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OPERATIONS OF U. S. MARINE FORCES

VIETNAM

MARCH 1969

G-3



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 1969. Its purpose is to update similar historical reports covering the period from March 1965 through February 1969.

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CONTENTS**SUMMARY 3**

LARGE UNIT OPERATIONS 5

SMALL UNIT COUNTERGUERRILLA OPERATIONS 19

REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT AND PACIFI-
CATION 27

AIR OPERATIONS 38

LOGISTICS 45

CONCLUSIONS 54

STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS 55

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SUMMARY

Characteristic of the reduced level of action obtaining throughout I CTZ since mid-1968, combat operations developed little sustained contact with enemy forces during March. Prominent among the 13 III MAF large unit operations were those prosecuted against enemy staging, assembly, and infiltration areas in the hinterland regions of western Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces. Combining the tactical mobility and airborne firepower provided by fixed wing and helicopter support, friendly ground forces ranged over a wide expanse of I CTZ, effectively denying the enemy the option of gaining offensive initiative. Results of III MAF and Seventh Fleet Special Landing Force operations included nearly 2,000 enemy killed or captured.

The III MAF counterguerrilla campaign in central I CTZ continued to provide security for the Danang vital area and nearby pacification projects with a saturation of over 10,000 patrols, ambushes, and company-size operations across the lowland plain. Principal small unit action resulted early in the month from a series of contacts developed with residual NVA and VC elements left near Danang following unsuccessful thrusts at the city in late February. Small unit operations during the remainder of the month focused on interdiction of local guerrilla and infrastructure traffic. Although singularly unspectacular, these limited March actions accounted for nearly 400 NVA and VC killed or captured.

Additional security for the I CTZ populace was provided by the more than 13,500 operations conducted by combined action units, which accounted for nearly 350 enemy killed or captured. And, ARVN units operating in the precedence areas around Danang and Quang Ngai City also contributed significantly to furthering the 1969 pacification plan, adding over 700 enemy killed in those two regions alone.

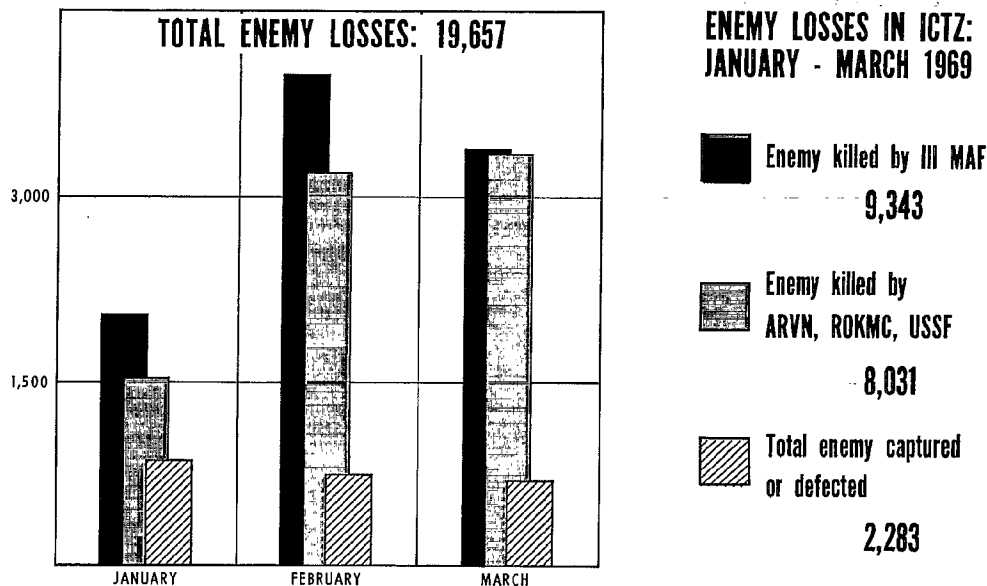
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In sum, US combat operations in I CTZ, coupled with those of other Free World forces, cost the enemy 6,695 killed during March, bringing the total since 1 January to 17,374 NVA or VC killed. A recapitulation of enemy losses during 1 January-31 March is provided below.



Behind this multi-tiered security screen, the GVN continued to register gradual progress in achieving its 1969 goals. Not only did the portion of the population considered secure surpass 75% (a six percent increase since January), but the government further exhibited its vibrancy by conducting popular elections in 849 villages and hamlets.

Highlighting III MAF accomplishments of a tactical/logistical nature were the 5 March introduction of the first increments of the 175mm, self-propelled gun, M107 into the Marine artillery family, and the 30 March opening of Liberty Bridge, spanning the Thu Bon river four miles northeast of An Hoa. The former, which comprised one six-gun firing battery placed into service, added materially to the long-range artillery firepower capability of III MAF, while the latter provided overland access to the An Hoa combat base, thus reducing resupply time from Danang by 50%.

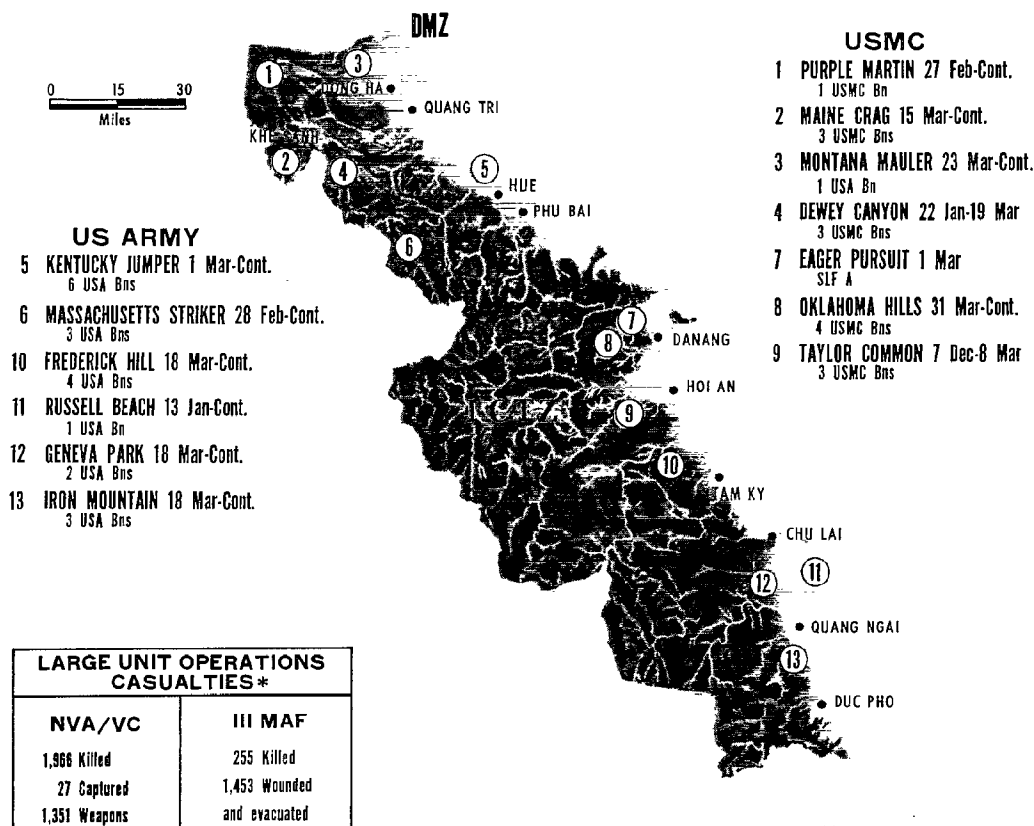
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LARGE UNIT OPERATIONS

III MAF and Seventh Fleet Special Landing Force (SLF) units were committed to 13 large unit operations during March. The continued reduced level of enemy presence encountered throughout I CTZ notwithstanding, these operations exerted constant pressure against the enemy, his base areas, and his lines of communication, particularly those in northern I CTZ hinterland regions abutting Laos and the DMZ.

The locations and results of the III MAF and SLF large unit operations are shown below.

III MAF AND SLF OPERATIONS: MARCH 1969

* Includes 686 enemy killed and 19 enemy and 246 weapons captured by US Army operations. US Army casualties: 125 killed and 657 wounded and evacuated. Also includes enemy and US losses in NICTZ individual unit activity.

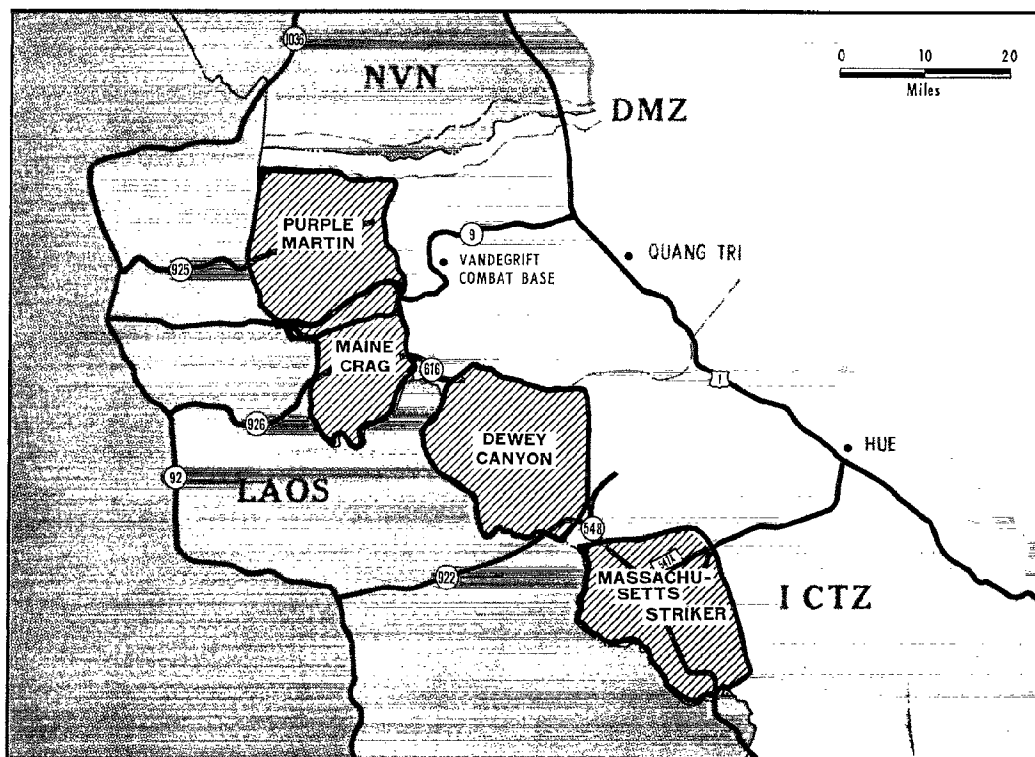
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Operations in Northern I CTZ

Large unit operations in northern I CTZ were focused primarily in the western and southern sectors of Quang Tri province and in Thua Thien's A Shau Valley. With the enemy largely forced to withdraw to nearby North Vietnam and Laos, III MAF maintained a strong, mobile posture aimed at preempting enemy efforts to infiltrate major formations from those cross-border lodgments or to use northern I CTZ redoubts and lines of communication to stage and move supplies and equipment. The campaign in these western Quang Tri and Thua Thien regions during March did not develop heavy contact; rather, the action was characterized by skirmishes with NVA screening forces and by the seizure of numerous, and often extensive, munitions and supply caches. III MAF operations in the northern I CTZ hinterland regions during March were MAINE CRAG, DEWEY CANYON, PURPLE MARTIN, and MASSACHUSETTS STRIKER; the areas and their relation to known enemy infiltration routes are illustrated below.

OPERATIONS IN WESTERN QUANG TRI AND THUA THIEN: MARCH 1969

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-Operation MAINE CRAG

MAINE CRAG, launched by the 3d Marine Regiment on 15 March, was a heliborne/overland attack into the southwestern extremity of Quang Tri. Friendly forces committed in the operation included the regimental headquarters of the 3d Marines and its 1st and 2d Battalions, a US Army task force, and elements of the 2d ARVN Regiment.

Operation MAINE CRAG was triggered by III MAF's comprehensive reconnaissance campaign. Helicopter-inserted patrols began, in early March, to report a sizable increase in truck traffic on Route 616, an enemy-constructed extension of Route 926 from Laos across southwestern Quang Tri. The enemy's employment of this artery for the movement and staging of supplies and infiltration groups was to be expected -- with 9th Marines Operation DEWEY CANYON in Base Area 611 and 101st Airborne Division Operation MASSACHUSETTS STRIKER in A Shau clogging his primary line of communication to the south, he was obliged to seek an alternate avenue of action. Moreover, the area rendered him obvious advantage as, situated in difficult terrain and surrounded on three sides by Laos, it offered a margin of security from flanking attack.

Preceded by reconnaissance and engineer units inserted to mine certain sections of the road, our forces began movement into the objective area on 15 March. The plan of attack encompassed the now-standard mobile concept of establishing fire support bases (FSB's) and fanning out to complete a series of deliberate, company-size search and clear operations within the effective range of the supporting artillery, then telescoping forward to new fire support bases, located no more than 8,000 meters distant. The systematic execution of the attack was aided materially by the employment of previously-established FSB's. Third Marine Division elements had penetrated the area twice before; in June 1968, a multi-regiment campaign virtually destroyed two regiments of the 308th NVA Division, and three months later, a 9th Marines reconnaissance-in-force encountered no significant contact.

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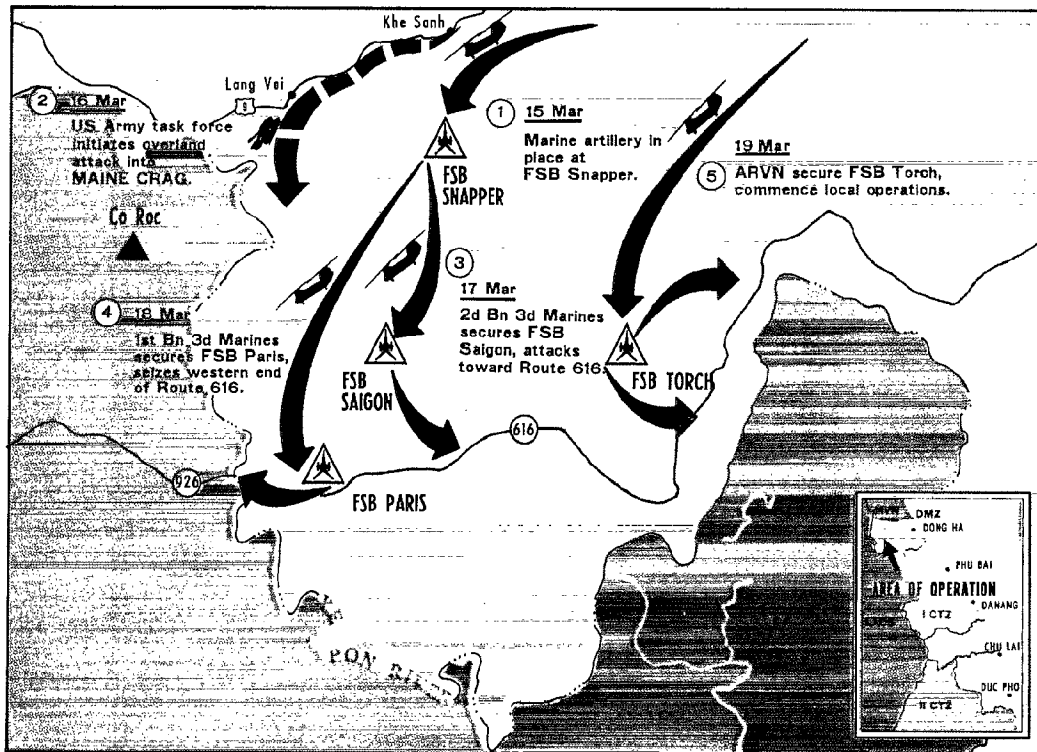
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The MAINE CRAG scheme of maneuver involved 1st and 2d Battalions, 3d Marines conducting helicopterborne assaults from FSB Snapper to seize and establish FSB's Saigon and Paris (six and ten miles south of Khe Sanh, respectively), thus blocking the western terminus of Route 616 at the Laotian border. Concurrently, the US Army task force, comprising a scout platoon, a mechanized infantry company, a tank company, and a battery of self-propelled artillery, attacked overland westward from Ca Lu along Route 9 to Lang Vei, thence southward to link up with the Marines. The ARVN, landing by helicopter at FSB Torch, five miles east of FSB Saigon, commenced offensive operations in that sector of the area of operations. The second phase of the campaign called for an attack eastward along the trace of the road -- a deliberate search to locate and destroy enemy forces, fortifications, and supply stores.

The map below describes the scheme of maneuver for Operation MAINE CRAG.

OPERATION MAINE CRAG



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The attacking units developed but sporadic contact with small bands of NVA soldiers through end-March, as the enemy displayed little capacity for organized defense in the area. Lacking the strength to slow effectively the III MAF advance, he concentrated his efforts instead on rocket and mortar shellings and limited ground forays, designed more for harassment than for any concrete result.

Some relatively minor contacts, however, produced tangible results. On 18 March, for example, a Company G squad ambush, laid along a side road four miles east of FSB Paris, was approached by two east-bound enemy trucks. Allowing the first truck, which was empty, to pass, the ambush opened fire on the second, destroying it and its cargo of rocket and mortar ammunition. The Marines then attacked the security element on the lead truck, which had halted a short way down the road, killing seven NVA and taking two weapons. On the 23d, Company E engaged a small enemy force, killing eight NVA in a hillside fortified complex, two miles farther east. During the firefight, an M-79 round fired into a cave touched off a secondary explosion, which exposed a weapons store behind a false bulkhead. The cache yielded 119 AK-47 rifles, all in new condition. Seventeen Marines were wounded and evacuated as a result of the action.

The majority of the results of MAINE CRAG, however, were garnered through undramatic but diligent inspection of the road network and the surrounding terrain. Substantial arms, ammunition, and supply caches were uncovered and subsequently destroyed. Enemy war stocks seized in the area by III MAF forces during March included 387 weapons, over 9,000 mortar shells, more than 60 tons of explosives, nearly 1,000,000 small arms rounds, and 356 tons of rice.

MAINE CRAG continued into April, with III MAF and ARVN units combing the ridges and valleys in a concerted effort to sanitize the area of enemy troops and to deny the enemy use of supplies and equipment already staged.

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- Operation DEWEY CANYON

To the southeast of the MAINE CRAG area, 9th Marines Operation DEWEY CANYON terminated on 19 March after nearly two months of highly successful offensive action in the Da Krong Valley. No major contact was generated by the units mopping up the last vestiges of the enemy's Base Area 611 organization, as the velocity of the February attack through the Da Krong had scattered his combatant forces and disjointed his command and control structure, thereby rendering ineffective any enemy attempt at an orderly counteroffensive.

The bulk of the March action involved brief, but often intense, clashes with holdout enemy units, and the discovery of additional caches of weapons and supplies. The major problem encountered during the final days of DEWEY CANYON was the weather, a factor which had plagued III MAF throughout the operation. Heavy rains, overcast, and ground fog delayed for several days the phase-down of the operation; however, with the extraction of the last Marine unit on the 19th, the campaign ended as an overwhelming success. Enemy losses were counted at 1,617 NVA killed and 1,461 weapons and hundreds of tons of munitions, supplies, and equipment captured.

The enemy's destruction in the Da Krong Valley and Base Area 611 was not achieved without cost -- 121 Marines were killed and another 611 were wounded seriously enough to require evacuation.

- Operations in the DMZ Area

Combat action along the DMZ, from the Operation PURPLE MARTIN area of northwestern Quang Tri east to coastal Cua Viet, remained intermittent during March. Enemy forces engaged by III MAF and ARVN operations were, by and large, elements of three independent NVA regiments (246th, 27th, and 138th), tasked with screening the enemy's

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DMZ front. Only occasionally encountered in strength, these units are employed primarily in missions involving reconnaissance; mortar shellings, ambushes, and probing attacks; maintenance of limited fortifications; and movement of arms and supplies to local force units and guerrillas.

The principal action in the DMZ area took place north of the Rockpile in an area extending from Mutter's Ridge generally northeastward for about three and one-half miles. There, III MAF patrols fought a series of engagements with elements, normally platoon-size, of the 27th NVA Regiment, entrenched in bunkers and armed with mortars, RPG's, and automatic weapons.

Typical of the actions fought in this region was the series of contacts developed by two companies of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines on the 13th and 14th. At 1115 on the 13th, Company M attacked a bunkered enemy force just north of Mutter's Ridge. Supported by artillery fire, the Marines overpowered the enemy position shortly after noon, counting seven NVA dead in their bunkers. Sporadic contact, punctuated by 60mm mortar fire, ensued throughout the day; then, at 0300 on the 14th, the enemy attempted a counterattack. Company M held the position and repulsed the NVA attack, killing another 16 enemy. Friendly losses in the fighting totaled six killed and 31 wounded and evacuated.

Company I, maneuvering to get behind the enemy unit, made contact during late morning. An on-line assault, supported by mortar and machine gun fire, soon routed the remaining enemy, who fled, leaving behind nine dead and 11 weapons. One Marine was wounded in this action and evacuated to Dong Ha.

On 27 March, however, heavy contact was achieved with at least a battalion of the 27th NVA Regiment. At 1000, 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment (US Army) met determined resistance from a bunker complex two miles northeast of Mutter's Ridge. In a battle lasting throughout the day, the

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friendly forces employed air, artillery, and tanks in support to kill 120 NVA. Fourteen soldiers were killed in the fighting and another 30 were wounded and evacuated.

Reinforced by Marines and ARVN deployed to prevent the enemy's escape, the soldiers reestablished contact early on the following day, accounting for another 68 NVA killed in a day-long running battle. Through end-March, III MAF and ARVN units conducted a search of the area, eliminating enemy elements bypassed during the initial stages of the action. Code-named MONTANA MAULER, this operation northeast of the ridge had killed a total of 268 NVA from 23-31 March.

Within the DMZ, reconnaissance patrols continued around-the-clock surveillance of enemy infiltration routes and suspected staging areas. While no major influx of enemy troop units or increase in other activity was noted, an incident at mid-month was an excellent measure of the value of a continuing, wide-ranging reconnaissance effort in the DMZ. Early in the morning on the 15th, a 3d Marine Division patrol observed an enemy rocket unit move into position four and one-half miles northeast of Gio Linh and begin firing on the Cua Viet port facility. Immediately taking the enemy under fire with organic weapons and supporting artillery, the reconnaissance team silenced the firing, killing ten enemy and capturing two. The patrol then successfully withdrew to link up with an ARVN reaction force, sustaining no casualties in the action.

Operations in Southern I CTZ

III MAF large unit operations south of the Hai Van pass were not marked by sustained combat during March, evidence the enemy is, at this time, no more disposed toward initiating large-scale action in the south than he is in the northern provinces. The majority of the action centered on the Operation TAYLOR COMMON area around An Hoa, a natural occurrence, since the enemy's primary force accretion in southern I CTZ is lodged in Quang Nam.

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The enemy maintained constant pressure against the combat base at An Hoa throughout the month, primarily employing the standoff attack-by-fire tactic rather than attempting to marshal an all-out infantry assault. Some 430 rounds of mixed rocket, mortar, and recoilless rifle fire were registered at An Hoa during March, far more than received during any month since III MAF first established a position there in April 1966. The enemy attack effort, however, achieved little effect other than harassment, as his gunnery was not distinguished by a marked degree of accuracy.

Ground contact with enemy forces in the An Hoa basin was again concentrated across the Thu Bon river to the northwest of the combat base, where 3d Battalion, 26th Marines patrols and ambushes established a number of sharp clashes with transiting enemy units. For example, on 1 March, four contacts developed by Company M patrols and ambushes in an area less than 2,000 meters square netted 26 NVA dead and 15 weapons. Then, later in the evening, fixed wing air strikes flown against enemy troops attempting to vacate the same general area killed another 19. No Marine casualties resulted from the series of actions.

At 0230 on the 2d, an enemy unit mounted an RPG and machine gun-supported attack against Company L, deployed approximately one mile southwest of Company M. The company repelled the assault with a combination of artillery, fixed wing air, and organic weapons, killing 18 Viet Cong. There were no friendly losses.

Operation TAYLOR COMMON closed on 8 March, with the 5th Marines remaining in the area to assist in providing security for pacification and for the approaching rice harvest. Enemy losses to the three-month campaign included 1,399 killed, 29 taken prisoner, 633 weapons seized, and a major base area (112) in disorder.

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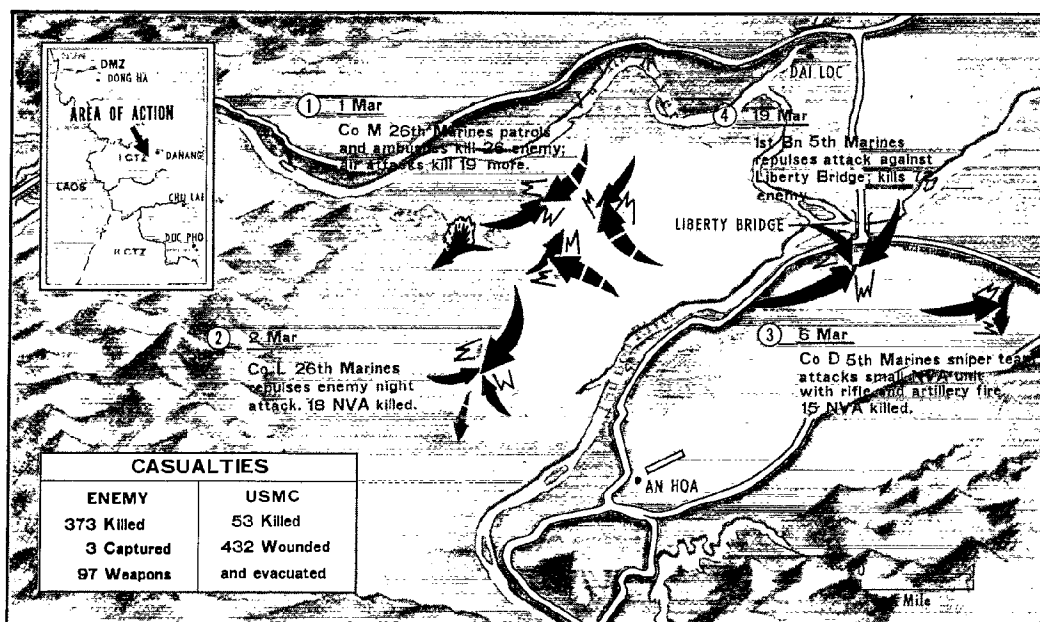
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The action in the basin throughout the remainder of the month remained sporadic, with one major contact taking place on the 19th. At 0245, a reinforced Viet Cong company launched an assault aimed at destroying Liberty Bridge, nearing completion four miles north-east of An Hoa. Elements of 1st Battalion, 5th Marines halted the enemy thrust, then counterattacked in conjunction with supporting arms fire to rout the enemy force. A sweep of the battleground turned up 72 enemy dead and 27 weapons. Twelve Marines were killed and 30 wounded and evacuated in the battle for the bridge.

The map below describes the major actions near An Hoa during 1-31 March.

ACTION IN THE AN HOA BASIN: MARCH 1969



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At end-month, III MAF initiated a new large unit operation against enemy forces occupying Quang Nam province. Code-named OKLAHOMA HILLS, this 7th Marines operation is aimed at destruction of the 141st, 31st, and 368B NVA Regiments, known to operate in the mountainous Charlie Ridge/Happy Valley region west-southwest of Da-nang. At 2000 on 30 March, with 1st Battalion, 7th Marines screening the south flank of the operating area along the Vu Gia river, the regiment's 2d and 3d Battalions executed a night maneuver into attack positions on the east. On the 31st, 3d Battalion, 26th Marines joined the action with a heliborne assault into blocking positions to the west, while the two 7th Marines battalions commenced their attack along the axis of the ridge and the valley. Concurrently, two battalions of the 51st ARVN Regiment were helilifted to landing zones in the Thuong Duc corridor and then moved out in an attack to the north.

No significant action developed during the last two days of the month; however, the attacking forces, operating within the precepts of the mobile fire support base concept, will continue a deliberate and detailed search of the area for a period of at least 20-30 days. The Happy Valley/Charlie Ridge region has a history of extensive enemy use for infiltration and staging for attacks against the Danang complex.

USS NEW JERSEY (BB-62) Departs Southeast Asia

At end-March, USS NEW JERSEY departed the Republic of Vietnam firing line, scheduled to return to CONUS. During the six-month period following her initial arrival off the Vietnam coast on 30 September 1968, the battleship fired 3,615 sixteen-inch shells from her main battery and nearly 11,000 rounds from the five-inch, 38-caliber guns of the secondary battery in support of III MAF units engaged in I CTZ combat. While the bulk of this fire

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support (2,650 sixteen-inch rounds and some 10,000 five-inch) was provided to 3d Marine Division forces along or near the DMZ, the NEW JERSEY ranged the littoral of I CTZ, from Operations KENTUCKY and LANCASTER on the north to amphibious Operation BOLD MARINER on Quang Ngai's Batangan peninsula. Whether firing to support engaged units, to soften targets for advancing infantry, to suppress active enemy firing positions, or to interdict enemy lines of communication, the combat record achieved by the battlewagon was exemplary -- hundreds of fortifications and storage facilities were collapsed and destroyed, roads were cut, numerous enemy firing batteries were silenced, and a number of previously occupied positions were seized without opposition.

However, mere statistics cannot begin to gauge accurately the value of USS NEW JERSEY's offensive contribution to the war. The firepower potential of the main battery's nine 16-inch rifles enables her to attack targets at a range of 24 miles with a shell weighing 2,750 pounds -- exceeding by six miles the range and by eight times the weight of the projectile fired by the eight-inch main battery of a heavy cruiser. The weight of metal, range, and penetration and shock effect of the 16-inch round is far greater also than that fired by our heaviest artillery weapon, the 175mm gun -- underscoring further its destructive threat to possible enemy escalation of his war effort, either from within I CTZ or from positions north of the DMZ. In addition, the NEW JERSEY's secondary battery of 20 five-inch guns provides a fire support capability roughly equal to four Seventh Fleet destroyers.

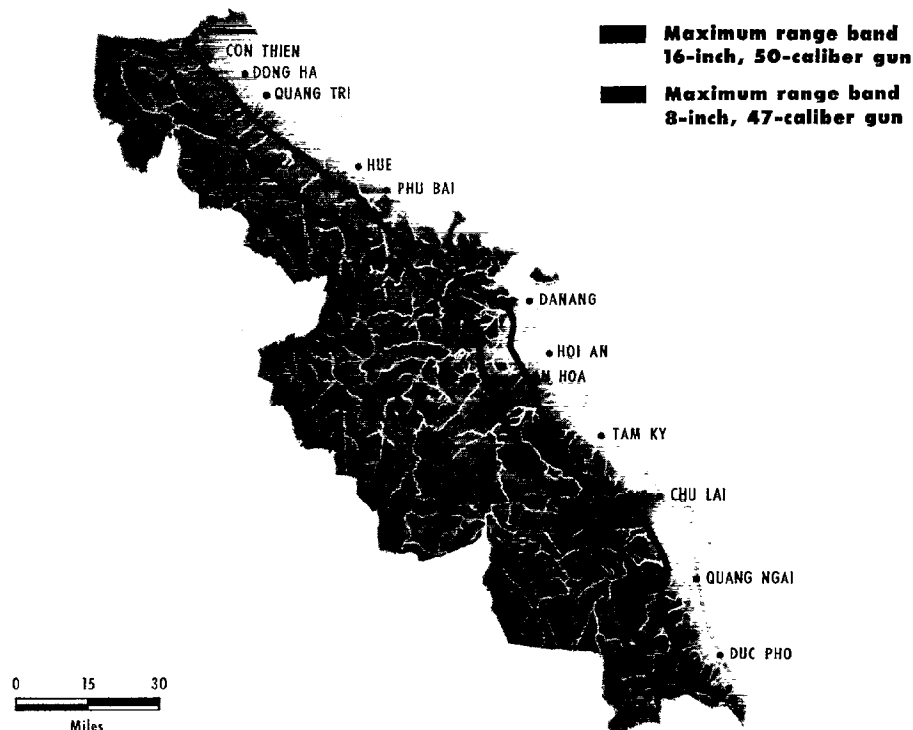
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The map below compares the area of I CTZ covered by the range of the battleship's 16-inch guns with the range capability of the 8-inch guns of the heavy cruiser.

COMPARISON OF MAXIMUM AREA OF I CTZ COVERED - 16-INCH VS 8-INCH NAVAL GUN



Considerations other than gun range and firepower differential serve to measure the intrinsic strength of the battleship as a supporting arms weapon. For example, her availability on the firing line provided III MAF on numerous occasions the flexibility to redistribute artillery assets to support mobile operations in the western reaches of I CTZ.

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Another factor is her value as a highly mobile fire support platform, capable of steaming at 25 knots cruising speed from the DMZ area to engage targets occupying the southern tip of Quang Ngai province. Unimpeded by conditions of poor weather or visibility, the mobility of the battleship is such that no I CTZ target within 16-inch gun range is more than six hours away from attack by her main battery.

III MAF, as her principal employer, was most reluctant to see USS NEW JERSEY depart the firing line.

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SMALL UNIT COUNTERGUERRILLA OPERATIONS

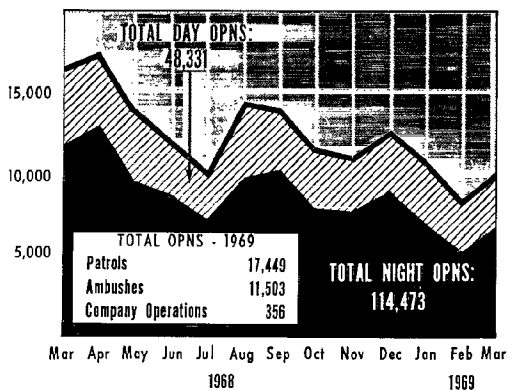
Continuing the III MAF counterguerrilla campaign in the coastal fringe of central I CTZ, Marine units during the month executed over 10,000 patrols, ambushes, and company-size search operations. Although this effort provided a constant screen of surveillance and interdiction activities across the lowland region, meaningful contact with the enemy was not forthcoming.

The month's principal small unit actions were generated during the first week of March as Marine patrols engaged isolated NVA and VC elements, stranded in the Danang-Hoi An-Dai Loc triangle following the enemy's abortive thrusts at Da-nang in late February. The remainder of the month was devoted to fleeting actions involving small guerrilla bands engaged in harassment tactics.

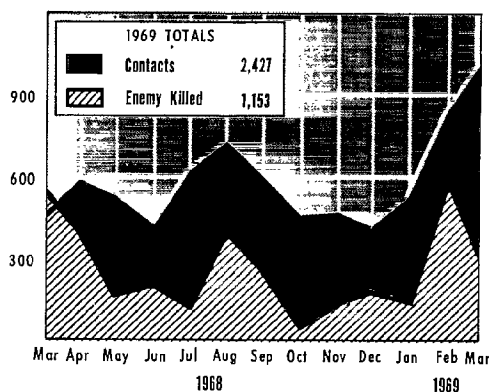
Despite the enemy's reluctance for combat, nearly 400 NVA and VC were taken out of action -- a clear gauge of the effectiveness of the small unit campaign. The following graphs relate counterguerrilla efforts during March with monthly totals during the previous year.

MARINE SMALL UNIT OPERATIONS: MARCH 1968 - MARCH 1969

PATROLS, AMBUSHES, AND SEARCH & CLEAR OPERATIONS



CONTACTS/ENEMY KILLED



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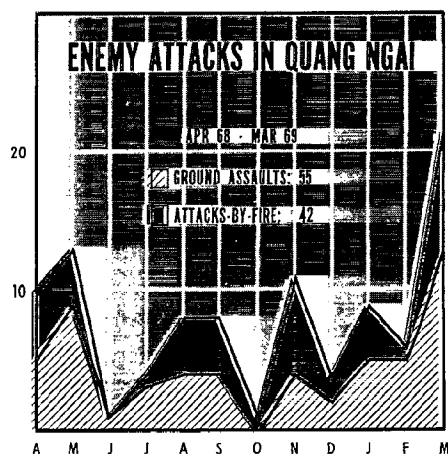
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Enemy Activity

Major enemy-initiated incidents in I CTZ during the month totaled 75 ground assaults and attacks-by-fire, representing a 34% increase over hostile efforts in February. A significant increase in enemy activity in Quang Ngai province and the continuation of indirect fire attacks against outlying III MAF and ARVN combat positions were responsible for this rise.

Geographically, the major increase in enemy activity was registered in Quang Ngai, where Viet Cong units staged 13 ground assaults and nine indirect fire attacks during March, as compared to a total of six attacks the previous month. Challenging the accelerated pacification efforts underway in the province,



the VC attacks were levied against all III MAF and RVNAF organizations. ARVN and US Army units conducting search and clear operations received three mortar attacks and countered three ground assaults. Another eight attacks were directed against Popular and Regional Force security activities, while combined action platoons, recently established north of Quang Ngai City, recorded four enemy attacks. The remaining incidents were executed directly against the

province capital or nearby hamlets. Enemy interest in the southern I CTZ province was evidenced further by a twofold increase in acts of harassment -- from 48 in February to 96 in March.

Chief targets for enemy attacks-by-fire were III MAF fire support bases (FSB's) and military vital area complexes. Reacting to III MAF and ARVN penetrations into the mountainous base areas, the enemy directed over 25 artillery, mortar, or

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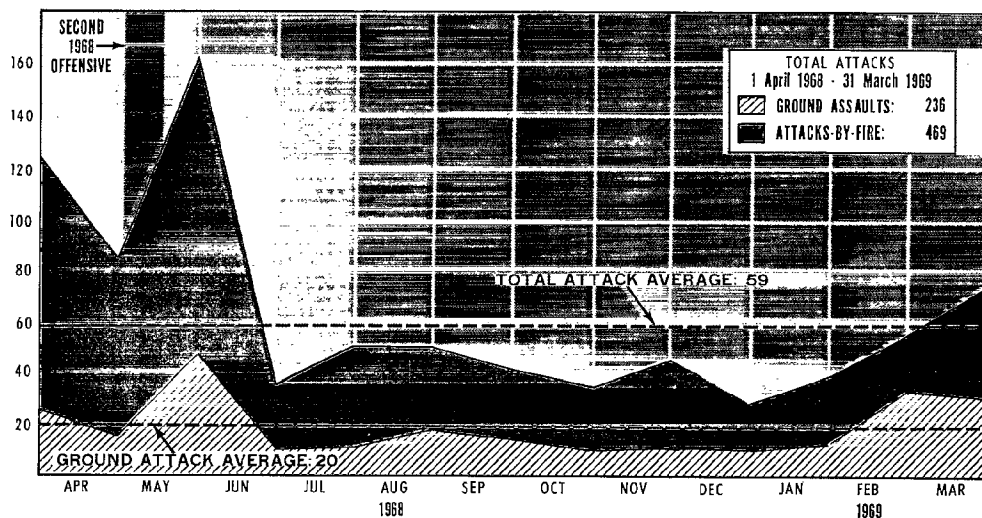
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rocket barrages at FSB's during the month. Although damage and casualties were light, the attacks reflect the high degree of effort the enemy is expending to degrade the effectiveness of these dispersed supporting arms positions. Only one indirect fire attack of 20 or more rounds was launched against a major III MAF air base installation (Chu Lai received twenty 122mm rockets on the 4th); however, lighter intensity harassing attacks resulted in substantial aircraft damage and loss. In one incident at dawn on the 21st, two 122mm rockets impacted at the Chu Lai Air Base; damage from the rounds hitting combat-loaded planes and an ammunition storage area included six A-4E aircraft destroyed and three damaged.

The following chart compares major ground attacks and attacks-by-fire (those of 20 rounds or more) initiated in March, with monthly totals since April 1968.

ENEMY ATTACKS IN I CTZ: APRIL 1968 - MARCH 1969



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Small Unit Actions

During the first week of the month, Marine search operations initiated in late February continued to uncover enemy elements attempting to avoid detection. Trapped in the lowland plain when their parent units were splintered and forced to withdraw, these groups went to ground, hoping to escape the saturation of Marine small unit activity. The following actions highlight reduction of the residual resistance found near Danang early in the month.

-West of Danang, Company G, 7th Marines engaged an NVA element hiding in an area heavily fortified by the enemy during 23-26 February actions. Supported by artillery and air strikes, the company reduced the bunkered retreat on 2 March, killing 26 of the enemy and capturing seven weapons. Stubborn resistance by the cornered force was underscored by the 15 Marines wounded and evacuated during the action.

-Shortly before midnight on the 5th, a platoon of Company B, 1st Marines intercepted a combined NVA/VC unit attempting to exfiltrate the coastal plain. Closing the area with artillery and tactical air supporting fires, the platoon attacked the enemy, killing 15. No friendly casualties were sustained.

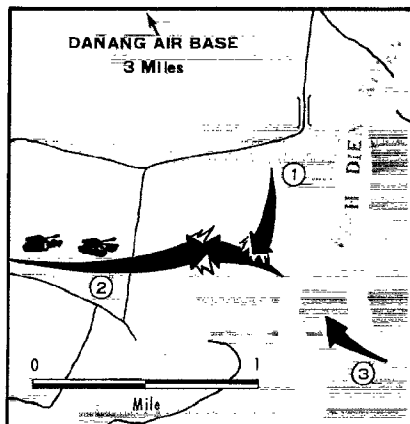
-Three miles southeast of the Danang Air Base, an element of the 59th Regional Force Battalion engaged an NVA force seeking haven in a cave complex at noon on the 8th. While the RF held the enemy in place, a squad of Company M, 1st Marines moved on tanks to join the action and other Marines established blocks along the Vinh Dien river. The subsequent attack resulted in 18 NVA killed, another two captured, and nine weapons seized; RF and Marine

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units sustained no casualties. During interrogation, the prisoners were identified as the operations officer of the V-25th Battalion and a squad leader from one of the battalion's companies.



Marine and RF Actions: 8 March

1. At 081150, elements of the 59th RF Battalion engage an enemy element in a cave complex.
2. Elements of Company M, 1st Marines and 1st Tank Battalion attack position from west.
3. Marine unit blocks enemy withdrawal to the east.

Contributing to the interdiction of enemy traffic during the month were 432 Marine scout/sniper deployments. Two-man teams, observer and rifleman, continued to score first-round kills at distances often exceeding 1,000 meters. Using the standard sniper weapon, a Model 700 Remington rifle with a variable-power telescopic sight, teams working the banks of the Vu Gia river south of Danang demonstrated the effectiveness of long-range rifle fire. On the 8th, a team from 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, sighting five Viet Cong near Liberty Bridge, killed two of the enemy before they could seek shelter. Later in the month, another team positioned farther upstream killed all five of a guerrilla unit moving near the river.

Other small unit missions in March included detailed surveillance for long-range rockets and associated firing sites. On the 9th, Company M, 7th Marines discovered a firing site under construction near the junction of the Tuy Loan and Yen rivers, southwest of the Danang Air Base. Characteristic of enemy rocket procedures, the site, complete with mud rocket launching ramps and bamboo aiming stakes, needed but rockets to become

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an active position. Six miles southeast of the air base, Combined Action Platoon 2-7-6 found the month's largest cache of rockets. Investigating a tunnel complex on the afternoon of the 14th, the Marines and Popular Force soldiers unearthed sixteen 122mm rockets.

Reconnaissance Activity

During March, 1st Marine Division reconnaissance units continued to monitor routes of communication linking mountainous enemy base areas with the populous lowlands surrounding Danang. Conducting independent STING RAY missions and other patrols in support of large unit operations, reconnaissance teams again concentrated on commonly used routes flanking the An Hoa basin, southwest of Danang. Enemy units targeted by reconnaissance-directed supporting arms fire, and occasionally engaged with small arms, lost at least 98 NVA and VC killed during the month - a total similar to monthly loss rates since the commencement of TAYLOR COMMON, an operation tasked to sweep enemy units from the basin and adjacent Base Area 112.

A measure of the effect of TAYLOR COMMON on enemy forces southwest of Danang is reflected in results tallied through reconnaissance actions. Averaging 327 enemy killed during each of the four months before the operation penetrated Base Area 112 in December 1968, reconnaissance units have accounted for a monthly average of 116 enemy killed since 1 December 1968.

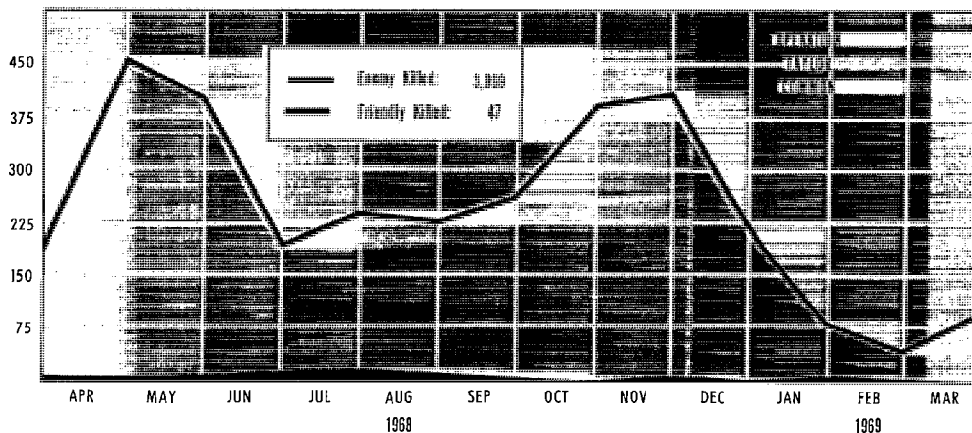
The graph on the following page compares enemy and Marine losses in Danang area reconnaissance actions since April 1968; further reflected is the drastic reduction of enemy transiting the periphery of the lowlands after Marine units entered the base area complex southwest of An Hoa.

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RESULTS OF RECONNAISSANCE ACTIONS IN THE DANANG AREA: APR 68 - MAR 69



Effectiveness of STING RAY employment has not been lessened, however, as seen by actions of one reconnaissance patrol. Shortly before noon on the 9th, a team positioned south of Go Noi Island observed five VC enter a bunker on the island; artillery fire destroyed the fortification, killing all occupants. An hour later, another artillery mission sank two rafts on the Vu Gia river, killing the four passengers. And at midafternoon, the team observed another two guerrillas killed by artillery, raising the day's tally to 11 Viet Cong.

Kit Carson Scout Program

At end-month, 414 former Viet Cong soldiers, members of the Kit Carson Scout (KCS) program, were supporting combat operations of the four III MAF divisions. Another 39 Chieu Hoi returnees were undergoing recruit training preparatory to assignment to combat units in I CTZ.

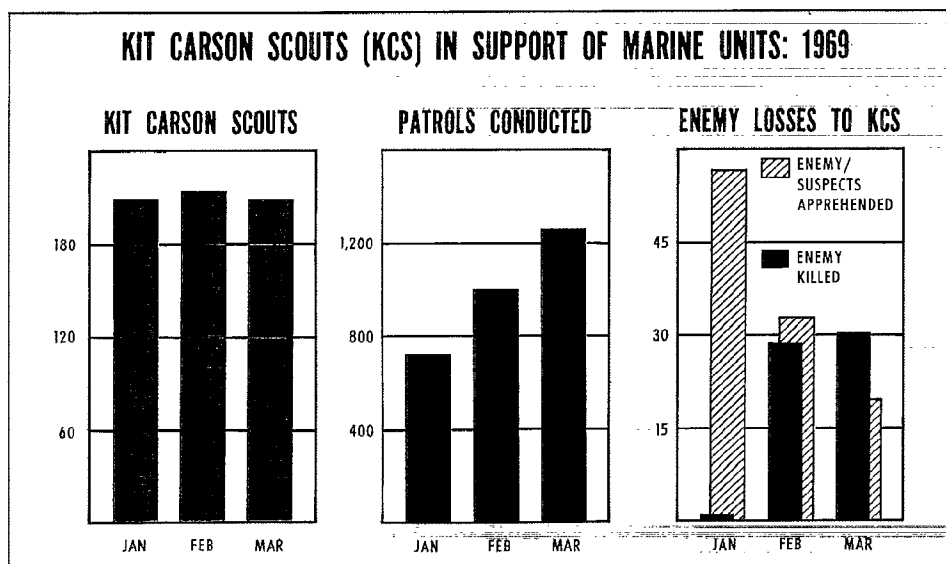
Operating with the 1st and 3d Marine Divisions dur-

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ing the month, 207 Scouts accompanied 1,269 patrols and ambushes, imparting to the Marines knowledge gained during service with Viet Cong units. Credited directly to these former VC were 30 enemy killed, another 19 enemy or VC suspects apprehended, and six returnees. Additionally, many friendly casualties were prevented as the KCS located 46 mines and booby traps.

The following chart compares the KCS strength supporting Marine units, and accomplishment by those Scouts, since the first of the year.



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REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT AND PACIFICATION

Pacification programs continued to expand in I CTZ during March, as evidenced by the increase to over 75% in the secure population. Capitalizing on this advancing security, the GVN conducted the first of three phases of local elections planned for 1969, and the high voter turnout reflected the people's support of the GVN.

Providing a military screen for these ongoing programs was the ARVN, compiling an impressive combat record both in the Danang and Quang Ngai City areas. Also contributing to the security requisite for a viable pacification campaign were combined action units, which accounted for nearly 350 enemy killed or captured as a result of their 13,554 counter guerrilla operations.

And, GVN and US anti-Viet Cong infrastructure (VCI) and Chieu Hoi campaigns continued their erosional effects on the enemy. During March, more than 300 VCI were eliminated; and, a 1969 monthly record of 324 disillusioned enemy rallied to the GVN in I CTZ.

Pacification

Again in March, the pacification status of I CTZ increased, as an additional 80,900 civilians were included in the secure category. As a result, 75.2% of the population in the five provinces was secure at end-month - the first time more than three-quarters of the people have been so rated.

On the following page is a map portraying the pacification status of I CTZ, by province, as of 1 March.

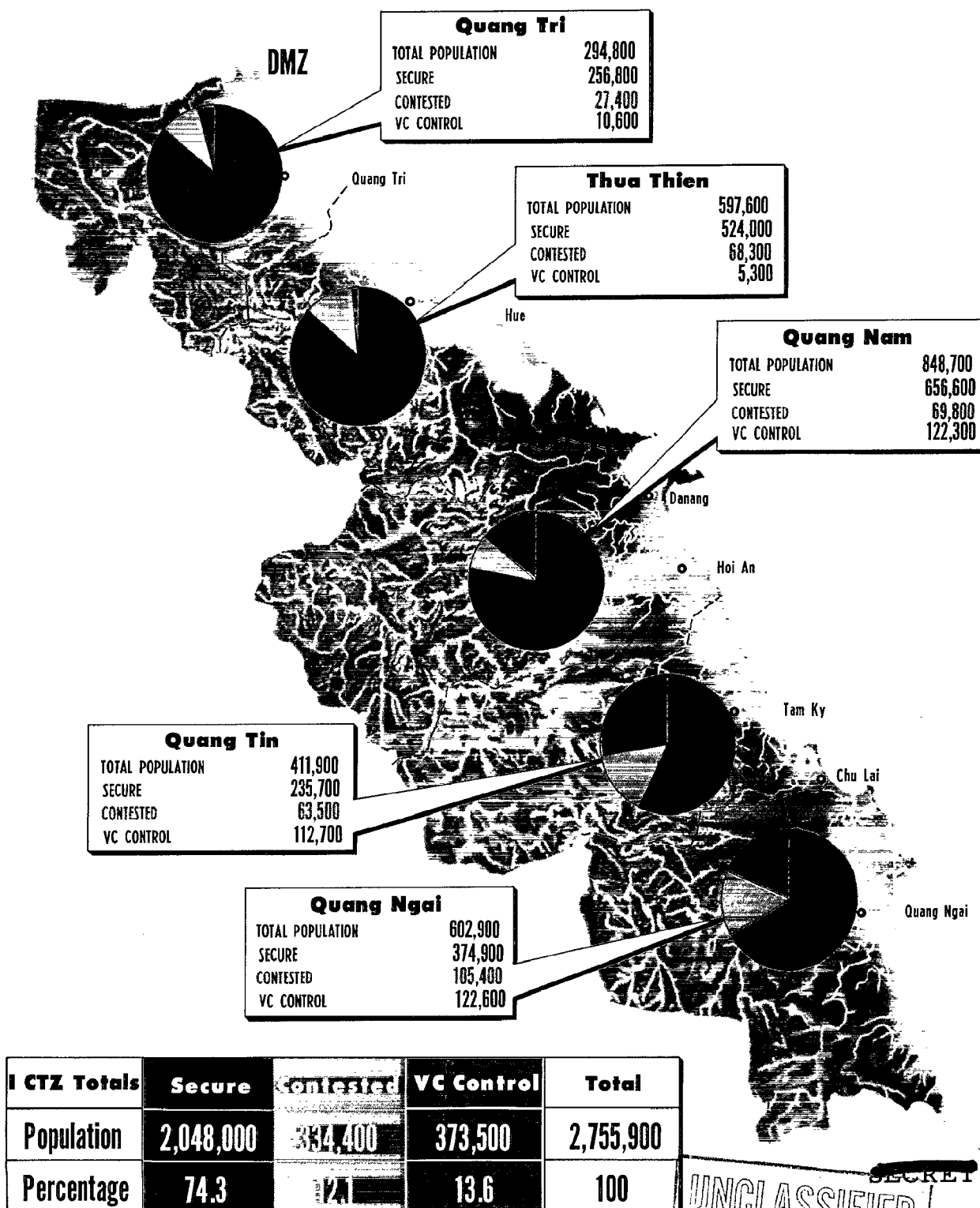
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PACIFICATION STATUS - I CTZ



Note: Based on end-February 1969 Hamlet Evaluation System data.

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Elections

The process of restoring elected government at the local level in I CTZ was initiated in 1967 when, between March and June, the GVN organized elections in 187 (36%) of the villages and 625 (26%) of the hamlets throughout the five provinces. Plans to expand this program in 1968 were postponed as a result of the Tet offensive and the subsequent restoration projects. However, one of the eight major objectives in the 1969 Pacification and Development Program is to spread elected government to all communities in I CTZ.

At present, the plan is to satisfy this requirement by a three-phased program: phase I by March (completed); phase II by June; phase III by December. This goal, however, will be difficult to attain, for several reasons.

-First, a number of hamlets and villages are either abandoned or sparsely populated; President THIEU proposes to rectify this situation by deleting these "paper" communities from the rolls.

-Second, there are certain areas which have been communist enclaves since the emergence of the Viet Minh in 1945. Consequently, meaningful elections in these areas are not happenings of the near future; they must be precluded by ferreting out the VCI, revamping the local society, and establishing GVN institutions - time-consuming projects.

-Third, it is difficult to solicit candidates in some "contested" areas, since elected officials are prime targets for Viet Cong terrorism. The only solution for this problem is to encompass all such places within the continually spreading security screen.

Despite these and other obstacles hampering the realization of popularly elected local governments, the GVN in March successfully conducted phase I of the 1969 program.

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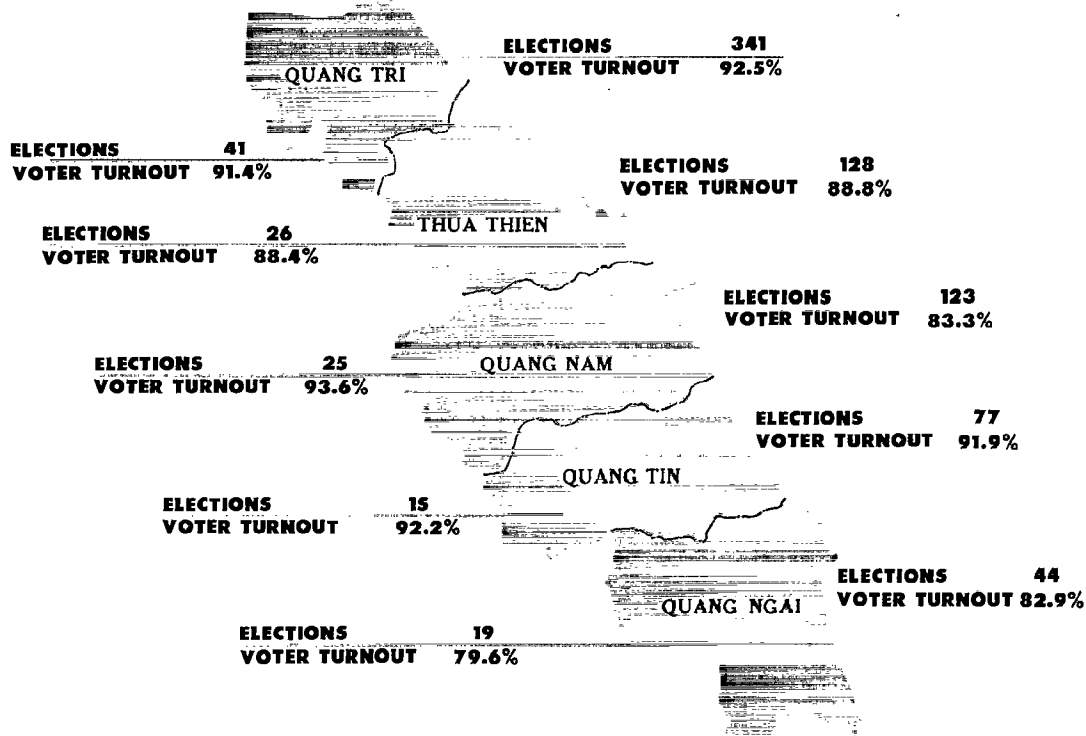
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The schedule called for 128 village council and 717 hamlet chief elections to be held on the first four Sundays of the month. By the 23d, the last polling day, 126 village and 713 hamlet elections had been conducted, with more than 88% and 87% of the eligible voters participating, respectively. The map below presents I CTZ election statistics, by province.

I CTZ LOCAL ELECTIONS: MARCH 1969

VILLAGE COUNCIL ELECTIONS

HAMLET CHIEF ELECTIONS



I CTZ TOTALS	SCHEDULED	HELD	ELIGIBLE VOTERS	VOTER TURNOUT	PERCENTAGE
VILLAGE COUNCILS	128	126	184,077	163,582	88.8%
HAMLET CHIEF	717	713	201,058	176,688	87.9%

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In evaluating the importance of these elections, it is necessary to note they are but one facet of the multilayered GVN pacification program to achieve socio-political solidarity, particularly in rural areas where government influence has waned for many years.

ARVN Support of Pacification

ARVN battalions operating in pacification precedence areas continued to generate considerable contact with enemy formations threatening major population centers in I CTZ. Particularly significant were the battles fought in the Quang Ngai City and Danang areas, which accounted for nearly 800 enemy killed during March.

Between 1 and 5 March, the 4th ARVN Regiment, maintaining the tempo of operations established late last month, accounted for more than 100 enemy killed in a series of battles centered five miles south of Quang Ngai City. On the 21st, the regiment again generated prolonged contact with the enemy; in three widely separated engagements, ranging from seven miles south to ten miles north of the city, the regiment killed another 96. The 4th ARVN Regiment casualties for these battles were six killed and 37 wounded.

In the Danang area, pacification support provided by the 51st ARVN Regiment and the 1st Ranger Group also produced telling results. On the 19th, for example, the 2d and 3d Battalions, 51st Regiment engaged the enemy in two separate contacts (ten and five miles south of Danang, respectively), killing a total of 64, capturing eight, and seizing 24 weapons. ARVN losses were two killed and 17 wounded. Four late-month contacts by Ranger units cost the enemy 332 killed and 31 weapons captured. Friendly casualties also were high, however, with 26 Rangers killed and 113 wounded.

Augmenting the ARVN effort were Regional Force

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outfits, which registered several noteworthy performances during March.

-During late afternoon on the 21st, three RF companies engaged a large enemy force, four miles west of Hoi An, killing 38 and capturing nine weapons. RF casualties were four killed and 11 wounded.

-Two days later, the 139th and 706th RF Companies were attacked by a large enemy force about three hours prior to dawn. Positioned a mile south of Hoi An, the RF units repulsed the assault, killing 49 enemy and capturing 13 weapons, 131 mines, and 120 grenades. Eleven RF soldiers were killed and 12 were wounded during the battle.

Combined Action Program

Operations by combined action units reached a record level during the month, as more than 13,500 patrols and ambushes were conducted by the 1,674 Marines, 110 US Navy corpsmen, and 2,879 Popular Force (PF) soldiers manning the program's four group and 20 company headquarters, 111 platoons, and five mobile training teams (MTT). Results of these operations included 296 enemy killed, the highest recorded since February 1968.

Of particular interest during the month were operations by Combined Action Company (CACO) 1-1 which, headquartered on the outskirts of Tam Ky, provides security in the northern, western, and southern quadrants emanating from the Quang Tin provincial capital. This is accomplished by employment of the company's six platoons as mobile units. The mobile CAP concept, whereby the platoon has no stationary compound to defend, allows the CAP to maneuver in a random pattern throughout its operating area; thus, not only is it more difficult for the enemy to fix a CAP in position, but also it enables the combined action unit to provide better security to local Vietnamese.

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Besides providing tactical training for 184 PF soldiers and enhancing the security of nearly 90,000 civilians living in the area, CACO 1-1 in March executed a highly successful campaign against enemy units threatening the capital. Generating more than 20 casualty-producing contacts, the company accounted for 133 enemy killed and 44 weapons captured; friendly casualties were three killed and ten wounded.

Twelve of the contacts resulted from actions by CAP's 1-1-6 and 1-1-7, which operate in the coastal plain stretching six miles to the north of Tam Ky. For example, during a series of patrols between the 6th and 8th, the two platoons engaged small enemy units on five occasions, killing 15, capturing two, inducing another two to rally, and seizing 12 weapons.

The month's activities culminated on the 26th, when, at 0900, CAP 1-1-7 attacked an estimated VC platoon, embunkered at Thach Tan (1) hamlet, six miles northwest of Tam Ky. After a brisk exchange of small arms fire, the enemy broke contact and fled west, leaving seven dead, one 60mm mortar, two short-range rocket launchers, one AK-47, and various munitions, equipment, and documents abandoned in their positions. The patrol pursued the enemy for four hours, killing an additional 19 Viet Cong (most of whom were attempting to hide in caves and tunnels) and capturing three more weapons. Friendly casualties for the patrol were two Marines wounded and evacuated.

At 0830 the following morning, a CAP 1-1-6 patrol came across six destroyed bunkers, four miles southwest of the 1-1-7 action. Within 15 minutes, the patrol engaged and killed three VC, and shortly thereafter another two enemy were added to the list. At 0930, the patrol was hit by mortar fire, but an aerial observer directed air strikes on the enemy positions, silencing the mortars. Reinforcements from CACO 1-1 headquarters and MTT 1-1 joined the patrol, and the bolstered unit swept the area, discovering nine dead enemy, four rifles, 500 pounds of rice, and several destroyed

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bunkers and tunnels. One Marine was wounded and evacuated during the day.

On the last day of the month, CAP 1-1-7 again engaged the enemy. Conducting a sweep through the area nine miles north of Tam Ky, the Marines and PF soldiers uncovered a tunnel complex, occupied by an estimated Viet Cong squad. Clearing the tunnels, the CAP killed seven VC and captured two others, a rifle, and 43 hand grenades.

Combined action units elsewhere in I CTZ likewise turned in impressive performances, the most significant of which was initiated by CAP 2-4-2 on the 18th. Early in the afternoon, the CAP made contact with a large enemy force one and one-half miles west of Hoi An. An aerial observer supporting the platoon reported some 100 NVA in the area, and fixed wing and armed helicopter strikes, two mortar missions, and a US Navy Swift boat strike were run against the hostile force during the afternoon. The aerial observer counted 43 enemy bodies on the battlefield, with 19 of them credited to CAP 2-4-2.

During the month, combined action units conducted 3,804 daylight patrols and 9,750 night patrols and ambushes, resulting in 345 enemy killed or captured and 123 weapons seized. The following graphs present combined action statistics for the past year.

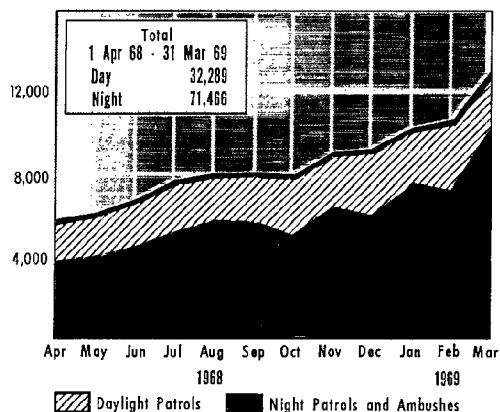
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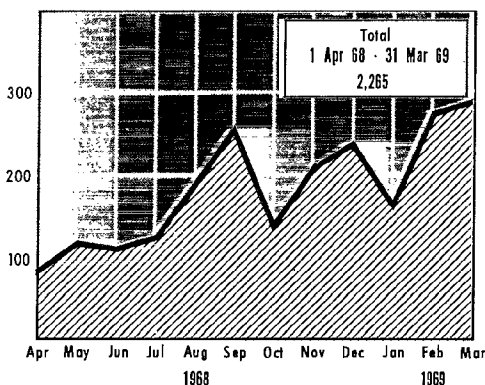
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COMBINED ACTION PROGRAM OPERATIONS

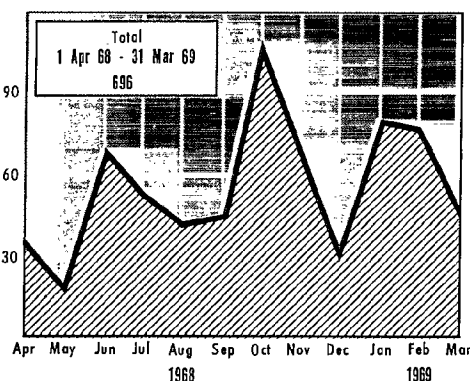
OPERATIONS CONDUCTED



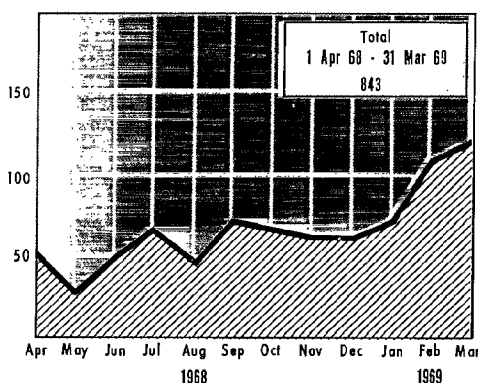
ENEMY KILLED



ENEMY CAPTURED



WEAPONS CAPTURED

PHOENIX/PHUNG HOANG Campaign

In order to appraise more objectively the effect the PHOENIX/PHUNG HOANG Campaign is having on the Viet Cong infrastructure, US and GVN agencies have developed more stringent criteria for verification of infrastructure neutralizations. Under these newly adopted criteria, communication/liaison, sapper, and armed propaganda person-

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nel, along with a substantial number of hamlet and village-level cadre functionaries, no longer will qualify as VCI.

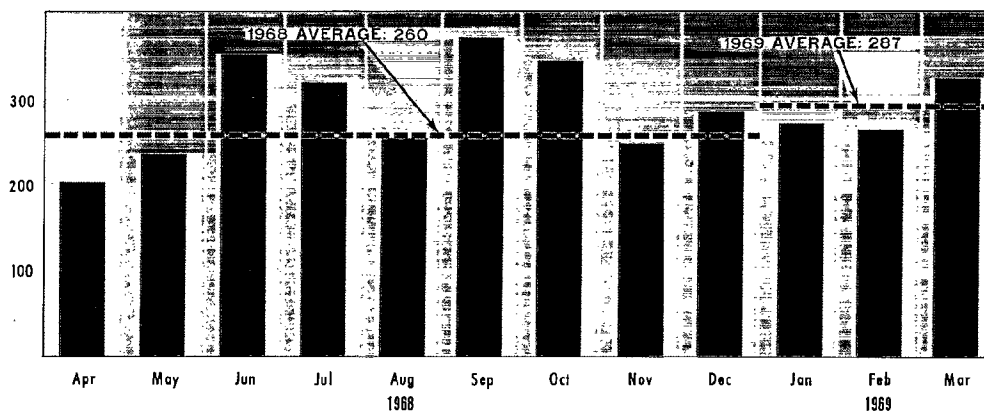
The effects this revised system is having on the program are twofold: the number of VCI eliminations reported will be reduced, reflecting only those encompassed by the stricter standards; but, this will result in a better picture of VCI deterioration.

In January, 928 VCI were reported neutralized in I CTZ; in February, subsequent to adoption of the new rules, the cadre eliminations fell to 384 - a 58% reduction. Reports for March reveal 338 VCI were eliminated.

Chieu Hoi Returnees

The highest number of returnees (324) since October 1968 rallied during March to the GVN in I CTZ, bringing the 1969 total thus far to 863, more than 70% greater than that recorded for the same period last year. The graph below depicts the Chieu Hoi returnee rate in I CTZ since April 1968.

CHIEU HOI RETURNEES - I CTZ



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One reason for the increased Chieu Hoi rate (287 per month in 1969 as compared to 260 per month in 1968) is the growing awareness, among enemy personnel, of the inevitable victory by Free World forces.

-Warrant Officer Tran THOUNG, a former assistant political officer in Front 4 who rallied on 4 March seven miles southwest of Danang, stated he became a returnee because he was convinced the GVN would win. He also felt the war news and propaganda expounded by the Viet Cong were based on falsehoods.

-Pham Ngoi THOC, a 17-year-old children's association leader in Son Hiep village, Quang Tin province, returned to GVN control on the 6th, 16 miles south of An Hoa in the Nui Loc Son basin. THOC credited III MAF and GVN psychological operations not only with convincing him the VC would lose but also with causing considerable erosion of the infrastructure in his village. According to THOC, seven local guerrillas rallied in February and a constant stream of civilians is flowing from his area to more secure territory.

-Senior Sergeant Nguyen Manh HUNG, a platoon leader in the Reconnaissance Company, 5th NVA Regiment, was captured on 20 March before he could rally at a GVN center. The reasons for his planned defection included a deterioration in living conditions and a realization of the senselessness of continued fighting.

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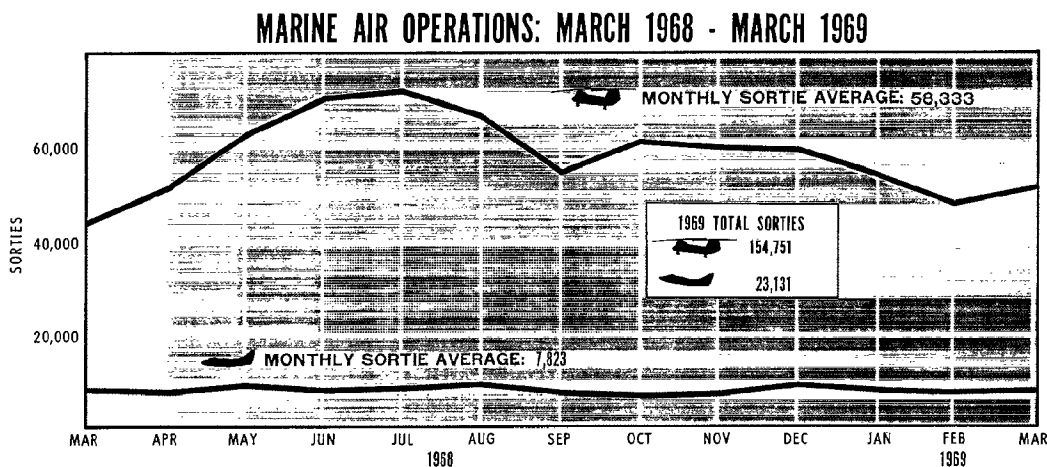
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AIR OPERATIONS

Marine air support in March again focused on operations against NVA and VC units in mountainous base areas and along associated lines of communication. Combining the tactical mobility and airborne firepower provided by fixed wing and helicopter support, III MAF and ARVN ground units continued to dissect NVA/VC staging and supply areas, forcing the enemy into motion - and further increasing his susceptibility to interdiction. Against this hostile flow, as well as resupply traffic along cross-border networks, over 4,000 fixed wing and 16,000 helicopter sorties supported major I CTZ ground operations and air interdiction programs, both in and out-of-country.

Support for other combat operations in March brought to 59,835 the number of combat and combat support sorties flown by Marine pilots. Helicopter squadrons logged 51,835 missions, transporting 72,843 troops and passengers and 12,025 tons of cargo. Fixed wing strike and combat support missions in I CTZ accounted for 6,344 sorties, while similar efforts out-of-country counted another 1,656. The following graph compares the March 1969 air effort with monthly flight operation totals since March 1968.



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Support of Ground Combat Operations

To support eight wide-ranging large unit operations and the coastal region counter guerrilla campaign, Marine aircraft squadrons flew over 58,000 sorties in March, providing around-the-clock ordnance deliveries and helicopter transport, various reconnaissance capabilities, and other airborne tasks requisite to a flexible and mobile ground scheme of maneuver.

- Fixed Wing Operations

Fixed wing air support for combat operations in I CTZ remained at a high level during March - 6,344 sorties, a 6.9% increase over February totals. The majority - 5,017 - were attack missions integral to ground operations or against enemy support networks and areas of special interest (DMZ region infiltration routes, Danang rocket belt). Ordnance delivery totals during these missions exceeded 11,100 tons of high explosives, 3,300 napalm bombs, and 15,200 rockets.

Accomplishment of the attack mission was illustrated in the reduction of enemy defenses, allowing a steady advance by ground combat units. Attributed directly to in-country strike sorties were 151 enemy killed, 2,126 structures or bunkers destroyed, and 619 secondary fires and explosions among supply and weapons positions. Specific examples of March attack missions are illustrated by the following accounts.

-On the 1st, pilots from Marine Aircraft Groups-12 and 13 supported elements of the 5th Marines attacking an enemy force three miles north-northwest of An Hoa. Six air strikes along a commanding high ground bunker complex resulted in 19 enemy killed, five fortifications destroyed, and continuation of the Marine advance.

-Company M, 26th Marines, operating two miles south of the 1 March action, called for a fixed wing attack on a mortar position at dusk on the 4th. An air observer con-

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trolling the mission observed ten NVA killed and the position destroyed.

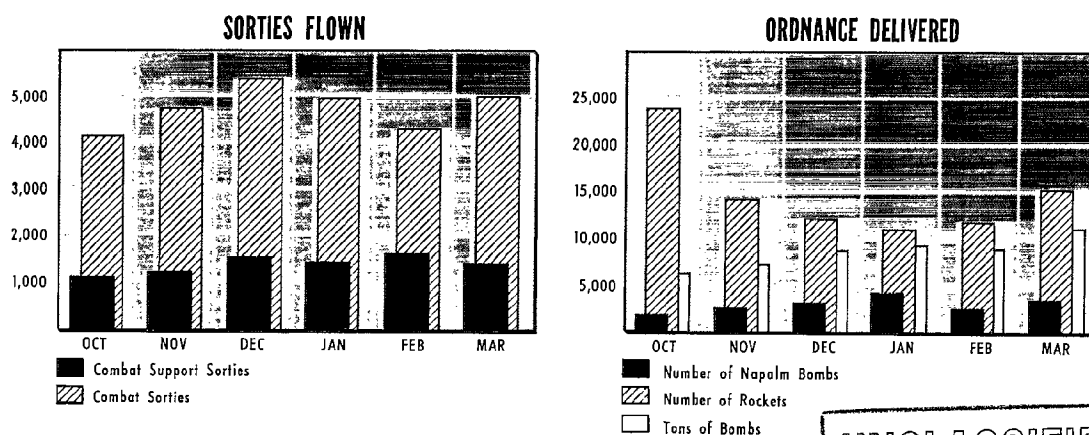
-In the DEWEY CANYON area on the 18th, an aerial observer directed two air strikes against an active mortar position 23 miles south-southwest of Quang Tri City. The mortar was destroyed and three of its crew killed.

-At noon on the 22d, two A-4E's from VMA-223, in support of a combined action platoon, dropped high explosives and napalm on enemy positions three and one-half miles west of Tam Ky, killing 15 enemy and destroying 18 bunkers. The CAP force found five automatic weapons as they swept the fortifications.

Another 1,327 sorties were flown to provide ground commanders various types of airborne support necessary for prosecution of the attack. Over 800 flights, including 682 by OV-10A aircraft, provided visual reconnaissance for unit leaders and operational planners. Photographic and electronic intelligence collection continued through 173 flights by Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron-1 (VMCJ-1) pilots. The remaining sorties carried forward air controllers and naval gunfire spotters or provided fire support along helicopter approach and retirement lanes.

The following graphs portray monthly, in-country fixed wing support and ordnance delivery totals since October 1968.

IN-COUNTRY FIXED WING SUPPORT BY MARINE AIRCRAFT: OCT 68 - MAR 69



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-Helicopter Operations

Providing helicopter support to Marine and other Free World forces in I CTZ, 1st Wing and SLF squadrons flew a total of 51,835 sorties during March. Cargo and troop lifts, accounting for nearly 20,000 of these flights, were responsible for the transport of 12,025 tons of supplies and 72,843 passengers.

The principal helicopter effort in March again was support for large unit operations targeted against enemy base and staging areas in the highland sections of northern and central I CTZ. Located beyond usable land lines of communication, these operations depended on helicopters for both resupply and tactical mobility. In Quang Tri province, 5,227 sorties supported the final phase of DEWEY CANYON, while another 4,319 were used in the initial phase of Operation MAINE CRAG. In the Danang area, 1st Marine Division units utilized 470 helicopter sorties on 31 March to initiate Operation OKLAHOMA HILLS. As two 7th Marines battalions attacked overland into the ridgelines southwest of the city, 3d Battalion, 26th Marines assaulted into landing zones deeper in the operational area. D-Day operations were supported by the helilift of over 1,700 troops and 93 tons of supplies.

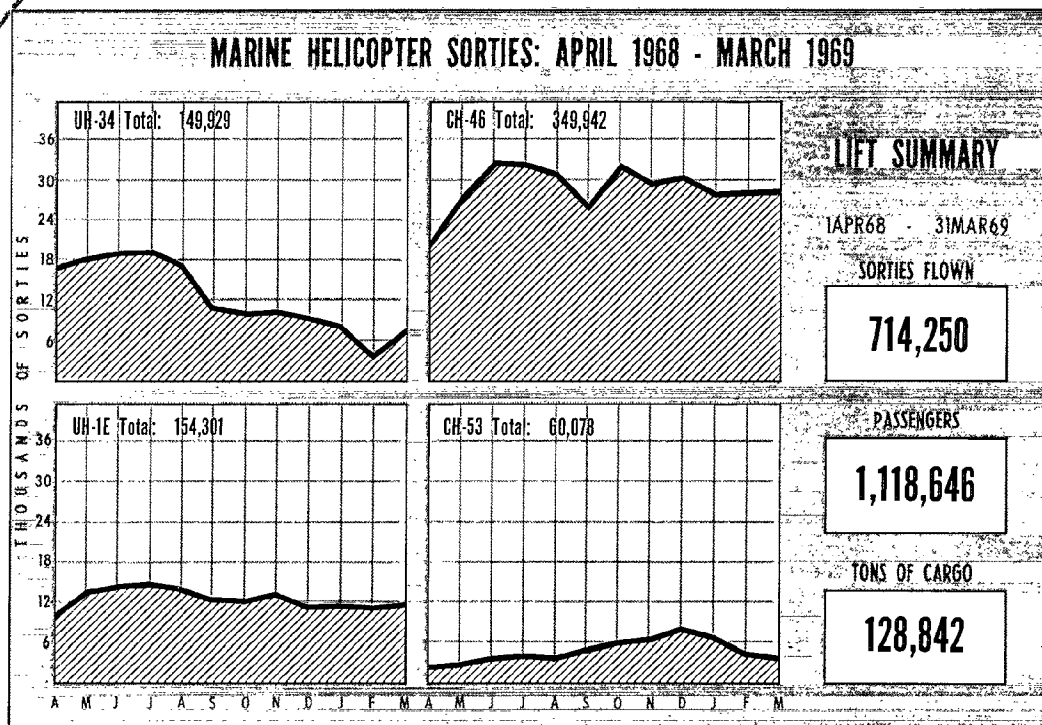
The graphs on the following page compare helicopter sorties conducted in March with monthly totals since April 1968.

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Out-of-Country Operations

During the month, 1st MAW fixed wing pilots also flew 1,656 sorties in support of out-of-country interdiction and surveillance operations, with the major effort applied against the Laotian resupply routes. Attacking the hostile traffic flow in Laos, attack pilots conducted 989 missions, while combat support missions accounted for an additional 82 sorties. Exemplifying these flights were two missions executed on the 15th.

-At 0635, two 1st Wing A-4E's targeted a road segment, 26 miles south of Khe Sanh, with twenty 250-pound bombs. Observed battle damage included one truck destroyed, four secondary fires and explosions, and the road cut.

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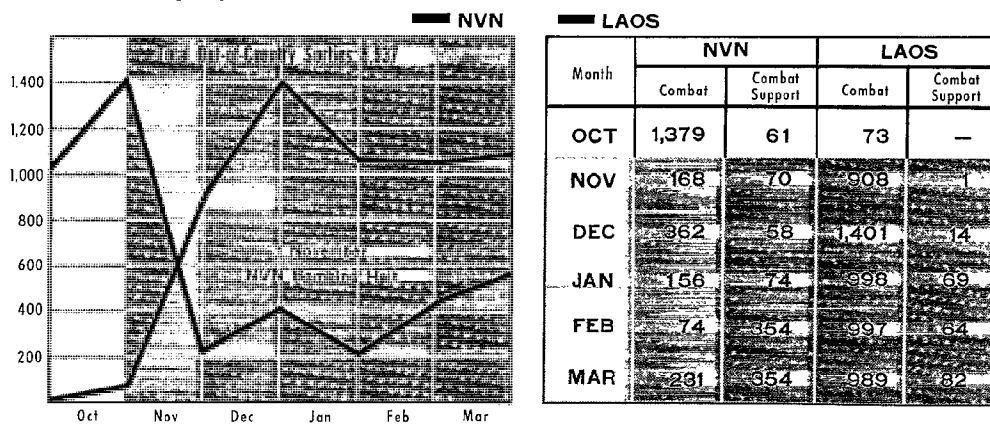
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-Seven miles to the east, two F-4B's from VMFA-323 hit another road late in the afternoon. Four trucks were observed destroyed, along with eight secondary explosions.

Supporting surveillance programs against North Vietnam, the wing conducted 585 sorties over Route Package I and contiguous South China Sea waters. Marine F-4's flew 231 combat air patrols, while EA-6A and RF-4B aircraft from VMCJ-1 flew 314 electronic countermeasure and 40 photographic missions.

The following graph compares fixed wing flights over North Vietnam and Laos for the past six months.

OUT-OF-COUNTRY FIXED WING SUPPORT BY MARINE AIRCRAFT: OCT 68 - MAR 69



Trans-Pacific Deployment

During March, Marine Fighter/Attack Squadron-232 (VMFA-232), with 15 F-4J aircraft, completed a successful trans-Pacific deployment to join the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and relieve VMFA-323, equipped with older model F-4B's. Departing Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, California on the 20th, the squadron made enroute stops at Kaneohe (Hawaii), Wake Island, Guam, and Cubi Point (Philippines) before arriving in-country.

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In-flight refueling along each leg of the route was provided by Marine KC-130F refueler/transport aircraft. The squadron closed on Chu Lai at 1315 on the 30th and was assigned to Marine Aircraft Group-13. Arrival of VMFA-232 brought the inventory of 1st Wing F-4J aircraft to 32.

Upon completion of the trans-Pacific crossing, VMFA-323 terminated combat operations and prepared for transplacement to El Toro. The squadron's departure reduces the number of F-4B aircraft in the 1st Wing to 60.

Aircraft Losses

In March, a total of 13 Marine aircraft losses were attributed directly to enemy action. In-flight incidents resulted in the loss of three fixed wing aircraft (one A-6A, one F-4J, and one A-4E) and three CH-46 helicopters. The other seven losses (one CH-46 and six A-4E's) were sustained during rocket attacks on III MAF installations.

Six helicopters received battle damage from enemy ground fire while supporting combat operations during the month. Another helicopter and three fixed wing aircraft were damaged at air facilities as a result of incoming rocket fire.

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LOGISTICS

The noticeable decrease in enemy activity and increased periods of moderate weather during March afforded III MAF logistic support to proceed much at a routine pace. Throughout the month, materiel flowing through the supply pipeline was completely responsive to the needs of the outlying combat bases and support areas. Appropriately, this period of relatively unhampered service support ushered in the third anniversary of the establishment of the Force Logistic Command.

Force Logistic Command

Originally oriented to an amphibious assault environment, the III MAF logistic support organization, Force Logistic Command (FLC), has evolved to the point where it can provide support for both sustained land and amphibious operations.

During 1965 and early 1966, when there was no assurance III MAF would remain long ashore in I CTZ, the logistic organization retained much of its provisional task organized characteristics. The possibility of a short-notice retraction from Vietnam required the organization of the Force Logistic Support Groups (FLSG's) at Danang and Chu Lai to retain expeditionary characteristics. As the war intensified, however, the accretion of troops and equipment in-country necessitated a change in concept. The consolidation of previously fragmented logistic command and control structures and procedures enabled the establishment of a viable semipermanent logistic support organization, thus creating the FLC concept. In essence, the Service Battalions of the two Marine divisions became FLC's Logistic Support Groups, and the 1st Force Service Regiment, after its introduction into SVN in February 1967, provided the

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framework for the headquarters and the heavier support. This organization was an orderly evolution from the original LSG which supported the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade -- a normal growth process with no discontinuities in services performed - nor any overnight changes in assets.

Another factor causing FLC to change its modus operandi is the wide geographical dispersion of III MAF units, now executing sustained operations in I CTZ hinterland mountain regions, as well as in the densely populated coastal plain. To provide adequate support for these wide-ranging, long-term campaigns, the FLC has established permanent supply, maintenance, and service facilities in each of the logistic support areas from which these functions can be performed on a year-round basis. But, even with these permanent facilities and some commercial-type equipment, the expeditionary characteristic of the III MAF logistic support organization remains, and is capable of mounting out for operations elsewhere if required. Its tactical logistic support equipment, supplies, and organization are those established for general use in the Fleet Marine Force. An illustration of the effectiveness of the organization is that no major operation has ever been cancelled for lack of adequate logistic support.

The organization of the FLC, its relationship to other commands, and the physical location of its units as of 31 March are reflected in the map on the following page.

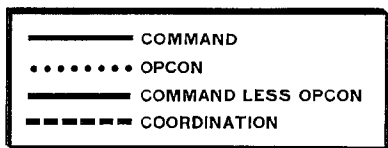
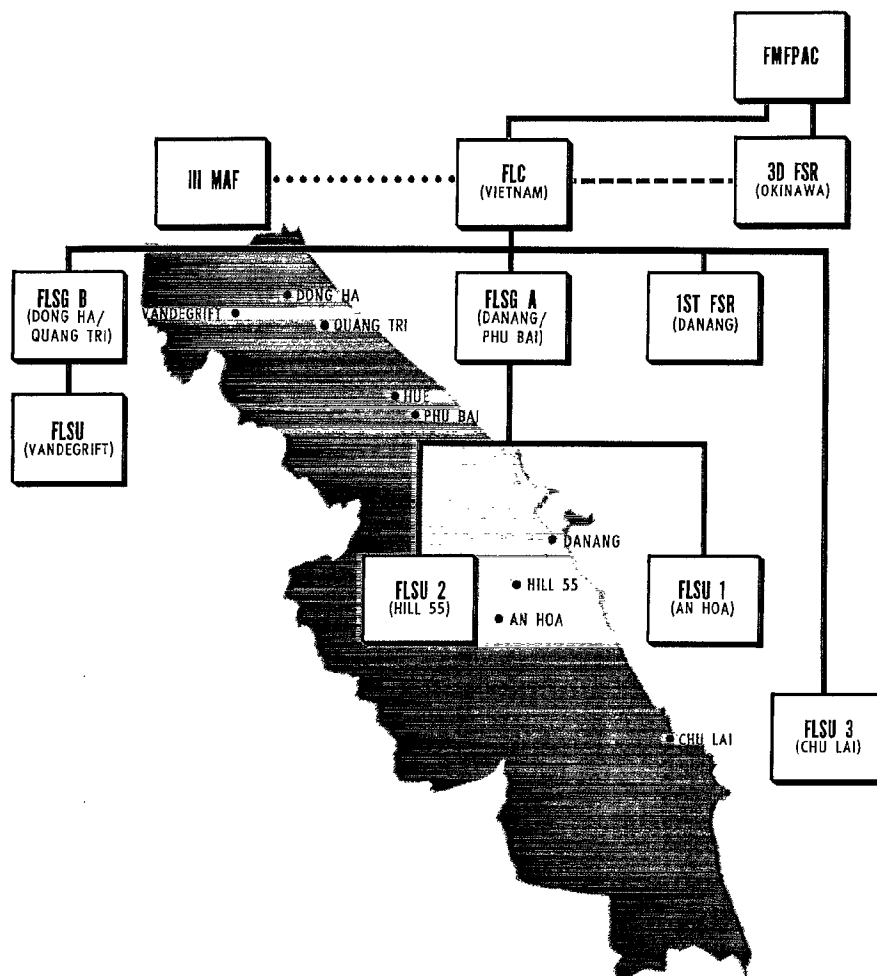
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III MAF LOGISTIC COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS AND FACILITIES 31 MARCH 1969



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Aviation Logistics

Inspection of Marine KC-130F's during comprehensive cleaning operations has uncovered extensive intergranular corrosion caused by moisture trapped in structural cavities and between members and panels of the aircraft. An estimated 1,000 man-hours of repair are required on the first six KC-130F's inspected. At the request of CG, FMF-Pac, COMFAIRWESTPAC made available its industrial facilities in Japan for aircraft requiring major repair. Minor work will be accomplished in Okinawa by contact teams from the Japan-based facilities.

The following chart reflects the number of aircraft, by type, assigned to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing in RVN as of 31 March. Included are aircraft undergoing Progressive Aircraft Rework (PAR) and Battle Damage Repair (BDR) during March.

<u>ACFT</u>	<u>TOTAL ASSIGNED</u>	<u>PAR</u>	<u>BDR</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>TOTAL IN-COUNTRY</u>
A-4	64	11	4	-	49
TA-4	11	1	-	2	8
A-6	37	3	-	-	34
EA-6	6	1	-	-	5
F-4	92	7	6	-	79
RF-4	10	1	-	-	9
EF-10	9	1	-	-	8
C-1	2	1	-	-	1

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<u>ACFT</u>	<u>TOTAL ASSIGNED</u>	<u>PAR</u>	<u>BDR</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>TOTAL IN-COUNTRY</u>
C-117	7	-	-	-	7
US-2	3	-	-	-	3
O-1	11	-	1	-	10
OV-10	38	-	6	4	28
UH-1	75	11	6	-	58
UH-34	53	3	3	-	47
CH-46	147	38	10	-	99
CH-53	50	15	5	-	30
TOTALS	612	93	41	6	475

NORS, "Not Operationally Ready due to Supply", and NORM, "Not Operationally Ready due to Maintenance", reflect those aircraft not available for operations; all other aircraft are considered operationally ready. Aircraft in the Marine Corps inventory may have more than one primary mission assigned, and prior to January 1969, they were required to be able to perform all assigned missions before considered operationally ready. During January, the Chief of Naval Operations directed that each aircraft capable of accomplishing any of its primary missions be reported in a ready status. The NORS/NORM rates for the past nine months, for selected aircraft of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, are shown on the following page.

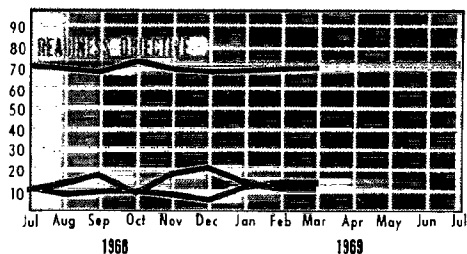
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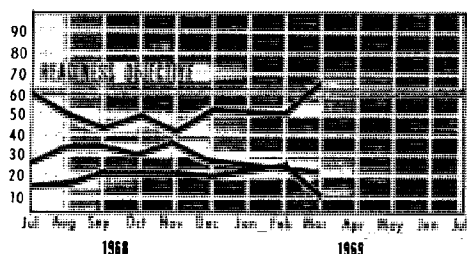
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NORS/NORM RATES - III MAF MARINE AIRCRAFT

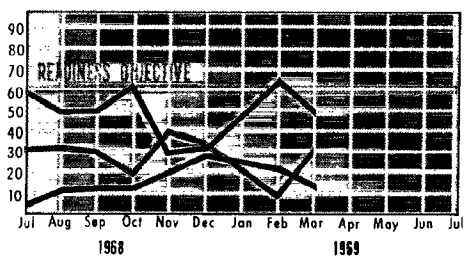
A-4 (ATTACK)



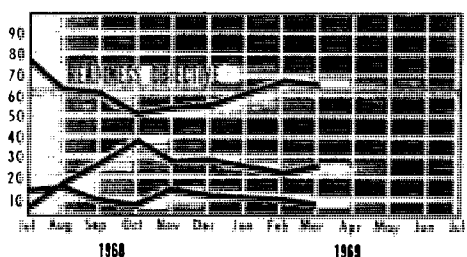
F-4 (FIGHTER-ATTACK)



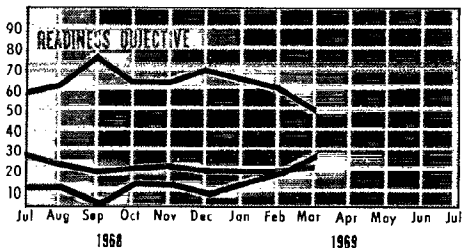
A-6A (ATTACK)



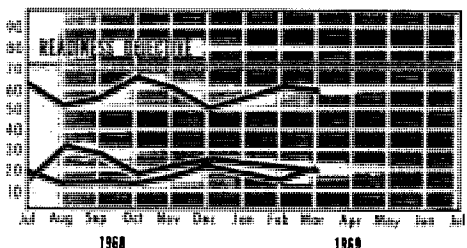
OV-10A (RECONNAISSANCE)



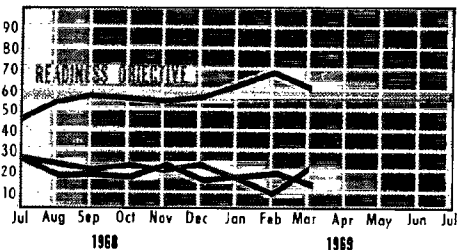
UH-34 (HELO)



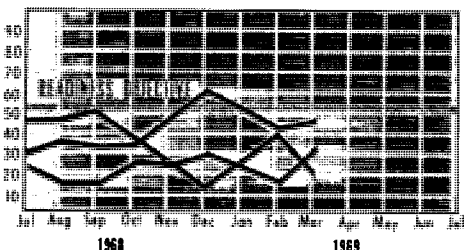
UH-1E (HELO)



CH-46 (HELO)



CH-53 (HELO)



NORS — NORM — READY —

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Embarkation and Transportation

The movement of cargo into and from the port of Danang increased during March, as exemplified by two new daily tonnage records set on the 5th. These were 30,070 measurement tons (M/T) off-loaded at the port and 38,955 M/T transferred from the Danang facility to outlying areas, such as Chu Lai, Hue, and Dong Ha, in support of III MAF operating units. This is a significant increase over the 5 October 1968 records of 25,178 M/T and 37,184 M/T, respectively.

Of the total III MAF shipments within I CTZ during March, 107,252 short tons (S/T) were moved by surface, which was over 11% higher than the 96,392 S/T delivered during February. The 1,457 S/T moved by fixed wing aircraft was lower than previous months due to more extensive use of Rough Rider convoys to the outlying camps. In addition, CH-53's airlifted 5,050 S/T of high priority cargo.

Engineer Operations

The engineer effort in I CTZ was highlighted by completion of the new Liberty Bridge, as Naval construction forces opened the 825-foot, timber-pile supported, concrete decked bridge to convoy traffic on 30 March. This vital link in the Danang-An Hoa line of communication will cut resupply time in half; furthermore, elimination of this logistic bottleneck will assist the local Vietnamese in economic development of the area, as well as increasing the capacity of III MAF and GVN forces for conducting tactical and pacification operations. For 17 months, the only overland surface access to the An Hoa area, bordered by rivers and marshes on three sides and a ridge line on the other, was a 1st Bridge Company-operated 60-ton capacity ferry across the Thu Bon river. The original 2,000-foot bridge was washed away on the night of 8 October 1967 by an unusually severe monsoon-generated flood. Construction began at a site nearby during

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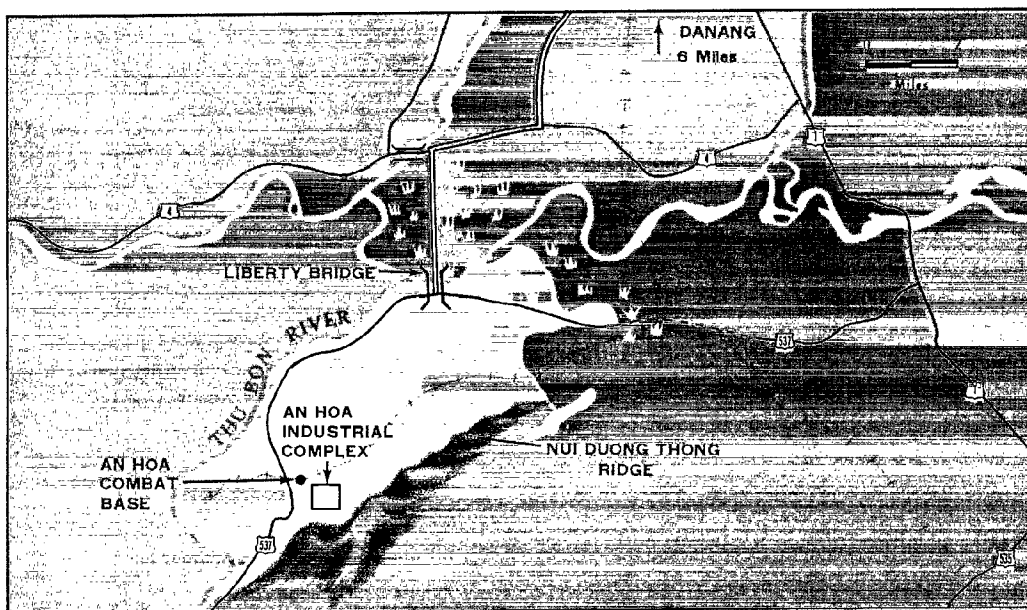
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January 1969, and despite enemy efforts to prevent completion, which included a 19 March ground assault against the site, the bridge was opened two days ahead of schedule.

The map below depicts the An Hoa area opened by completion of the new bridge.

REGION AFFECTED BY LIBERTY BRIDGE



The 1st Engineer Battalion conducted a land clearing operation in support of the 5th Marines, from 9 to 27 March, two miles northwest of An Hoa. The project, code-named WOODPECKER IV, resulted in 17,300 square meters of land cleared and 41 bunkers, 258 yards of tunnels, and 250 yards of trenchline destroyed.

During the last week in March, a project was initiated to reconstruct the Route 1 bridge over the Tra Bong river nine miles south of Chu Lai; five of its nine 80-foot reinforced concrete spans

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had been destroyed by enemy action. A tactical floating bridge is in place at the site to ensure the continued flow of traffic until repairs, scheduled for completion in July, are finished.

Ordnance

Six 175mm self-propelled guns, M107 were placed in service to supplant the shorter range M53 artillery pieces of the 1st 155mm Gun Battery on 5 March; the unit subsequently was redesignated as the 1st 175mm Gun Battery, FMF. The transition to 175mm guns by the 3d and 5th 155mm Gun Batteries is dependent upon receipt of initial provisioning repair parts. It is anticipated that adequate initial provisioning will arrive during April, at which time an additional twelve 175mm guns will be placed in action, further increasing artillery fire power available to III MAF.

Motor Transport

During March, 165 Rough Rider convoys were conducted in I CTZ, moving 12,238 S/T of cargo and 544 personnel, with an average of 14 tactical vehicles involved in each convoy. A review of March operations of the five in-country motor transport battalions and the FLC truck company is depicted below.

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>MILEAGE</u>	<u>PERSONNEL TRANSPORTED</u>	<u>TOTAL TONNAGE</u>
1st MTBn	74,323	50,378	6,743
3d MTBn	67,865	59,956	4,957
7th MTBn	138,771	2,599	26,531
9th MTBn	130,287	45,829	13,669
11th MTBn	66,361	14,008	8,520
TrkCo, FLC	105,244	43,409	34,083
TOTALS	582,851	216,179	94,503

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CONCLUSIONS

-III MAF's wide-ranging mobile offensive campaign has dealt the enemy serious damage -- not only in terms of such measurable results as troop, supply, and equipment losses, but also in the realm of imposing severe restrictions on his employment of I CTZ accommodations for the staging and movement of war resources.

-The first phase of expanding elected government at the local level was a successful achievement -- testimony to the accrual of GVN strength at the grass roots level in I CTZ.

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STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS: MARCH 19691. ENEMY ORDER OF BATTLEa. I CTZ/DMZ Summary

The enemy in I CTZ continued a two-pronged commitment of his forces -- reserving major formations in hinterland redoubts while tasking more unconventional elements with missions of harassment and terror, primarily along the coastal plain. Targets for his harassing attacks characteristically were military units afield, but the An Hoa combat base in Quang Nam also attracted much of his attention. The terrorism was directed predominantly against refugee camps in the southern provinces.

As the month closed, an estimated 80,600 personnel manned the enemy units in I CTZ, the DMZ area, and sanctuaries in adjacent Laos. Of the total, there were about 49,400 in confirmed combat units (42,200 NVA and 7,200 Main and Local Force Viet Cong), 2,000 administrative personnel, 13,800 guerrillas, and 15,400 troops in units classified in a probable or possible status.

On the following page is a map of the I CTZ/DMZ region, presenting the general locations of the 89 enemy infantry battalions situated there at end-month. The next four maps depict more specific information concerning the enemy unit dispositions.

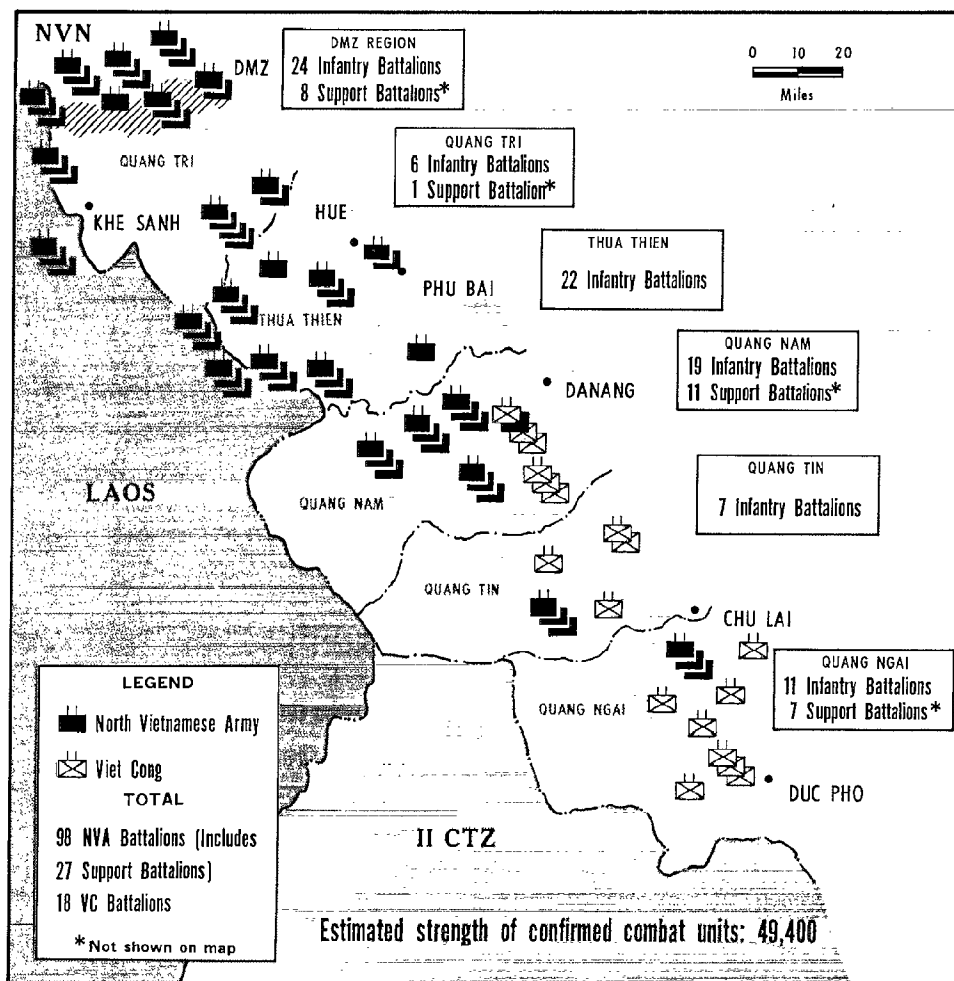
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ENEMY BATTALIONS IN I CTZ AND DMZ AREA: MARCH 1969



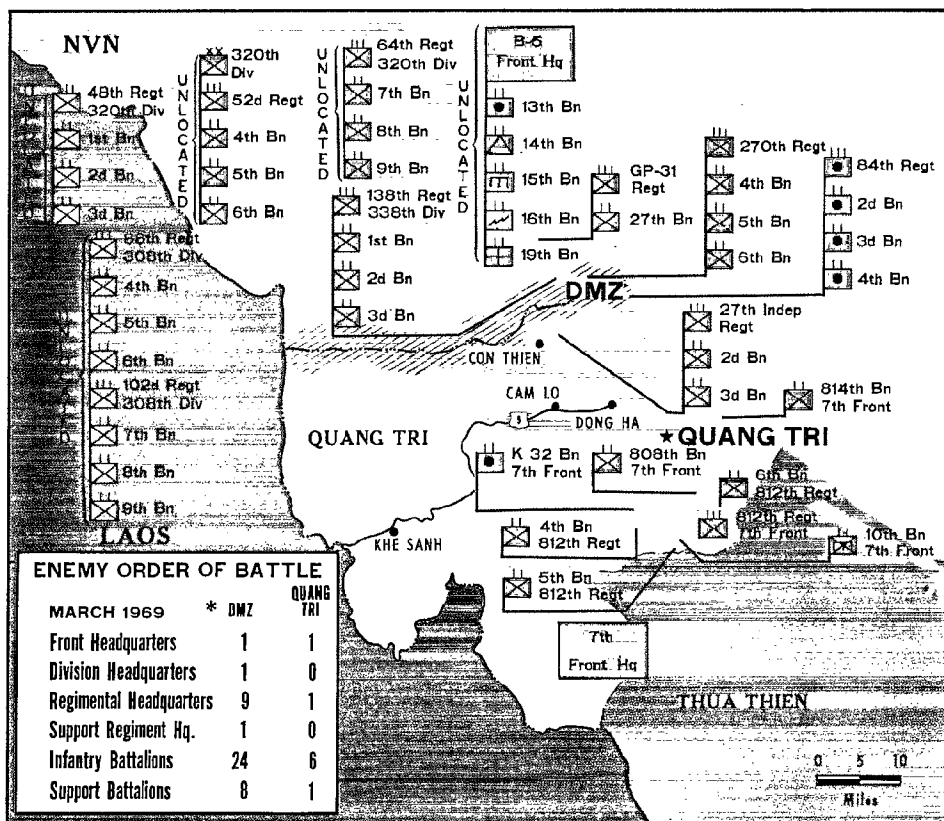
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b. DMZ/Quang Tri Province

At end-month, enemy strength in the DMZ/Quang Tri region was an estimated 33,900 soldiers, approximately the same as last month. Included in the figure were some 19,500 troops in confirmed combat units, about 85% of whom were positioned in the DMZ, North Vietnam, or Laos.



* Province capital

* 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, or under the control of the B-5 Front headquarters, are considered DMZ AREA UNITS.

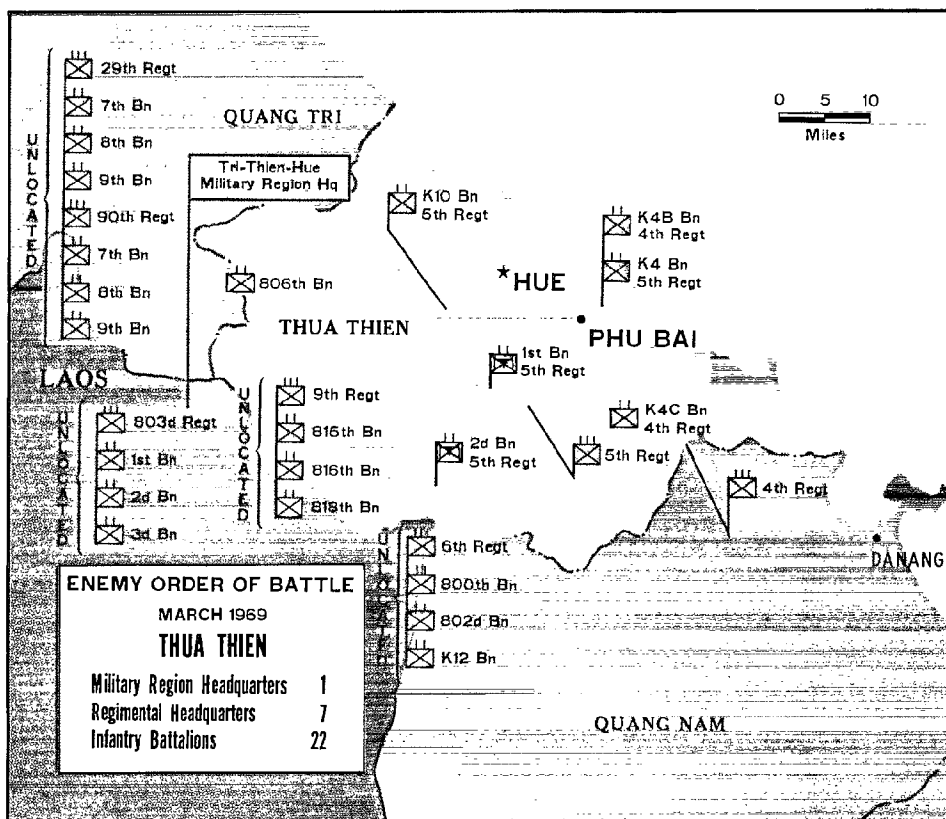
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c. Thua Thien Province

The enemy's end-month strength in Thua Thien was estimated at 14,200 troops, with 11,400 of them enrolled in confirmed combat units. Nearly 80% of this strength rests within sanctuaries across the Laotian border; the remainder are dispersed generally north and south of Hue along Route 1.



★ Province capital

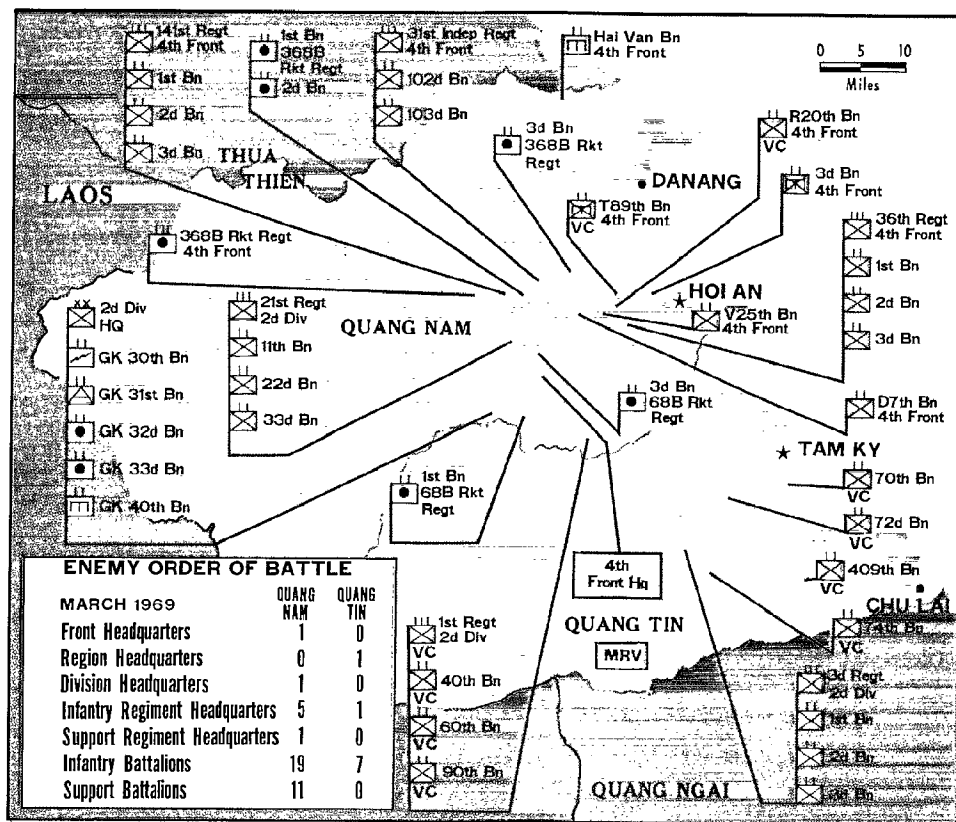
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d. Quang Nam/Quang Tin Provinces

On 31 March, estimated enemy strength in Quang Nam was roughly 16,100 soldiers, with another 6,600 in Quang Tin. This total (22,700) represents about the same as recorded in February. The only major unit change was the deletion of the 38th NVA Regimental headquarters which was assimilated by Front 4. The 38th NVA had been the senior headquarters for at least five NVA and Viet Cong battalions, now directed by Front 4.



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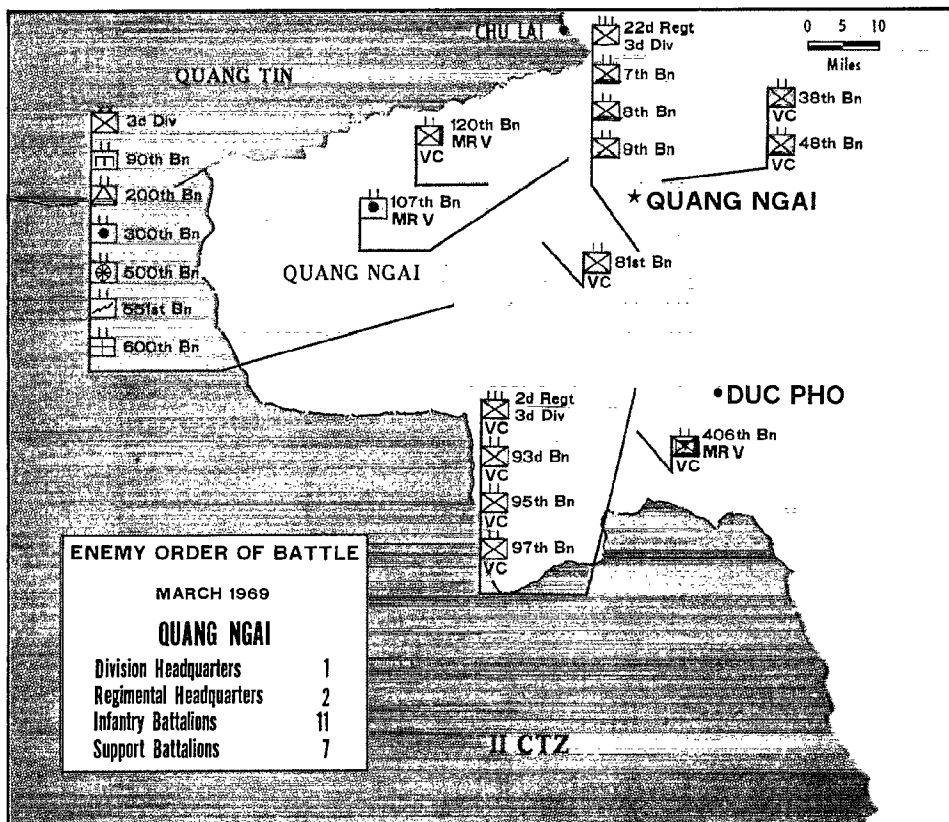
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Quang Ngai Province

Enemy strength in Quang Ngai was estimated on 31 March at 7,100 troops (3,600 NVA and 3,500 VC) in confirmed combat units and 2,700 guerrillas.



★ Province capital

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2. ENEMY LOSSES IN I CTZ

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Captured</u>	<u>Weapons</u>
<u>Enemy losses to III MAF /SLF</u>			
Marines	2,082	88	1,844
Monthly III MAF /SLF			
Total	3,361	107	2,165
1969 III MAF /SLF			
Total	9,343	406	4,554

Enemy losses to other forces

ROKMC	325	21	145
RVNAF	2,909	234	815
Special Forces /CIDG	100	2	22
Monthly Total	3,334	257	982
I CTZ Monthly Total	6,695	364	3,147
1969 Total	17,374	1,421	7,946

3. MARINE /SLF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

<u>USMC</u>	<u>CAP</u>		<u>Cumulative 1969 Total</u>
6,770	7,771	Patrols	40,332
4,330	5,783	Ambushes	25,822
184		Company operations	356
432		Sniper posts	1,180
2		Battalion operations	5*
5		Regimental or larger operations	10*
8,000		Fixed wing sorties	23,131
51,835		Helicopter sorties	154,751

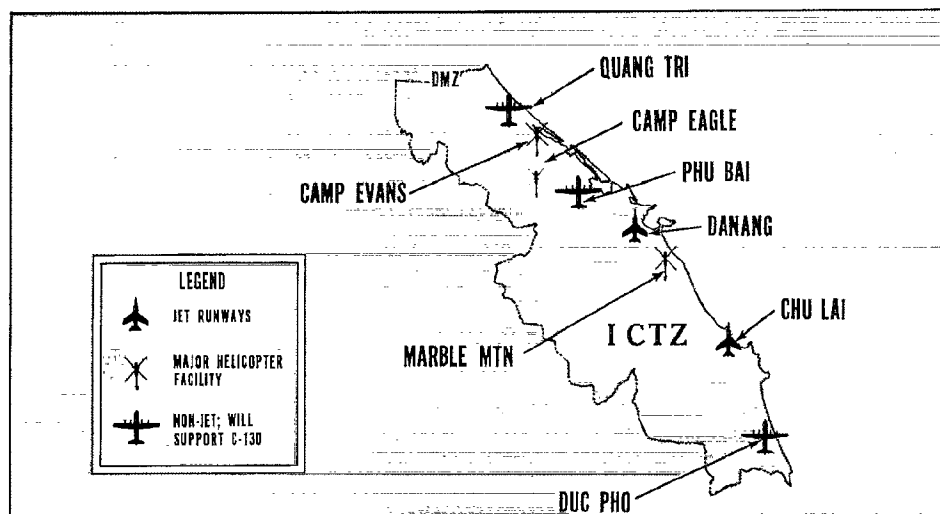
*Since monthly figures include operations continued from previous months, they are not used to compute cumulative totals.

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4. US AIRCRAFT BASED AT MAJOR I CTZ AIRFIELDS: MARCH 1969



USMC AIRCRAFT			USN AIRCRAFT			USA AIRCRAFT (CONT)		
QUANG TRI			DANANG			CAMP EAGLE		
2 HELO SQDNS (31 CH-46)			2 DETS FLT AIR RECON SQDN			1 ABN DIV ASSETS:		
1 OBS SQDN (10 O-1, 10 OV-10, 12 UH-1)			(8 EA-3B, 4 EC-121M)			1 AVN GRP (66 UH-1, 12 AH-1, 11 OH-6, 2 U-6)		
PHU BAI			TOTAL USN			1 MED BN (12 UH-1)		
4 HELO SQDNS (14 CH-53, 17 CH-46, 17 UH-34, 15 UH-1)			A/C PRESENT - 12			1 CAV SQDN (13 UH-1, 9 AH-1, 9 OH-6)		
1 ACFT MAINT SQDN (1 C-117, 15 UH-34)			USAF AIRCRAFT			DIV ARTY (16 UH-1, 11 AH-1, 14 OH-6)		
DANANG			DANANG			MISC (19 UH-1, 25 OH-6)		
1 FTR/ATK SQDN (14 F-4)			1 TAC AIR SPT SQDN (14 O-1, 53 O-2, 15 OV-10)			MARBLE MTN		
2 ALL-WEATHER ATK SQDNS (23 A-6A)			3 TAC FTR SQDNS (50 F-4)			HQ AVN BDE (2 UH-1, 2 U-6, 1 U-21)		
1 PHOTO/ECM SQDN (5 EA-6A, 8 EF-10B, 9 RF-4B)			1 DET AIR RES/RCVY SQDN (3 HH-43)			2 AVN COS (28 UH-1, 17 OV-1)		
1 ACFT MAINT SQDN (7 TA-4F, 1 C-1, 3 C-117, 3 US-2)			1 DET FTR/INTERCEPT SQDN (6 F-102)			1 COURIER PLT (3 U-1)		
MARBLE MTN			FIXED WING - 138			DANANG		
5 HELO SQDNS (15 CH-53, 51 CH-46, 23 UH-1)			HELICOPTER - 3			1 AVN CO (15 U-8, 1 U-21)		
1 OBS SQDN (18 OV-10, 8 UH-1)			TOTAL USAF			TAC SPT (6 OH-6)		
1 ACFT MAINT SQDN (1 C-117, 1 CH-53, 15 UH-34)			A/C PRESENT - 141			ABN DIV SPT (7 CH-54)		
CHU LAI			USA AIRCRAFT			CHU LAI		
4 FTR/ATK SQDNS (65 F-4)			QUANG TRI			1 INF DIV ASSETS:		
3 ATK SQDNS (49 A-4)			MECH DIV SPT (4 UH-1, 3 OH-6)			2 AVN BNS (31 CH-47, 93 UH-1, 6 AH-1, 9 OH-6, 2 U-6)		
1 ALL-WEATHER ATK SQDN (11 A-6A)			CAMP EVANS			1 CAV SQDN (8 UH-1, 8 AH-1, 9 OH-6)		
2 ACFT MAINT SQDNS (1 TA-4F, 2 C-117)			1 AVN BN (75 UH-1, 2 OH-6)			DIV ARTY (8 OH-6, 1 U-6)		
FIXED WING - 241			PHU BAI			MISC (13 OH-6, 1 U-1)		
HELICOPTER - 234			3 AVN COS (8 UH-1, 3 OH-6, 32 O-1, 20 OV-1, 2 U-6, 2 U-21)			1 RECON CO (24 O-1, 1 U-6)		
TOTAL USMC			ABN DIV SPT (48 CH-47, 2 OH-6)			DUC PHO		
A/C PRESENT - 475						1 AVN CO (30 UH-1)		
						FIXED WING - 126		
						HELICOPTER - 620		
						TOTAL USA		
						A/C PRESENT - 746		

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5. MARINE CIVIC ACTION

<u>March 1969</u>		<u>Cumulative 1969 Total</u>
11,502	Persons given medical treatment	263,340
2,266	Persons given dental treatment	7,735
487	Persons given medical or dental training	1,568
34,965	Pounds of food distributed	127,018
8,124	Pounds of soap distributed	29,813
6,520	Pounds of clothing distributed	27,180
787	Critically ill civilians evacuated	3,410
1,568	English language classes conducted	3,540
\$6,253	Cash donations	\$23,461
69,930	Persons fed	233,110
3,740	Students supported	10,344
211	Construction projects	620

6. 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>
DMZ area	878	18,602	67	531	305	4,212
Quang Tri	561	4,927	90	597	384	5,386
Phu Bai	291	2,488	6	59	2,369	20,641
Danang	3,089	42,978	261	1,695	189	772
Chu Lai	576	5,365	25	105	1,660	18,075
Duc Pho	-	-	-	-	184	3,499
Totals	5,395	74,360	449	2,987	5,091	52,585

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7. LOGISTICSa. SupplyClass I

(1000 rations/days of supply)

	<u>Danang</u>	<u>Dong Ha and Quang Tri</u>
MCI	292/5	1,236/20
B rations	226/4	414/8
A rations	366/7	104/2

Class II

(supply requisitions)

	<u>FLC</u>	<u>3d FSR</u>
Processed	51,264	26,522
Fill rate	50%	39%

Class III and IIIA (bulk) (Marine Corps owned)
 (1000 gallons/days of supply)

	<u>JP -4</u>	<u>AVGAS</u>	<u>MOGAS</u>	<u>DIESEL</u>
Vandegrift	61/1	7/7	-	-
Quang Tri	57/1	16/16	-	-
Phu Bai	65/2	42/21	-	-
Danang	-	-	91/15	96/10
An Hoa	77/12	5/50	-	-

Class V and VA

	<u>Danang</u>	<u>Chu Lai</u>	<u>Phu Bai</u>	<u>Dong Ha</u>
Ground (days of supply)	45	45	45	45

Aviation - maintained within CINCPAC allocations.

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b. Resupply Status to RVN(1) Surface Shipping Status 16,401 M/T

Received from CONUS (5,999 M/T)

Received from intra-WestPac (10,402 M/T)

(2) Air Shipping Status 582 S/T

Received from CONUS (196 S/T)

Received from intra-WestPac (386 S/T)

c. Resupply Status within RVN(1) Surface Shipping Status 107,252 S/T

Danang to Dong Ha/Cua Viet (48,998 S/T)

Danang to Hue/Tan My (28,541 S/T)

Danang to Chu Lai (29,713 S/T)

(2) Air Shipping Status (USMC and PACAF) 1,457 S/T

Danang to Dong Ha (489 S/T)

Danang to Phu Bai (116 S/T)

Danang to An Hoa (59 S/T)

Danang to Chu Lai (234 S/T)

Other intra-I CTZ APOE's (559 S/T)

d. Retrograde Cargo from RVN(1) Surface 10,084 M/T

MSTS conventional vessels (9,215 M/T)

Roll On/Roll Off vessels (869 M/T)

(2) Air 279 S/T

USMC (89 S/T)

MAC (142 S/T)

PACAF (48 S/T)

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e. Maintenance

Items evacuated from RVN to 3dFSR	1,072
Items repaired at 3dFSR	1,235
Items returned to CONUS from 3dFSR or disposed of on Okinawa	28

f. Medical and Dental Services(1) Medical

Patients admitted to III MAF facilities	2,329
Battle injury (933)	
Non-battle injury (257)	
Disease (1,139)	
Evacuated out-of-country	651
Deaths in III MAF facilities	15
Returned to duty	872
Hospitalized as of 31 March 1969	374

(2) Dental

Total procedures	44,074
Operative, crown, and bridge	19,018
Prosthetics	507
Oral surgery	3,808
Number of sittings	16,106

g. Construction Projects

Roads -124.0 miles were upgraded and maintained.

Bridges -Two Class 60 bridges were constructed; three Class 60 bridges were under construction; three Class 60 bridges were repaired; three Class 60 bridges were under repair; six Class 60 bridges were removed.

Rafts -Two rafts were in operation in the Danang area.

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