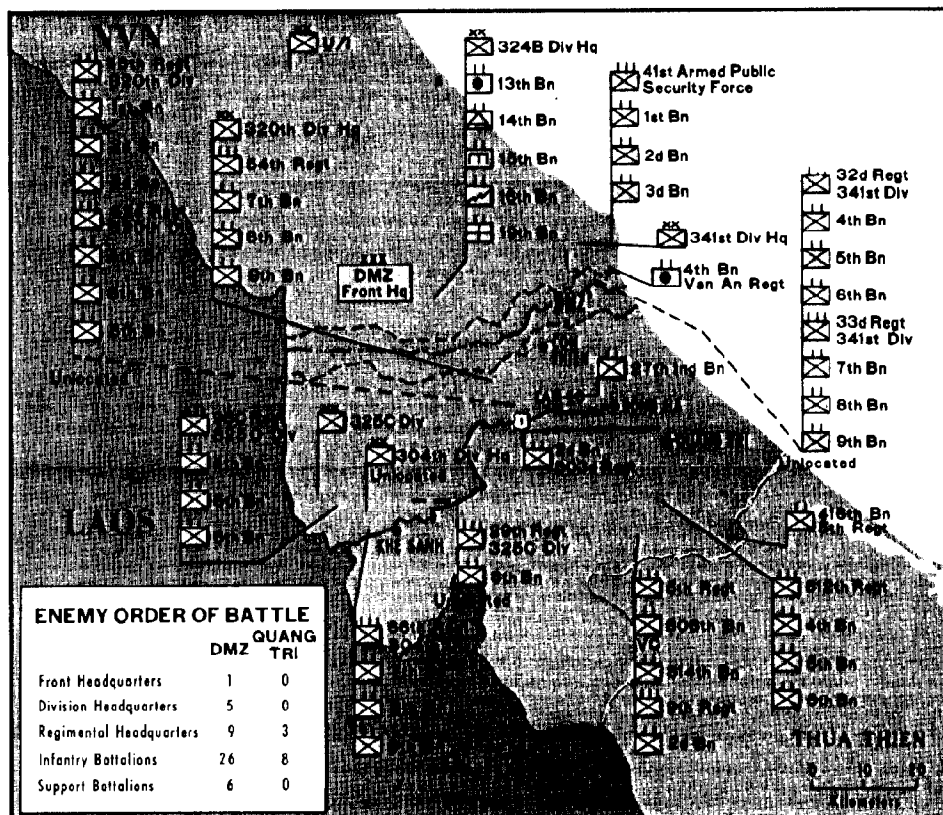
- The relocation of the 31st Regiment from the Vinh Linh Special Zone in North Vietnam to the Danang area in Quang Nam province.

- The redeployment of the 7th and 9th Battalions, 29th Regiment, 325C NVA Division from the Khe Sanh area, south to the A Shau valley.

- The southward shift from Quang Tri City to Hue of the 803d Regiment, 324B NVA Division.

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The relocation of these units placed the three regiments of the 324B NVA Division (the 90th, 803d, and the 812th) within striking distance of two of the principal NVA targets in I CTZ - Quang Tri City and Hue.

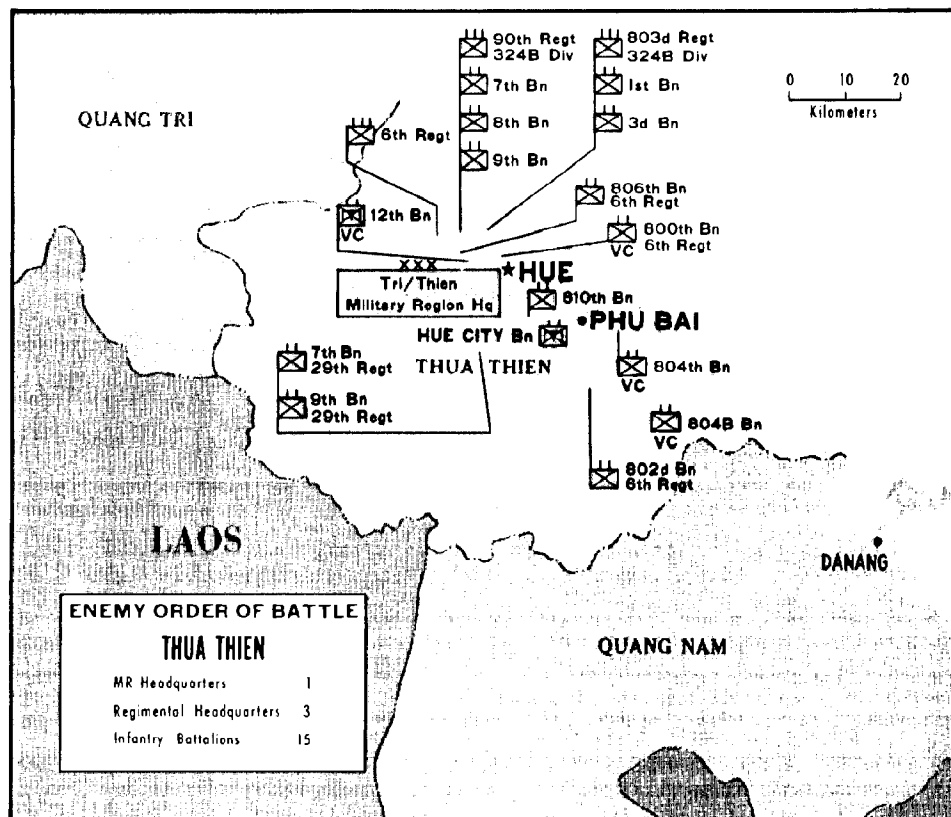


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c. Thua Thien Province

The confirmed enemy combat strength increased by 2,935 during March to 6,645. This increase represents the added strength of the 90th Regiment, elements of the 803d Regiment, and the 7th and 9th Battalions, 29th Regiment, and 1,015 newly joined replacements. This personnel gain was somewhat countered by the attrition of 1,435 enemy killed.

Prisoner and agent reports suggest the 90th and 803d Regiments are preparing for renewed attacks on Hue. The 7th and 9th Battalions, 29th Regiment are reportedly near the A Shau valley southwest of Hue, near the junction of Routes 547 and 547A. Tanks were also reported in the A Shau valley, a factor which poses an additional threat to Hue.

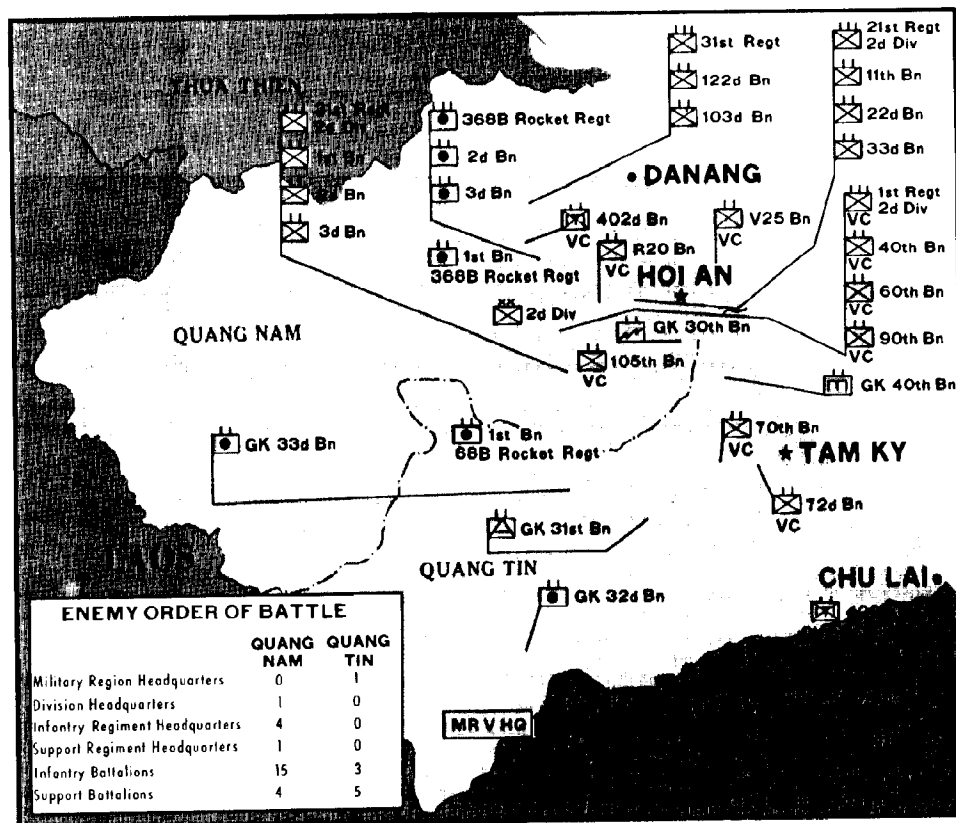


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d. Quang Nam/Quang Tin Provinces

At end-March, the confirmed enemy order of battle strength was estimated at 9,320 NVA and VC personnel, an increase of 1,515 over the 7,805 reported last month. This adjustment included (1) confirmation of the 31st Independent Infantry Regiment in Quang Tin, with a combined strength of 1,820, (2) the arrival of an estimated 1,045 replacements, and (3) casualty assessments of 1,350 against identified enemy units.

Enemy initiated activities remained relatively light; however, reports suggest enemy forces are continuing preparations for a renewed offensive. An NVA headquarters named Special Zone 44, reportedly has been formed to coordinate and control tactical units during the pending attacks on Danang and Hoi An.



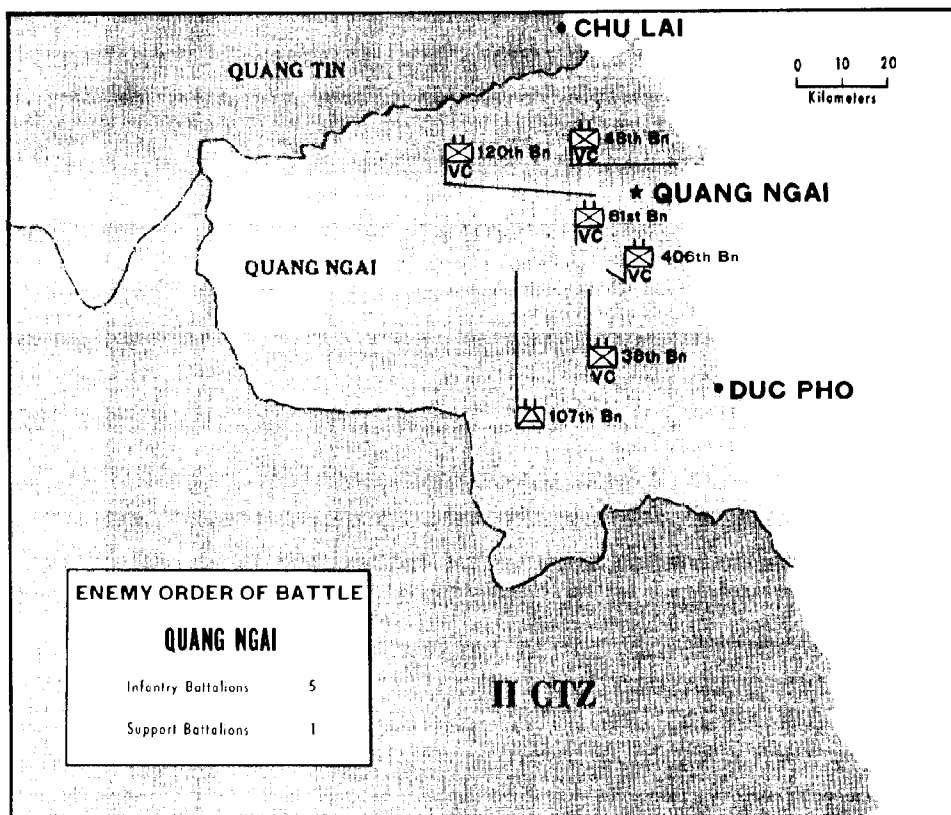
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e. Quang Ngai Province

On 31 March, the confirmed enemy combat strength in Quang Ngai province was estimated at 1,980, an 80-man decrease in strength from the end-February estimate of 2,060. Factors contributing to this order of battle adjustment included an estimated 190 replacements, offset by casualty assessments totaling 270 enemy killed.

Intelligence reports received during the month suggest the enemy has plans for future offensive actions against Quang Ngai City and possibly the Chu Lai airbase complex. The attack on Quang Ngai City reportedly is to be launched by a regimental-size force, supported by a rocket unit.

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2. ENEMY LOSSES FOR I CTZ

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Captured</u>	<u>Weapons</u>
<u>Enemy losses to III MAF/SLF</u>			
By Marines	3,118	83	448
By US Army	3,364	146	1,429
Monthly Total	6,482	229	1,877
1968 Total	19,882	556	4,804
<u>Enemy losses to other forces</u>			
By ROKMC	111	-	19
By RVNAF	2,547	256	706
By Special Forces/CIDG	63	38	19
Monthly Total	2,721	294	744
I CTZ Monthly Total	9,203	523	2,621
1968 Total	31,954	1,582	8,414

3. III MAF/SLF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

<u>By U. S. Army</u>	<u>By Marines</u>		<u>1968 Total</u>
708	12,460	Patrols	47,609
601	4,883	Ambushes	18,736
218	202	Company operations	1,500
-	282	Sniper posts	1,112
-	3	Battalion operations	8*
4	8	Regimental or larger operations	18*
-	7,603	Combat/combat support sorties	21,408
131,595	44,084	Helicopter sorties	410,667

*Since monthly figures include operations continued from previous months, they are not used to compute cumulative totals.

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4. MAJOR CHANGES IN III MAF/SLF UNITS

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>From/To</u>
1st Bn, 27th Marines	1Mar	LPD-2/Danang
HMM-164 (SLF Bravo)	3Mar	Phu Bai/LPH-8
3d Marines	4Mar	Quang Tri/Cua Viet
1st Bn, 3d Marines	4Mar	Quang Tri/Cua Viet
BLT-2/4 (SLF Alpha)	5Mar	Camp Carroll/Cua Viet
1st MT Bn	6Mar	Phu Bai/Gia Le
3d Engr Bn	8Mar	Phu Bai/Quang Tri
HMM-363 (SLF Alpha)	14Mar	LPH-2/Phu Bai
3d SP Bn	17Mar	Dong Ha/Quang Tri
2d Bn, 5th Marines	22Mar	Hue/Phu Bai
HMM-363 (SLF Alpha)	27Mar	Phu Bai/LPH-2
3d MT Bn	27Mar	Phu Bai/Quang Tri
2d Bn, 1st Marines	29Mar	Con Thien/Ca Lu

5. UNITS ASSIGNED TO SPECIAL LANDING FORCESSLF Alpha (TG 79.4)

Battalion Landing Team - 2/4
 Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron - 363

SLF Bravo (TG 79.5)

Battalion Landing Team - 3/1
 Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron - 165 (1-3 March)
 164 (3 March -
 continuing)

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6. III MAF CIVIC ACTION

<u>By US Army</u>	<u>By Marines</u>		<u>Cumulative III MAF total</u>
21,290	62,803	Persons given medical treatment	2,955,559
-	2	Persons given medical training	2,722
81,325	430,260	Pounds of food distributed	6,255,521
1,235	6,463	Pounds of soap distributed	237,395
170	4,163	Pounds of clothing distributed	293,289
60	458	Critically ill civilians evacuated	10,352
5	237	English language classes conducted	5,654
-	-	Cash donations	\$44,734
162,650	860,520	Persons fed	11,216,741
200	966	Students supported	74,003
6	83	Construction projects	2,632

7. III MAF STRENGTH

	<u>USMC</u>		<u>USN</u>		<u>USA</u>	
	<u>Off</u>	<u>Enl</u>	<u>Off</u>	<u>Enl</u>	<u>Off</u>	<u>Enl</u>
Danang	2,383	31,331	204	1,208	286	2,133
Chu Lai	495	5,396	32	199	1,451	15,865
Duc Pho	-	-	-	-	283	3,754
Phu Bai	1,025	14,806	134	1,001	1,435	14,651
DMZ Area	1,489	26,827	99	985	1,805	17,691
Totals	5,392	78,360	469	3,393	5,260	54,094

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8. LOGISTICSa. Supply levels at end of period

	<u>Danang</u>	<u>Chu Lai</u>	<u>Phu Bai</u>	<u>Dong Ha</u>
<u>Class I</u>				
(1000 of rations/ days of supply)				
MCI rations	113/3	40/5	709/15	635/11
B rations	102/3	40/5	98/2	30/1
A rations	346/9	0	16/1	109/2
<u>Class III and IIIA (Bulk)</u>				
(1000 gals/days of supply)				
JP-4	7,120/4	6,321/22	91/4	203/4
AVGAS	839/18	442/28	66/8	20/5
MOGAS	1,223/33	363/12	17/1	75/4
DIESEL	74/11	647/13	44/2	94/4
<u>Class V and VA</u>	<u>Danang</u>	<u>Chu Lai</u>	<u>Phu Bai</u>	
Ground Ammuni- tion (days of supply)	45	45	45	

Aviation Ordnance - Stocks maintained within CINCPAC allocations.

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b. Resupply Status(1) Surface Shipping Status (all I CTZ)

Cargo received from CONUS	28,945 M/T
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Cargo received from intra-WestPac	20,395 M/T
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(2) Air Shipping Status

Cargo received from CONUS	4,549 S/T
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Cargo received from intra-WestPac	4,517 S/T
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c. Resupply Status Within RVN(1) Surface Shipping Status

Danang to Chu Lai	21,311 S/T
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Danang to Phu Bai	26,475 S/T
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Danang to Dong Ha/Cua Viet	41,268 S/T
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(2) Air Shipping Status

Within I CTZ	19,347 S/T
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d. Cargo Shipped Out of RVN(1) Surface from I CTZ

MSTS	13,231 M/T
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Conventional (12,535 M/T)	
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Roll on/Roll off (696 M/T)	
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Amphibious shipping	379 M/T
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(2) Air from I CTZ

USMC aircraft	260 S/T
PACAF aircraft	41 S/T
MAC aircraft	49 S/T

e. RED BALL* Summary

Items at beginning of period	453
Items added	279
Items removed	147
Items remaining at end of period	585

*RED BALL items are urgently needed combat equipment items which require expedited processing of requisitions and priority shipment to the user.

f. Maintenance

Items evacuated from RVN to 3dFSR	5,014
Items repaired at 3dFSR	3,231
Items returned to CONUS from 3dFSR or disposed of on Okinawa.	23

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g. Construction Projects

Roads

-Dong Ha: 8.0 miles were upgraded. Danang: 33.5 miles were upgraded and 63.0 miles were maintained. Chu Lai: 21.8 miles were under construction or upgraded and 64.0 miles were maintained.

Bridges

-Completed ten Class 20 or larger bridges. Two new Class 60 bridges were under construction, and six other bridges were repaired.

Bunkers

-Thirty-nine bunkers were completed and six were under construction.

Airfields

(Percentage of completion)

-Phu Bai: MAG-36 aviation warehouse (75%); MAG-36 parking apron (90%). Danang: MWSG-17 carpenter and utility shop (100%); MAG-11 power check pad (20%); MAG-11 tactical aircrew quarters - 20 Quonset huts (95%). Chu Lai: 1st MAW tactical aircrew quarters - 21 Quonset huts (30%).

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Patients admitted to III MAF facilities	2,038
Battle injury (1,121)	
Non-battle injury (323)	
Disease (594)	
Evacuated out-of-country	818
Deaths in III MAF facilities	13
Returned to duty	704
Hospitalized as of 31 March	84

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