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*11/18/77: Operations of U.S. Marine  
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# OPERATIONS OF U. S. MARINE FORCES

## VIETNAM

### MARCH 1970

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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 1970. Its purpose is to update similar historical reports covering the period from March 1965 through February 1970.

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## SUMMARY

Dominating III MAF operations during March was the alteration of the command relationship in I CTZ, a development occasioned by the KEYSTONE redeployments of major Marine elements from the combat zone, thus leaving US Army units as the most numerous military assistance forces in the five northern provinces. Accordingly, on 9 March, III MAF transferred operational responsibility for I CTZ to the Army's XXIV Corps Headquarters, with Marine responsibility constricting to Quang Nam province, plus the Combined Action Force, the Air Support Radar Teams, and MAG-13 (Chu Lai). Additionally, because of widespread and extensive activities of CAPs throughout I CTZ, III MAF passed operational control of the Combined Action Force to XXIV Corps on 26 March.

Under this revised I CTZ command relationship, III MAF remains a separate command under Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, but under operational control of XXIV Corps. Consequently, III MAF now exercises operational control over US Marine and other US and Free World forces, as assigned, to conduct combat operations, primarily in Quang Nam province. By and large, there is no change in the air operations relationship, as Marine air, under the existing concept, will continue support of all I CTZ combat operations and out-of-country missions, as required.

In retrospect, the force reduction and subsequent realignment of command relationships reflect clearly the measure of III MAF achievement in I CTZ over some five years of combatant action. From the initial amphibious brigade landing in March 1965, III MAF expanded to include more than five US divisions (two Marine divisions, three US Army divisions, and two Marine regimental landing teams) during the period of heaviest fighting in RVN. As III MAF combined arms power destroyed the enemy's combat strength

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and forced him to withdraw defeated formations to cross-border lodgments, there occurred a sharp scaling down in the war's intensity, commensurate with growing ARVN strength. Thus, continuing redeployments from I CTZ are but a product of successful prosecution of combat and related pacification operations.

III MAF combat actions during March were virtually a duplication of those generated during the past year -- a diligent, but often unrewarding, search for enemy forces, with the resultant intermittent contact restricted to brief, small unit clashes or supporting arms attacks against hostiles sighted at long range. Except for a series of low-key attacks at end-month and extending into early April, the enemy offered little to contest the expansion of Free World influence. Results of III MAF combat operations (includes US Army totals through 8 March) were 794 NVA/VC killed, 65 taken prisoner, and 169 weapons seized.

Pacification advancement, albeit moderate, was steady during March. Aided by the Combined Action and Combined Unit Pacification Programs, the GVN counted 86.3 percent of the I CTZ population secure at end-month, with Quang Nam registering a slightly higher 86.8 percent. Additionally, at least partially in response to a nationwide psychological and CTZ-wide pacification campaign, the Chieu Hoi program registered a 24 percent increase over February's total, as 413 Hoi Chanh were received during March.

KEYSTONE BLUEJAY, the third redeployment phase, was completed, with the last Marine element scheduled to arrive at Long Beach, California on 7 April. Concurrently, USS REPOSE (AH-16), a hospital ship which supported III MAF operations since February 1966, departed RVN coastal waters on 13 March, bound for CONUS and ultimate deactivation.

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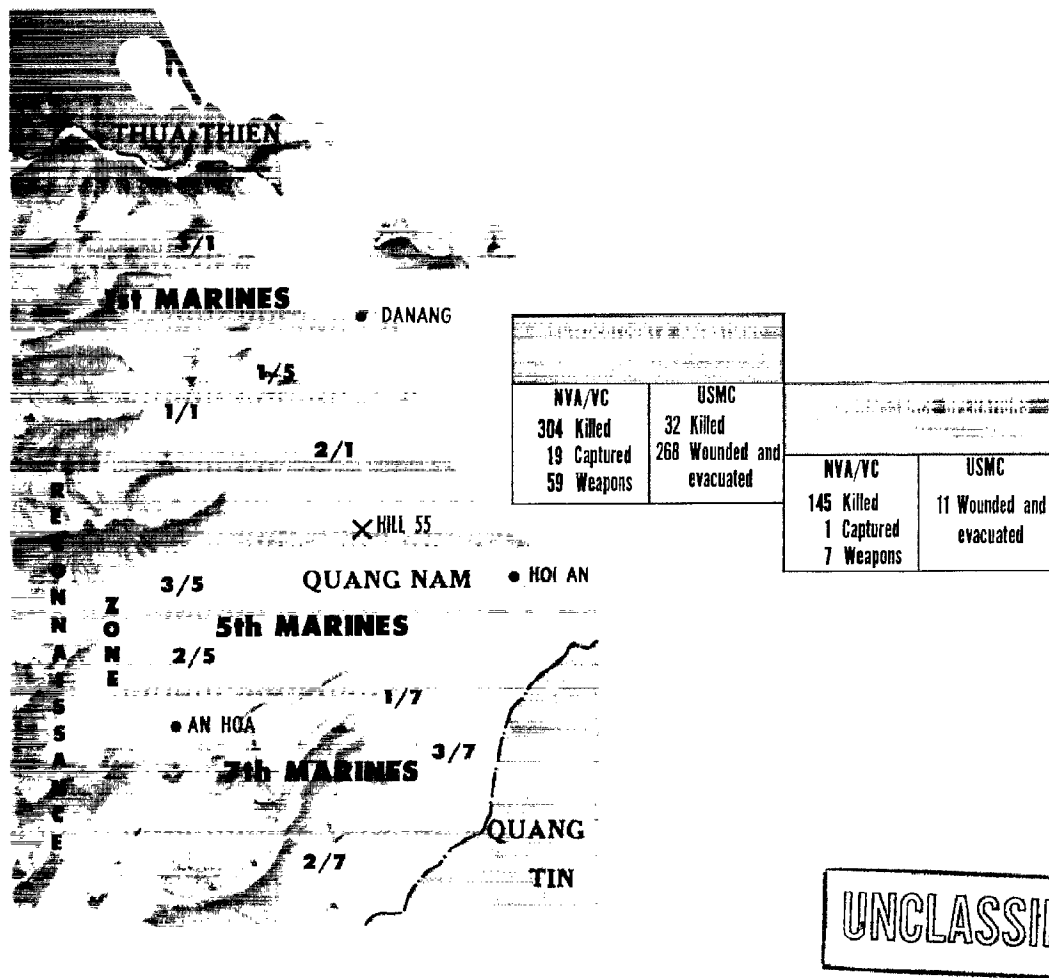
## COMBAT OPERATIONS

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During March, operations throughout I CTZ continued to generate but minimum enemy resistance. On 9 March, the command relationship in I CTZ changed -- CG, III MAF passed operational control of US operations in the tactical zone to CG, XXIV Corps. Thus, III MAF retains control of Marine units in Quang Nam province and other US and Free World forces, as assigned, and directs combat operations there under operational control of XXIV Corps.

Action in Quang Nam paralleled that of the past few months - minor ground skirmishes interspersed with both friendly and enemy indirect fire attacks. The map below locates the Marine battalions in Quang Nam at end-month and displays the results of March operations.

## MARINE OPERATIONS: MARCH 1970



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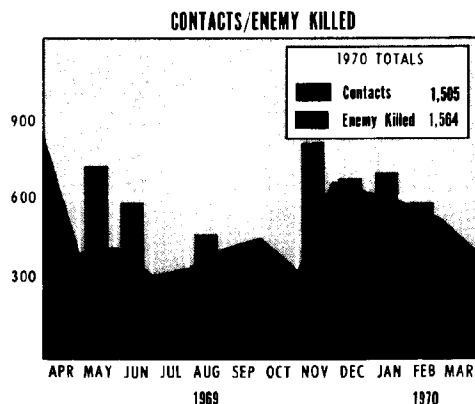
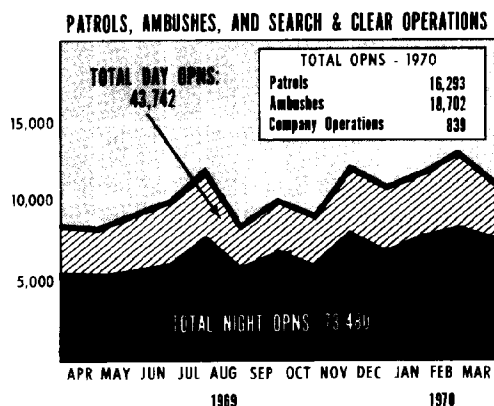
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Counter guerrilla Operations

Marines executed in excess of 11,000 patrols, ambushes, and company-size operations in support of pacification, rice harvest, and population security during March. Redeployment of the 26th Marines necessitated minor modification of regimental operating areas, with the 1st Marines shifting northward and the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines (in division reserve) moving to provide patrol coverage in the rocket threat area to the south and southwest of Danang. With the movement of the 51st ARVN Regiment into the former 1st Marines Hill 55 area, the round-the-clock north/south screen of surveillance and interdiction activities across the Quang Nam lowlands remained active as a deterrent to enemy incursions.

Meaningful contact was not forthcoming, as fighting was restricted primarily to fleeting actions with small guerrilla bands engaged in harassment tactics. Despite the enemy's reluctance for combat, however, some 300 NVA and VC were killed or captured.

The following graphs relate counter guerrilla efforts during March with monthly totals since April 1969.

**MARINE SMALL UNIT OPERATIONS: APR 69-MAR 70**

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UNCLASSIFIED-1st Marines Operations

During March, 1st Marines small unit maneuver included 2,157 patrols and 2,358 ambushes, as elements of the Regiment acquired familiarity with operating areas formerly occupied by the 26th Marines (to include the terrain, patterns of enemy activity, village and hamlet peculiarities, and the degree of support to be expected from the local inhabitants). The effect was an orderly transition into the area, with no lessening of the degree of security provided previously. The patrols and ambushes evoked 70 contacts, predominately with VC elements, and inflicted moderate losses - 54 killed, two others captured, and 14 weapons seized.

The principal action occurred at 1055 on 7 March, when a Company A platoon, on the southern slope of Hill 270 nine miles southwest of Danang, detected a westbound column of 30-40 NVA, several of whom were transporting large sacks of rice. A request for artillery fire from nearby Fire Support Base (FSB) Stallion resulted in 14 NVA dead in the impact area.

-5th Marines Operations

The brunt of 5th Marines operations (2d and 3d Battalions) during March was directed against enemy activity in the An Hoa basin and the Thuong Duc corridor/Charlie Ridge region, favored approaches to lowland rice fields and military and civilian targets. Employing nearly 2,000 patrols, ambushes, and company operations and 492 scout/sniper team deployments, the Regiment developed 127 contacts, accounting for 88 NVA and VC killed, nine prisoners, and 20 weapons seized.

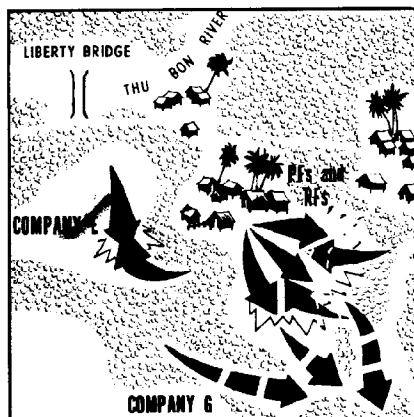
An engagement on the 15th exemplified Marine/RVNAF teamwork in combating enemy attacks on civilian targets. At 0200, Company E, covering the southern approach to Liberty Bridge, repulsed a

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mortar-supported probe, while at the same time and one mile east, a hamlet (defended by the 69th and 117th Popular Force (PF) Platoons and the 1st Platoon,



369th Regional Force Company) received a volley of 60mm mortar and RPG fire, several satchel charges, and small arms fire followed by a ground attack by an estimated 150-man force. Marine artillery fired more than 1,000 rounds in support of the RVNAF defenders, with tactical aircraft providing strikes between 0500 and daylight,

forcing the enemy to retreat. At 0700, elements of Company G, 5th Marines joined the PFs in pursuit of the fleeing enemy; however, no further contact was made. In all, seven dead, two prisoners, six weapons, and a wide assortment of battle gear were found along the path of enemy withdrawal; friendly casualties numbered one PF killed and two wounded.

During late February, Kingfisher techniques (heliborne patrol) were modified and redesignated Pacifier operations. This concept utilizes elements of the division reserve, the strength ranging from platoon to company-size, depending on the anticipated target. Additionally, the helicopter-assault patrol is launched to exploit hard intelligence or to influence action already in progress within the III MAF area.

Illustrative of the Pacifier tactic, on 24 March, a heliborne patrol (two Company D platoons) was landed a mile and a half west of An Hoa combat base to search for an enemy formation detected earlier by electronic means. A short time after the landing, an OV-10-borne aerial observer sighted an enemy squad about a mile northwest of the Marines;

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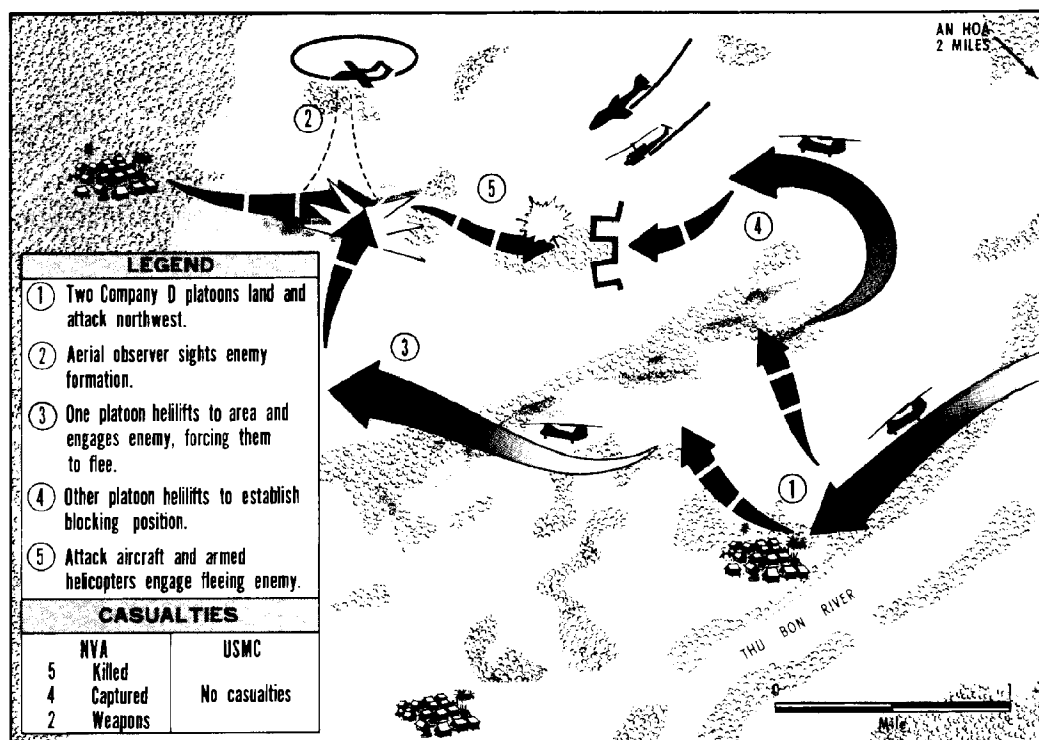
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one platoon was reembarked aboard CH-46s and moved to intercept the squad. Guided by the observer, the platoon made contact and forced the NVA to flee eastward, while the remainder of the patrol was helilifted east of the action as a blocking force. Marine fixed wing aircraft and armed helicopters joined the fighting, which ultimately cost the enemy squad five killed and four prisoners. No friendly casualties were sustained in the action.

The following map portrays the 24 March Pacifier action.

### PACIFIER ACTION : 24 MARCH 1970



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-7th Marines Operations

Throughout March, the emphasis of 7th Marines maneuver was rice harvest security. The enemy, still pressed by insufficient stores, continues to view the rice-rich northern Nui Loc Son basin as a prime source, attempting to infiltrate food gathering details primarily via the Que Son mountains and Phu Loc Valley. Employing a saturation of 1,700 patrols and ambushes and 161 company-size searches, the Marines shielded the early-Spring harvest operations, interdicting the enemy on 189 occasions to account for 142 NVA and VC killed, two prisoners, and 23 weapons.

As during past harvests, the discovery of rice caches increased. At 1530 on 12 March, a combined patrol of 473d Regional Force Company soldiers and 1st Battalion Marines uncovered nearly a ton of rice four miles east of Landing Zone (LZ) Ross. A week later, a Company M patrol discovered a substantial amount of rice and other foodstuffs, a quantity of uniforms, and assorted documents in a cave complex, three miles west of LZ Baldy. On the 26th, Company G Marines unearthed a two and one-half ton cache of rice in a bin built into the side of Hill 158, three miles southwest of Que Son.

The major ground clash took place at 0930 on 4 March, when elements of Company L, patrolling the area five miles northwest of Que Son, encountered a group of 30 NVA and VC moving south. The opposing forces exchanged small arms fire in a running battle until air support forced the enemy to disengage and flee. The Company captured three VC and found three NVA and three VC dead and a pistol abandoned in the battle area. One Marine received a minor wound during the skirmish.

Reconnaissance Activity

During March, Marine reconnaissance units (1st Force Reconnaissance Company and 1st Recon-

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naissance Battalion) conducted over 1,000 long-range patrols. Tasked primarily to collect intelligence, the patrols on occasion were required to fight and often directed supporting arms attacks against targets of opportunity with excellent success. In addition to providing current information on enemy locations, movement patterns, and routes in the hinterlands, the Marines accounted for 145 NVA and VC killed, one captured, and seven weapons seized.

The following accounts are descriptive of reconnaissance action during March.

-At dusk on the 15th, reconnaissance team STONE PIT, located on a knoll overlooking the Thuong Duc corridor six miles northwest of An Hoa, observed an NVA squad exit the river-edge foliage to swim and bathe in the Thu Bon. A nearby 5th Marines 81mm mortar section responded to the patrol's request for fire; all nine NVA were killed.

-Patrol TRAILER PARK, reconnoitering a sector of the Que Son mountains five miles southeast of An Hoa, found itself surrounded by a platoon of enemy at midday on the 20th. In the brisk fire-fight which ensued, the Marines broke the encirclement, but maintained contact until armed helicopters joined the action and provided covering fire for extraction. Nine NVA were killed during the action; friendly casualties were two with minor wounds.

#### Kit Carson Scout (KCS) Program

The KCS program remains a potent counteractant to enemy activity in Quang Nam. From January to March, the number of Scouts employed by the 1st Marine Division increased from 99 to 109 (eight were recruited and the two formerly assigned to Force Logistic Command absorbed into the Division's KCS structure). During the three months, these for-

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mer enemy soldiers actively participated in Marine operations, accompanying nearly 2,500 patrols, and were credited with killing 16 NVA and VC, capturing one other, apprehending 40 VC suspects, and seizing 66 weapons. In addition, the KCS, exercising familiarity with enemy tactics, located 115 caves, tunnels, and caches and 66 mines/surprise-firing devices.

Another facet of the program, 55 psyops broadcasts and 26 classes on enemy tactics were conducted; ten such presentations were made during March by Scout HONG, a former NVA sapper. HONG traveled to Marine support bases, demonstrating techniques employed by NVA assault troops to breach heavily defended positions (usually encircled by belts of concertina and double-apron barbed wire and seeded with flares, claymores, and other anti-personnel mines). Following each demonstration, he answered questions and made recommendations for enhancing the security of positions against sapper attack and penetration.

#### Enemy Activity

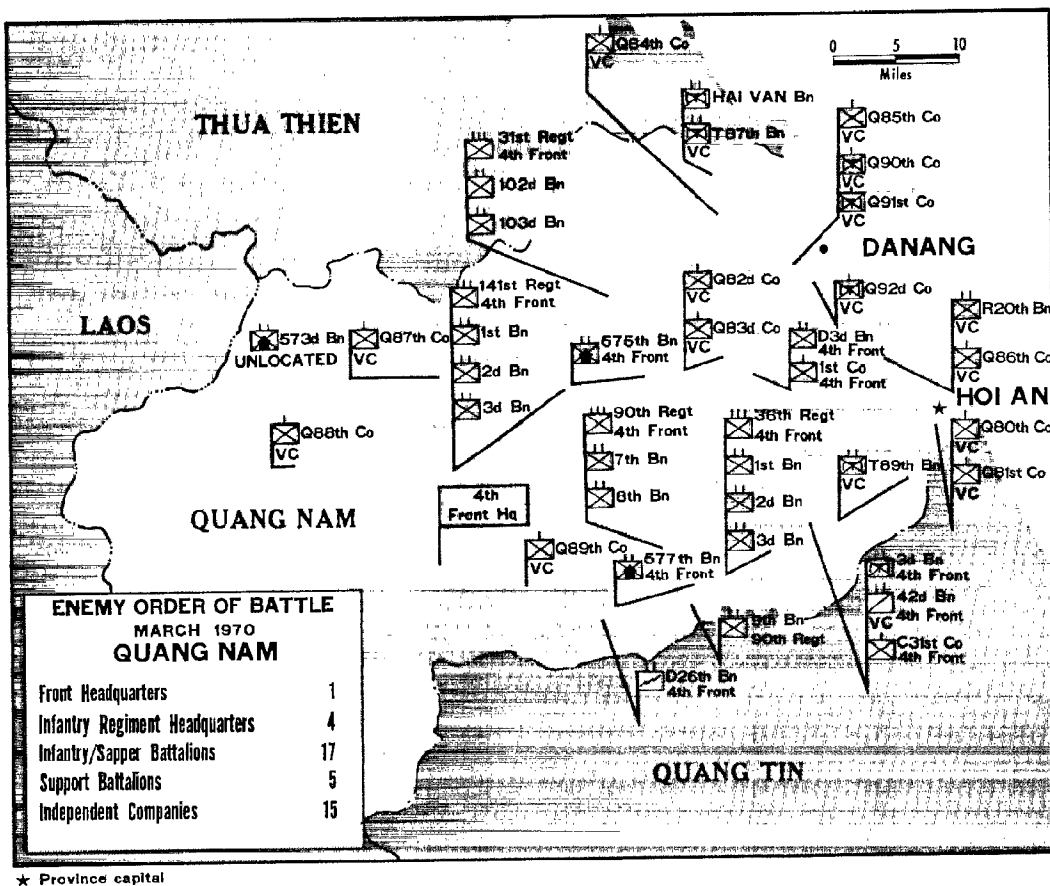
With large-scale attacks proven too costly, NVA and VC Main Force units have increased attempts to gather popular support, while strengthening infrastructure, reinforcing local forces, and providing leadership for guerrilla activity. Numerous documents and prisoner reports describe the provision of NVA regulars by the 36th Regiment, Front 4 as replacements to VC local forces and the assumption of logistic missions by other NVA units. The splintering of regular NVA units to accomplish such tasks is evidence of added emphasis on guerrilla activity in Quang Nam. Continuing supply difficulty and a steady dwindling of popular support have precipitated this reliance on guerrilla warfare as a primary offensive effort.

The map on the following page portrays the Quang Nam locations of enemy units carried in confirmed status in order-of-battle listings, as well

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as those held as probable (the NVA 26th Communication Battalion, the Hai Van Engineer/Sapper Battalion, and the Main Force T-87th Sapper Battalion).



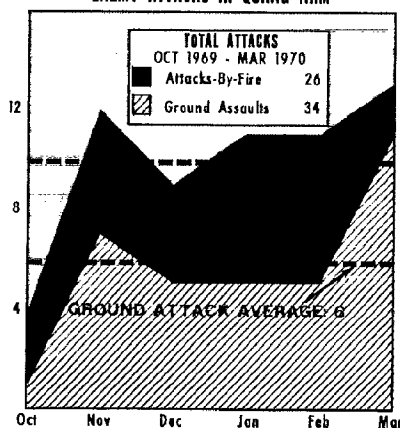
TROOPS IN CONFIRMED COMBAT UNITS		ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT PERSONNEL	GUERRILLAS	TROOPS IN PROBABLE AND POSSIBLE UNITS
NVA	VC			
5,100	2,200	350	4,200	600

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Having suffered serious losses in Quang Nam during past months, particularly within the T-89th Sapper and V-25th Main Force Battalions, the enemy, by and large, has concentrated his overt efforts on

ENEMY ATTACKS IN QUANG NAM



stand-off shellings and isolated ground assaults. Attacks in Quang Nam, the focal point of his I CTZ effort during March, totaled 13 - 11 ground and two indirect fire (20 rounds or more) attacks. In addition, on the 31st and extending into the first week of April, the enemy launched a large number of indirect fire missions in Quang Nam, an effort which was registered nationwide. Rather than a signal of forthcoming offensive ac-

tion, however, the flurry of mortar incidents was but another short-lived harassment attempt, a tactic exercised frequently during the dark phases of the moon.

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## REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT AND PACIFICATION

March witnessed continuation of gradual pacification progress in I CTZ, as secure population, under the Hamlet Evaluation System 1970 (HES 70), attained 86.3 percentile. The Combined Unit Pacification Program and the Combined Action Force (the latter placed under operational control of XXIV Corps on 26 March) continued aggressive patrol and ambush activities, resulting in nearly 150 NVA/VC killed or captured during March. Also, the tactical zone's pacification picture was improved by ARVN pacification support operations, the Chieu Hoi program, and the Phung Hoang Viet Cong Infrastructure neutralization campaign.

Pacification

Moderate gains were recorded throughout I CTZ in each of the three pacification criteria (security, political posture, and socio-economic structure) during March, increasing the secure portion of the zone's population to 86.3 percent. Similarly, the contested portion decreased nearly one percent; however, the number under VC control increased by 0.4 percentage points (some 11,000 individuals), primarily in Quang Tin's outlying districts.

The inclusion of socio-economic conditions in the rating scale used by HES 70 has identified this field as the weakest link in the pacification chain. While security and political posture CTZ-wide have reached levels of 87.3 and 91.6 percent, respectively, the socio-economic structure lags far behind at 68.7. Eradication of problems in this area will lead to improvements in public health, education, social and economic welfare, and land tenure throughout I CTZ.

Quang Nam province, inclusive of Danang, attained an 86.8 percent security level during March, an increase of approximately one percent. The province also contains over 50,000 contested, 22,000 VC-controlled, and 53,000 non-rated civilians, many of whom reside in the two most remote districts, Thuong Duc and Que Son.

The map on the following page portrays the end-February pacification status for I CTZ by province.

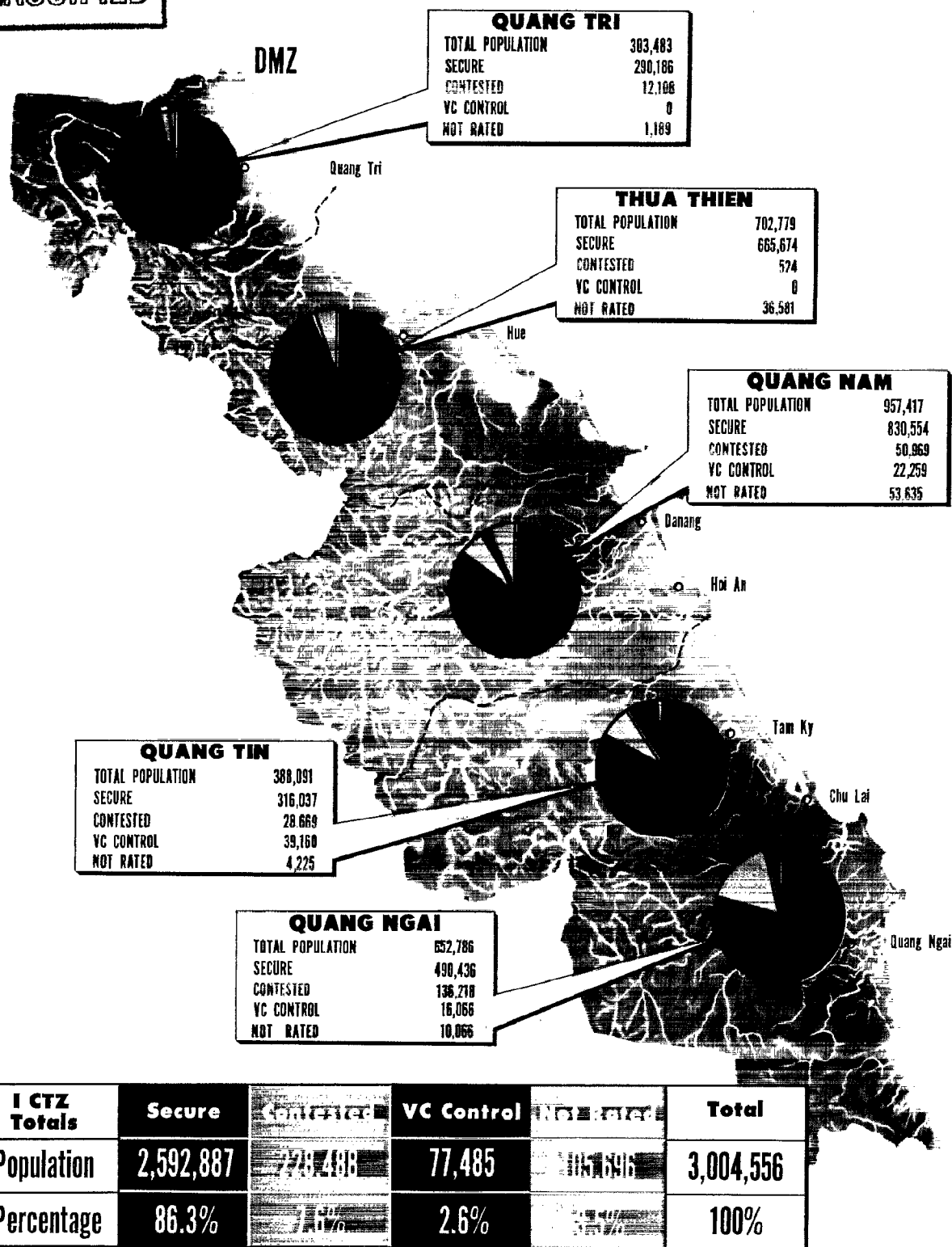
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## PACIFICATION STATUS - I CTZ

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Note: Based on end-February 1970 Hamlet Evaluation System data.

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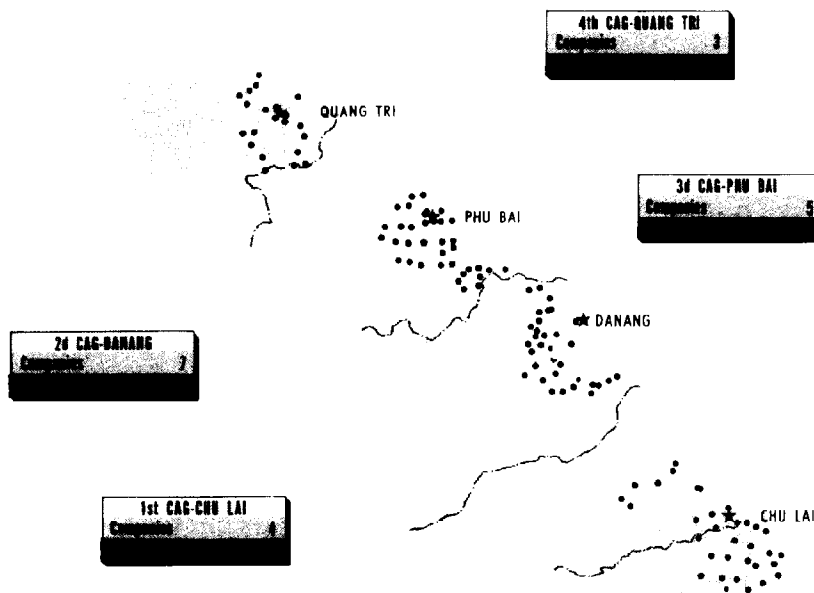
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### Combined Action Force

Commensurate with the 9 March assumption of I CTZ responsibility by a US Army headquarters, operational control of all combined action units passed from III MAF to XXIV Corps on 26 March; administrative control, however, remained with III MAF. This change in command relationship affects neither the mission nor the organization of the program.

The following map displays the locations and manpower of CAF units throughout I CTZ as of 31 March.

### **COMBINED ACTION FORCE: 31 MARCH 1970**



CAG'S	CAG'S	
4	19	114

PERSONNEL		
USMC	USN	
1,572	106	3,102/45

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The relative calm existing throughout I CTZ for the past several months has allowed CAP Marines to emphasize training Popular and Regional Force soldiers to attain a high level of military proficiency. A recent innovation to CAP operating procedure has been initiated at local echelons to allow more realistic evaluation of territorial force ability. Upon concurrence by the district chief and the CACO commander, the PF contingent of a CAP now conducts patrols and ambushes independent of Marine participation. The benefit accrued these forces through daily association and training with III MAF is readily apparent, as the combat activities conducted by PF and RF soldiers have been highly effective and professionally executed.

CAF maneuver units continued extensive combat operations - 7,388 day and night patrols and 6,028 ambushes - around the villages and hamlets of their respective tactical areas of control during March. These activities, developing only light and scattered enemy contact, accounted for 81 NVA/VC killed, 37 others taken prisoner, and 11 VC infrastructure cadre and 38 individual or crew served weapons seized. Additionally, CAP Marines and territorial force soldiers received 30 Hoi Chanh and detained 315 Vietnamese civilians whose actions rendered them VC suspects. The following narratives are representative of the month's CAF engagements.

-On the night of the 13th, the CAP 1-1-6 patrol base, six miles northwest of the Tam Ky district headquarters, was attacked by an unknown size enemy force. Supported by armed helicopters, the CAP repulsed the attack and, during a search of the perimeter, located one VC body, a rifle, several grenades, and numerous blood trails; one PF soldier was killed and one wounded. Exploiting information provided by local villagers on the 15th, a CAP 1-1-6 patrol discovered the bodies of seven NVA and another VC hastily concealed in a nearby thicket. The villagers stated the enemy had been killed during the night attack and identified the VC as a

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guerrilla from Thon Bon hamlet and one of the NVA as an officer who had been in contact with a local guerrilla unit during the previous week.

-CAPs 2-7-1, 2-7-2, and 2-7-4, conducting a combined operation with National Police Field Forces (NPFF) on the 23d, apprehended 192 Vietnamese civilians three and one-half miles northwest of the Dien Ban district headquarters. After screening and interrogation, the NPFF classified 180 as VC suspects, 11 as infrastructure cadre, and one as a guerrilla.

-PF soldiers from CAP 2-9-2 ambushed three VC traveling along the Thu Bon River, one and one-half miles from the An Hoa combat base, at 2115 on the 28th. The enemy returned fire and fled to the northeast. A CAP 2-9-2 reaction force, joining the PF troops, shortly thereafter engaged an unknown size enemy unit in a treeline 400 meters from the original ambush site. Following artillery preparatory fire, the reaction force overran the enemy position, capturing six VC and one AK-47 rifle. No friendly casualties were sustained in either contact.

Combined Unit Pacification Program (CUPP)

Redeployment of the 26th Marines triggered a minor realignment of the 1st Marine Division combined unit pacification structure during March. Company M, 1st Marines, under operational control of the 5th Marines and maintaining eight CUPP locations in central Quang Nam, assumed responsibility for the four hamlets which otherwise would have been vacated by the departure of the 26th Marines. This was accomplished through transfer of non-redeploying Company K, 26th Marines CUPP personnel to the 1st Marines. Elsewhere, a provisional CUPP platoon formed from Headquarters Company, 5th Marines has operated in three hamlets along the Vu Gia River northwest of An Hoa since February, and Company A, 7th Marines has continued pacification operations in nine Nui Loc Son basin hamlets since January.

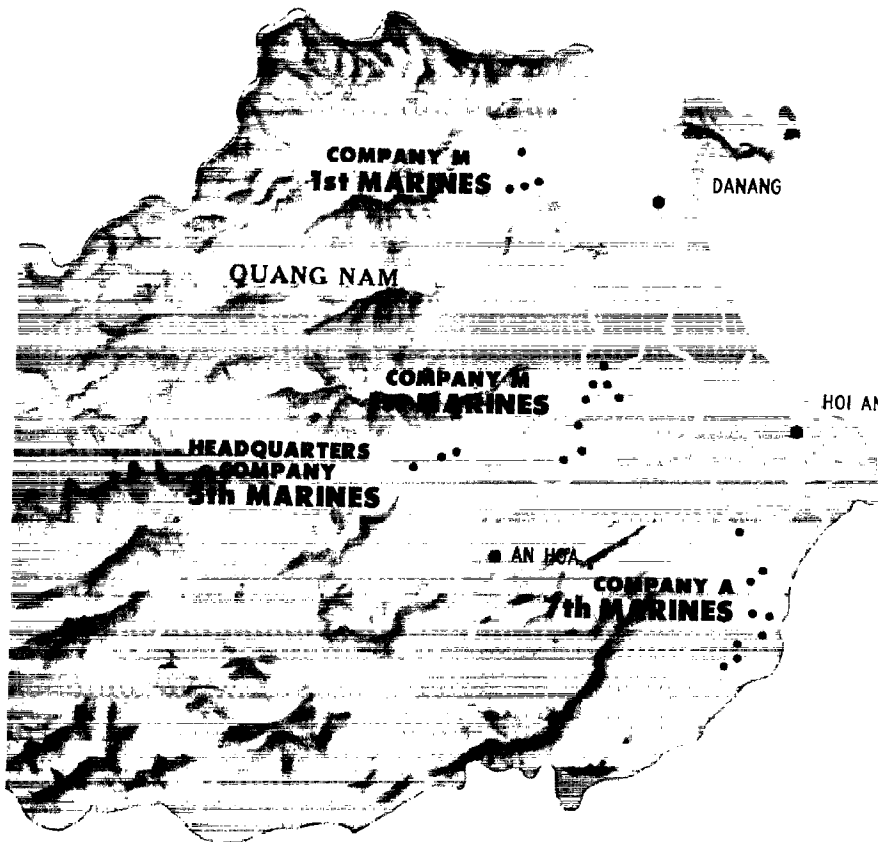
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The map below portrays the locations of the 24 1st Marine Division CUPP units as of 31 March.

**1ST MARINE DIVISION CUPP LOCATIONS: 31 MARCH 1970**

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Duplicating the missions of the Combined Action Program, the CUPP has advanced the proven value of working in close harmony with territorial forces and civilians to achieve GVN sovereignty and development of local defense systems in I CTZ communities. Aggressive patrol and ambush activity by CUPP units has provided the security required for rural development while achieving meaningful results in combat; during the past two months, 50 enemy have been killed, ten captured, and 38 VC suspects and 13 weapons seized. Additionally, medical treatment has been provided to nearly 7,000 civilians by corpsmen organic to the Marine forces. The following sketches highlight CUPP engagements during late February and March.

-During a counterambush action on 23 February in Chau Son hamlet, two miles southwest of Hill 55, Company M, 1st Marines initiated small arms and artillery fire against a small enemy force reconnoitering for future attacks. A map taken from one of the enemy identified several targets in the Danang area, with checkpoints, as well as numerous key GVN offices in downtown Danang, earmarked. In all, two VC and one NVA were killed, two enemy captured, and one weapon seized in the action, with no friendly casualties.

-At 2130 on 11 March, a Headquarters Company, 5th Marines CUPP ambush observed ten VC attempting to enter Huong Trung hamlet, six miles north of An Hoa. Intercepting the enemy, the ambush killed four VC and captured two individual weapons in a brief firefight; one Marine was wounded and evacuated.

-Shortly after noon on 21 March, a provincial reconnaissance unit (PRU), in contact with an estimated enemy company, requested artillery support through a Company A, 7th Marines CUPP unit. Following a 20-minute fire mission, the PRU swept the impact area, finding nine VC bodies and one rifle.

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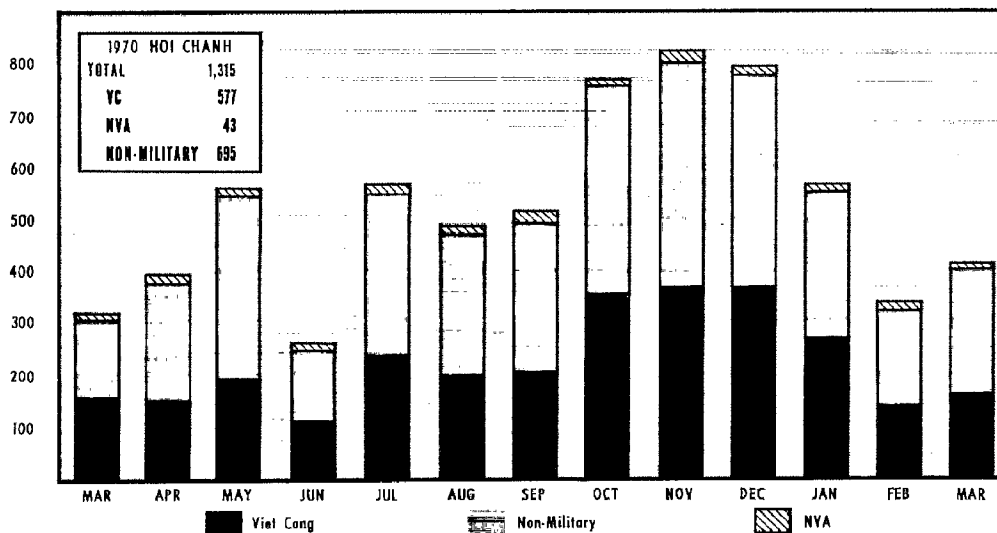
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### Chieu Hoi Returnees

An intensification of psychological operations in conjunction with the Spring campaign by the Ministry of Chieu Hoi at the national level and of pacification activities throughout I CTZ helped trigger the Hoi Chanh surge experienced in the tactical zone during March - 413 returnees (175 VC, 227 non-military supporters, and 11 NVA), a 24 percent increase over the 335 received last month. Along with this rising response to the program, the enemy stepped up attacks against Chieu Hoi centers in hope of proving the GVN incapable of protecting Hoi Chanh, thus weakening this appeal. The heaviest assault of this nationwide effort was initiated against the Quang Ngai center; however, it was repulsed by Armed Propaganda Team and NPFF personnel, denying the enemy even a propaganda effect.

The following graph compares March Chieu Hoi results with those of the preceding twelve months.

### CHIEU HOI RESULTS: MAR 69 - MAR 70



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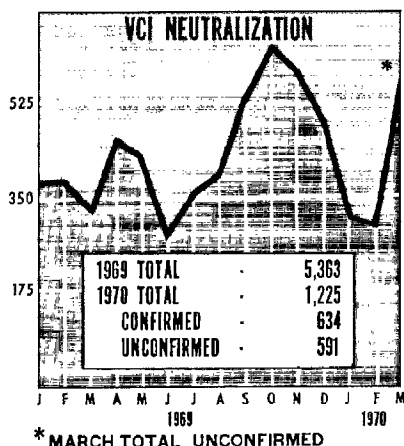
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The GVN recently expanded the Chieu Hoi program, availing its provisions not only to enemy rallying of their own volition but also to selected VC prisoners. On 26 March, the first increment (74) of captured VC received Hoi Chanh status in ceremonies at Danang. An extensive psychological campaign is being conducted concurrently with this innovation, stressing the generosity of the GVN and its desire for peace and prosperity for all its citizens.

#### Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) Neutralization



The neutralization of Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) remains one of the most salient tasks effecting total pacification in I CTZ. Until this "shadow" faction is eliminated, pacification and rural development projects, although enjoying visible success, are subject to surreptitious disruption and undermining. Thus far in 1970, the I CTZ Phung Hoang campaign has yielded 635 confirmed neutral-

izations (killed, sentenced, or rallied); however, the VCI base-strength still is estimated at nearly 19,000. An additional 591 from March are awaiting validation by MACV.

Phung Hoang activities in Quang Nam province have been particularly successful, accounting for over 40 percent of I CTZ's neutralizations this year. Intelligence has provided further insight into the problems facing the VCI and their planned activity in this province. A document, written by the Chief of the Propaganda Policy Committee of the Military Proselyting Section, Quang Da Special Zone, indicates leadership of party committees and VCI cadre is inadequate due to the loss of experienced leaders, thus making protracted resistance their only feasible method of challenging the GVN's growing strength.

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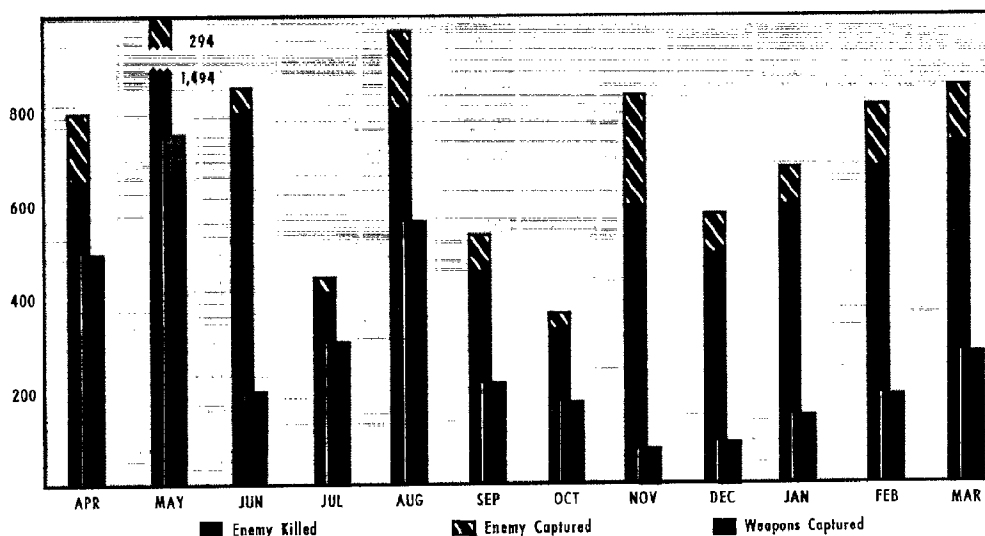
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ARVN Support of Pacification

In I CTZ during March, ARVN forces conducted 12 operations in direct support of the GVN pacification program. The 4th, 5th, and 6th ARVN Regiments, operating in the Quang Ngai and Quang Tin coastal lowlands, terminated operations on the month's final day - each accounting for more than 100 enemy kills during March - bringing the first quarter totals to 1,056 NVA and VC killed, 208 prisoners, and 391 weapons captured. A second operation by the 6th Regiment killed an additional 126 enemy. Operation DUONG SON 3/70, controlled by the 1st Armored Brigade and conducted south of Hoi An, amassed the most significant results of the pacification operations in Quang Nam - 116 enemy killed, 16 captured, and 38 weapons seized. Thus, continued ARVN maneuver, countering enemy pacification disruption attempts in I CTZ's populous coastal lowlands, preempted this enemy threat, killing 740 of his troops and capturing 118 others and 285 weapons. Territorial forces, forming the final barrier to infiltration, killed an additional 727 enemy, captured 34 others, and seized 331 weapons.

The following graph compares March results for ARVN pacification support operations with those since April 1969.

**ENEMY LOSSES TO ARVN PACIFICATION SUPPORT OPERATIONS**  
**APRIL 1969 - MARCH 1970**

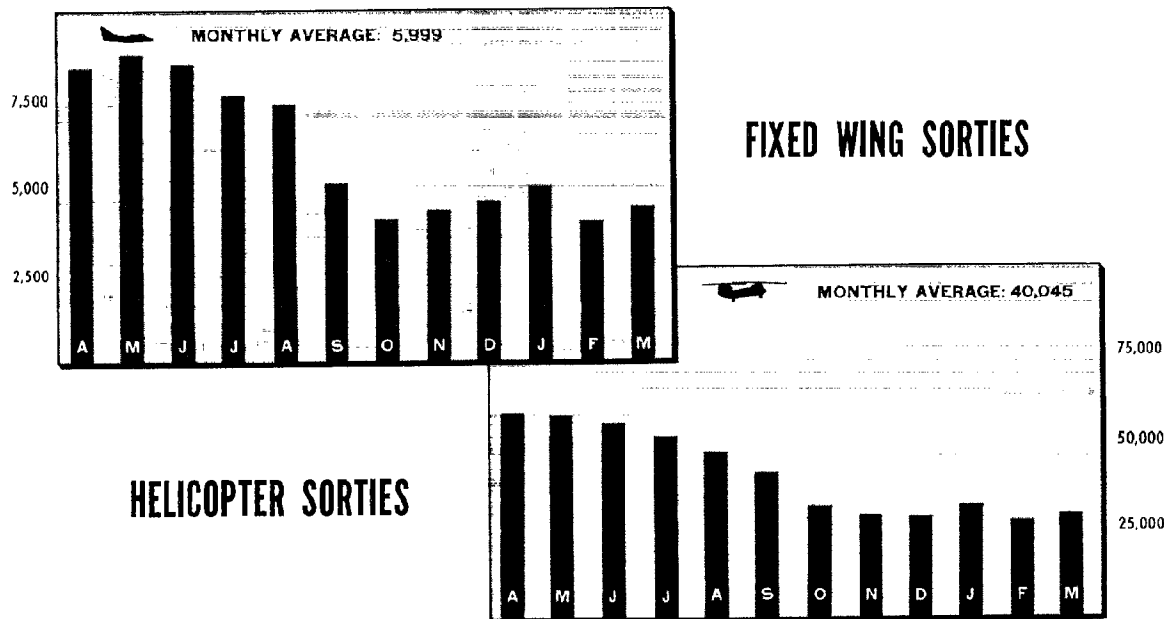


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**UNCLASSIFIED****AIR OPERATIONS**

Tactical squadrons of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing flew over 32,000 sorties in support of in and out-of-country Free World operations during March, a continuation of the reduced scale of air operations occasioned by a combination of Phase II and III redeployments and the absence of significant ground engagements. Nevertheless, Marine fixed wing aircraft accounted for over 4,000 sorties in conducting fire support and reconnaissance missions, while the Wing's remaining, in-country helicopter group, MAG-16, flew 28,517 sorties during the month. With the reduction of Marine ground forces in I CTZ, the majority of the heli-borne effort was centralized in Quang Nam province to support 1st Marine Division operations.

The following graphs compare the level of air operations established in recent months with the totals achieved during early 1969.

**MARINE AIR OPERATIONS: APR 1969 - MAR 1970****UNCLASSIFIED**~~SECRET~~

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UNCLASSIFIEDIn-Country Fixed Wing Operations

Despite the limited tempo of combat activity again registered in I CTZ, fixed wing air support remained prominent in the conduct of operations against enemy forces, whether in close combat with Free World units or within remote base areas. More than 2,400 strike missions and 600 combat support sorties were flown to support these operational requirements, delivering 4,259 tons of bombs, 1,555 napalm canisters, and 4,346 rockets. Close and direct air support missions, responsive to the needs of Free World forces throughout I CTZ, accounted for 1,406 sorties; coupled with this campaign, interdiction of enemy personnel and logistic staging areas and lines of communication resulted in an additional 966 flights.

While the majority of close support missions are preplanned sorties scheduled to meet projected requirements of operations in progress, the Wing maintains a standby hot-pad from which attack aircraft can be readily launched in response to emergency requests. The immediate availability of air-delivered ordnance resulting therefrom provides not only flexibility in fire support, but also the capability to concentrate firepower to exploit a fluid combat situation. Examples of such missions are illustrated in the following narratives.

-On the 11th, two F-4s were launched to strike an enemy troop position in the mountains southwest of Quang Tri City; assessment of the target area included five NVA killed and six bunkers destroyed.

-Two strikes by MAG-13 F-4s on the 20th targeted a hostile position ten miles southwest of An Hoa; a forward air controller (airborne) (FAC (A)) reported 16 bunkers and structures destroyed by the strikes. Shortly thereafter, 15 miles south-southwest of Phu Bai, another flight of F-4s delivered

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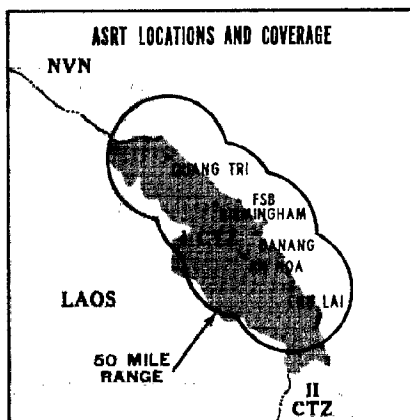
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ordnance on a second mountain position, igniting eight secondary fires and explosions and destroying ten bunkers.

-On the 30th, MAG-13 aircrews were scrambled on 11 occasions; early during the day, two A-4Es responded to action 20 miles south-southwest of Quang Ngai City and destroyed 14 military structures. Later, two F-4s struck an enemy complex 16 miles south-southwest of Phu Bai. This attack resulted in five bunkers and structures destroyed and six secondary fires and explosions among logistic stores.

The interdiction campaign, accounting for 39 percent of the I CTZ strike total, continued to hinder vital resupply of enemy forces. An integral part of the 1st Wing's capability to conduct these all-weather combat strike missions is the Air Support Radar Team (ASRT). Utilizing AN/TPQ-10 radar course-directing centrals, Marine ASRTs presently are located at five strategic sites in I CTZ --



Quang Tri, FSB Birmingham (eight miles west of Phu Bai airfield), Danang, An Hoa, and Chu Lai. These installations are capable of guiding a transponder beacon-equipped aircraft to any enemy target within 50 miles (25 miles for non-beacon aircraft).

Since 1965, this radar-bombing system has been used to interdict known enemy troop and logistic staging areas during hours of darkness or when meteorological conditions prevent visual dive bombing. Further, AN/TPQ-10 missions have played an extremely important role in providing close air support for ground units during similar periods of reduced visibility, particularly during the monsoon seasons.

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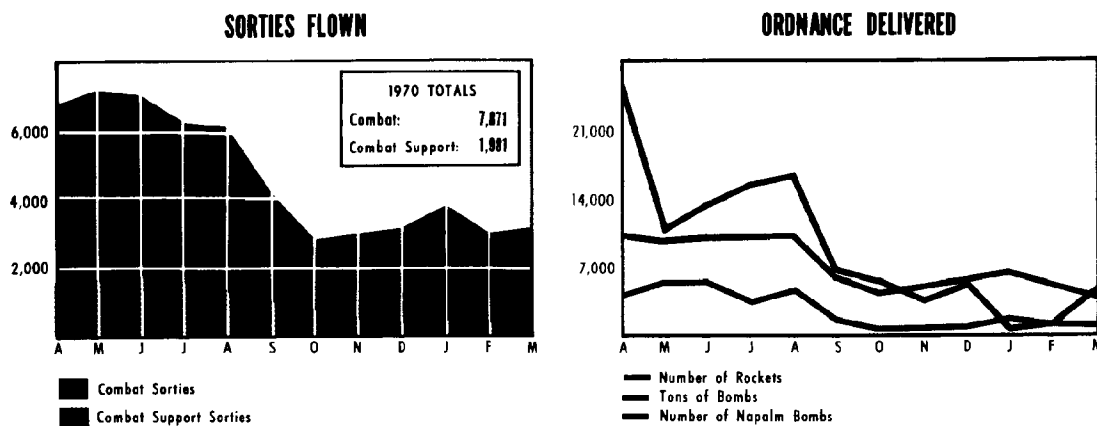
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Complementing the attack effort, RF-4B, TA-4F, and OV-10A aircraft flew 641 combat support missions. These flights, which included visual reconnaissance, forward air control (airborne), artillery spotting, and photography, complete the combat and combat support operations of fixed wing aircraft to I CTZ units.

A display of in-country fixed wing operations and ordnance delivered during the past 12 months is illustrated on the following graphs.

**IN-COUNTRY FIXED WING SUPPORT BY MARINE AIRCRAFT  
APRIL 69 - MARCH 70**



Helicopter Operations

The helicopter squadrons of MAG-16 conducted 28,517 sorties during March, maintaining a level of operational commitment similar to that prevailing since November 1969. Requirements for troop and logistic lifts occupied the majority of the CH-53D and CH-46D lifts, as these aircraft transported 68,943 troops and passengers and 4,892 tons of cargo. In addition, armed helicopter missions by UH-1E and AH-1G aircraft totaled 6,124 flights, while the Group amassed another 4,489 sorties for command and control and medical evacuation missions.

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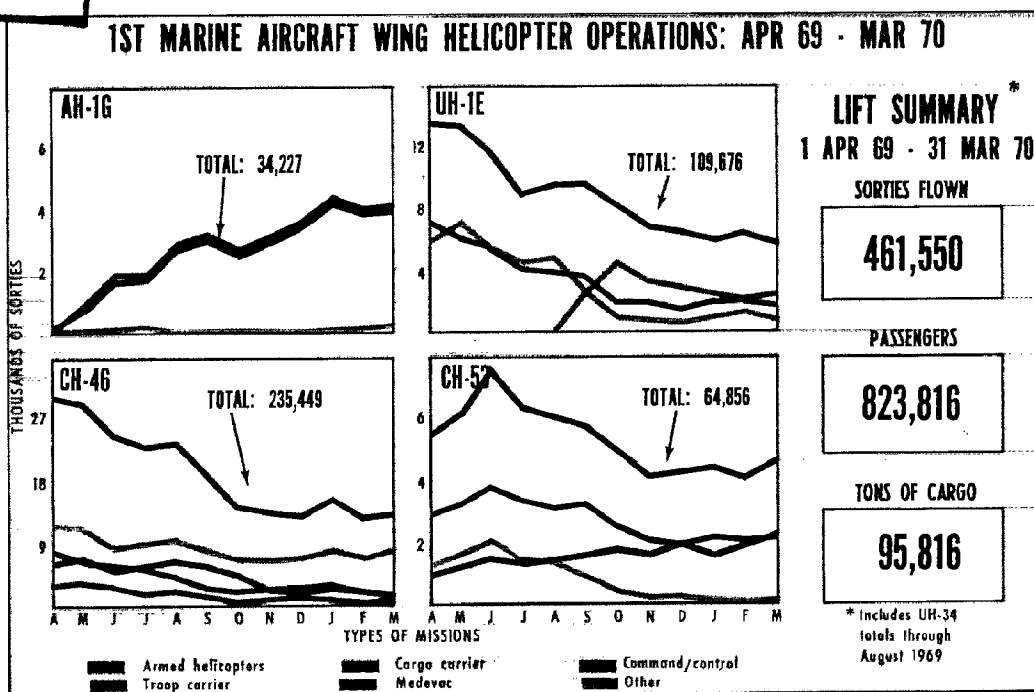
Helicopters continued as the mainstay of tactical mobility in the Quang Nam lowlands, as III MAF initiated Pacifier operations, a refinement of heli-borne patrolling techniques developed during Kingfisher operations earlier this year. As described in the Combat Operations chapter of this edition, this tactic enables Marine units to close rapidly with the enemy, neutralizing his capability to take refuge in his cave and tunnel networks or to fuse with the local populace.

A significant example of air/ground mobility occurred on the night of 4-5 March during the execution of a night assault, which melded the 1st Wing's resources to support the ground scheme of a joint US/Korean Marine maneuver. Coordinated staff planning called for lifting some 700 Marines and associated logistic support into three separate landing zones, while the ROKMC force moved overland into blocking positions. The lifting element consisted of eight CH-53s and 15 CH-46s, with four AH-1Gs and one UH-1E furnishing the armed escort and command and control functions. Additionally, fixed wing air provided continuous flare illumination and forward air controller (airborne) coverage. All Marine ground forces were inserted into landing zones within 23 minutes, while logistic support was completed within 42 minutes; the extraordinarily rapid insertion is underscored further by the fact it was accomplished at night, without incident.

The following graph compares March helicopter operations with those tallied during the past 11 months.

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### -AH-1G Helicopter

March marked the end of the first year of combat service for the Marine AH-1G helicopter. Introduced to 1st Wing operations during April 1969, the Cobra has increased the measure of suppressive fire support available to both transport helicopter crews and committed ground elements. The first aircraft designed specifically as an armed helicopter, the AH-1G is superior to the UH-1E in speed, ordnance-carrying capability, and weapons platform stability, thus affording friendly units increased firepower, while presenting a less vulnerable target to enemy gunners.

From the four aircraft initially delivered, the Marine AH-1G force expanded to 26 by end-March. Concurrently, AH-1G operations increased from 149 sorties during the first month of operations to an average of 4,306 during 1970. To date, the Cobra has conducted 34,227 sorties in support of I CTZ combat units.

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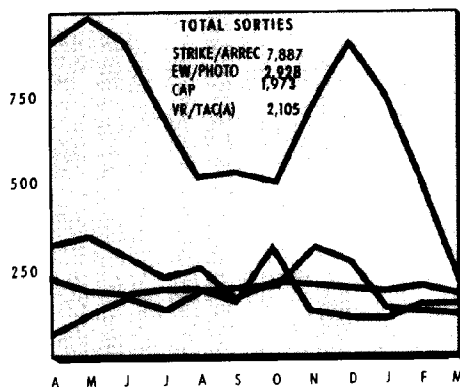
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Although initial allowances provided the two in-country Marine observation squadrons with 12 Cobras each, the 1st Wing AH-1G distribution was modified by subsequent Marine redeployments from Vietnam. To keep the superior weapons system in-country, VMO-2 was assigned all Marine AH-1G assets until December 1969, at which time the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing temporarily restructured the VMO and HML squadrons. This reorganization consolidated in a single squadron similar assets, supply and maintenance support, and trained personnel; on 11 December 1969, MAG-16 reassigned all AH-1Gs from VMO-2 to HML-367.

#### Out-of-Country Operations

Continuing to support out-of-country interdiction, air defense, and aerial reconnaissance operations, the 1st Wing flew 660 sorties in March. Interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail accounted for 216 of these missions, as Marine aircrews maintained

**MARINE OUT-OF-COUNTRY  
AIR OPERATIONS**



an around-the-clock contribution to slow the southward flow of NVA troops and supplies. Of the 216 strike and armed reconnaissance missions, the two A-6A squadrons compiled 66 percent. Targeted against the road networks emanating from the Ban Ban, Ban Karai, and Mu Gia Passes, all but one of the 143 A-6A sorties were flown at night. Utilizing the aircraft's moving target indicator, the aircrews detected and struck 172 mov-

ing targets in March, dealing further interference and loss to enemy truck convoys, already largely restricted to night movement. The TA-4Fs of Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron (H&MS)-11 conducted 127 of the 258 combat support missions, providing visual reconnaissance and tactical air controller (airborne) (TAC (A)) support in the Steel Tiger region of the Laotian panhandle.

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Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron (VMCJ)-1 compiled 193 out-of-country electronic warfare and photographic flights during March. RF-4B aircrews flew 45 of their 47 photo reconnaissance sorties in Laos, documenting battle damage assessments from the previous night's strikes and filming other areas of intelligence interest. The Squadron's EA-6As flew 146 sorties in the passive role (fixing the location of radars associated with surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), AAA guns, and ground control intercept (GCI) sites), in addition to actively jamming SAM/AAA-associated radars posing a threat to Free World aircraft. Completing the out-of-country picture, MAG-13 F-4B aircraft assumed the US Navy barrier combat air patrol (BARCAP) mission during five days. The resultant 48 sorties, most of which were flown at night, provided air defense for ship and aircraft operations around Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin.

#### Aircraft Losses

Four Marine helicopters (two AH-1Gs, a CH-46D, and a UH-1E) were lost to direct enemy action during March. The CH-46D was downed by automatic weapons fire, causing an explosion in the aft pylon while approaching a combat landing zone; both AH-1Gs and the UH-1E crashed after being hit by small arms fire.

#### Distribution of Marine Aircraft

Stabilizing after Phase III redeployments, the structure of the 1st Wing remained unchanged during March. Noteworthy, however, was the departure of the last increment of CH-53A helicopters, initially introduced in-country during January 1967; this leaves Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH)-463 equipped with 20 of the newer CH-53D models.

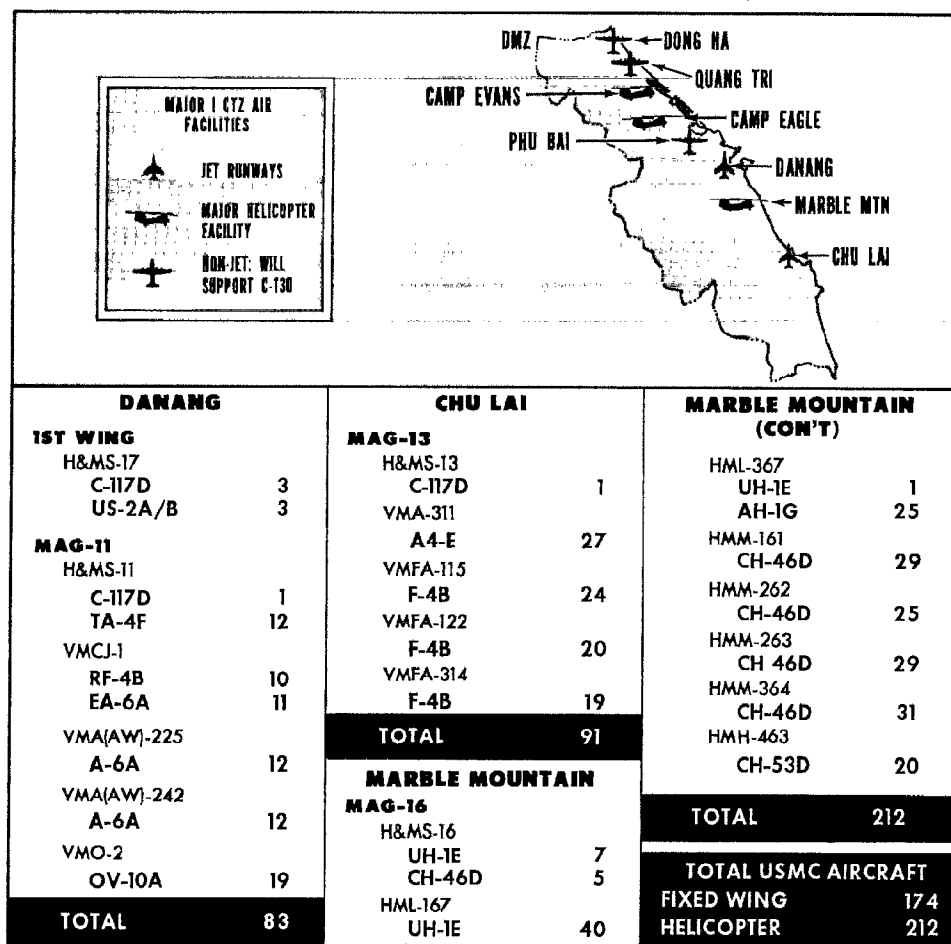
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The following chart reflects the distribution of 1st Wing aircraft at end-March.

### MARINE AIRCRAFT BASED IN I CTZ: MARCH 1970



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## LOGISTICS

While III MAF internal logistic operations continued in much a routine manner during March, peripheral logistic actions of significant impact were highlighted by the completion of KEYSTONE BLUEJAY, sailing of the USS REPOSE for CONUS, and increased emphasis on screening materiel excesses, made available partially as a result of redeployments, for the Pacific Utilization and Redistribution Agency (PURA).

Embarkation

On 2 March, surface elements of KEYSTONE BLUEJAY's Embarkation Unit-5 (110 personnel, 25,559 sq ft of vehicles, and 3,428 cu ft of cargo (non-mobile loaded)), consisting of Company A(-), 9th Engineer Battalion; Company B(-), 3d Amphibian Tractor Battalion; and a detachment of the 1st Radio Battalion, embarked USS MONTICELLO (LSD-28) at Da-nang, with Hawaii as their ultimate destination. Then, during the period 11-22 March, surface elements of Embarkation Unit-6 (1,904 personnel, 96,012 sq ft of vehicles, and 290,557 cu ft of cargo) boarded five Seventh Fleet amphibious ships for return to CONUS. The last vessel of the group, USS DURHAM (LKA-114), is scheduled to close Long Beach, California on 7 April, completing the surface lift for Phase III.

In addition to the unit movements, during the period 5-31 March, 3,504 measurement tons (M/T) of AM-2 matting, 12,674 M/T of mount-out (a 30-day block of supplies held in readiness by Fleet Marine Force units) and mount-out augmentation (a second 30-day block, held by service support units, which provides committed Marine units an additional 30 days of supply), and other assets were shipped from RVN to Okinawa/Japan/CONUS as a result of KEYSTONE redeployments. This required the combined effort of seven amphibious ships.

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A recapitulation of Phase I (KEYSTONE EAGLE), Phase II (KEYSTONE CARDINAL), and Phase III (KEYSTONE BLUEJAY) lift requirements is shown below.

Phase	Personnel	Vehicles (Sq Ft)	Cargo (Cu Ft)
KEYSTONE EAGLE	8,394	150,805	293,911
KEYSTONE CARDINAL	18,483	422,566	3,906,720
KEYSTONE BLUEJAY	<u>12,900</u>	<u>393,708</u>	<u>1,026,880</u>
Total	39,777*	967,079	5,227,511

\* Does not include 1,614 US Navy personnel redeployed with Marine units.

#### Engineer Operations

Engineer efforts in Quang Nam province during March consisted of continuing combat and combat service support and emphasized improvement of established cantonments. Taking full advantage of good construction weather, Marine engineers also ensured lines of communication were upgraded and maintained throughout the province. In addition, the never-ending requirement to improve security of fixed installations necessitated construction and maintenance of obstacles, erection of guard and watch towers, and installation of perimeter lighting. Such projects have enabled III MAF to maintain local security with reduced manpower, a vital consideration in the face of current redeployments.

#### Retrograde Cargo Movement

Following the surface cargo tonnage record of 30,923 M/T set in January 1970, there occurred a marked increase in the competition for ready shipping. This was caused, in the main, by dedication of available assets to KEYSTONE BLUEJAY during February and March. Thus, the March surface

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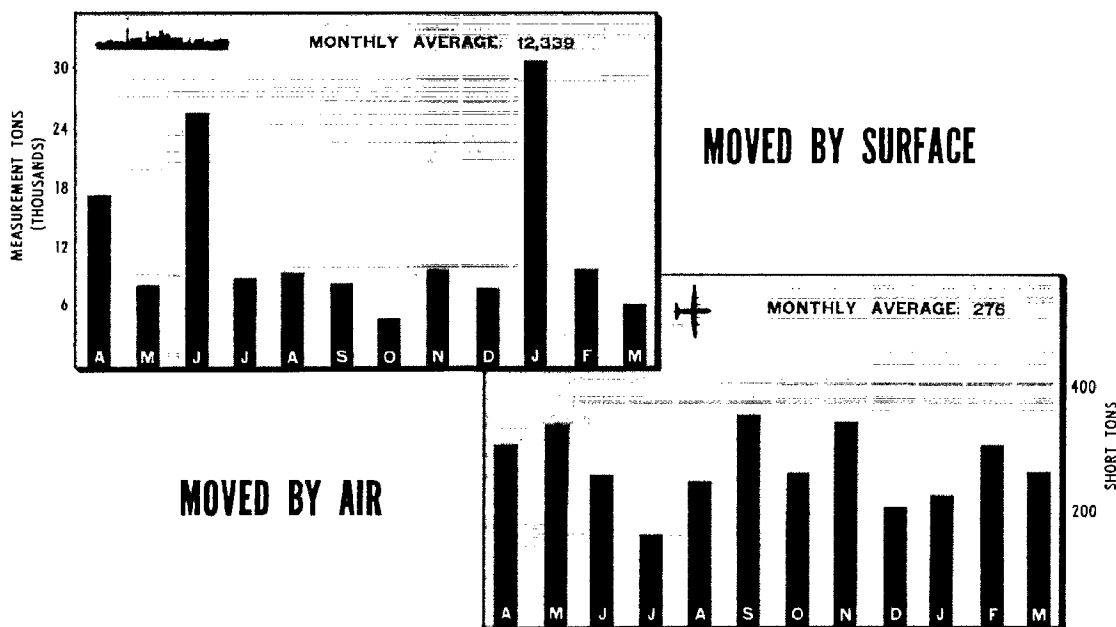
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movement of 6,201 M/T neared the record low of 4,914, set in October 1969 (the crest of KEYSTONE CARDINAL needs), and is some 50 percent below the past year's monthly average of 12,339 M/T. The retrograde by air of 260 short tons (S/T) of cargo, reflecting a decrease of some 15 percent over that tallied in February, remained slightly less than the established average of 276 S/T.

A comparison of retrograde cargo movement during the past 12 months, including both air and surface means, is portrayed in the following graph.

### III MAF RETROGRADE CARGO: APR 1969 - MAR 1970



#### Supply Operations

Recent KEYSTONE redeployments and the resultant decrease in Marine participation in RVN have helped generate certain excess supplies in III MAF. In many instances, it

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has been possible to apply these excesses to the reestablishment of mount-out (M/O) and mount-out augmentation (M/OA) blocks (depleted during nearly five years of deployment in the war zone) for the 3d Marine Division and other departing elements. Excesses over and above that required to fill the M/O and M/OA have been nominated for PURA, the Pacific Utilization and Redistribution Agency, established by the Department of Defense to utilize, to the maximum, excesses located in the Pacific area. PURA affords other US forces in the Pacific Area Command opportunity to requisition supplies from these stocks, eliminating transportation costs of shipping like items from CONUS, as well as paring lead time. Since initial participation in August 1969, III MAF Force Logistic Command has nominated excesses valued at \$20.6 million to PURA. After a period of 60 days, those PURA assets not requested by another US Service may be used to satisfy Marine needs elsewhere or returned to supply centers for future issue.

#### Aviation Logistics

At end-March, 65 aircraft (a decrease of some 20 percent) were undergoing progressive aircraft rework (PAR) at aircraft plants in Japan, while 11 others were undergoing battle damage repair (BDR) at intermediate maintenance activities or repair facilities in Japan and the Philippines. The following chart reflects the number of aircraft, by type, assigned to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing in I CTZ at end-month; in addition, those undergoing PAR and BDR are included.

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**STATUS OF III MAF MARINE AIRCRAFT: MARCH 1970**

Aircraft Model	Total Assigned	PAR	BDR	Other	Total In-Country
A-4	27	3	0	0	24
TA-4	12	3	2	0	7
A-1	24	0	1	0	23
A-6	11	0	0	0	11
F-4	63	15	1	0	47
RF-4	10	2	1	0	7
C-119	5	1	0	0	4
US-2	3	1	0	0	2
OV-10	19	0	1	0	18
AH-1	25	0	1	0	24
UH-1	48	8	0	0	40
CH-46	119	32	4	5	78
CH-53	20	0	0	0	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>305</b>

NORS/NORM/OR

Availability of operationally ready aircraft within the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing remained essentially at February levels; exceptions were drops to 61 percent readiness for the UH-1 and to 26 percent for the A-6. The decline in UH-1 readiness, to the lowest rate recorded during the past year, was due to four helicopters requiring repair of battle damage, 11 undergoing engine changes, and six scheduled for routine maintenance. The A-6 problem was minor, involving replacement of clamps on a bleed-air duct leading from the engine compressor section with an improved version; the project was completed by end-month.

The NORS/NORM and OR (not operationally ready due to supply/maintenance and operationally ready) data for selected in-country Marine aircraft are displayed on the following page.

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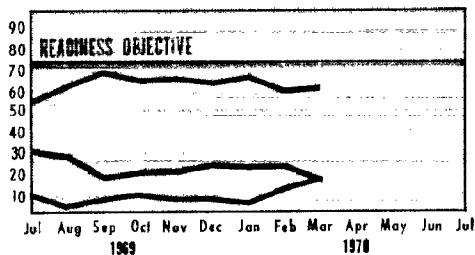
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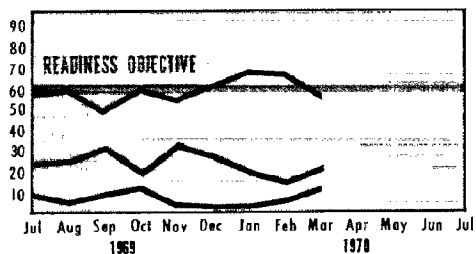
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# **NORS/NORM RATES - III MAF MARINE AIRCRAFT**

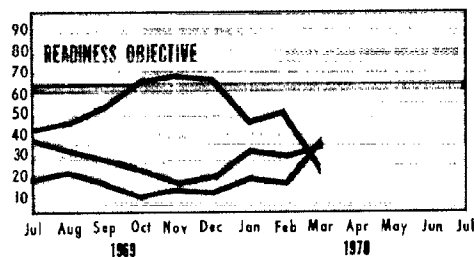
**A-4 (ATTACK)**



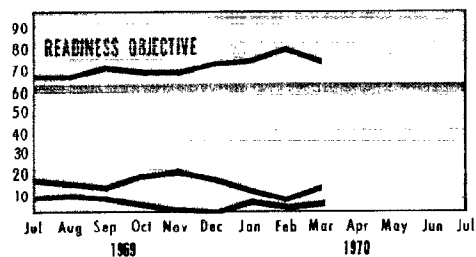
**F-4(FIGHTER-ATTACK)**



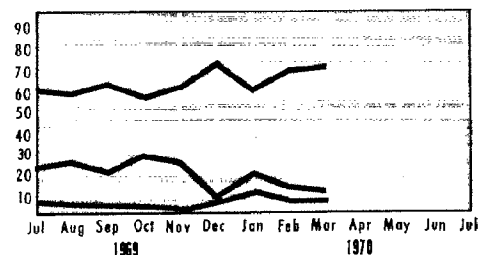
**A-6A (ATTACK)**



**OV-10A (RECONNAISSANCE)**

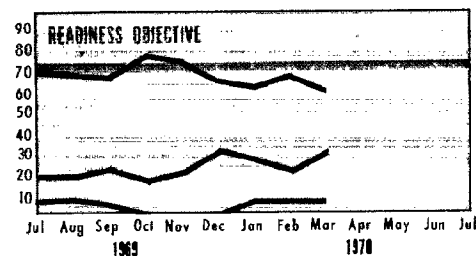


**AH-1G (HELO) \***

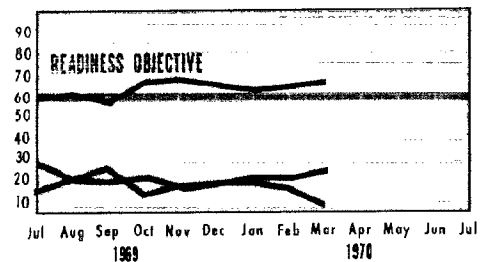


\* Readiness Objective not established.

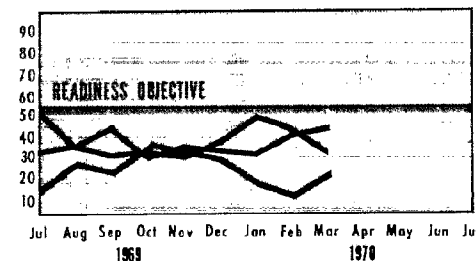
**UH-1E (HELO)**



**CH-46 (HELO)**



**CH-53 (HELO)**



NORS — NORM — READY —

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USS REPOSE

Having served in combat zones twice before (evacuating British and American civilian casualties from Shanghai in 1949 and providing hospital facilities during the Korean War), USS REPOSE (AH-16) was reactivated during late 1965 and arrived on-station, just off the Vietnam coast, on 16 February 1966. The 15,000-ton ship, equipped with a helicopter platform to expedite casualty receiving, was designed originally as a 750-bed hospital, but refinements to ensure more effective patient care and installation of modern equipment reduced that capacity to 560. Staffed by 23 medical officers, eight medical service officers, 35 nurses, and 288 enlisted hospital corpsmen, the REPOSE, from 16 February 1966 to 13 March 1970, treated 9,139 battle casualties, 2,611 non-battle injuries, and 12,963 disease cases, for a total of 24,713 admissions. Spending 1,128 days of her four years in WestPac on the line in support of III MAF operations, USS REPOSE provided medical care to 19,421 Marine and Navy personnel before departing on 13 March for return to CONUS and future deactivation.

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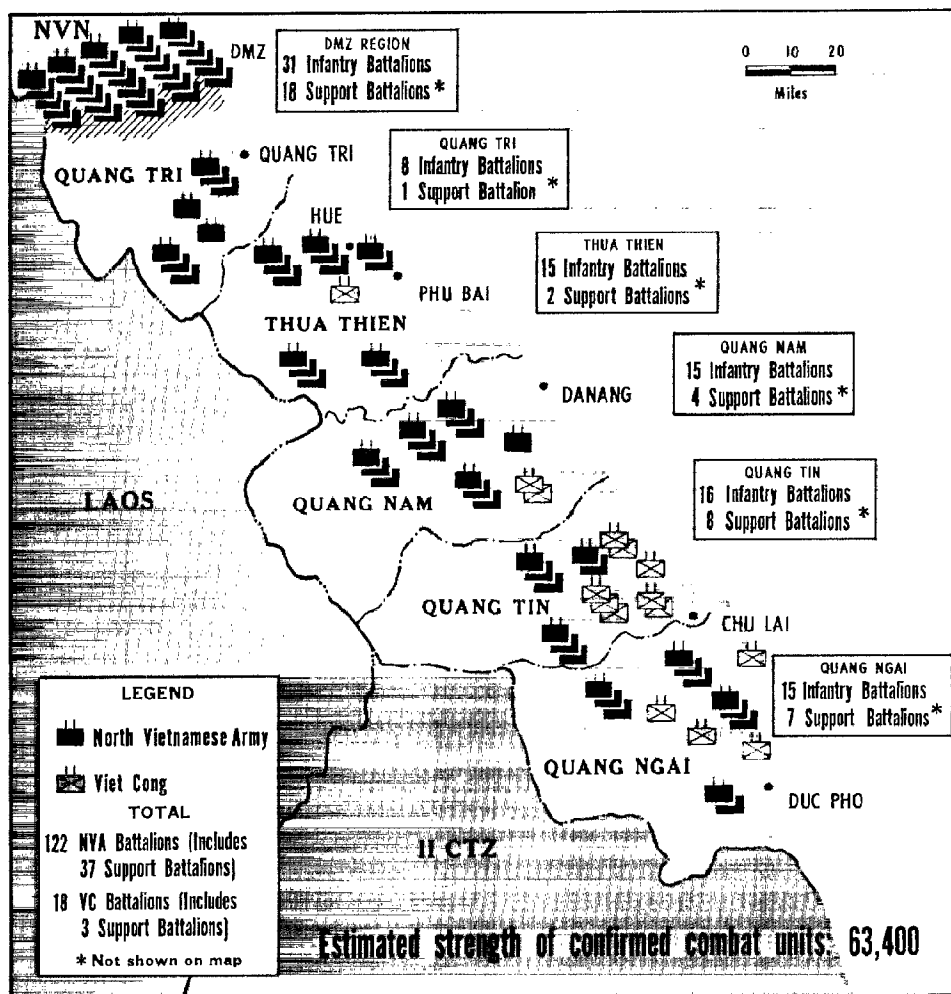
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## STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS

1. Enemy Order of Battle

At end-March, enemy strength in I CTZ was an estimated 83,200 troops, a total which included 63,400 soldiers in confirmed combat units. The 26 infantry regiments committed against the tactical zone were composed of 74 NVA and three Main Force battalions. In addition, there were eight separate VC infantry and 15 sapper battalions. These units were supported by 11 rocket and rocket/artillery and five field artillery battalions, plus 24 other combat and combat service support units. The map below portrays the general locations of enemy battalions in I CTZ and the DMZ area.

## ENEMY BATTALIONS IN I CTZ AND DMZ AREA: MARCH 1970



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2. ENEMY LOSSES TO III MAF

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Captured</u>	<u>Weapons</u>
Marines	530	57	104
US Army (Through 8 March)	264	8	65
Monthly III MAF			
Total	794	65	169
1970 III MAF			
Total	4,448	186	1,211

3. MARINE OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

<u>USMC</u>	<u>CAP</u>		<u>Cumulative</u> <u>1970 Total</u>
4,554	7,388	Patrols	37,410
6,329	6,028	Ambushes	36,245
194		Company operations	893
581		Sniper posts	1,954
4,419		Fixed wing sorties	13,331
28,517		Helicopter sorties	87,337

4. III MAF STRENGTH

	<u>Off</u>	<u>USMC</u> <u>Enl</u>	<u>Off</u>	<u>USN</u> <u>Enl</u>
DMZ area	0	13	0	1
Quang Tri	13	318	1	22
Phu Bai	11	458	1	31
Danang	2,806	35,628	221	1,454
Chu Lai	325	3,195	11	63
Duc Pho	7	264	0	16
Total	3,162	39,876	234	1,587

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5. LOGISTICSa. SupplyClass I

(1000 rations/days of supply)

MCI

B rations

A rations

Danang

63/1

395/8

538/11

Class II

(Supply requisitions)

Processed

Fill rate

FLC
40,202
56%

3d FSR
24,068
47%

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

Danang

MOGAS
85/10

DIESEL
124/5

Class V and V(A) - Adequate to support operational commitments.

b. Resupply Status to RVN(1) Surface Shipping Status

21,652 M/T

Received from CONUS (17,035 M/T)

Received from intra-WestPac (4,617 M/T)

(2) Air Shipping Status

340 S/T

Received from CONUS (96 S/T)

Received from intra-WestPac (244 S/T)

c. Resupply Status within RVN(1) Surface Shipping Status

802 S/T

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(2) Air Shipping Status (USMC and PACAF) 445 S/T

Danang to Phu Bai (33 S/T)  
 Danang to Chu Lai (171 S/T)  
 Other intra-I CTZ APOE's (241 S/T)

d. Retrograde Cargo from RVN(1) Surface 6,201 M/T

MSTS conventional vessels (4,234 M/T)  
 Roll On/Roll Off vessels (1,932 M/T)  
 Fleet Amphibious shipping (35 M/T)

(2) Air 260 S/T

USMC (64 S/T)  
 MAC (196 S/T)

e. Medical and Dental Services(1) Medical

Patients admitted to III MAF facilities 2,043  
     Battle injury (439)  
     Non-battle injury (332)  
     Disease (1,272)  
 Evacuated out-of-country 561  
 Deaths in III MAF facilities 29  
 Returned to duty 1,115  
 Hospitalized as of 31 March 703

(2) Dental

Total procedures 30,100  
 Operative, crown, and bridge 16,240  
 Prosthetics 350  
 Oral surgery 2,217  
 Preventive dentistry 5,312  
 Number of sittings 9,902

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f. Construction Projects

Roads	149.2 miles were upgraded and/or maintained.
Bridges	One Class 60 bridge was constructed and one repaired.

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