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# OPERATIONS OF U.S. MARINE FORCES SOUTHEAST ASIA

1 JULY 1971 THRU 31 MARCH 1973



FLEET MARINE FORCE PACIFIC

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## PREFACE

This is a chronological narrative summary of significant activities, of U.S. Marine Corps forces in Southeast Asia, for the period 1 July 1971 through 31 March 1973. Its purpose is to update previous FMFPac historical reports covering the period from March 1965 through June 1971.

This update resulted from renewed U.S. Marine Corps participation in support of South Vietnamese efforts after the North Vietnamese invasion of South Vietnam in March 1972. Official documents, command chronologies and special reports were utilized in compiling this short narrative summary.

The summary was prepared by the G-3 Operations/ Training Branch, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific. The preparation and editing was done by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas H. SIMPSON, USMC with administrative support from Captain Ralph W. DUNN, USMC and Mrs. Ramona Stone.

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## FROM A COMBAT ROLE TO A FORCE IN READINESS

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1 July 1971 - 31 March 1972

### Stand Down

The redeployment of the 3d Marine Division to Okinawa and elements of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing to Iwakuni, Japan from the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), beginning in November 1969, commenced the reposturing of the PACOM WestPac reserve. Headquarters, I Marine Amphibious Force (I MAF) was activated on Okinawa as these forces arrived, replacing the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade which was deactivated. For nearly two years, as Marine forces continued redeployment from RVN to MidPac and EastPac for reposturing or deactivation, I MAF forces stood ready to assist, as required, in Southeast Asia.

In April 1971, Headquarters, III MAF redeployed from RVN to Okinawa where it replaced Headquarters, I MAF which was relocated to Camp Pendleton, California with a small nucleus staff and an assigned mission of planning for contingency operations and coordination of air-ground exercises for EastPac Marine forces. The arrival of III MAF on Okinawa and the termination in RVN of ground operations on 7 May, air operations on 26 May and deactivation of 3d MAB on 27 June 1971, ended more than six years of Marine air-ground operations in Vietnam. III MAF on Okinawa, with operational control of the 3d Marine Division(-) (Rein), the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and 3d Force Service Regiment, was to begin to ready itself as the WestPac Force in Readiness.

### A Force in Readiness

Although Marines had become acquainted with III MAF's combat role in RVN, its new assignment as the WestPac Force in Readiness would become just as well known one

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year later. However, much work was to be done to mold III MAF into a viable, ready force. The continued conflict in Vietnam and the requirement for contingency planning to counter potential threats in other Southeast Asia areas presented a formidable planning and training task.

- Contingency Considerations

The reduction in CINCPACFLT's inventory of amphibious ships and the subsequent reduction of amphibious squadrons from six to four during 1971, left WestPac Amphibious Forces with just enough immediate shipping to lift the assault elements of two-thirds of a MAB. Available WestPac amphibious shipping included only one LPH and no capability to lift other wing assets. While the WestPac amphibious lift could be doubled in approximately two weeks by addition of the ready EastPac PHIBRON and doubled again in about one month by the remaining two EastPac PHIBRONS, it could not alleviate the immediate shipping shortfall.

III MAF, as postured on Okinawa/Japan, represented two-thirds of a Division/Wing Team. Considering the immediate shipping shortfall, all plans responding to possible contingencies had to be updated to reflect present shipping capabilities. It was obvious that the size of the force committed in response to a crisis would be directly dependent upon the availability of amphibious shipping required to transport these forces to the crisis area. Therefore, with immediately available assets, the maximum combat power III MAF could deploy rapidly would be a MAB, providing that one BLT could be airlifted to, or very near, the point of commitment. Further complicating the situation was the fact that a WestPac MAB had not conducted an amphibious landing since Exercise Golden Dragon I was conducted in Korea during April 1970. On the positive side, the 31st MAU had been continuously deployed afloat as part of Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) ALFA, maintaining a 120-hour reaction time to MR-I in RVN.

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BLT BRAVO, a surface assault configured BLT, was tasked, as part of ARG BRAVO, with a requirement to maintain a 168-hour reaction time to MR-I after commitment of the 31st MAU. Additionally, an airlift BLT was on standby and fixed and rotary wing squadrons were continuously deploying to training sites to improve their combat readiness.

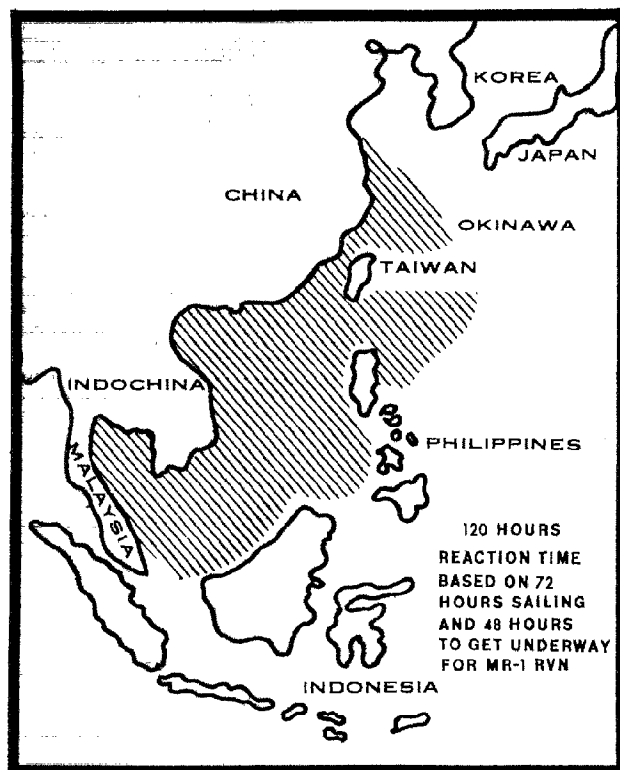
In essence, the basic components of a MAB were in existence and ready but the headquarters command and control element and the service support elements of a MAB would require additional training. The problem was clear. III MAF was structured as a Division/Wing Team but could employ its combat power, at least initially, in no greater strength than a MAB due to the shipping shortfall. Accordingly, all plans requiring the employment of a MAB or a MAF were analyzed and a plan written for each force level based on the concept of incremental deployment utilizing transportation as it was made available.

- 31st MAU Operations

The 31st MAU provided the basic component of the MAB building block concept and was the spearhead of III Marine Amphibious Force. As in the past, a small MAU headquarters with a Battalion Landing Team from the 3d Marine Division, a helicopter squadron from the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, and a Logistic Support Unit from the Division and 3d Force Service Regiment, plied the western Pacific and South China Sea embarked in Amphibious Ready Group ALFA shipping. A trace of its movements crossed and recrossed a wide portion of the area while maintaining the specified 120-hour reaction time to Military Region I in the Republic of Vietnam.

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The readiness of this Navy-Marine Corps team was no accident. The capability of the 31st MAU to quickly assimilate and train newly rotated battalions and helicopter squadrons was largely due to the ready availability of Philippine training sites and the presence of a convenient support base at Subic Bay. Subic's Zambales Training Area was the scene of frequent landing exercises which provided the vehicle for testing the landing and loading plans of each new Battalion Landing Team. The MAU Camp at Subic provided adequate but austere facilities during extended periods ashore. Its convenient proximity to the port facilities of the naval base and the air station at Cubi Point presented unique advantages as a forward staging and logistic support base for both aviation and ground elements.

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A major undertaking for the MAU during the fall of 1971 was the planning for Fortress Light II, a combined U.S./Philippine Amphibious Landing Exercise. The exercise was scheduled to be conducted at MINDORO Island during the period 11-18 December with elements of both the Philippine Marine Corps and the Philippine Navy participating. Integration of the Philippine planning staffs with their respective U.S. counterparts was a mutually beneficial innovation for the exercise. A major portion of the planning was completed; however, the exercise was not to be executed, as the break out of hostilities between India and Pakistan forced its cancellation. Attention immediately focused on ARG "A"/31st MAU as an emergency evacuation force for American citizens in East Pakistan.

The initial message alerting ARG "A"/31st MAU for possible operations in the Indian Ocean, directed ARG "A"/31st MAU, with appropriate escorts, to proceed at best speed toward Singapore. At the time the initial message was received, the USS TRIPOLI (LPH-10), having sustained a boiler casualty, was slowly steaming from Sasebo, Japan toward Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines (R.P.). It was therefor uncertain whether the USS TRIPOLI and embarked personnel of the 31st MAU would be able to join the newly-formed TF 74. An alternate plan involving use of ARG "A"/31st MAU minus the USS TRIPOLI, was considered with the USS TRIPOLI rejoining the remainder of the ARG upon completion of boiler repairs at Subic Bay. Relocation of personnel and equipment was planned but the USS TRIPOLI was able to accomplish repairs at sea, and a final determination by higher authority was that only the USS TRIPOLI and embarked Marine units would transit the Malacca Straits.

The MAU was now administratively, operationally and geographically split. Two rifle companies, "E" and "H", were aboard the USS TRIPOLI with H&S Company and BLT 2/4 Headquarters, HMM-165, and the 31st MAU Hq. Units of BLT 2/4 remaining behind--Companies "F" and "G" and supporting arms detachments--were designated BLT 2/4 (Rear)

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and with the remainder of ARG ALFA operated in the South China Sea until 18 December when mounting ship casualties necessitated their return to Subic Bay for upkeep.

While the USS TRIPOLI was en route to the Malacca Straits landing force logistic problems began to develop. India-Pakistan map and chart shortages were critical and plans were made to air-deliver map packages to Cubi Point, R.P. and the Republic of Singapore. Additionally, III MAF directed 1st MAW to schedule high priority air lift to Singapore via Cubi Point of critically needed aviation material for HMM-165. Clearance was obtained to land at Selatar Airfield, Republic of Singapore, and to transfer personnel and supplies from Selatar to the ships by helicopter. Material was staged at MCAS, Futema and NAS, Cubi Point and flown to Selatar by KC-130 aircraft on 12 December. Helicopter shuttle of personnel and material was accomplished on the morning of the 14th when the USS TRIPOLI, now part of TF 74, commenced transit through the Malacca Straits into the Indian Ocean.

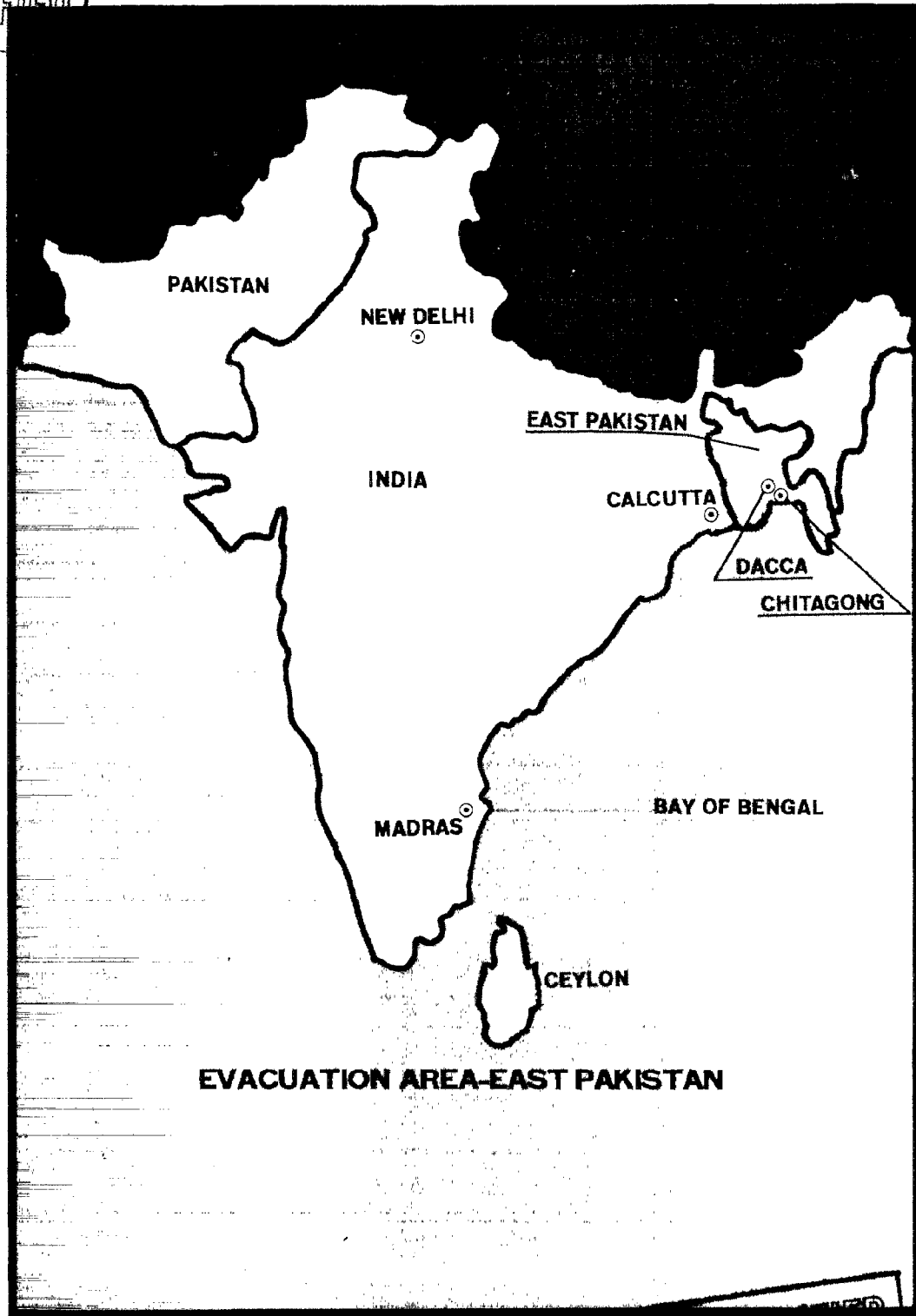
Organizational and command relationships were initially strained by failure to assign the MAU a separate task designator. Without specific tasking the embarked Marines were not addressees on message traffic concerning operations. Similarly, the use of SPECAT Exclusive messages created additional confusion. As the operation progressed, these problems were subsequently solved.

A concept plan was prepared by the 31st MAU for the possible evacuation of U.S. citizens from Chittagong and Dacca, East Pakistan. The concept for landing force employment addressed a progression of situations ashore and corresponding force levels required within the capabilities of the MAU and in consonance with political/diplomatic considerations.

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En route to the Indian Ocean and at the request of CTG 74.3 (Evacuation Group) a visual surface surveillance screen was provided for the Task Force using the CH-46 helicopter assets of HMM-165. This task was undertaken with some reluctance by 31st MAU, for visual surveillance could be detrimental to the execution of the evacuation mission. Further, considering that TF 74 electronic surveillance means already included submarines, aircraft and radar-visual search, the task appeared superfluous and of little benefit. However, the mission proved valuable from an "exercising the assets" viewpoint; and morale, which had sagged through boredom and inactivity, rose appreciably as a result of the mission.

Sector search surveillance flights were generally flown during daylight hours to a distance of fifty nautical miles from the TRIPOLI, covering the area three times daily. At night, standby aircraft were available to investigate confirmed, unidentified radar plots. Additionally, routine training/maintenance flights were conducted. Conduct of the surveillance mission was carefully controlled so that available aircraft parts and the overextended resupply line would not degrade aircraft availability below an amount necessary to respond to the evacuation mission. While HMM-165 conducted the surveillance mission, BLT 2/4 provided the flight observers and augmented the Navy flight deck crew. Additional mission oriented training concerning the India-Pakistan situation and emphasis on riot control techniques and evacuation procedures was conducted.

The unexplained loss of two CH-46 aircraft at sea on 20 and 27 December, respectively, caused immediate grounding of the CH-46 by the HMM-165 squadron commander. Higher commands also grounded the aircraft except for urgent operational requirements. A related CH-46 accident at Yokota, AFB, Japan suggested a common cause factor centering in the aft transmission, and a factory team was sent to the 31st MAU to assist in investigation of the cause.

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Surveillance operations were continued at a reduced level using CH-53 and UH-1E aircraft but problems in supply/resupply forced termination on 4 January to maintain these aircraft for contingency operations.

On 7 January 1972, it was determined by higher headquarters that the operation should be terminated and Task Force 74 was directed to return from the Indian Ocean. The various task groups were chopped to their respective parent commands upon passing Raffles Light near Singapore on 10 January. TRIPOLI proceeded to Subic Bay to rejoin the rest of ARG ALFA, thus restoring ARG/MAU integrity and the normal ARG/MAU schedule.

Three important observations were derived from operations in the Indian Ocean. First, fragmentation of the MAU for 34 days had seriously impaired readiness to execute their primary mission. Second, augmentation of TRIPOLI's flight deck crew by Marine personnel was required to sustain 24-hour operations. Integration of Marines into ship's company was feasible from a manpower utilization standpoint in a situation where landing forces were not otherwise committed. However, had Marine forces been employed ashore, flight deck operations would have been adversely affected due to manpower shortages in the ship's crew. Accordingly, representation was made through Navy channels to ensure adequate staffing of Navy ships and not to depend on Marine augmentation for sustained operations. Third, the increasing use of the SPECAT Exclusive Category for operational traffic is a serious deterrent to the full exchange and flow of information required for effective planning.

Following the Indian Ocean Operation, BLT 3/4 relieved BLT 2/4 and on 26 January 31st MAU/BLT 3/4 conducted the first of three Zambales Landing Exercises to prepare them as the afloat force in readiness. In mid-March a successful ARG/MAU visit and open house program was conducted in Japanese ports. The ARG/MAU returned to Subic in late March for ship upkeep and to complete preparations for Golden Dragon II, a combined exercise scheduled to be conducted during April at Pohang, Korea.

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-331st Marine Amphibious Element

In response to a COMSEVENTHFLT query concerning the possibility of continued contingency operations in the Indian Ocean and with increasing concern over the fragmented and reduced capability of the 31st MAU, CG III MAF proposed that a Marine Amphibious Element (MAE) be embarked aboard an LPD to replace the USS TRIPOLI and embarked landing force units in the Indian Ocean. On 19 December the MAE headquarters was activated. During the period 22-23 December the MAE was organized, its individual units and detachments identified and the force prepared itself for embarkation aboard the USS DENVER (LPD-9). The term Marine Amphibious Element was introduced to describe the organization previously referred to as a reinforced company. The organization of the MAE was based on the premise that the anticipated mission required the formation of a separate headquarters capable of dealing with higher, adjacent and supporting commands. Further, it was considered that the reinforced company and the helicopter detachment did, in fact, constitute an air-ground team.

<u>331ST MAE</u>	<u>MARINE OFF/ENL</u>	<u>NAVY OFF/ENL</u>	<u>TOTAL OFF/ENL</u>
HQ	5/4	0/0	5/4
DET 7TH COMM BN	0/10	0/0	0/10
DET MED BN	0/2	1/8	1/10
DET 3D SP BN SMD	0/5	0/0	0/5
DET SERV BN	0/5	0/0	0/5
DET FSR	0/3	0/0	0/3
DET ALPHA HMM 164	10/29	0/1	10/30
DET 3D MT BN	0/4	0/0	0/4
L CO 3/9 (REIN)	7/223	0/6	7/234

On 24 December the MAE with four CH-46 helicopters sailed for Sasebo, Japan for a port visit. Plans were to sail on 4 January from Sasebo to relieve the TRIPOLI. While en route to Japan, the MAE conducted extensive

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flight operations to determine the feasibility of operating CH-46 helicopters from an LPD. These operations provided valuable training and operational experience and proved the ability of the LPD to perform the anticipated evacuation mission. Under the circumstances, this arrangement was within the concept and policy established by the Commandant of the Marine Corps for the utilization of Marine Corps helicopters aboard amphibious assault ships. On arrival in Sasebo notification was received concerning the grounding of the CH-46 aircraft. On returning to Okinawa, the CH-46's were removed and replaced with a detachment of three CH-53 helicopters.

On 5 January the MAE sailed for Subic Bay to await the decision on the replacement of the USS TRIPOLI by the USS DENVER. Fate was to rule that the MAE would not be committed. Contingency operations in the Indian Ocean were terminated and the USS DENVER and the embarked MAE were directed to return to Okinawa. The 331st MAE was deactivated on 14 January 1972.

While the MAE was shortlived, it emphasized the flexibility of amphibious forces and the Marine Air-Ground Team to organize, on short notice, special task organizations.

-BLT Bravo/Air Contingency BLT

While the 31st MAU was the most visible, most travelled and widely known element of III MAF, its full effectiveness as the precursor of the III MAF incremental deployment concept was dependent on the immediate backup provided by Battalion Landing Team BRAVO, embarked in ARG BRAVO shipping and by the standby Air Contingency Battalion Landing Team located on Okinawa.

This arrangement proved effective for the situation which existed in WestPac during the July 1971 - March 1972 period; however, operating experience revealed at least one serious limiting factor. Supporting incremental packages resulted in unacceptable fragmentation of combat service support resources.

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On the plus side, the concept provided neat, relatively self-sufficient packages for training and afloat phases. Specifying a BLT configuration for helicopter-borne assault, surface-borne assault or commitment by air allowed the best possible utilization of shipping assets and facilitated unit planning. Further, the availability of specially configured task organized units provided a desirable degree of versatility in available response to potential contingency requirements.

To ensure readiness to react to the 168-hour contingency requirement in MR-1 and other possible contingencies, BLT BRAVO and ARG BRAVO conducted periodic Zambales Landing Exercises throughout the period July 1971 - March 1972 perfecting surface assault techniques. While not maintained afloat, BLT BRAVO remained in an alert status on Okinawa while ARG BRAVO shipping provided amphibious training to other 3d Marine Division units, executed opportune lifts, made port visits and transported 3d Marine Division units from Okinawa to Camp Fuji, Japan for training.

The capability of training the 3d Marine Division Air Contingency BLT became a reality when FMFPac concluded negotiations in July 1971 to include the 3d Marine Division in the Military Airlift Command (MAC) Joint Airborne/Air Transportability Training Program. In December 1971 a LOADEX was conducted at Kadena AFB, Okinawa and was supported by a MAC training team. In February and March 1972 BLT 1/4 and C-141 aircraft from MAC conducted an air movement exercise from Okinawa to Cubi Point, R.P. and return. This exercise further increased the readiness of III MAF contingency forces and tested one more component of the WestPac Force in Readiness.

#### Air Operations

Upon redeployment from SVN, the air units of FMFPac occupied themselves with the task of rebuilding squadrons whose capabilities had been eroded by six years of continuous combat operations. The emphasis was on reconstituting materiel stocks and training personnel. In the latter

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case, the specialized demands of Vietnam, coupled with personnel turbulence, had left serious gaps in the backgrounds of younger personnel while some older hands had lost proficiency in certain areas, particularly air-to-air combat and special weapons delivery.

To attain an acceptable readiness posture, the 1st MAW adopted a training program which involved squadron deployments to Naha, Okinawa and Cubi Point, R.P. Squadron rotations were made on a 3-month cycle. This procedure provided newly arrived air crews with the opportunity to qualify in air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons delivery and air combat maneuvering. Close proximity of the weapons' ranges to these operating bases was a specific advantage at both locations. Additionally, the deployment sites were ideally suited for integration with ground unit training.

Air crews of the 1st MAW were active in the Joint Peacetime Aerial Reconnaissance Program (PARPRO) as well as joint and combined exercises of the air defense systems in Japan, South Korea, Okinawa and Taiwan. Participation in these exercises involved CAP, ECM support missions and simulated strike attacks.

On 1 July 1971 two squadrons from MAG-12, VMA-211 and VMA(AW)-533, assumed a Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP) commitment in response to a CINCPAC request for additional SIOP forces. This marked the first time since the mid 1960's that Marine aviation units were committed to the SIOP. From 1 July 1971 until they stood down on 9 February 1972 these two squadrons maintained their SIOP commitment, and, in conjunction with a headquarters element from MAG-12, staged quarterly Nuclear Operational Readiness Exercises to demonstrate their ability to respond to SIOP tasking.

-VMA(AW)-224

During November 1971 VMA(AW)-224 from the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing arrived in WestPac for a six-month line period aboard the USS CORAL SEA (CVA-43). Although

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not assigned to the 1st MAW this squadron received logistic and personnel support from 1st MAW assets.

-YOV-10D Combat Evaluation

Combat evaluation of the YOV-10D night observation gun ship continued in MR-3 and 4 RVN during June, July and August 1971 after arriving on 26 May. The YOV-10D is an OV-10A aircraft configured with the Night Observation Gunship System (NOGS) which consists of an integrated 20MM gun and infrared target acquisition system. The NOGS detachment included two aircraft and 21 Marines. Deployment and evaluation was conducted with the Navy's Light Attack Squadron 4 at Binh Thuy, RVN. During the course of the evaluation a total of 200 missions were flown with excellent results. On the night of 28 July, in support of an outpost in danger of being overrun, supporting fire was placed within 30 meters of friendly positions. As a result of the evaluation, the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific recommended adoption of the NOGS YOV-10 aircraft and that, an additional six YOV-10's be included in the VMO aircraft allowance.

-MAG-36

The professional ability of MAG-36 and particularly its heavy helicopter squadron, HMH-462, received favorable notice for the near perfect execution of the lift of Marine nuclear weapons from their storage location to the aerial port of embarkation on 14 December 1971. The lift required 15 CH-53 sorties and four CH-46 sorties. Subsequent lifts on 29 February and 6 March 1972 were made to move U.S. Army nuclear weapons from various sites to their aerial port of embarkation. A total of 34 CH-53 and CH-46 sorties were required to complete the latter moves.

MAG-36 was not exclusively a helicopter group since it provided administrative and logistic support to the 1st Wing's transport squadron, VMGR-152. Futema provides a convenient base for this squadron since the base is located near one fixed wing deployment training site

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(Naha) and midway between Iwakuni and the other deployment training site, Cubi Point. This central location enhances the squadron's ability to execute its mission of inflight refueling as well as provide logistic support to the widely dispersed Marine forces in WestPac.

The KC-130F's of VMGR-152 and the helicopters of MAG-36 made an excellent team during September and October 1971 in the delivery and distribution of disaster relief supplies to Yaeyama-Gunto Islands south of Okinawa after these islands were devastated by the full force of typhoon Bess. The expeditionary nature of Marine equipment again played an important part in disaster relief. A forward operating base was established at Ishigaki airfield and a Tactical Airfield Fuel Dispenser System (TAFDS) was installed to refuel the CH-53's operating out of Futema. The TAFDS was kept filled by Marine KC-130F tanker aircraft.

One of the tasks that occupied the aviation forces during the period following the Vietnam redeployment was a search for an optimum helicopter mix aboard LPH class ships.

In the course of conducting routine amphibious deployments and landing exercises, the 31st MAU had proven the validity of the 14-4-4 helicopter mix (14 CH-46's, 4 CH-53's, 4 UH-1E's) aboard the LPH. With HMM-164 relieving HMM-165 in October 1971, an evaluation of the 14-6-4 mix was undertaken. One of the principal purposes of testing the numbers and mix of helicopters was to maximize the potential of the single LPH in WestPac by providing the maximum lift capability. One of the major items of interest, in the evaluation, concerned the adequacy of the Aviation Consolidated Allowance List. Until 1 June 1971, Marine helicopter units were stationed at Marble Mountain near DaNang, and spare parts and expertise were readily available to the MAU. However, when these units were redeployed from Marble Mountain in 1971, helicopter units embarked with the MAU were dependent on self-contained assets. To obtain the best possible operational data, evaluation of the 14-6-4 mix was included as one of

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staff was directed to develop this data and begin preparation for the deployment of a headquarters and related equipment to accompany either an airlifted MAB, MAU or reinforced rifle company. Additionally, the nucleus MAB staff conducted the necessary liaison with Air Force personnel at Kadena AFB, Okinawa regarding the movement of personnel and equipment to embarkation points. The data accumulated and the planning conducted by the nucleus MAB staff provided the basis for the III MAF NEMVAC Plan.

Following the India-Pakistan confrontation in late 1971 the nucleus MAB staff was augmented for Operation Golden Dragon II and began combined planning with its Navy and Korean counterparts. Additionally, Headquarters, 4th Marines, 31st MAU and BLT Bravo began planning in conjunction with 9th MAB and embarkation data was prepared for the deployment of these units.

Meanwhile, selected personnel of the 9th MAB Headquarters, on request of CG, FMFPac, were returned to the United States and MidPac to embark aboard the new Amphibious Command Ship, USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC-19), in order to become familiar with the ship's sophisticated equipment while the ship was en route to WestPac.

On the eve of the departure (29 March 1972) of 9th MAB for Operation Golden Dragon II in Korea, the North Vietnamese Army invaded South Vietnam. The test of the reaction capability of the WestPac Marine Force in Readiness was at hand.

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29 PALMS

FORCE TROOPS, FMFPAC

CAMP PENDLETON

1 MAF HQ

1ST MARINE DIVISION

1ST MARINES

5TH MARINES

7TH MARINES

11TH MARINES

1ST FORCE SERVICE REGIMENT

EL TORO/SANTA ANA/YUMA

3D MARINE AIRCRAFT WING

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-11

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-13

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-16

MARINE WING SUPPORT GROUP-37

MARINE AIR CONTROL GROUP-38

MARINE COMBAT CREW READINESS

TRAINING GROUP-10

MARINE HELICOPTER TRAINING  
GROUP-30

IWAKUNI, JAPAN

1ST MARINE AIRCRAFT WING

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-12

MARINE AIR CONTROL GROUP-18

MARINE WING SUPPORT GROUP-17

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-15

KANEOHE BAY, HAWAII

1ST MARINE BRIGADE

3D MARINES

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-24

CAMP SMITH, HAWAII

HQ FMFPAC

OKINAWA

III MAF HQ

3D MARINE DIVISION -

4TH MARINES

9TH MARINES

12TH MARINES

3D FORCE SERVICE REGIMENT

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-36

## MAJOR FMFPAC UNIT LOCATIONS

31 MARCH 1972

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## RESPONSE OF THE FORCE IN READINESS

1 APRIL - 31 MAY 1972

### Posture

As three North Vietnamese Army (NVA) divisions attacked across the northern border of South Vietnam on 29 March 1972, the disposition of III MAF operational forces was nearly ideal for a rapid response to any contingencies. Headquarters, 9th MAB was embarked aboard the USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC-19) at White Beach, Okinawa preparing for the conduct of Exercise Golden Dragon II in April. ARG ALFA/31st MAU (BLT 3/4 and HMM-165) had departed U.S. Naval Base, Subic Bay, R.P. for ARG operations in the South China Sea. ARG/BLT BRAVO (BLT 1/9) was conducting ARG operations in the East China Sea. First MAW was preparing for support of Golden Dragon II and had maintained a contingency readiness through repeated deployment of training detachments to Naha, Okinawa and Cubi Point, R.P. from their home base in Japan.

As the situation along the DMZ deteriorated, ARG ALFA/31st MAU was directed to proceed at best speed to the vicinity of the DMZ to await orders and be prepared to evacuate U.S. military personnel by helicopter or assault craft as required. This force arrived off the DMZ on the morning of 2 April 1972. On the evening of 6 April, four hours and 55 minutes after receipt of execution orders, Marine aircraft from MAG-15 touched down at DaNang, RVN and commenced required in-country briefings in preparation for combat operations to the north. The cornerstone of the incremental deployment concept of III MAF was in place.

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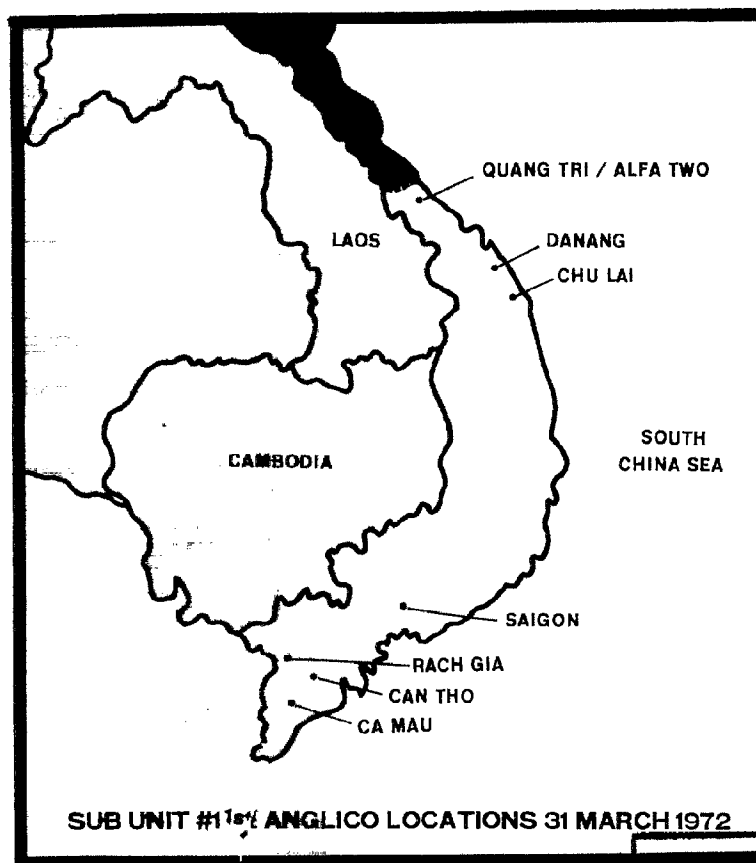
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While the flexible and mobile power of Seventh Fleet forces were being rapidly expanded to provide support to the beleaguered South Vietnamese, the first U.S. Marines to meet the NVA onslaught were those from Sub-Unit One, 1st ANGLICO.

-Sub-Unit One, 1st Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (1st ANGLICO)

Sub-Unit One, 1st ANGLICO was the only Fleet Marine Force, Pacific unit remaining in RVN after the departure of the 3d Marine Amphibious Brigade during June 1971. Through its scattered naval gunfire liaison/spot teams, the Sub-Unit continued to provide combat support by controlling the fires of Seventh Fleet destroyers and cruisers for Free World Forces along the entire coastline of RVN

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The Sub-Unit was in the process of drawing down in personnel and support when the NVA advanced across the DMZ. Locations at which Naval gunfire support had been provided in RVN, had been reduced from 27 locations during 1968-69 to eight on 31 March 1972. Personnel strengths had been reduced accordingly, and the Sub-Unit was at an operating strength of 11 Marine and 6 Navy officers and 88 Marine and 2 Navy enlisted. The disposition of Sub-Unit One in MR-1, at two critical locations, Quang Tri and Outpost ALFA TWO, proved propitious however, when the NVA invasion began.

The large, well coordinated NVA attack across the DMZ caused the 3d ARVN Division to withdraw in disorder. During the first 48 hours of the advance, four ARVN fire bases fell or were abandoned, and several others were in extreme danger and the 3d ARVN Division had lost most of its artillery. The weather grounded the majority of friendly aircraft, leaving naval gunfire as the only continuously effective supporting arm available to ground forces in MR-1.

On 1 April, after three days of intensive NVA bombardment, outpost ALFA TWO was evacuated by helicopter. During the preceding days, naval gunfire had been directed by ANGLICO personnel from the outpost on enemy troop staging areas, advancing enemy formations, likely avenues of approach, and on enemy firing positions. The presence of naval gunfire delayed the inevitable fall of ALFA TWO, but by 1 April, the outpost was cut off and surrounded. The ARVN battalion defending ALFA TWO was withdrawing in general disorder. During the hasty evacuation of ALFA TWO, one member of the ANGLICO team was mortally wounded and another was missing in action. After the fall of ALFA TWO, naval gunfire was directed on the advancing NVA units from the Quang Tri Combat Base.

During the month of April, the NVA offensive assumed major proportions, with the fighting reaching a level of intensity unequalled since Tet 1968. In response to the massive enemy assault, the utilization of Naval gunfire was increased substantially and augmentation was

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required. The augmentation of naval gunfire support assets included twenty-seven destroyers, two light cruisers, and one heavy cruiser from the Atlantic Fleet, the USS NEWPORT NEWS (CA-148).

The bad weather which prevailed in northern MR-1 during early April hampered observer control of both naval gunfire and close air support. Despite the bad weather, Sub-Unit One aerial observers, operating out of Phu Bai Air Base and flying in VNAF L-19 Birdog aircraft, continued to spot naval gunfire by ducking through breaks in the cloud cover and flying at extremely low and hazardous altitudes. During this same period, direct fire from the naval gunfire ships was employed against tank formations and massed enemy personnel along the beach. In return, the ships began to receive heavy enemy counter-battery fire. Due in large part to the naval gunfire support, the enemy advance was slowed, and the ARVN units reformed and established a stable line of defense along the Cua Viet River. Naval gunfire assets in MR-1 were credited during April with destroying an estimated 15-20 enemy tanks and killing between 300 to 400 enemy personnel.

On 7 April, with twelve hours notice, the ANGLICO operations in MR-4 were closed down and its personnel transferred to MR-1 to supplement the heavily engaged ANGLICO personnel there. On 8 April, Sub-Unit One, 1st ANGLICO requested a personnel augmentation of twenty-one Marines, primarily aerial observers, in order to provide continuous daylight air cover in support of three MR-1 ARVN divisions. A further request for eighteen additional Marines and two naval officers was submitted on 10 April, when the Commanding General, Delta Regional Assistance Command requested naval gunfire support be reestablished in MR-4. FMFPac augmentation personnel drawn from 1st ANGLICO, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Brigade and 3d Marine Division began arriving on 13 April. In all, 39 Marines and two Navy officers were provided to augment the in-country Shore Fire Control Parties. With the additional personnel, Sub-Unit One was also able to provide naval gunfire services in MR-2 where services had been terminated earlier because of enemy inactivity throughout

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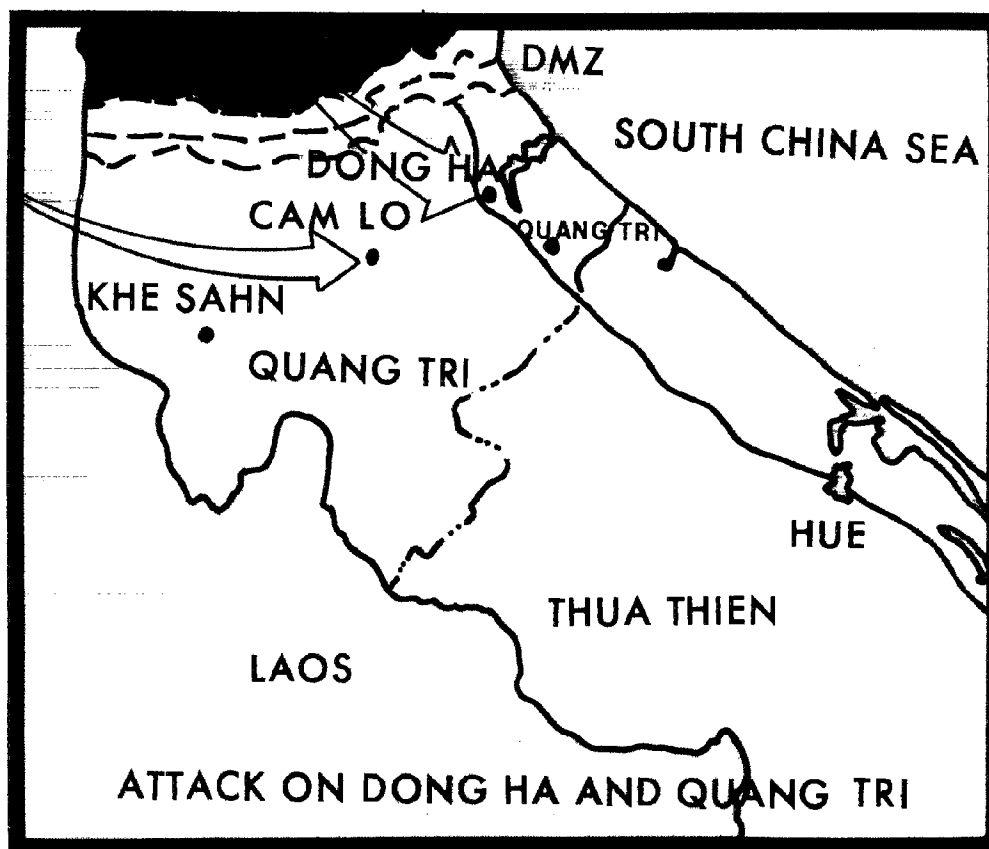
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the MR. Headquarters were established at Qui Nhon and aerial observers flew out of Phu Cat Air Base in support of ARVN and Korean forces.

On 12 April the aerial observers at Phu Bai in MR-1 were transferred to DaNang and began flying with the 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron, USAF. The Seventh Air Force, on request of MACV, agreed to provide up to 42 OV-10 flight hours daily, weather permitting, in order to provide continuous dawn to dusk air coverage for both the 1st and 3rd ARVN Divisions. On 27 April, night spotting missions also commenced in support of the two divisions.



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On 30 April, owing to increased enemy pressure from both heavy artillery barrages and probing ground attacks, Dong Ha fell to the enemy and after its fall, the loss of Quang Tri was imminent. Quang Tri fell on 2 May and the ARVN forces withdrew to the My Chanh River defense line. With the loss of Dong Ha and Quang Tri the operating area for aerial NGF observers was expanded to include all territory north of the My Chanh River. While the normal altitude for adjusting NGF was 3500 feet, due to intense enemy ground fire in the area north of the My Chanh River and the introduction of the hand held SA-7 missile to the battlefield by the enemy, a 7000 foot minimum altitude was forced on spotting aircraft, sharply reducing the observer's capability to observe and adjust naval gunfire.

During the period 8-21 May, enemy activity increased in the vicinity of the Cua Viet River and many NGF missions were called for along the mouth of the river, producing substantial gun damage assessment (GDA). However, one NGF aerial observer was listed as MIA when his aircraft was shot down by enemy fire. The last week in May was marked by a decrease in ground activity, but hostile fire against observation aircraft increased and as a result, a TA-4F was shot down while conducting a NGF mission; however, the pilot and AO ejected safely and were rescued.

#### Formation of the 9th MAB

On 3 April 1972 Golden Dragon II was officially cancelled and Task Force 193 (9th MAB) was deactivated by CTF 79 (CG III MAF); however, selected elements of the 9th MAB (TG 79.1) staff remained activated for contingency planning, and Headquarters, RLTF 4 was retained on Okinawa in a ready status. CG 9th MAB (ADC, Third MarDiv) was directed by CG III MAF to remain embarked aboard the USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC-19) and to be prepared to execute extraction and/or amphibious landing missions, as directed. On 5 April 1972, CTF 76 (Amphibious Task Force) and CTG 79.1 (9th MAB) sailed for the waters off MR-1 and on 6 April CTG 79.4 (31st MAU) and CTG 79.5 (BLT BRAVO) reported for planning. The location of both CTF 76 and CTG 79.1 aboard

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the USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC-19) immediately prior to and during this deployment would prove invaluable to concurrent and coordinated planning and cooperation, so necessary in the intensive planning tempo to come.

On 9 April Task Group 79.1 (9th MAB) was activated for operations and TG 79.4 (31st MAU) and 79.5 (BLT BRAVO) were placed under the operational control of CTG 79.1. The fleshed out MAB was beginning to take shape. Although the procedures for the formation of this force had been developed in preparation for Golden Dragon, the actual creation under crisis conditions marked a clearly successful test of the III MAF incremental deployment concept.

The initial task organization of TG 79.1 was as follows:

9th MAB	TG 79.1
H&SCo, 9th MAB	TU 79.1.0
Det, 1st RadBn	TE 79.1.0.1
ProvCommSptCo	TU 79.1.1
RLT 4 (Fwd)	TU 79.1.2
Hq RLT 4 (Hq, 31st MAU)	TE 79.1.2.0
BLT 3/4	TE 79.1.2.1
BLT 1/9	TE 79.1.2.2
Det B, HML-367	TE 79.1.2.2.1
Det A, HML-367	TU 79.1.3
BLSG (Brigade Logistic Support Group)	TU 79.1.4
LFSP (Landing Force Shore Party)	TU 79.1.5
HMM-165	TU 79.1.6

#### -Activation and Deployment of 33d MAU

On 11 April 1972 COMSEVENTHFLT announced the decision that the ARG turnover would not occur at Okinawa during 17-20 April as originally scheduled. It was further directed that PHIBRON FIVE (ARG ALFA/ARG BRAVO) would remain on station in WestPac and that upon in-chop, PHIBRON SEVEN would form ARG CHARLIE and ARG DELTA. III MAF commands were alerted to be prepared to provide component

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elements of a MAU and a BLT to be deployed in PHIBRON SEVEN shipping as replacements for, or supplements to, units deployed with 9th MAB. Accordingly, 33d MAU (TG 79.7) consisting of BLT 1/4, HMM-164 and a Logistics Support Unit (LSU) was activated for planning on 14 April 1972 and for operations on 18 April 1972. The headquarters was formed utilizing the same T/O used by the 31st MAU. The Commanding Officer of the 4th Marines was designated the MAU commander and an aviator from the III MAF staff was assigned as the executive officer to maintain the desired Air-Ground balance. The helicopter squadron was directed to include two AH-1J aircraft along with its mix of fourteen CH-46, four CH-53, and two UH-1E helicopters.

The newly formed MAU departed Okinawa for the Philippine Islands where they conducted a Zambales landing exercise to test loading and landing plans. On completion of the landing exercise, they proceeded to the Gulf of Tonkin and reported for operational control to 9th MAB on 28 April. On the arrival of 33d MAU, 9th MAB was task organized as follows:

9th MAB	TG 79.1
H&S Co, 9th MAB	TU 79.1.0
Det 1st RadBn	TE 79.1.0.1
Det A, HML-367	TE 79.1.0.2
ProvCommSptCo	TU 79.1.1
RLT-4	TU 79.1.2
Det, HqCo, RLT-4 (Hq 33d MAU)	TE 79.2.0
BLT 3/4	TE 79.1.2.1
BLT 1/9	TE 79.1.2.2
BLT 1/4	TE 79.1.2.3
LFSP	TU 79.1.3
BLSG	TU 79.1.4
Prov MAG-10	TU 79.1.6
Hq, Prov MAG-10 (Hq 31st MAU)	TU 79.1.6
HMM-165	TE 79.1.6.1
Det B, HML-367	TE 79.1.6.2
HMM-164	TE 79.1.6.3
NGF Spot Det	TE 79.1.6.5

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With the addition of the ground combat, air combat and combat service support element of the 33d MAU, CG, 9th MAB now possessed the combat potential of three Marine BLTS and a provisional MAG of over 45 aircraft. In May, several factors developed which affected the organization of the MAB. On 4 May as a result of the loss of a high pressure turbine in the USS TRIPOLI (LPH-10), CTF 76 recommended that TRIPOLI sail to Subic for upkeep and repair. The recommendation was approved by COMSEVENTHFLT and on 5 May, the ARG with 33d MAU (BLT 3/4, HMM-165 and LSU) departed the Gulf of Tonkin for Subic. With BLT BRAVO (BLT 1/9) and 31st MAU (BLT 1/4 and HMM-164) remaining in the Gulf of Tonkin, 9th MAB was reorganized as follows:

9th MAB	TG 79.1
H&S Co, 9th MAB	TU 79.1.0
Det, 1st RadBn	TE 79.1.0.1
Det A, HML-367	TE 79.1.0.2
ProvCommSptCo	TU 79.1.1
RLT-4	TU 79.1.2
HQ RLT-4	TE 79.1.2.0
BLT 1/9	TE 79.1.2.2
BLT 1/4	TE 79.1.2.3
LFSP HQ	TU 79.1.3
BLSG HQ	TU 79.1.4
Prov MAG-10	TU 79.1.6
Hq Prov MAG-10	TE 79.1.6.0
Det B, HML-367	TE 79.1.6.2
HMM-164	TE 79.1.6.3
NGF Spot Det	TE 79.1.6.5

When initially deployed to the Gulf of Tonkin, there was little information available on which to base the organization of the MAB. As time passed and the situation in Vietnam began to stabilize, greater visibility was gained as to the limits of involvement by U.S. forces and the extent to which they would be committed. Thus, it was possible to refine the organization of the headquarters, adjust the overall task organization for greater effectiveness and efficiency, and to implement the rotation of units.

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-Deployment of BLT DELTA

Maintaining the readiness of deployed forces in the face of protracted operations focused increased attention on rotation of units. Considering the lengthy periods at sea, refresher training at the Subic MAU Camp was essential to maintaining the readiness of embarked troops. Rotation of Amphibious Ready Groups was equally necessary if long term ship staying power was to be maintained. ARG/BLT DELTA provided the flexibility to initiate the rotation and was waiting in the wings on Okinawa.

2d Battalion, 9th Marines was designated BLT DELTA on 18 April but remained on Okinawa, maintaining a 168-hour reaction time to MR-1. Meanwhile ARG DELTA ships executed opportune lifts and provided Marine training services, including transporting elements of the 12th Marines to Japan for a firing exercise at Camp Fuji. Returning to Okinawa, ARG DELTA ships embarked BLT DELTA on 14 and 15 May and sailed on 16 May for the Zambales Training Area. A ZAMLEX was conducted on 19-20 May and back-loading was completed on 21 May. Although scheduled to return to Okinawa, the ARG/BLT was directed to the Gulf of Tonkin as a relief for BLT 1/9. 9th MAB assumed operational control on 22 May as the BLT arrived in the Amphibious Holding Area off MR-1.

With three incremental packages (BLTs) already deployed, there were insufficient UH-1E assets to meet all priority commitments and still support BLT DELTA, the fourth BLT, with the usual 2 plane detachment for command and control. The matter was coordinated with the CG, 9th MAB who decided that any requirement for such assets could be provided from resources already deployed.

On 25 May the Landing Force Shore Party was disestablished and one day later Headquarters RLT 4 and Prov MAG-10 were deactivated as 9th MAB units. At the end of May, 9th MAB was task organized as follows:

9th MAB  
H&S Co, 9th MAB

TG 79.1  
TU 79.1.0

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Det, 1st RadBn	TE 79.1.0.1
Det A, HML-367	TE 79.1.0.2
Redeye Platoon	TE 79.1.0.3
Det NGF Spot	TE 79.1.0.4
 31st MAU	 TG 79.4
Hq 31st MAU	TU 79.4.0
BLT 1/4	TU 79.4.2
HMM-164	TU 79.4.3
 33d MAU	 TG 79.7
Hq 33d MAU	TU 79.7.0
BLT 3/4	TU 79.7.1
HMM-165	TU 79.7.2
 BLT DELTA (2/9)	 TG 79.9

-9th MAB Operations

Initially, the anticipated mission of 9th MAB was extraction/evacuation of U.S. personnel from threatened areas. However, by the time 9th MAB arrived at the holding area off the coast of MR-1 on 9 April, the tactical situation in the area had stabilized to the degree that extraction operations did not appear imminent. Instead, COMSEVENTHFLT and higher headquarters directed that a series of plans for amphibious demonstrations and amphibious raids be developed in conjunction with CTF 76. The purpose of the demonstrations/raids would be, to fix in position NVA forces in North Vietnam, to cause withdrawal of NVA forces from South Vietnam, to interdict lines of communications and to destroy North Vietnamese military supplies and facilities. Prompted by a continuing search by higher headquarters for a wider variety of alternatives, a variety of plans were prepared. As the level of forces available to 9th MAB increased to 4 BLTs, directives by higher headquarters to plan a 4 BLT raid indicated that "available force" was replacing "force required for the mission" as the dominate planning factor. At this point CG, FMFPac and CG III MAF both interceded, noting that force size was being directed by tasking rather than being derived from the mission and concept of operations

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ashore. After analyzing the objectives of the proposed raids, COMSEVENTHFLT was advised that most, if not all of the proposed raids could be accomplished by using lightly organized forces that were specifically configured and trained in a series of rapid raids against assigned objectives.

Despite the fact that a formal initiating directive had not been issued, planning was generally characterized by concurrent and closely coordinated effort with the appropriate Navy staffs at all levels. Due to classification and sensitivity of the plans, some difficulty was experienced in preparation, distribution and the exchange of data with subordinate units. In addition, the plans were subjected to major changes as improved intelligence in the proposed target areas was obtained. Because of these factors the desirability of a basic MAB OPLAN that could be referenced in a message frag order became evident and was adopted.

During the period that contingency planning was underway, the MAB headquarters was active in many other areas. Due to the large demand for helicopter transportation and the need for an effective method of controlling this traffic, a Helicopter Transportation Coordination Center was established in the Landing Force Command Center aboard the USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC-19). This arrangement was instrumental in maintaining effective coordination of the movement of mail, equipment and personnel between ships and to and from DaNang.

While planning was the MAB's first order of business, support was being provided in other areas. During the MAB's first week in the waters contiguous to Vietnam, its attached helicopters assisted in search and rescue (SAR) missions. On 13 April, helicopters from HMM-165 aboard the USS TRIPOLI (LPH-10), as well as the three helicopters, two Marines and one Navy embarked aboard the USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC-19), participated in a two day SAR mission for a missing Marine EA-6A, with negative results. During the search, a CH-46 from HMM-165 received fire from Tiger Island, with the helicopter sustaining some damage and the copilot receiving minor wounds.

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Additionally, during this period, a plan was developed by COMSEVENTHFLT for using Marine spotters, flying off an LPD in UH-1E helicopters, to provide an air spot capability for naval gunfire ships operating north of the DMZ. On 18 April, Detachment B, HML 367 and Marine aerial observers embarked aboard the USS DENVER (LPD-9) and proceeded to the gunline. As a precaution against anti-aircraft fire, the UH-1Es used a "pop-up" technique of staying low over the water and then popping up in altitude to spot the fall of shot when the ship fired. This technique did not prove to be a practical means of controlling naval gunfire and the program was terminated after two missions.

As the month of May progressed it was evident that the wide ranging, almost frenzied planning effort through April was abating somewhat and becoming more clearly focused on fewer and more specific missions and tasks. Plans were formulated for the evacuation of the remaining U.S. forces from Phu Bai. This plan would be carried out by TF 76/TG 79.1 forces in the event evacuation by USAF C-130s was not possible. The concept provided for 9th MAB units to land in designated landing zones, provide security for evacuation sites, and proceed to evacuate the approximately 2240 personnel and 65,300 pounds of cargo earmarked for evacuation. Close coordination was maintained with the CG FRAC (First Regional Assistance Command) and the 8th RRFS (Radio Research Field Station) as the plan was developed.

Significant effort was also devoted to planning for a raid into North Vietnam--Operation HEROIC ACTION. The action by COMSEVENTHFLT on 6 May in issuing an initiating directive for this operation was notable since this was the first such directive issued in the current period of expanded operations. Plans were completed and orders issued. However, on 11 May, HEROIC ACTION was postponed indefinitely in order to provide direct support to VNMC operations.

#### -Support of VNMC Operations

Authority was granted in early May for U.S. Amphibious Forces to support Vietnamese Marine Corps (VNMC)

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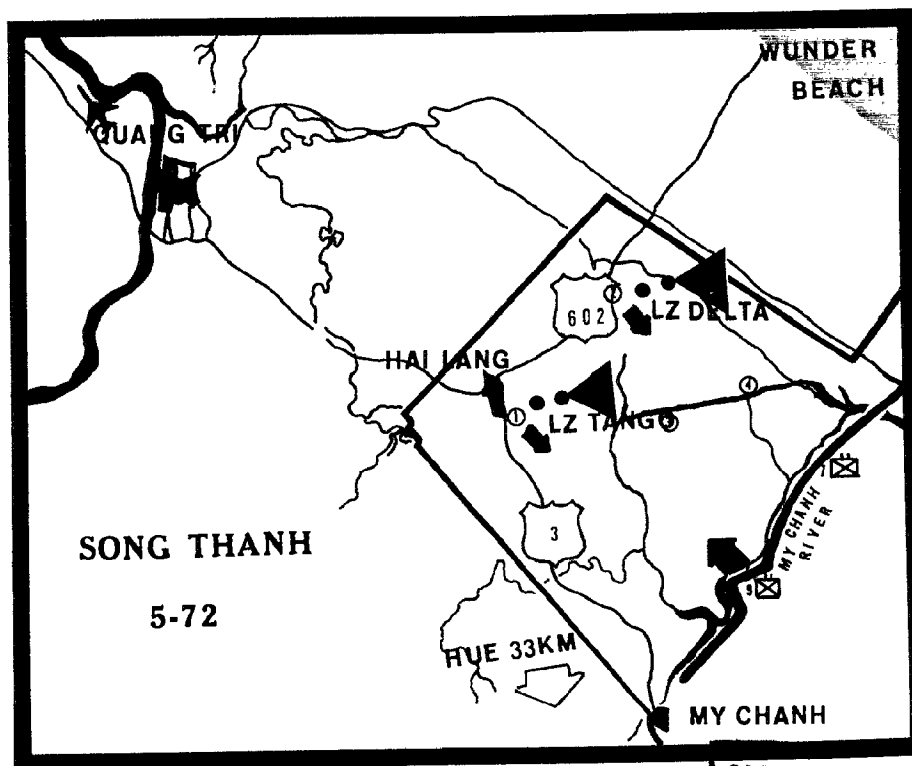
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and ARVN initiatives in retaking lost territories in MR-1. The first operation conducted in which amphibious force assets were provided to support the VNMC was Song Thanh 5-72. This was the first major Vietnamese offensive action in MR-1 since the fall of Quang Tri and its purpose was to spoil an impending attack by the 66th NVA regiment on the recently established defensive line along the My Chanh River.

### --Song Thanh 5-72

The concept of operations for Song Thanh 5-72 called for a helicopter assault by the 3d and 6th VNMC Battalions from the 369th Brigade into two separate LZs approximately 6 miles southeast of Quang Tri City. After clearing the LZs the two battalions, in parallel traces, would sweep south toward blocking positions manned by the 9th VNMC Battalion.



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On 13 May the first wave of U.S. Marine Corps CH-46 helicopters from HMM-164 departed the USS OKINAWA (LPH-3) at 0800H, embarked the Vietnamese Marines at Fire Support Base Sally and touched down in the first LZ at 0934H. Following this first lift, the helicopters were refueled on the OKINAWA, USS MOBILE (LKA-115), USS ST LOUIS (LKA-116) and the USS MANITOWOC (LST-1180) and then returned to FSB Sally for the second lift at 1055H.

Despite devastating preparation fires by air and naval gunfire, the second LZ was hot and, on the recommendation of escorting U.S. Army gunships, landing sites were shifted to the southern portion of the LZ. Moderate hostile fire was encountered as the first helicopter touched down at 1136H. The lift was completed; however, one CH-53 and three CH-46s were hit by enemy small arms fire. The CH-53 was hit in the tail rotor area just before touchdown. No troops were injured, but the damage was such that the CH-53 had to be destroyed in the LZ. The three CH-46s were safely returned to the LPH as was the crew of the downed CH-53.

After completing the assault lifts, USMC helicopters provided logistic resupply from FSB Evans and four medevac support missions, lifting 18 Vietnamese Marines, to the Hue Hospital. The following is a summary of helicopter operations conducted in support of Song Thanh 5/72:

	<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Sorties</u>	<u>PAX</u>	<u>Hours</u>
	CH-46	42	536	48.0
	CH-53	10	600	15.0
	UH-1E	17	2	16.5
Total		<u>69</u>	<u>1138</u>	<u>79.5</u>

The following air maneuver tactics were used to minimize losses:

-A single wave was heli-lifted into each zone, thereby allowing minimum time for the enemy to set up AAA defenses.

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-Approach and retirement to and from the LZs was conducted at or below two hundred feet.

By 1250H all 9th MAB assets were reembarked aboard ARG shipping and participation in Song Thanh 5/72 was terminated. From all indications the operation was successful as the enemy was caught by surprise and reportedly suffered 220 KIAs with heavy equipment loss through destruction and capture. Only a single U.S. Marine casualty was incurred when a splinter fragment caused a minor leg wound for a CH-46 crewman who was treated and returned to duty.

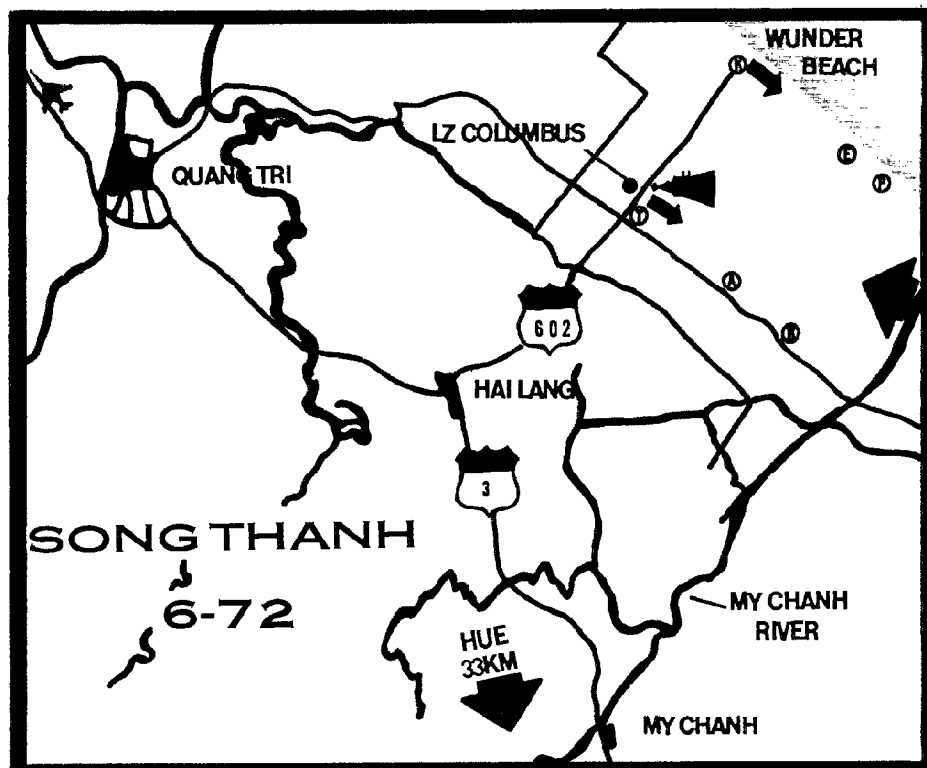
--Song Thanh 6-72

Eleven days later on 24 May, 9th MAB supported the second VNMC operation, Song Thanh 6-72, which was conducted in the same general area as Song Thanh 5-72. Like the first operation, it was planned as a spoiling attack, but this time both surface and heliborne assaults were involved.

The concept of operations for Song Thanh 6-72 provided for one battalion of 580 Vietnamese Marines to land over Red Beach, in a surface assault, followed by a second battalion of 550 Vietnamese Marines in a vertical assault on LZ Columbus. On landing, both battalions were to turn and attack south to relieve the enemy pressure which was being executed against the My Chanh defense line.

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The operation commenced on 24 May with ARCLIGHT strikes coordinated with naval gunfire, air and artillery fires on the beach and LZ. The surfaceborne assault was launched from USS DULUTH (LPD-6) and USS CAYUGA (LST 1186) in 20 USMC LVTs 3600 yards from Red Beach. When the LVTs and the embarked Vietnamese Marines were just under 2000 yards from the beach a final ARCLIGHT strike was conducted on the beach landing areas. At 0832 the LVTs landed the 7th VNMC battalion in the face of scattered mortar fire and an NVA coastal defense battery which fired at the amphibious ships. Immediately after landing the VNMC battalion, the LVTs returned to their parent ships for reembarkation.

The vertical assault began at 0940 when 13 CH-46s and 5 CH-53s from HMM-164 lifted the 6th VNMC battalion

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into LZ Columbus. The USMC helicopters were escorted to the LZ by U.S. Army gunships who marked the LZ and provided suppressive fires during the assault.

Immediately after landing, both VNMC battalions came into heavy contact with elements of the 18th regiment of the 325th NVA division which had apparently just moved into the area in preparation for an attack on the My Chanh defense line. During the ensuing battle the VNMC killed 369 of the enemy while suffering 35 KIAs. They also assisted over 1000 refugees escape NVA occupied territory.

For the second time in 11 days the U.S. Navy/Marine Corps amphibious team had helped the South Vietnamese take the offensive. Song Thanh 5/72 and 6/72 represented important first steps in countering the NVA offensive and dramatically established new milestones in the relationship between U.S. Marines and their Vietnamese counterparts. As COMSEVENTHFLT observed "The precision and polish with which you executed all phases of the operation is yet another tribute to the high state of readiness and discipline which have become your trademarks. Well done." It was noteworthy that 9 out of every 10 U.S. Marine airmen and LVT crewmen who accomplished this superb performance were on their first combat mission.

#### Air Operations

The forward deployment of a Marine Aircraft Wing at Iwakuni, Japan, provided the WestPac ready force, a potent mixture of attack, fighter/attack and electronic warfare aircraft. With the situation in South Vietnam becoming critical, the decision was made to commit Marine fixed wing air assets to the battle for the survival of South Vietnam. Ten months from the time of departure of the last Marine fixed wing aircraft from DaNang AB, RVN, Marine fighter/attack aircraft returned to their former base.

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-Iwakuni to DaNang

On 5 April 1972, the First Marine Aircraft Wing (1st MAW) received a warning order from FMFPac to be prepared to deploy two fixed wing tactical aircraft squadrons to RVN. The decision was made to deploy two F-4 squadrons from MAG-15; VMFA-115 and VMFA-232 based at Iwakuni, Japan. On the morning of 6 April, JCS issued an execute order for the deployment of the two tactical squadrons to RVN. Immediate action was taken to stage the two squadrons to NAS Cubi Point to await the final execute order from COMSEVENTHFLT. At noon, the first elements of the two squadrons were airborne from Iwakuni and en route to NAS Cubi Point. While en route, one aircraft and crew from VMFA-232 was lost at sea just south of Naha, Okinawa.

At 1744 on 6 April, the execute order from COMSEVENTHFLT was received by 1st MAW and immediately passed to the two Marine squadrons now staged at Cubi Point. The squadrons at Cubi reacted promptly, and the lead element, VMFA-232, arrived at DaNang AB, RVN at 2133 on 6 April and the lead element of VMFA-115 arrived just minutes later. Four hours and 55 minutes had elapsed after receipt of the final execution orders.

The total time required for the deployment of MAG-15 (Fwd) from Iwakuni with two F-4 squadrons (VMFA-115, with 12 F-4B aircraft and VMFA-232, with 15 F-4J aircraft), and support elements from H&MS-15 and MABS-15, was two days. The last increment of the follow-on cargo, to the initial lift, arrived on the fourth day. The lift of MAG-15 (Fwd), including supporting elements (984 Marines and 2,099,702 pounds of cargo) was provided by the Pacific Command Transportation Management Agency (PATMA), the Military Airlift Command (MAC) and Marine KC-130F (VMGR-152) assets.

The rapid response of Marine aviation units and their ability to quickly relocate to the crisis area was noted by all levels of command, including the President of the United States.

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Due to the temporary nature and TAD status of the newly deployed forces, COMSEVENTHFLT directed that operational control of MAG-15 (Fwd) be retained by 1st MAW, with missions assigned by the COMUSMACV air component commander (7th AF) through the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing located at DaNang. A Marine Liaison Officer was assigned to the air component commander to ensure smooth and complete mission coordination.

To complete the buildup of Marine F-4 aircraft at DaNang, VMFA-212 was directed on 10 April to transpac to DaNang from MCAS Kaneohe, Hawaii. The first increment from VMFA-212 arrived at Cubi Point on 13 April, and the entire squadron closed DaNang on 14 April. Also, on 14 April, a TA-4F Detachment from H&MS-15, with support personnel and equipment, departed Iwakuni. This detachment arrived at DaNang on 16 April and was to be assigned to CTF-77 for naval gunfire spot missions. The arrival of these two units brought the total USMC F-4 assets in RVN to 27 F-4J's, 12 F-4B's and five TA-4F aircraft.

-VMCJ 1 and 2 Detachments

Deployment to Cubi Point of a detachment of five EA-6A aircraft from VMCJ-1, on 3 April, marked the re-entry into air combat over Vietnam for Marine aviation. The detachment was assigned to the operational control of CTF 77 (Carrier Task Force) and flew their first mission in support of combat operations in Vietnam on 7 April.

DaNang was to be used as a mission staging field for the EA-6A's from Cubi, and support personnel from the VMCJ-1 detachment were located there to service the aircraft. The operating procedures for the EA-6A's called for them to be launched in the early morning hours from Cubi Point, accompanied by a KC-130 from VMGR-152, and fly to DaNang Airbase where they would land for mission brief and aircraft servicing. On completion of the briefings, the EA-6A's would then launch on their electronic countermeasures mission into North Vietnam. When support of the missions into North Vietnam were completed, the aircraft would return to DaNang for servicing in preparation for a

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second mission. A new EA-6A crew, which was brought in with the KC-130, would then fly the second mission over North Vietnam. As on the first mission, the aircraft returned to DaNang for servicing and then returned with the KC-130 to Cubi Point. The EA-6A's would not remain overnight at DaNang.

The effectiveness of the Marine EA-6A support was noted by CTF-77 when he informed COMNAVAIRPAC--the most effective support this force has had to date has been by VMCJ-1 EA-6A aircraft. On the five strikes they have supported, SAM guidance has been erratic and no aircraft have been hit. These aircraft along with other Air Force and CTF 77 assets also supported the B-52 strikes against VINH on 10 April. VMCJ-1 operating from Cubi Point and staging through DaNang has flown all missions for which their services were requested. CTF 77 went on to further state--the presently assigned EA-6A's do not constitute adequate resources for sustained support of our concept of operations involving daily flights in route package two and three. Additional EA-6A assets are required to augment the VMCJ-1 effort, preferably by having carrier qualified crews which could stage through CVA's and thus be immediately responsive to suddenly occurring strike needs. Had it been known earlier that a Marine EA-6A detachment was on SARATOGA (USS SARATOGA (CVA-60) was scheduled to report to the Pacific Fleet from the Atlantic Fleet) we would have requested that the entire Detachment proceed to Subic via transpac. It is possible that the VMCJ-2 detachment will provide sufficient augmentation to do the job when it arrives. It is requested that at least four EA-6 aircraft with adequate flight crews, support personnel and material, be deployed to Cubi Point, earliest.

To provide the immediate support requested by CTF 77, COMNAVAIRLANT on 11 April directed the VMCJ-2 detachment from the USS SARATOGA, with four EA-6A aircraft, to transpac to Cubi Point vice embarking on the USS SARATOGA for the voyage to WestPac. The VMCJ-2 detachment arrived at Cubi on 20 April 1972.

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In order to provide a greater sortie capability and ease of support for the EA-6A's, 1st MAW recommended the VM CJ-1 and 2 detachments now staged at Cubi Point, be combined. COMSEVENTHFLT and CTF 77 concurred, with the proviso, that the option to operate the VM CJ-2 detachment from any carrier deck, as well as DaNang, be retained.

VM CJ-2 detachment flew their first combat mission in support of CTF 77 on 20 April 1972, their first day on station.

-Bien Hoa

On 12 May 1972, CG, 1st MAW received a warning order from CG, III MAF to prepare to deploy two A-4 squadrons and supporting detachments of H&MS-12 and MABS-12 to Bien Hoa, AB, RVN. VMA-211, with 17 A-4E aircraft, and VMA-311, with 15 A-4E aircraft, reported the capability to deploy within 12 hours after ordered to execute. The next day, 13 May, 10 A-4E aircraft from a detachment at Naha, Okinawa, flew to NAS Cubi Point to await the execute order. On the evening of 16 May 1972, final plans were made for the deployment of 22 A-4's from Iwakuni and 10 A-4's from NAS Cubi Point. The execute order was received that night. At 0609 on 17 May, the first flight of A-4's departed NAS Cubi Point for Bien Hoa, RVN and landed there at 0818. By 1750 that evening, 27 A-4 aircraft had arrived at Bien Hoa. On the following day, 18 May, the final tactical aircraft arrived. The first combat missions were flown on the 19th. Again the readiness of WestPac Marine forces to react on a moments notice was demonstrated.

In-country indoctrination was required for all pilots prior to flying combat missions and was conducted by a team from 7th Air Force. This training included briefing/lectures on communication procedures, rules of engagement, flight regulations for the area, escape and evasion, as well as the enemy and friendly situation. In the case of MAG-12, the indoctrination also included a combat familiarization flight with an experienced U.S. Air Force pilot in the dual seated A-37 Attack Aircraft. This

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was achieved through the initiative of the Group Commander and the cooperation of the locally based 8th Special Operations Squadron. Full combat operations was achieved by 22 May following a gradual buildup.

-Activation of Nam Phong

Even as MAG-12 was deploying into Bien Hoa, RVN, Nam Phong, Thailand, was being considered as a potential site for the redeployment of MAG-15 from DaNang. Because of the sensitivity of the proposed redeployments and the locations under consideration, planning was restricted to a few selected staff members at each headquarters of the Force. Initial planning was hampered by the lack of specific information about the proposed site. It was known that the field had been constructed in 1967 but had never been operational. It consisted of an unused airstrip with taxiways, parking aprons and a few austere buildings which were occupied by an indigenous training activity. A report provided by the Officer in Charge of Construction (OICC), Thailand, on 10 May, included the current condition of the runway, taxiways and parking aprons, availability of ground materials required for construction, the vertical structures available and current occupancy.

On 14 May representatives from 1st MAW arrived on Okinawa to confer with III MAF, 3d MarDiv and 3d FSR. Based on this joint meeting, a proposed task organization was formulated for redeployment to Nam Phong. Specific questions to be addressed by an on-site survey team were developed. The composition of the survey team was determined and the team, headed by the Assistant Wing Commander, 1st MAW, departed for Thailand on 17 May 1972. After briefings by representatives of the key U.S. agencies in Bangkok, both military and civilian, the team proceeded to the Nam Phong site.

At the site, arrangements were made so that currently occupied structures on the parking apron could be made available to the Marines. These consisted of six Butler buildings and one small hangar. Logistic representatives of the survey team effected liaison with the U.S.

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Army Support, Thailand, at Sattahip. It was determined that all classes of supply could be made available on request. Also determined were the requirements for Inter Service Support Agreements.

Based on recommendations by the on-site survey team, a plan for the introduction of personnel and equipment of MAG-15 (later designated as Task Force DELTA) into Nam Phong was developed. The plan brought together the requirements for base development with the imposed operational target dates. The basic plan was to place primary emphasis on ensuring that all the essential requirements to operate the tactical units would be completed by 10 June 1972.

On 22 May the OICC, Thailand commenced actions to support the opening of Nam Phong airfield. Actions included the screening of local supplies for procurement of materials, leasing of large earth-moving equipment, and the hiring of local nationals to assist in the overall construction effort.

Once country clearance was obtained for 653 personnel from TF DELTA, special airlift requests were submitted via service channels to deploy the advance party into Nam Phong.

The introduction of U.S. forces into Nam Phong commenced with the landing of a USAF aerial port detachment on 24 May 72 to receive and off-load aircraft. On the same day the OICC, Thailand had personnel on site to receive incoming construction materials.

Also on 24 May, a Marine KC-130 landed at the newly operational airfield with the advance party of TF DELTA. On 25 May three C-141 aircraft arrived with the initial elements and by 31 May there were 377 Marines, 94 Seabees, and 3 civilians at Nam Phong. The total airlift effort through 31 May included 1399 S/T of supplies and equipment delivered by 74 C-141 and two C-5 aircraft.

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The American Embassy on 29 May noted--that a few days ago, base facilities at Nam Phong consisted of little more than a stand-by runway and considerable work must be done to develop it into an austere air base. However, with the capabilities of Marines and Seabees and other U.S. military elements in Thailand, every effort will be made to have Nam Phong ready to receive Marine aircraft as planned.

The expeditionary nature of Marine equipment and the work of Seabees and Marines opened Nam Phong to the first Marine fighter/attack aircraft 17 days later.

-TA-4F Employment

Utilization of the H&MS-15 TA-4F detachment at DaNang was a major item of interest during the period. The requirement on which the deployment was based, NGF spotting, had not developed as anticipated, resulting in essentially, zero utilization of this valuable asset. Three proposals for the disposition/utilization of the TA-4Fs were raised for consideration. The first was to send them home to Iwakuni, the second involved a smoke dispensing role and the third, spotlighting Laser Guided Bomb targets with the hand held laser target designator for attack by other aircraft. For various reasons none of the proposals had been adopted by the end of May. However, enough attention was focused on the capability of the TA-4F to increase the utilization to 4 NGF Spotting missions per day. On 21 May a TA-4F on such a mission sustained 9 hits by small arms fire but with no injury to the crew.

-VMFA-122

Continuing the build up in WestPac, VMFA-122 with 7 F-4B aircraft completed transpac Key Rider from MCAS Kaneohe, Hawaii to MCAS Iwakuni, Japan on 2 May. This transpac commenced at Kaneohe on 27 April and was routed via Wake Island, Guam and Naha, Okinawa. Transpac Key Rider was completed without incident.

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-VMA (AW) -224

During April and May VMA(AW)-224 continued operations from the USS CORAL SEA (CVA-43) in the Gulf of Tonkin. During this period VMA(AW)-224 flew 760 sorties in support of CTF-77.

SUMMARY OF AIR COMBAT OPERATIONS APRIL - MAY

MAG-15 (FWD)	VMFA-115 11 F-4B	VMFA-232 15 F-4J	VMFA-212 12 F-4J	H&MS-15 5 TA-4F
Combat Sorties	504	661	489	22
Non-Combat Sorties	2	1	20	52
Hours	593.5	726.9	570.4	119.5
Ordnance				
MK-82	3943	5837	4597	0
MK-83	29	46	58	0
MK-82SE	8	0	66	0
ZUNI	1131	2370	665	0
ROCKEYE	64	75	255	0
2.75 RKTS				92

MAG-12 (FWD)	VMA-211 A-4E	VMA-311 A-4E
Combat Sorties	84	77
Non-Combat Sorties	6	3
Hours	99.7	117.0
Ordnance		
MK-81	157	83
MK-83	0	0
MK-82	232	273
ZUNI	0	0
ROCKEYE	0	0
M-77	0	0
2.75 RKTS	63	51

VMCJ-1 and 2 Detachments	
Combat Sorties	175

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Combat Support	
Sorties	192
Hours	276.8

-Combat Losses

On 13 April an EA-6A from VM CJ-1 was lost during a combat support mission. The SAR effort was cancelled on 14 April with no trace of the aircraft or its crew. On 28 April an F-4B from VMFA-115 was involved in a mid air collision with a VNAF 01 Bird Dog aircraft 4 miles north of DaNang and the F-4B was lost at sea.

On 7 May an F-4J from VMFA-212 was hit by AAA fire while engaging a SAM storage area south of the DMZ. The aircraft caught fire and the pilot was advised by his wingman to shut down the left engine. Almost immediately after engine shutdown the pilot lost control and crashed approximately 50 miles NW of Hue. The RIO was recovered, but the pilot was reported missing in action.

On 13 May a UH-1E was lost from the USS OKINAWA. On liftoff from the LPH, the aircraft settled into the water and sank. The crew was recovered without injury. Also on 13 May, during Song Thanh 5/72, a CH-53 was damaged by hostile fire and was destroyed in the LZ. The crew was recovered by accompanying aircraft. In the same operation one CH-46 was moderately damaged and 2 CH-46s suffered minor damage due to hostile ground fire. These 3 aircraft returned safely to the USS OKINAWA.

During the early morning hours of 14 May, DaNang Airbase received 18 rounds of 122MM rocket fire. Two aircraft from VMFA-115 received minor damage. There were no Marine casualties.

On 26 May a TA-4F was lost to AAA fire during a visual reconnaissance mission while looking for enemy tanks 5 miles south of Quang Tri. The crew ejected 10 miles northeast of DaNang and were recovered with minor injuries. The aircraft crashed at sea.

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-Redeye Deployment

Attacks on naval gunfire ships, operating off North Vietnam, by enemy aircraft, prompted CNO on 22 April to request that Marine Corps Redeye missile teams be made available for possible deployment aboard NGF ships of the 7th Fleet. The Redeye missile teams would provide the ships a close in support against high speed low flying aircraft, a defense they lacked with their present armament.

Following a "quick look" evaluation by First Fleet during early May, CINCPACFLT, on 7 May, requested immediate deployment of a Redeye platoon of 40 gunners for use on NGF ships. Deployment of a Redeye platoon, from the Third Marine Aircraft Wing (3d MAW), was planned for a 90 day period to provide an immediate AAW capability and to further act as a training cadre for USN shipboard personnel.

As specified by CG, FMFPac, operational control of the 3d MAW Redeye Platoon passed to CG, III MAF on arrival at Okinawa on 12 May. Opcon was in turn passed to 9th MAB. Command less opcon remained with 3d MAW. The concept of operations called for a 4 man team on each of 10 designated ships with the Platoon Commander embarked with the Commander Naval Gunfire Support Unit aboard USS PROVIDENCE (CLG-6). By the dates shown, the teams were in place on the following ships:

<u>SHIP</u>	<u>DATE TEAM PLACED</u>
USS MULLINNIX (DD-944)	13 MAY
USS EVERETT F. LARSON (DD-830)	17 MAY
USS PROVIDENCE (CLG-6)	17 MAY
USS BENJAMIN STODDERT (DDG-22)	18 MAY
USS EVERSELE (DD-789)	18 MAY
USS BERKLEY (DDG-15)	19 MAY
USS HANSON (DD-832)	19 MAY
USS HULL (DD-945)	19 MAY
USS BUCHANAN (DD-14)	19 MAY

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A team for the USS DENNIS J. BUCKLEY (DD-808) was temporarily retained aboard the USS CAMDEN (AOE-2). It is worthy of note that the original Redeye concept was developed when NGF strikes north of the DMZ were carried out during daylight hours without air cover. However, except under special circumstances NGF operations were shifted to night strikes and since the air threat was considerably less at night, no Redeye weapons had been fired at enemy aircraft as of 31 May.

### Logistics

III MAF support of RVN contingency operations increased in-country requirements for logistic support. The in-country force logistic support groups so familiar to Marines in the late 1960s were gone. Information as to existing in-country support activities, their capabilities, and their accessibility, was limited.

The initial deployment of 1st MAF units back into RVN resulted in logistic support for common items (e.g., ordnance) being coordinated with 7th AF. However, support of 9th MAB units afloat, off the coast of MR-1, presented a more significant problem.

The limited material handling capability of the austere MAG-15 detachment at DaNang, prevented its use as a terminal transfer point for 9th MAB supplies. 9th MAB supplies transiting the detachment were of necessity limited to high priority items identified for pick up by embarked units using organic helicopters.

Personnel ceilings on in-country USMC forces established by the JCS precluded the creation of a Marine Liaison Section at DaNang aerial port. Consequently, the Fleet Air Support Unit (FASU) located at DaNang and subordinate to the Commander Fleet Air Western Pacific (COMFAIRWESTPAC) was identified as the best available solution. Through coordination, to include USMC personnel assuming FASU tasks at Cubi Point R. P., in exchange for a like number of USN personnel increases at FASU, DaNang, arrangements were made wherein FASU, DaNang would handle

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9th MAB resupply. In addition, underway replenishment ships operating out of Subic Bay and servicing the Amphibious Ready Groups were used whenever possible.

The helicopter mix of 14 CH-46s, 6 CH-53s, and 4 UH-1Es, embarked with the 31st MAU had been given considerable attention, primarily due to its effect on relative combat power. A second, and also important consideration, was the ability to logistically support the mix on extended afloat deployments. Logistic support for CH-46 aircraft consisted of Aviation Consolidated Lists (AVCAL) of predetermined spares. Pack-up kits, based on usage data, were configured by MAG-36 to support the UH-1Es and CH-53s.

Considering relative combat power, the April decision to embark two AH-1 (Cobra) helicopters with the 33rd MAU, in place of two UH-1Es, was a logical one. Logistically, the necessary changes were made with respect to embarked ordnance, and MAG-36 once again configured a maintenance pickup kit. Because of limited experience with respect to the maintenance requirements of the AH-1, it was realized that the contents of the kit could prove critical, and would very likely change as usage data became available. Nevertheless, a new dimension had been added to the combat capability of the 33rd MAU.

During May, III MAF was logistically concerned with support of the units redeploying to or within, Southeast Asia. Of great concern was the ability to support sustained operations at the new locations.

The deployment of MAG-12 to Bien Hoa and MAG-15 to Nam Phong presented substantial but different logistic problems. Nam Phong was little more than an airstrip with little or no support facilities. On the other hand, units deploying to Bien Hoa were able to occupy existing facilities and only had to arrange for necessary supply support. Such arrangements at Bien Hoa were quickly arrived at through the cooperative efforts of COMUSMACV and 7th AF. The logistic support paralleled that which had been provided MAG-15 by 7th AF while operating from DaNang.

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Based on the initial report of 10 May by the Officer in Charge of Construction Thailand, CG, FMFPac initiated several actions to free construction materials for support of requirements at Nam Phong. These included: (1) Directing CG, III MAF to ship AM-2 matting located at MCAS (H) Futema to the OICC, Thailand, (2) Authorizing CG, III MAF to utilize Butler buildings held by CG, Camp Butler and quonset huts held by CG, 3d Mar Div and (3) Use of the MAB construction block held by 3d FSR.

#### Reversion

On 15 May the Okinawa home of III MAF reverted to Japanese control. Except for the presence of the Japanese flag along side the Stars and Stripes, most Marines observed little change in their daily routine. Negotiations with the Japanese Government had ensured the continued presence of Marine bases and training areas. It was evident, however, that the requirement for prior consultation as a provision of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security which now encompassed Okinawa would be a factor in future deployments.

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**OPERATIONS**

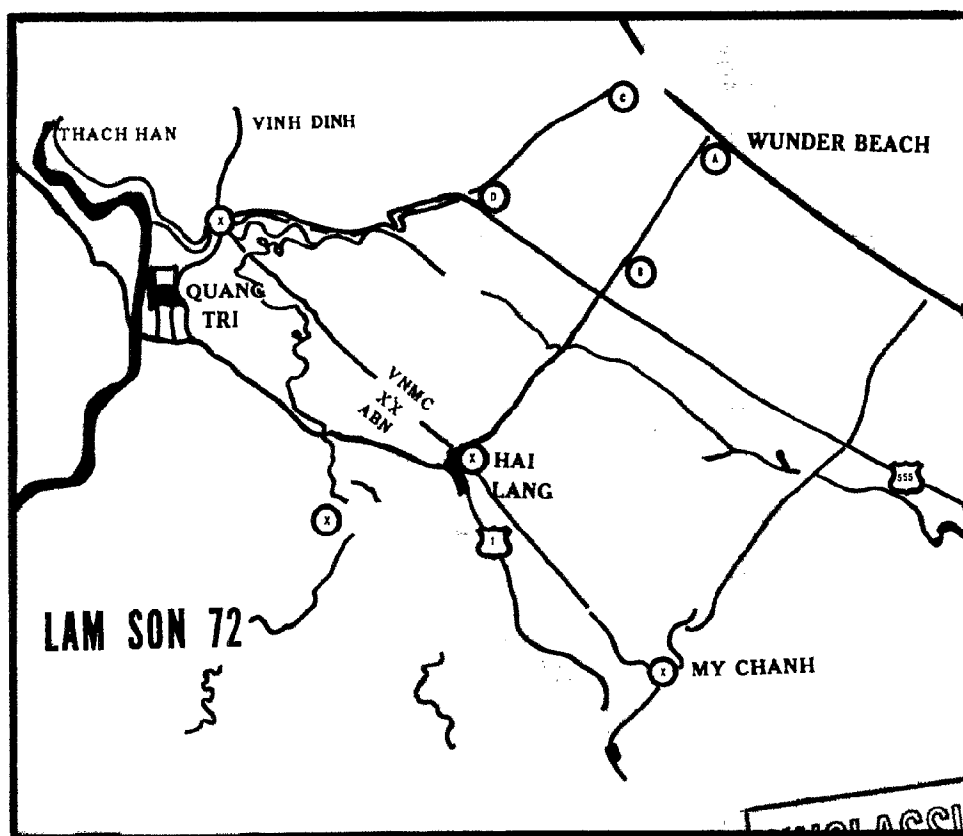
JUNE - JULY 1972

9th MAB Operations

The months of June and July saw the South Vietnamese forces gain the initiative from the enemy. Offensive actions by the South Vietnamese to retake northern MR-1 intensified with large scale attacks supported by massive U.S. air, naval gunfire and amphibious support.

-Support of LAM SON 72

LAM SON 72 was the I Corps counteroffensive plan to recapture the southern portion of Quang Tri province.



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The concept provided for the Vietnamese airborne and Marine divisions, commencing at 0800 on 28 June, to attack abreast, generally east and west of QL-1 respectively, to the northwest, employing surface and heliborne assaults. They were to attack and seize Highway 602 to Wunder Beach and Hai Lang and continue the attack to seize Quang Tri City and Phase Line Gold. The attack was to be preceded by an amphibious demonstration on D-1.

The amphibious demonstration was conducted by U.S. amphibious forces on 27 June with the intent to draw and fix enemy forces north of the Cua Viet river. Prior to the actual demonstration on 27 June, CTF 76 (COMPHIBGRU ONE) as CATF and CTG 79.1 (9th MAB) as CLF assembled forces in a staging area off MR-1, RVN. A special amphibious task group was activated to conduct deception operations simulating the preparation for and conduct of an amphibious assault north of the Cua Viet River from D-3 through D-1 with D-Day scheduled as 28 June.

On D-3 an amphibious landing CPX and rehearsal was held in the amphibious staging area while selected targets in the objective area were taken under attack by NGF and TACAIR. On D-2 the amphibious task force was activated and a second rehearsal was conducted. NGF and TACAIR continued attacks within the demonstration area while Vietnamese navy units embarked VNMC forces from Tan My to take part in the assault demonstration. On D-1 (27 June) the amphibious task force moved into the objective area ready to conduct the demonstration. At 0800 helicopters from HMM-165 launched from LPH-3 and headed toward the beach, as the surfaceborne assault force already embarked in landing craft neared their turnaway point. At 0806, 5000 meters from the beach, the helicopters executed a turnaway while the landing craft simultaneously turned away at 10,000 meters.

During the execution phase of the demonstration, there was no hostile fire directed at the helicopters;

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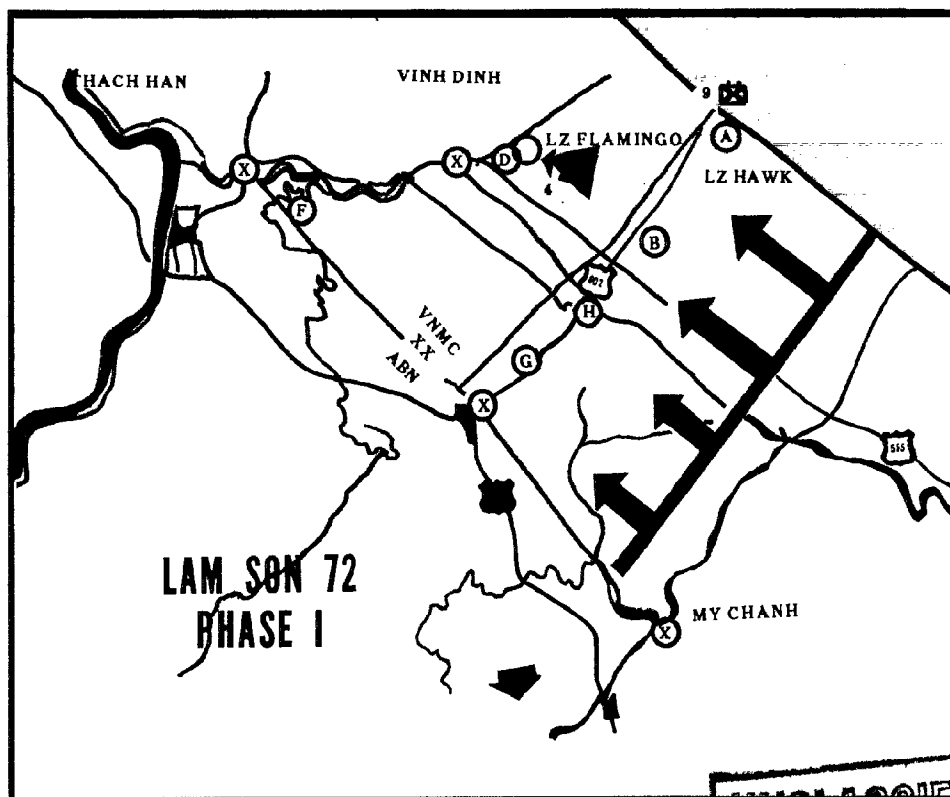
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however, Task Force 76 ships were bracketed by enemy artillery rounds fired from Hon Co (Tiger) Island. The amphibious ships and landing craft were not hit and there were no casualties to personnel.

The demonstration was considered highly successful as intelligence indicated it had caused confusion within NVA forces and the possible relocation of some enemy units.

Ninth MAB support of LAM SON 72 continued on D+1, (29 June) with a helicopter lift of two VNMC battalions into LZs Flamingo and Hawk. The purpose of the assault was to employ the mobility of the helicopter to exploit the initial success of the VNMC ground attack on the right and speed the advance. The helicopters of HMM-164 augmented by HMM-165 were used in the lift. Eighteen CH-46s and 6 CH-53s were employed to transport 1450 Vietnamese Marines into the landing zones.



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A schedule of integrated preparatory fires was delivered with Arc Light strikes hitting the landing zones approximately 45 minutes prior to helicopter touchdown. The first wave landed at 0918 into LZ Flamingo with the second lift landing at 1104 into LZ Hawk. Small arms fire was received in both zones, but the Cobras of Fox Troop, 4th Air Cavalry, U.S. Army, effectively suppressed the fire. The preassault supporting fires were so effective that the 4th and 9th Battalions VNMC were able to move out against assigned objectives while meeting only scattered resistance.

The operation was a complete success in that it provided for a rapid advance of the friendly forces and the regaining of lost territory early in the offensive. On 30 June the President of South Vietnam, NGUEYN VAN THIEU visited the USS BLUE RIDGE where he expressed his gratitude for 9th MAB and naval support of Operation LAM SON 72.



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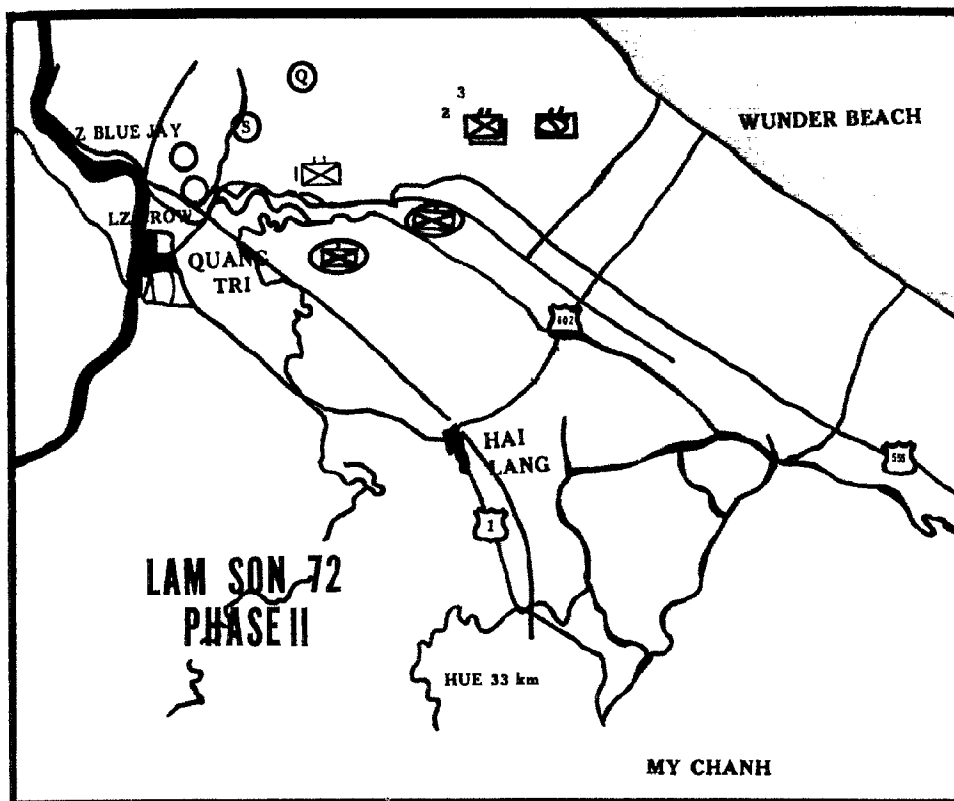
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By 7 July the counteroffensive had slowed south of Quang Tri City and south and east of the Vinh Dinh River in the face of strongly entrenched enemy forces. To break the impasse, it was decided to commit one reinforced Vietnamese Marine battalion by heliborne assault northeast of Quang Tri across the Vinh Dinh River, while two battalions enveloped the enemy positions from the east. To gain the most rapid build up of combat power in the LZ, and to lessen the exposure of helicopters to enemy fire, the battalion was to be committed in one lift of 840 men with an external lift of 12,000 pounds of C rations and ammunition.



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To accommodate the lift, the helicopter squadrons of both MAUs were to be employed, using 25 CH-46s, 7 CH-53s and 3 UH-1Es. Preparation fires began at 0600, 11 July. Three Arc Lights were scheduled into the area with H-hour planned for 15 minutes after the last Arc Light was completed on the LZ. Seven flights of helicopters from the USS TRIPOLI and USS OKINAWA picked up Vietnamese Marines and their loads from staging areas south-east of Quang Tri City and proceeded north to the battle zone. Approaching the zone, heavy fire was encountered. A CH-53 was hit by an SA-7 missile and crashed with the loss of 2 USMC crewmen and 50 South Vietnamese Marines. This was the first Marine Corps aircraft to be destroyed by the hand delivered SA-7 missile.

Two CH-46s were damaged and downed by small arms fire but were later lifted by CH-53s to the USS OKINAWA. The U.S. Army 11th CAG helicopter force provided superior fire support and destroyed one T-54 tank in the vicinity of the LZ. The efforts of the Army Cobras were highly praised by all the Marines involved in the heliborne assault.

The Vietnamese Marines of the 1st Battalion were engaged in heavy combat with elements of the 48th Regiment of the 320th NVA Division soon after landing. Despite losses, the 1st Battalion fought off the enemy and held their LZ, killing at least 126 NVA, taking 6 prisoners and capturing large quantities of equipment.

Light USMC casualties were sustained. Five crewmen of the downed CH-53 were rescued from the zone by the helicopters of F Troop, 4th Air Cavalry, who braved enemy fire just prior to darkness on D-Day to extract them. Despite the heavy antiaircraft fire and determined enemy resistance, this professionally planned and boldly executed heliborne assault was accomplished with noteworthy success.

With the main defense penetrated by the vertical assault of the 1st Battalion and the flank being turned from the east, the two NVA regiments defending the Vinh Dinh River line began to break up and withdraw on 14 July.

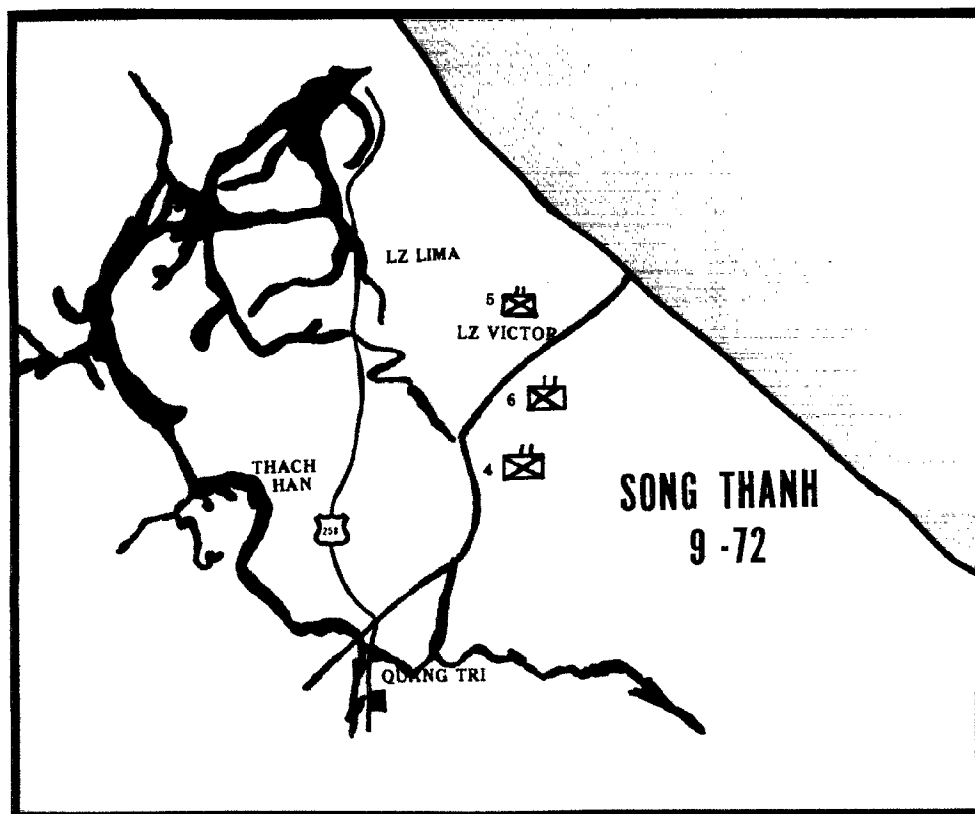
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By the 20th of July the Vietnamese Marines had consolidated their positions northeast of Quang Tri. The airborne division had not yet taken Quang Tri City, although heavy fighting was in progress. The Marines saw an opportunity to take advantage of the enemy's weakness along the coast by enveloping his left flank and cutting the lines of communication south of the Cua Viet. The 147th VNMC Bde with three battalions was assigned the mission. Two VNMC battalions, supported by armor, were to attack north from their forward positions and link-up with a third battalion which was to be landed by helicopter, approximately 4km to the north. Then all three battalions were to attack west and south, seizing a dominant road junction, which would force the enemy to withdraw west across the Song Thach Han River or north to the Cua Viet River.



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On D-Day, 22 July, ARG ALFA and the 31st MAU moved into position to support the helicopter assault. In addition to the USS OKINAWA and the other four ships of the ARG, the USS DENVER had been detached from MARHUK operations in order to provide another ready helicopter deck.

The helicopter assault was preceeded by three and one half hours of preparation fires delivered by TacAir, naval gunfire, and corps and division artillery. Two Arc Lights struck the landing zones just prior to the assault. HMM-164, using 10 CH-46s and 2 CH-53s, lifted 688 Marines of the 5th Battalion into Landing Zones Lima and Victor in two waves in 48 minutes. The helicopters were escorted by gunships of F troop, 4th Air Cav who marked the zones and suppressed enemy fire as the helicopters touched down. There was only light enemy fire in Lima while LZ Victor was cold. No battle damage or U.S. casualties were sustained.

Due in great part to the excellent supporting arms plan, the helicopter and surface assault battalions rapidly linked up and the initial objectives were secured against light opposition. In the first two days of the operation, 133 enemy were killed while two 130mm guns and three tanks were destroyed and two tanks captured. The discovery, by the 5th VNMC battalion, of a 100-bed hospital with medical supplies gave evidence that the enemy had withdrawn hurriedly.

This operation was conducted in a near classic fashion and it represented the high degree of coordination and integration which has been attained in the execution of operations in support of the Vietnamese Marine Corps.

The Commandant of the Vietnamese Marine Corps provided the following summation of the support rendered by U.S. forces--Operation Song Thanh 9-72 has been successfully initiated as a Military Region I Corps operation to retake the major portions of Quang Tri Province. The RVN-MC is greatly appreciative of the superlative United States support which enabled the offensive to be launched with such success. The devastatingly accurate preparation

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ties by naval gunfire immeasurably aided the RVNMC attack, while the multi-battalion heliborne assaults were supported by the 9th MAB with professional skill, courageous performance, and a timeliness which allowed VNMC forces to aggressively attack.

#### -DTAS

During Phase I of LAM SON 72, one 9th MAB liaison team transmitted some situation reports by the DATA TRANSMISSION AND SWITCHING SYSTEM (DTAS). This was believed to be the first use of DTAS under actual combat conditions. The equipment was made available to the MAB by the Marine Communications Detachment stationed aboard the USS BLUE RIDGE. Prior to the operation, tests were conducted to familiarize operators with the equipment and to provide staff members with copies of formatted types of messages. Although this was a limited test of DTAS, the possibilities looked encouraging.

#### -Philippine Relief Operation

The "American's finest hour in the Philippines since the Liberation," was what Liberal congressman Joe De Venecia called the American relief efforts during the worst flooding in Luzon since 1930. Rains in the central Luzon valley exceeded 85 inches during July, affecting nearly 300,000 people.

The 33d MAU embarked aboard the USS TRIPOLI arrived in Subic Bay from Okinawa on 22 July and immediately commenced relief support with a lift of 25,000 pounds of supplies. USS CAYUGA (LST-1186) was stationed in Lingayen Gulf along with HMS LINCOLN (a British Frigate). Both ships were assisted by Marine Corps CH-46s in off-loading supplies into the stricken areas of the northern Luzon valley.

Relief operations consisted primarily of delivering food (high protein/calorie 'neutra-buns'), water, medical supplies, and evacuation of people when necessary. Neutra-buns were baked at Subic and Manila, then delivered

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to Clark AB by Air Force C-130s. USMC helicopters based at NAS Cubi Point picked up loads at Clark AB and other points then delivered them to the towns and villages in distress.

By the end of July, Marine helicopters had flown 196 missions, totaling 3,232 hours delivering 870,000 pounds (of a total 1,400,000 pounds delivered) of relief materials to residents of flood-stricken Luzon provinces. A total of 235 relief workers were transported to the disaster area and the insertion into six separate field locations of Army Disaster Assistance Relief Teams (DART) was accomplished.

Due to continuing heavy rains, relief operations were extended into August.

#### -9th MAB Task Organization

Because of the rotation of subordinate units, the 9th MAB task organization underwent various changes during the month of June.

The task organization until 10 June was as follows:

9th MAB	TG 79.1
H&S Co, 9th MAB	TU 79.1.0
Det 1st RadBn	TE 79.1.0.1
Det A HML 367	TE 79.1.0.2
Redeye Plt	TE 79.1.0.3
NGF Spot Det	TE 79.1.0.4
31st MAU	TG 79.4
HQ 31st MAU	TU 79.4.0
BLT 3/4	TU 79.4.1
HMM-165	TU 79.4.2

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33d MAU	TG 79.7
HQ 33d MAU	TU 79.7.0
BLT 1/4	TU 79.7.1
HMM-164	TU 79.7.2
BLT 2/9	TG 79.9

With the assignment of HMA 369 to the operational control of 9th MAB on 18 June and the change of operational control of BLT 2/9 from 9th MAB to III MAF on 26 June, the task organization was as follows at the end of June:

9th MAB	TG 79.1
H&S Co, 9th MAB	TU 79.1.0
Det 1st RadBn	TE 79.1.0.1
Det A HML 367	TE 79.1.0.2
Redeye Plt	TE 79.1.0.3
NGF Spot Det	TE 79.1.0.4
Prov Comm Co	TU 79.1.1
31st MAU	TG 79.4
HQ 31st MAU	TU 79.4.0
BLT 1/4	TU 79.4.1
HMM 164	TU 79.4.2
LSU	TU 79.4.3
33d MAU	TG 79.7
HQ 33d MAU	TU 79.7.0
BLT 1/9	TU 79.7.1
HMM 165	TU 79.7.2
LSU	TU 79.7.3
HMA 369	TG 79.8

During July the task organization remained essentially unchanged. BLT 1/9 was relieved by BLT 2/4 and TG 79.7 (33d MAU) was redesignated as TG 79.5 to coincide with the ARG task organization.

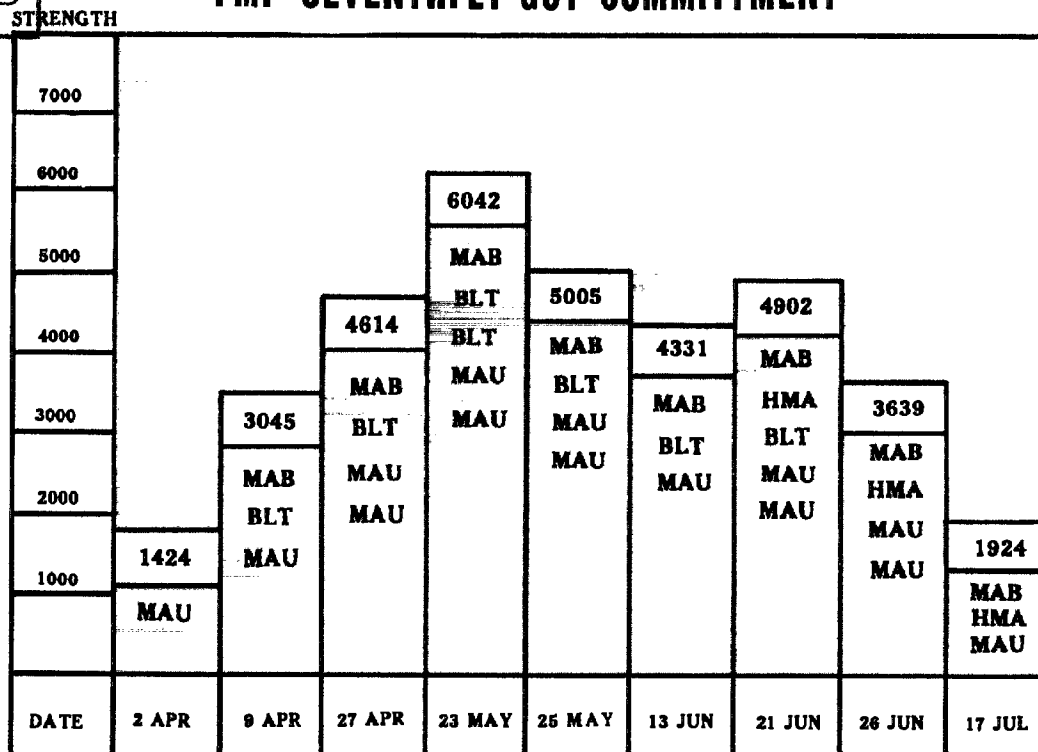
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## FMF SEVENTHFLT GOT COMMITMENT

-Fire Support of VNMC Operations

Fire support for VNMC operations supported by the 9th MAB was characterized by coordinated planning and execution of detailed fire plans by the following agencies: VNMC, USMC, VNAF, USAF, VNN, USN, ARVN and U.S. Army.

Fire planning was carried out primarily by the VNMC with advice from their USMC advisors and assistance by USN/USMC ANGLICO personnel and USAF liaison personnel. Objectives were selected by the Vietnamese, while, landing zones and beaches were proposed by the Vietnamese and agreed to by the 9th MAB.

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Based on estimates of the enemy situation, helicopter approach and retirement lanes, location of landing zones and beaches, and location of friendly forces; the detailed fire support requirements were prepared by the Vietnamese in the form of overlays and target lists.

Detailed requirements were blended into a firm schedule of fires by the ANGLICO representatives, USAF representatives and VNMC artillery planners. This schedule was built around Arc Light strike times requested by the VNMC Division and approved or adjusted by I Corps and MACV/7th USAF. Flexibility was maintained until approximately 1600 on D-1 at which time Arc Light times became firm.

Finished fire support plans were delivered to the NGF Support Group Commander (CTG 70.8.9) by either the VNMC Division NGLO, the I Corps NGLO, or both. The NGLO briefed the NGF Support Group Staff. That staff in turn assigned targets, missions and fire support stations to the fire support ships based on the detailed plan presented by the NGLO.

Air plans were presented to the DASC by the USAF liaison officer located at the VNMC Division CP. Plans were in terms of planned targets, on station TACAIR requirements post L(H) Hour requirements and FAC requirements. In addition to presentation of requirements to DASC, the USAF personnel briefed the Tactical Air Support Squadron supporting the operation.

Seventh Air Force requirements for receipt of air requests by 1400 on the day prior to execution resulted in conflict with Arc Light requests which were not approved until 1600 of the day prior to execution. Arc Light time approval was subsequently changed to 1400, and the problem was alleviated.

Artillery requirements and plans were passed to the executing battalions by the VNMC Division Artillery. This organization was the primary fire support (including

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air and NGF) planning agency for the Division. Subordinate brigades participated in the fire planning by passing their requests up through the artillery channels.

Delivery of fires was according to time schedules with the exception of slippage of some TACAIR strikes and minor Arc Light time deviations. TACAIR slippage was covered by the extension of artillery and NGF fires.

There was a tendency for U.S. fire support units to desire complete and detailed plans before they could be reasonably prepared by the VNMC and their assistants. The VNMC operations in northern MR-1 were essentially land operations supported from the sea and carried out on relatively short notice. This was in contrast to a conventional amphibious operation for which much more time would normally be available for fire support planning. Overall, the VNMC, aided by U.S. liaison personnel, met deadlines and provided professionally completed fire support plans.

#### -9th MAB Planning

The 9th MAB staff from April through July was continually planning for contingency operations or operations in support of South Vietnamese forces. The 9th MAB planning effort was divided into three successive, although overlapping phases.

Phase I was the initial planning effort when intensive planning between 5 and 24 April, produced plans for amphibious demonstrations and raids north of the DMZ and up to the 20th Parallel. The results of this effort, was the preparation of comprehensive campaign plans with accompanying detailed supporting plans comprising:

- a. A 2 BLT demonstration at Dong Hoi.
- b. A 2 BLT raid at Quang Khe.
- c. A 1 BLT raid at Hon Matt.

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- d. A 2 BLT demonstration at Vinh.
- e. A 1 BLT raid and 2 BLT feint at Quang Khe.

Phase II planning was in conjunction with the South Vietnamese plan to gain the initiative and recapture Quang Tri Province. This planning included the Song Thanh and Lam Son 72 operations conducted May-July 1972.

Phase III was devoted to contingency planning in support of possible evacuation of U.S. personnel and security operations in MR-1. These plans were prepared in conjunction with CG, First Regional Advisory Command (CG, FRAC) and authorized the employment of U.S. Marines, when so ordered by COMSEVENTHFLT. The plans for the emergency evacuation were prepared for Phu Bai and DaNang and called for the commitment of a MAU for each mission. Plans for emergency security operations were prepared for Hue/Phu Bai and DaNang. Two MAU's were required to support these plans, with the first MAU to be prepared to deploy ashore 12 hours after notification and the second MAU 72 hours after execution by the first MAU.

The planning by the 9th MAB staff was continuous and contingency plans were updated regularly unless they were cancelled or executed.

#### Sub Unit One, 1st ANGLICO

Personnel from Sub Unit One remained busy during June and July, providing naval gunfire support throughout all four military regions. The Sub Unit was heavily engaged in MR-1 providing naval gunfire and fire support coordination planning for the South Vietnamese counteroffensive to recapture Quang Tri. Aerial observers flying out of DaNang, in U.S. Air Force OV-10 aircraft, were averaging 7 missions a day to provide around-the-clock support in the battle for northern MR-1. The Sub Unit suffered two KIA while supporting MR-1 operations.

In MR-II, during the latter part of July, the Sub Unit provided eight naval gunfire liaison/spot teams in support

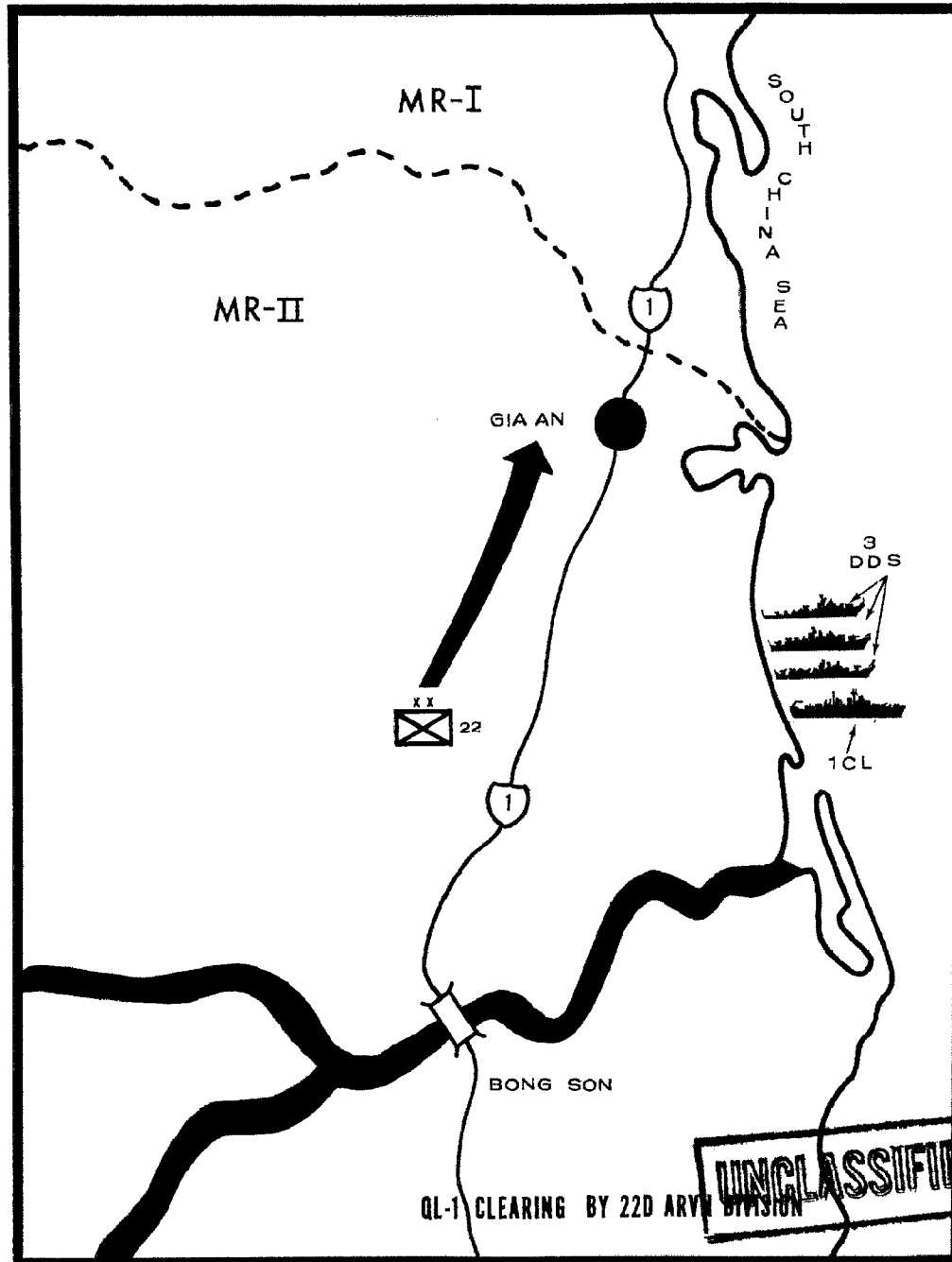
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of the 22d ARVN Division's attempt to secure Highway QL-1 from Bong Son to the MR-II northern border. Three destroyers and a light cruiser were stationed off the coast to provide support.

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The operation had not been completed at the end of July and ANGLICO support was required into August.

### Air Operations

#### -Activation of Nam Phong Airfield

Weather problems in early June greatly curtailed construction progress at Nam Phong, Thailand. Work was continued at a reduced pace and as the weather improved in the latter days of the month, tempo increased enough to meet most deadlines or scheduled objectives.

On 10 June the Commanding General of Task Force Delta and his staff arrived at Nam Phong. The decision to assign a general officer as Task Force Commander was considered essential due to the large contingent of Marines at Nam Phong (nearly 3200 Marine Corps, Navy, and civilians). Additionally, this size Marine Force in a country where no previous Marine force existed, necessitated incountry coordination at the highest level of the Thai government. It was felt coordination would be appreciably enhanced by the presence of a general officer.

On 16 June, eleven F-4B aircraft of VMFA-115 landed at Nam Phong for home basing after completion of combat missions initiated at DaNang. This was the initial influx of aircraft and were followed by VMFA-232 and VMA (AW)-533 on the 20th of June. VMA(AW)-533 arrived from Iwakuni and provided Task Force Delta with an all weather attack capability. At the end of June, aircraft assets at Nam Phong included:

VMFA-115	12 F-4B
VMFA-232	15 F-4J
VMA (AW)-533	12 A-6A
H&MS 36 Det	4 CH-46
VMGR-152	4 KC-130

Rain plagued construction progress during the early days of July; however, by the middle of the month virtually all projects were either ahead of schedule or completed.

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On Independence Day eight F-4Js from VMFA-232 flew combat air patrol over North Vietnam, marking the first USMC air-to-air fighter sorties flown over North Vietnam since reintroduction of USMC aviation units into combat operations during April 1972. There were no enemy aircraft encountered on the first combat air patrol, although four days later on 8 July, two F-4Js passed within 2000 ft. of 2 MIG-19s on opposite headings, but the flight was not able to engage the enemy due to the MIG's tactic of immediate high speed and very low altitude evasion.

The squadrons at Nam Phong flew nearly 2000 combat sorties during the months of June and July. These sorties were influential in the success of the Vietnamese counter-offensive and demonstrated the ability of the United States Marine Corps to fulfill its expeditionary role on very short notice and with demonstrative effectiveness. The Commandant of the Marine Corps noted--The expeditious establishment of an operational air base at Nam Phong, Thailand under adverse conditions has been recognized at the highest levels. Such an achievement was made possible only through the team work of dedicated professionals and numerous personal sacrifices. This matter is of considerable pride to me and should be a source of great individual self-satisfaction.

The security of Nam Phong was enhanced on 29 July with the arrival of 100 Thai security augmentees and the arrival on the 31st of July of 12 sentry dogs.

-Bien Hoa

Since the arrival at Bien Hoa during the middle of May, MAG-12 was heavily involved in supporting SVN operation in MR III and IV. Averaging 40 sorties a day during June, the two A-4 squadrons of MAG-12 (VMA 211 and 311) increased their sortie average to 52 sorties a day during July.

This high tempo of effectiveness after a short notice deployment prompted the following words of praise from CG, FMFPac--I have been watching with interest the

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very fine performance of VMA 211 and 311, particularly of late, the sortie rate of both squadrons has been remarkable. The effectiveness of their contribution was vividly demonstrated by the request from COMUSMACV to retain the two units in RVN even though in-country spaces were at a premium. Performance of this excellence does not just happen, it results from superior leadership, a high degree of professional competence, team work and a lot of hard work. These two squadrons are a vivid example of combat readiness and combat effectiveness. Every Marine and Navy member of Hq, MAG-12 and VMA 211 and 311 can take justifiable pride in these most professional accomplishments.

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SUMMARY OF AIR COMBAT OPERATION JUNE - JULYMAG 15 (FWD) DANANG AND NAM PHONG

	VMA(AW)-533 A-6A	VMFA-115 F-4B	VMFA-232 F-4J	*VMFA-212 F-4J	**H&MS-15 TA-4F	VMGR-152 KC-130
Average Aircraft On Hand	11	11	15	12	4	4
Combat Sorties	365	651	725	235	55	299
Non-Combat Sorties	48	46	97	23	18	67
Ordnance						
MK-82	5117	5176	6512	2146	0	
MK-83	3	164	126	218	0	
ZUNI	394	604	320	64	0	
ROCKEYE		11	24	20	0	
MK 77		0	126	8	0	
2.75 RKTS		0	0	0	342	

\*VMFA 212 Stooddown on 20 June for return to Kaneohe

\*\* TA-4F's departed DaNang 30 June for MCAS Iwakuni, Japan

MAG 12 (FWD) BIEN HOA

	VMA-211 A-4E	VMA-311 A-4E
Average Aircraft On Hand	16	16
Combat Sorties	1326	1355
Non-Combat Sorties	49	29
Ordnance		
MK-81	22	127
MK-82	8514	8691
MK-83	90	90
ZUNI	1980	2792
ROCKEYE	6	0

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MAG 12 (FWD) BIEN HOA

VMA-211

VMA-311 (Continued)

CBU 24  
2.75 RKTS

151  
1126

336  
694

VMCJ 1 and 2 DETACHMENTS - CUBI POINT

KC-130

Average Aircraft On Hand 10  
Combat Sorties 230  
Combat Support Sorties 210

2

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-VMCJ-1 and 2 Detachments

The VMCJ detachments, which consisted of 6 EA-6A aircraft from VMCJ-1 and 4 EA-6A aircraft from VMCJ-2 continued their operations in support of the Carrier Task Force (CTF 77). The combined detachment during June and July flew 230 combat and 210 combat support sorties.

-Carrier Operations

On 30 June VMA(AW) 224 completed a successful deployment aboard the USS CORAL SEA (CVA-43). During June a total of 357 sorties were flown in support of CTF 77. From 27 March through 30 June a total of 1184 sorties were flown in support of the war against North Vietnam.

The relief for the Coral Sea in WestPac was the USS AMERICA (CVA-66), another Atlantic fleet aircraft carrier. Embarked aboard the AMERICA was VMFA-333, an F-4 squadron, from the Second Marine Aircraft Wing. During its tour in support of the war effort in Indochina, VMFA-333 proved to be an able relief for the departed 2d MAF Squadron, VMA(AW)-224. Between 14 and 24 July, VMFA-333 flew 143 sorties from the USS AMERICA, operating in the Gulf of Tonkin.

-MARHUK (Marine Hunter Killer) Operations

The decision to mine North Vietnam's harbors forced the enemy to implement new resupply tactics. The NVN, in order to circumvent the mined waters, began using a system of small Waterborne Logistic Craft (WBLC) to off-load merchant ships off the coast of North Vietnam. Consequently, a merchant ship surveillance and WBLC interdiction program under CTF 77 (Carrier Task Force) was initiated, using fixed wing aircraft. Due to the heavy commitment of Navy assets in the bombing of North Vietnam, the task of WBLC interdiction was assumed by Marine AH-1J Cobra helicopters of HMA-369 operating from the USS DENVER (LPD-9). The limited deck space and logistic capabilities of an LPD were somewhat of a hindrance; however, the contingency requirements of the amphibious forces precluded

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the use of an LPH for MARHUK operations. Additionally, the MARHUK mission was a secondary assignment for both the LPD and HMA-369. If commitment of the amphibious force was required in either evacuation or support of South Vietnamese forces in MR-1, the LPD and HMA-369 were to rejoin the amphibious force.

MARHUK operations were supported by additional USN ships which provided SAR, naval gunfire, illumination and Talos and/or Terrier missile support. USN fixed wing aircraft were available for attack of lucrative targets and to support the Cobras when required.

HMA-369 was assigned to the operational control of 9th MAB and was designated as TG 79.8. It was mandatory that the assets of the squadron should remain under control of 9th MAG vice CTF 77 in the event contingency commitments requiring gunship resources became paramount. Daily missions however, were fraggd and coordinated by CTF 77.

Throughout July, an effort was made toward improving the tactics and effectiveness of the MARHUK operations. During June, a pattern of one morning and one afternoon MARHUK flight proved unsatisfactory. With the probability that the enemy was monitoring uncovered communication circuits, it made it difficult to surprise the WBLC's in order to determine times of movement and routes taken to and from the anchored merchant ship.

During July, as an alternate to the June morning and afternoon flights, a helicopter was launched at random intervals and, for varying periods of time, for surveillance and interdiction. By varying the flight pattern, about 25% of the daylight hours were covered by an aloft helicopter. While the first helicopter was on station, a second Cobra was maintained on a ten minute deck alert, ready to provide a rapid response if lucrative targets were located. To eliminate enemy warning of helicopter launches and recovery, the LPD maintained communication silence during actual launch/recovery operations and, as a decoy, would go through communication procedures for

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launch/recovery, but would not actually launch. By the middle of July, HMA-369 was also flying continuous cyclic night missions to further frustrate the WBLC's efforts to evade detection and attack by the Marine Cobras.

On 26 July the USS DENVER returned to Subic Bay and was relieved by the USS CLEVELAND as the MARHUK platform. During the period HMA-369 was in Subic, the aircraft from the USS KITTY HAWK, USS HANCOCK and USS MIDWAY assumed MARHUK surveillance and interdiction responsibilities.

-VMFA 212

After 67 days of sustained combat operations in MR-1, VMFA 212 departed DaNang on 19 June to return to their home base at the MCAS Kaneohe, Hawaii. VMFA 212 had deployed to WestPac on 14 April to support the U.S. build-up against the threat posed by the NVA invasion of South Vietnam. During their deployment, VMFA 212 flew 1051 sorties in support of SVN operations and they lost two F-4J aircraft due to enemy action.

-Redeye Platoon

The Redeye Platoon which arrived in WestPac on 12 May to augment the anti-air capabilities of ten 7th Fleet destroyers, completed their assigned mission on 31 July and the platoon was returned to El Toro, California. The USMC gunners, while assigned to the ships, trained Navy personnel in the use of the Redeye missile and provided a close in anti-air defense against enemy aircraft threats. During the platoons' deployment there were no actual firings of the Redeye against enemy aircraft.

-Operational Losses

On 4 June an F-4J of VMFA-212 crashed while delivering ordnance on a 51 caliber machine gun site and enemy

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troop position 12 miles north of Phu Cat, RVN and on 11 June, a UH-1E from HMM-164 was lost at sea while conducting a test flight.

On 8 July, VMA(AW) 533 lost an A-6A in MR-1 near Khe Sanh. The aircraft was in a flight of two A-6A's working the area, when a hit was taken in the wing from an unknown caliber AAA gun. On 11 July an SA-7 missile downed a CH-53 helicopter that was carrying troops into an LZ, near the Vinh Dinh River, northeast of Quang Tri City. Two USMC and 50 VNMC were killed in action. On 30 July a CH-53 helicopter, from HMM-165, supporting relief operations in the Republic of the Philippines, crashed into the driveway of a gasoline station in the town of Dagupan City. The helicopter was carrying 10,000 pounds of food and relief cargo when it lost power and attempted a forced landing in an open area near the station. One Philippine national was killed and three others were injured. There were no injuries to the crew.

DEPLOYED MARINE AIRCRAFT AS OF 31 JULY

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>TYPE ACFT</u>	<u>ASG</u>	<u>OH</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
	FIXED WING			
H&MS-15	-	0	0	Nam Phong
VMFA-115	F-4B	18	10	Nam Phong
VMFA-232	F-4J	19	14	Nam Phong
VMA(AW)-533	A-6A	15	12	Nam Phong
H&MS-12	-	0	0	Bien Hoa
VMA-211	A-4E	22	16	Bien Hoa
VMA-311	A-4E	22	16	Bien Hoa
VMCJ-1	EA-6A	7	6	Cubi Pt
VMCJ-2	EA-6A	4	4	Cubi Pt
VMFA-122	F-4B	13	13	Iwakuni
*VMGR-152	KC-130F	13	10	Futema
VMGR-352 (Det)	KC-130F	3	3	Futema

\*Provides Det's to Cubi Pt and Nam Phong

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HELICOPTERS

HMM-164	CH-46D	14	14	LPH
	CH-53D	6	6	LPH
	UH-1E	3	3	LPH
HMM-165	CH-46D	15	14	LPH
	CH-53D	7	6	LPH
	UH-1E	4	4	LPH
HMA-369	AH-1J	8	7	LPD
H&MS-36 (Det D)	CH-46D	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	Nam Phong
TOTAL		197	162	

Logistics-MARHUK Support

*LPD is classified as an aviation ship*

The deployment of AH-1J Cobra helicopters aboard the LPD, a non-aviation oriented ship, in June posed several logistic problems for both ship and aircraft. These included:

- (1) Supply/resupply
- (2) Lack of infrared Countermeasures (IRC) equipment.
- (3) Procurement and embarkation of Zuni rockets and sidewinder missiles (approval had not been received for the employment of these items for the AH-1J).
- (4) Identification and procurement of radiation hazard (RADHAZ) barriers for use with the 2.75 inch rocket pods.
- (5) The identification and embarkation of equipment for ordnance and avionics support.

By 14 June MAG 36 had identified the Class V(A) requirements and requested assistance in determining the RADHAZ requirements for MARHUK operations.

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Due to the missile threat in the operational area, a need for IRC equipment and tactics was identified, however, the deployed AH-1J aircraft were not equipped to dispense the MK 46 Decoy Flare or aluminum chaff. On 13 June, 1st MAW identified this requirement to COMNAVAIR-PAC and requested ALE-29A dispensers be mounted on the AH-1J Cobras. COMNAVAIRPAC initiated actions to develop and test the proposed modification. As the month of June ended, eight modification kits were in transit to NAS, Cubi where 1st MAW representatives insured their transfer to the USS DENVER and subsequent installation on the Cobras. Installation was accomplished by the 15th of July on all aircraft aboard the DENVER.

While efforts were underway to install the dispensing system, a shortage of MK-46 Decoy Flares developed. 1st MAW advised FMFPac that, assuming the current rate of expenditures of the MK-46/47 flares would continue, available stocks would be depleted prior to receipt of shipments from CONUS. FMFPac's assistance was requested and on 26 June NAD, Crane, Indiana advised that shipment of the items had been expedited and were on their way to WestPac.

-Nam Phong

In addition to the rain, heat and lack of suitable living/working spaces, there were many other serious problems encountered by Task Force Delta. Not the least of these problems was the lack of sufficient and dependable electrical power. Initial base electrical power requirements stated the need for 250 KW muse generators. There were none immediately available for use at Nam Phong and 5 to 60 KW field units were substituted. Myriad problems developed as a result of insufficient electrical power and the inherent erratic performance of the generators. Additional technicians and generators were made top priority to correct this serious deficiency. The electrical power distribution problem at Nam Phong was alleviated on 18 July with the airlift of 17 generators from Futema.

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Insects proved to be an annoyance not only to personnel but also to equipment. For example, the liquid oxygen generator could be put out of service by insects clogging the filters. As a result, a special screened cover had to be built around the unit to keep it free of insects and in operation.

Communications and electronics assets from 3d Marine Division and 1st Marine Aircraft Wing were installed at Nam Phong to support the communication requirements of Task Force Delta.

The circuitry which was provided by the AN/TRC-97E to support the operation was connected to the Integrated Communication System (ICS) at Khon Khaen, Thailand. The ICS, a subsystem of the Defense Communications System, provided circuit paths to provide direct entry into the AUTODIN system. The AN/TYC-5 provided high speed AUTODIN service terminating with Korat, Thailand; while the AN/TGC-37, providing low speed service, terminated with Fort Buckner, Okinawa.

The AN/MTC-1 switchboard provided required telephone switching service to local subscribers at Nam Phong and provided access to the AUTOVON system for voice transmissions. Additional dedicated voice lines and record weather circuits completed the system supporting Nam Phong operations. There were 4 record and 14 voice circuits installed at Nam Phong. Sixty personnel from 3d Marine Division, in addition to the above mentioned equipment, augmented TF Delta.

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AREA OF INTEREST  
OF INVESTIGATION



DEVELOPEMENT OF NAM PHONG 30 JUNE 1972

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**OPERATIONS**

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 1972

9th MAB Operations-Philippine Relief Operations

Continued poor weather throughout the central Luzon area in early August, prompted the Philippine government to request an extension of 9th MAB assets assisting in the disaster relief effort. COMSEVENTHFLT requested that ARG Bravo/33d MAU assets remain available for relief operations until 15 August, subject to day-to-day review.

The period 6-10 August brought a vast improvement in the weather and some relief deliveries were made by truck in many areas of the devastated Luzon valley. Marine helicopters continued to make delivery of foodstuffs and other vitally needed assistance up to the cessation of the relief operations. A CH-46 from HMM-165 crashed near San Simon, R.P. while engaged in relief operations and was destroyed. In addition to property damage, minor injuries to one crew member and five Philippine nationals were sustained.

On 14 August the 33d MAU concluded 24 days of continuous relief operations. HMM-165 helicopters, from the 33d MAU, played a large role in the success of the relief operations. The CH-46 and CH-53 helicopters flew 1,149 missions, delivering 1,738,255 pounds of foodstuffs and medical supplies to the flood victims. The squadron airlifted 2,096 persons which included Army Disaster Assistance Relief Teams, flood refugees, Philippine constabulary personnel, cargo handlers and news media representatives.

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On 14 August, President MARCOS awarded the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (PUC) to U.S. military personnel who participated in the Luzon flood disaster relief operations. During an impressive ceremony at Malacanang Palace, President MARCOS, accompanied by Mrs. MARCOS, pinned the Unit Citation on U.S. military service representatives and thanked them personally for their assistance as well as that of all their men. The ceremony, which was broadcast on Philippine national radio, also received considerable publicity in the local press and on television.

Marine units that received the Philippine PUC were:

- Hq, 9th MAB
- Hq, 33d MAU
- HMM 165
- BLT 2/4
- H&MS 15 Det, Cubi Pt.
- Marine Barracks Subic Bay
- Sub Unit #1, Naval Gunfire School
- III MAF Liaison Section

On completion of relief operations, the 33d MAU began a period of intensive training and maintenance to prepare for a turnover, in the Gulf of Tonkin, with the 31st MAU. Training included a two day ZAMLEX which was needed to increase their combat readiness after the extensive relief operation. On 24 August the 33d MAU relieved the 31st MAU in the GOT.

#### -9th MAB Task Organization

The return of the Redeye Platoon to CONUS on 7 August, and the return of Det A HML 367 to its parent command when the 9th MAB shifted from the USS BLUE RIDGE to the USS PAUL REVERE, caused these two units to be dropped from the task organization. With the turnover of BLT 1/4 with BLT 2/9 on 27 August, the task organization as of 27 August was as follows:

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9th MAB	TG 79.1
Hq 9th MAB	TU 79.1.0
Det 1st RadBn	TE 79.1.0.1
Det NGF Spot Tm	TE 79.1.0.4
Prov Comm Support Co	TU 79.1.1
 31st MAU	 TG 79.4
Hq 31st MAU	TU 79.4.0
BLT 2/9	TU 79.4.1
 HMM 164	 TU 79.4.2
LSU	TU 79.4.3
 33d MAU	 TG 79.5
Hq 33d MAU	TU 79.5.0
BLT 2/4	TU 79.5.1
HMM 165	TU 79.5.2
LSU	TU 79.5.3
 HMA 369	 TG 79.8

-Support of Vietnamese Operations

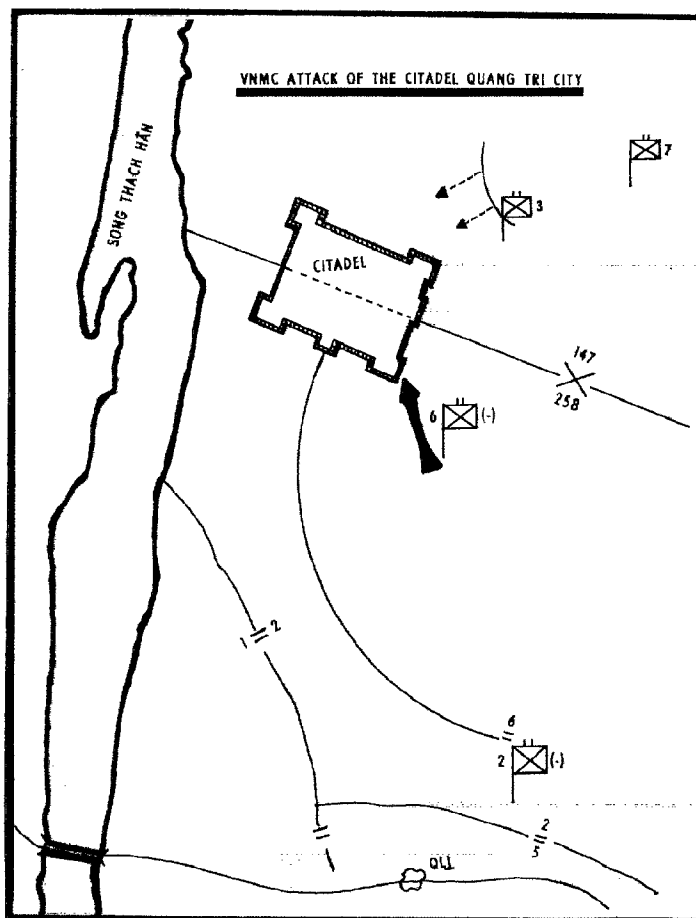
While the South Vietnamese were involved in heavy fighting to retake Quang Tri City, the 31st MAU remained on station in the GOT, ready to support the South Vietnamese offensive as required. On 24 August the 31st MAU was relieved by the 33d MAU as the ready MAU in the Gulf of Tonkin and as the U.S. force ready to assist, as required, the South Vietnamese efforts in the recapture of Quang Tri City.

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The VNMC division relieved the Vietnamese airborne division in the assault on Quang Tri City on 27-28 July. During the month of August four battalions of the VNMC were committed to clearing the city of NVA soldiers. House-to-house fighting, hampered by heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire (over 50,000 rounds), stymied South Vietnamese attempts to retake the city and the end of August found two tenacious opponents deadlocked in battle.

In September, the VNMC recaptured Quang Tri City after a 138 days of enemy control. Beginning on 9 September, intensive artillery, naval gunfire and tactical air preparation fires were placed on the Citadel and adjacent parts of Quang Tri City. The VNMC assault battalions pressed forward aggressively and in the early morning

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hours of 11 September, a platoon from the 6th VNMC battalion entered the Citadel. While the enemy continued to resist fanatically, the massive supporting arms fire and unrelenting Marine ground attacks steadily crushed the enemy, so that by 1700 on 15 September, the Citadel was in VNMC hands. The fall of the rest of the city followed, and on 16 September, the VNMC had accomplished its mission of recapturing Quang Tri City.

To support the recapture of Quang Tri City, 9th MAB was busy conducting an amphibious demonstration north of the Cua Viet River to draw the NVA away from Quang Tri to the northeast.

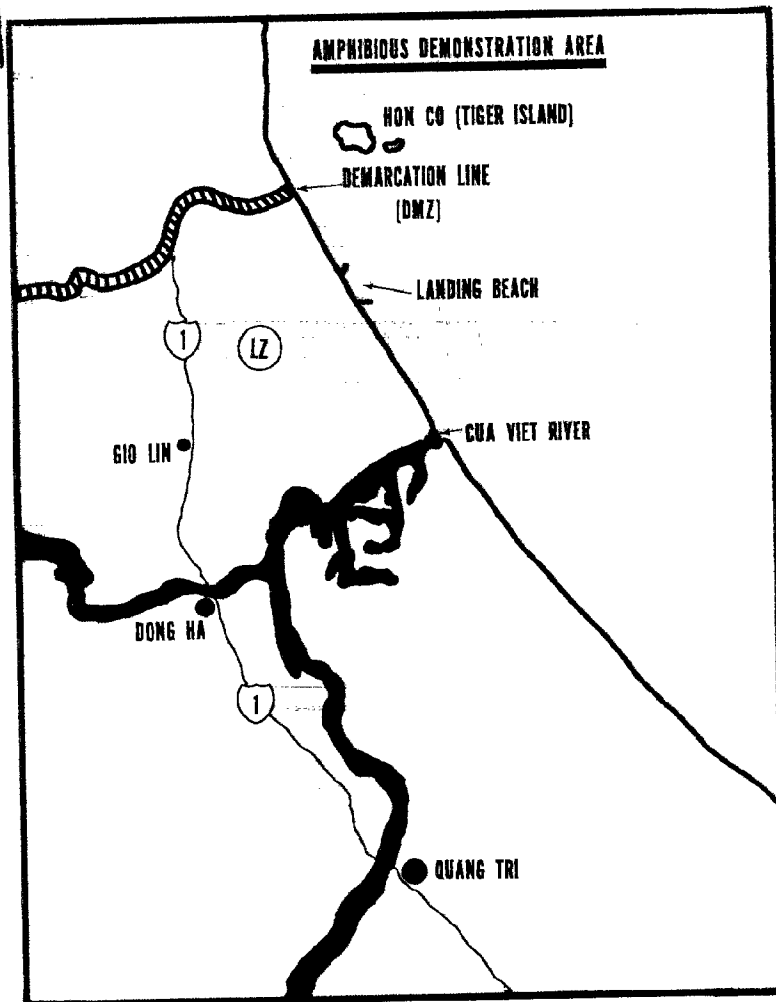
Planning for an amphibious operation north of the Cua Viet began in August when CG, First Regional Advisory Command (FRAC) requested approval of ARG/MAU assets to support an amphibious assault operation on or about 1 September. However, plans for an amphibious assault were cancelled and an amphibious cover and deception demonstration, to be conducted on 9 September, between the Cua Viet and the DMZ was substituted. That a demonstration was to be substituted, for an actual assault landing, was kept as a close hold secret. The resultant success, as discussed later, in causing the NVA to react to the demonstration was the direct result of U.S. and South Vietnamese ability to maintain secrecy, yet leak erroneous information.

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The amphibious demonstration, as planned in support of SVN operations, was conducted in the following five phases:

Phase I - On D-3 (6 Sept) CTF 76.1 (CATF) and 9th MAB (CTG 79.1) in conjunction with ARG BRAVO/33d MAU

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conducted communication checks in preparation for embarkation of Vietnamese troops in the Tan My area. Naval gunfire and TACAIR conducted strikes against Hon Co (Tiger Island), Cap Lay and other designated targets which would normally be struck in an actual landing.

Phase II - On D-2 the Vietnamese embarkation unit (400 Rangers) embarked aboard Vietnamese shipping and the USS JUNEAU (LPD-10) for surface assault training. Naval gunfire and TACAIR continued hitting designated targets in the objective (demonstration) area.

Phase III - On D-1 the Amphibious Task Force was activated and conducted an amphibious rehearsal while air and naval gunfire continued neutralization/destruction missions on assigned targets. Arc Light (B-52) strikes were conducted in the objective area while friendly artillery registered in the beach assault areas.

Phase IV - On D-Day the Vietnamese Navy joined the Task Force and at T-2, started to conduct communication checks. Naval Gunfire (NGF) Units continued their neutralization/destruction of assigned targets with heavy concentration of fire during the period T-3 to T(Turnaway) Hour. Arc light strikes were delivered just prior to T-Hour while NGF was lifted at T-Hour.

The landing craft and helicopters making their approach to the beach turned away just after the NGF was lifted. Turnaway for the landing craft was 10,000 yards from the beach while the helicopters turned away at 5,000 yards.

Phase V - On completion of the turnaway, the landing craft and helicopters returned to the ships of the Amphibious Task Force. The Vietnamese embarkation element was returned to the Tan My area to disembark RVN personnel while the remainder of the Amphibious Task Force returned to the staging/holding area.

The amphibious demonstration conducted in consonance with the VNMC Division's final push on Quang Tri

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City was considered by all participants as a complete success. The following observations, on what the demonstration achieved, are as reported by the 9th MAB liaison team which operated with the VNMC Division from D-2 through T+3 hours on D-Day.

#### D-2 Days

(1) Enemy incoming artillery and mortar fire, on friendly front lines, was greatly reduced and VNMC and Ranger units received only 240 rounds of incoming fire which inflicted 3 KIA and 5 WIA. The daily average of incoming artillery and mortar fire for the 37 days preceding D-2 was 2460 rounds per day.

(2) Refugees reported through CORDS representatives that the NVA were moving troops from the west and northwest of Quang Tri City to the east and northeast.

(3) Ranger elements, relieving VNMC elements in place, received very light incoming fire and the two VNMC battalions being relieved by Ranger elements, received no incoming fire while moving back to reserve positions. Normally this would have been an ideal time for the NVA heavy artillery and mortars to take advantage of the SVN vulnerability (exposure due to relief of lines).

(4) Also, other VNMC units preparing for the attack on Quang Tri City did not receive incoming fire. They too, were extremely vulnerable to enemy fire as they were in the process of resupply and sending up replacements.

(5) Aircraft operating near Quang Tri City (FAC's, resupply and medevac helicopters) reported no anti-aircraft fire against their aircraft. Again, this was not normal.

#### D-1 Day

(1) D-1 followed a similar pattern as D-2. There was reduced incoming fires that produced only light

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casualties, and there were no fires against VNMC units moving into attack positions. Also, there were no reported fires against friendly aircraft.

(2) Two U.S. correspondents appeared at the VNMC Brigade Headquarters, anticipating that "something was in the wind."

(3) USMC advisors and their counterparts in the VNMC queried the 9th MAB liaison team about the truthfulness of 2400 ARVN being loaded aboard U.S. ships and helicopters (actually only 280 were loaded).

D-Day: The same pattern of activity as on D-2 and D-1 was followed on D-Day by the NVA. They also anticipated "something in the wind," as indicated by the northeasterly movement of enemy troops and reduction of incoming fires.

The observations, as noted above, by the 9th MAB liaison team, indicates the success of the amphibious demonstration in support of the final attack on Quang Tri City. Once again, the versatility and effectiveness of U.S. Amphibious Forces was highlighted. Even though an actual assault landing did not take place, the ability of the Amphibious Force to cause the enemy to react to friendly initiatives, greatly assisted the South Vietnamese in recapturing Quang Tri City.

#### -Contingency Planning

During the remainder of September the 9th MAB staff was involved in further planning for possible insertion of a Marine Emergency Security Force into MR-1. The requirement for insertion, if so ordered, was based on the premise that the situation in MR-1 had so deteriorated, due to the tactical situation and withdrawal of U.S. Forces, that security of U.S. personnel/facilities in the DaNang and Hue/Phu Bai areas was threatened.

The plan called for 9th MAB to be prepared to deploy one MAU on a 12-hour notice and a second MAU on a 120

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hour notice into MR-1. These reaction times were approved by CINCPAC, with the stipulation that the reaction times were on a contingency basis, and the two MAU's would be available only through mid-October 1972. It was planned that subsequent to mid-October, the Emergency Evacuation Force would consist of one ARG/MAU and one ARG/BLT.

On 26 September, COMUSMACV requested CINCPACFLT to retain a two ARG/MAU posture in WestPac, on a contingency basis, beyond the mid-October time period. The request was based on the current situation in MR-1 and a requirement for use of the MAU's helicopters if evacuation was required. COMUSMACV noted, the requirement for two ARG/MAU's will be continuously evaluated and at such time as the tactical situation permits, a recommendation to reduce the ARG/MAU posture will be made. The decision was made to retain a two ARG/MAU posture in WestPac until the situation further stabilized.

-Fortress Light III

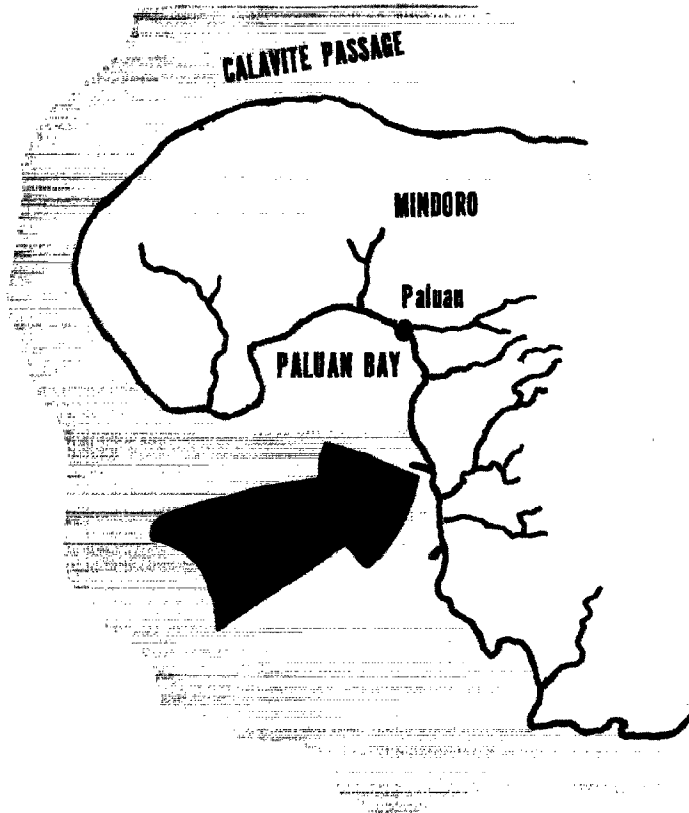
The 31st MAU spent the majority of the month of September in port at Subic preparing for a combined BLT exercise with the Philippine Marine Corps, Fortress Light III. Fortress Light III was to be conducted in the vicinity of Paluan Bay, Mindoro, R.P., during the period 25-29 September.

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**FORTRESS LIGHT III MANEUVER AREA**

Expectations ran high for this exercise, in that it provided the Philippine Navy and Marine Corps an opportunity for needed training in combined operations. However, the opportunity to conduct the exercise was negated

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by political events in the Philippines. As Fortress Light II had to be cancelled in December 1971, because of the India/Pakistan war, Fortress Light III was cancelled on 24 September 1972, due to the emergency situation and declaration of martial law in the Republic of the Philippines.

-Sub Unit One, 1st ANGLICO

Support of the South Vietnamese efforts in MR-1 and 2 occupied much of the Sub Units' resources during August and September. Even though heavily committed in MR-1 and 2, ANGLICO teams continued to provide NGF control throughout the country. The following chart provides an insight into the country-wide support rendered by this small, but effective unit.

<u>MILITARY REGION I</u>	<u>USMC</u>		<u>USN</u>	
	<u>OFF</u>	<u>/ ENL</u>	<u>OFF</u>	<u>/ ENL</u>
DANANG	11	18	0	0
HUE CITY	10	37	3	1
PHU BAI	2	0	0	0
CHU LAI	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
MILITARY REGION I TOTAL	24	58	4	1
<u>MILITARY REGION II</u>				
QUI NHON	1	5	1	0
TAM QUON	0	2	0	0
PHU CAT	3	0	0	0
LZ CRYSTAL	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
MILITARY REGION II TOTAL	5	12	2	0

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MILITARY REGION III

SAIGON	<u>7</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
MILITARY REGION III TOTAL	7	38	1	2

MILITARY REGION IV

CAN THO	1	2	0	0
VI THANH	0	2	0	0
RACH GIA	0	2	0	0
CA MAU	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
MILITARY REGION IV TOTAL	2	9	0	0
GRAND TOTAL	38 / 117		7 / 3	

Air Operations-Bien Hoa

From Bien Hoa AB, RVN, MAG-12 (Fwd), with VMA-211 and 311, continued combat operations in Military Regions III/IV and Cambodia. A sustained aircraft availability rate of 85% enabled the air group to log over 2000 flight hours and again achieve a near perfect sortie completion rate. The A-4 squadrons of VMA-211 and VMA-311 flew 1532 missions, delivering 1858 tons of bombs, 1906 rockets and 46,000 rounds of 20mm ammunition, accounting for 128 confirmed enemy killed by air (KBA) and 209 secondary explosions. VMA-311 completed its 50,000th combat sortie of the Vietnam War on 29 August. VMA-311 had first arrived in Vietnam on 2 June 1965.

Rocket attacks struck Bien Hoa AB during the early morning hours of 1 and 31 August. In the first attack, 75 122mm rockets struck the airbase and MAG-12 (Fwd) suffered one enlisted Marine killed and twelve wounded. The

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Group Commander's headquarters and ordnance maintenance buildings were destroyed and three A-4 aircraft sustained minor shrapnel damage. Two of the aircraft were repaired immediately and the third aircraft was combat-ready on 3 August. During the 31 August attack, when 64 rockets struck the airbase, there were no MAG-12 (Fwd) personnel injured, but three A-4's received minor shrapnel damage. As the damage was minor, repairs again were immediately effected.

In September, MAG-12 (Fwd) suffered their first aircraft losses to enemy action since the unit returned to Vietnam and began combat operations in May 1972. On 2 September an A-4 from VMA-211, on a close air support mission in support of ARVN forces, near An Loc, was heavily damaged by AAA fire. The pilot managed to maintain control of the crippled aircraft for several minutes before he was forced to eject approximately 15 miles northwest of Bien Hoa AB. The pilot was subsequently recovered uninjured by a rescue helicopter.

On 10 September, an explosion, triggered by undetermined causes, destroyed a major portion of the VNAF ordnance dump at Bien Hoa AB. The resultant concussion and flying shrapnel caused limited damage to the MAG-12 (Fwd) living area and minor injury to four Marines. No damage was sustained by MAG-12 (Fwd) aircraft.

A second A-4 from VMA-211 was downed by AAA fire on 26 September while providing close air support to ARVN forces near An Loc. The pilot ejected, but intense ground fire in the rescue area caused the SAR effort to be unsuccessful.

During the 1414 sorties conducted during the month of September over Military Regions III/IV and Cambodia, MAG-12 (Fwd) expended 1645 tons of bombs, 2300 Zuni rockets and 36,000 rounds of 20mm ammunition while flying 1645 hours. MAG-12 (Fwd) pilots were credited with 229 enemy personnel KBA, 193 secondary explosions and 15 sustained fires.

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-Nam Phong

Construction progress at Nam Phong was highlighted on 2 August with the completion of the first permanent messhall. The avionics complex and security lighting were improved, and work continued on the hospital, second mess-hall, roads and helicopter pad. With the arrival of muse generator assets, and the subsequent improvement in a stable power supply, A-6A's of VMA(AW)-533 were able to fly all weather systems ordnance delivery missions. By the middle of August the spectrum of operations from Nam Phong included daylight visual attack, all weather attack and fighter operations.

The F-4 and A-6 aircraft of MAG-15 flew attack missions in Military Region I, the Barrel Roll area of Laos and Route Package I in NVN during August. VMA(AW)-533 conducted all weather and night "systems" ordnance delivery missions as fragged by the 7th Air Force. On the evening of 12 August the first "all weather systems" missions were flown from Nam Phong. A total of 1829 tons of bombs and 1091 rockets were delivered by MAG-15 during August while flying 668 combat sorties. Sixty confirmed enemy KBA were recorded along with 267 secondary explosions and 145 sustained fires.

On 6 September MAG-15's air-to-air role was expanded when VMFA-115 joined VMFA-232 in flying BARCAP sorties in support of strike operations against North Vietnam.

MAG-15 F-4's and A-6's in September accounted for 361 secondary explosions and 15 sustained fires while flying 706 combat missions during 1424 flight hours.

-VMFA-122

VMFA-122, the F-4B squadron from MAG-24, commenced its return to their home station, MCAS Kaneohe, from MCAS Iwakuni on 26 September. The TransPac named Key Grove was completed on 29 September. VMFA-122 had been relocated to Iwakuni from Kaneohe on 1 May 1972 to provide backup support for in-country operations.

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-Carrier Operations

During August and September VMFA-333 from 2d MAW, aboard the USS AMERICA, served their second and third line periods with the Seventh Fleet on "Yankee Station." During this period, VMFA-333 flew 326 sorties.

-VMCJ 1 and 2 Detachments

VMCJ-1 and 2 Detachments at NAS Cubi Point continued their ECM support for TF-77 and 7th AF operations over North Vietnam. During this period the combined detachments flew 357 hours and 186 combat sorties.

-Operational Losses

On 2 August an F-4J from VMFA 232 crashed 3 miles south of Nam Phong. Both crewmen ejected safely. The crash was caused by flame-out due to fuel starvation.

On 13 August a CH-46 from HMM-165, participating in relief operations near San Simon, Republic of the Philippines, lost control while lifting off, hit a tree and crashed. The helicopter burned after impact but the crew escaped with minor injuries. No serious damage occurred to local property.

An F-4J from VMFA-232 was shot down by a MIG-19 on 26 August while participating in BARCAP over North Vietnam. The RIO was rescued, however, contact was lost with the pilot and he was listed as MIA.

On 2 and again on 26 September an A-4E from VMA-211 was lost to enemy ground fire while attacking targets in the vicinity of An Loc.

-MARHUK Operations

After cross decking from the USS DENVER (LPD-4) to the USS CLEVELAND (LPD-7) in Subic Bay, the Cobras of HMA-369 returned to the line in the GOTL on August 4th.

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During this period they provided airborne surveillance during all hours of darkness and were on 30 minute deck alert for 6 hours during daylight hours.

The tempo of operations was now geared to continuous nighttime surveillance with random daylight missions. On August 17th, a combined NGF and fixed wing operation was conducted in the vicinity of the Hon La anchorage on predesignated targets of opportunity. HMA-369 aircraft controlled the fires of the NGF ships and strikes of the fixed wing aircraft during the operation.

The second line period ended on the 26th of August as HMA-369 departed for Subic Bay, R.P. Permission had been received to utilize the 5-inch Zuni rockets on the AH-1J Cobra. This weapon would give the Cobras a stand-off capability and added striking power when returning fire at hostile gun positions. Immediate action for aircraft modifications to effectively handle the Zuni rockets were begun en route to Subic and continued while in Subic. On 5 September, with modifications completed on the aircraft, the USS CLEVELAND moved to a harbor anchorage and began loading aboard the Zuni rockets and pods for HMA-369 usage.

HMA-369 and the USS CLEVELAND returned to the Gulf of Tonkin on 13 September from Subic Bay. The Cobras again provided continuous airborne surveillance during the hours of darkness and maintained a 30 minute stand-by, for six hours, during daylight hours.

During the period 13 to 22 September three different night observation devices were evaluated by the crews of HMA-369. The purpose of the evaluation was to find a device which would increase the Cobra's stand-off capability in night target acquisition and attack. Of the devices evaluated, none proved satisfactory. Five inch illumination rounds, from supporting destroyers, were also being used to support night Cobra operations. However, this method of illumination was not completely satisfactory as it silhouetted the Cobras, and the 5" naval illumination round had a relatively high failure rate.

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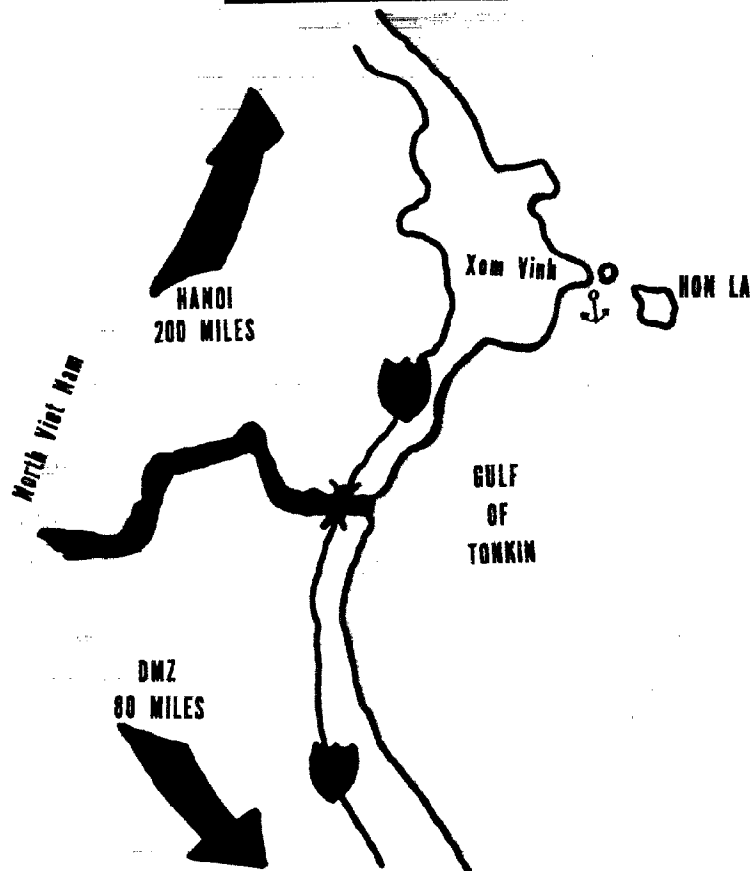
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MAR HUK OPERATIONS-HON LA ANCHORAGE



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On 16 September a Cobra from HMM-369 was involved in the rescue of two downed Air Force pilots who were forced to abandon their aircraft at sea near the Hon La anchorage. The downed flyers were sighted by a Cobra that was making a routine test flight, and were kept under constant surveillance until they were picked up by an escort destroyer.

On 22 September the third Chinese merchant ship, since MARHUK operations commenced on 22 June, arrived and anchored at Hon La. Merchant ship Hung Chi 162 replaced Hung Chi 152 which had remained in the anchorage 60 days, attempting to offload supplies.

The unloading of the merchant ships by small craft had all but ceased by the end of September, due in large part to the MARHUK activities. The merchant ships, in an attempt to offload supplies, were dumping them in the sea in waterproof containers, and hoping the current and tides would cause them to drift ashore. The floating supplies, when clear of the merchant ship anchorage, were attacked by the Cobras and sunk.

The AH-1J Cobras of HMA-369, at the end of September, had flown a total of 599 MARHUK combat sorties since the initiation of MARHUK activities in June 1972.

DEPLOYED AVIATION ASSETS AS OF 31 SEPTEMBER

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Type Acft</u>	<u>ASG</u>	<u>OH</u>	<u>PAR</u>	<u>DAM</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Loc</u>
Fixed Wing							
H&MS-15	-	0	0				Nam Phong
VMFA-115	F4B	17	12	3	2	0	Nam Phong
VMFA-232	F4J	17	16	0	1	0	Nam Phong
VMA(AW)-533	A6A	12	11	0	1	0	Nam Phong
H&MS-12	-	0	0				Bien Hoa
VMA-211	A4E	21	15	5	1	0	Bien Hoa
VMA-311	A4E	19	16	2	1	0	Bien Hoa
VMCJ-1	EA6A	8	6	2	0	0	Cubi Pt
VMCJ-2	EA6A	4	1	0	0	3	Cubi Pt

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VMGR-152	KC-130F	13	9	2	1	1	Futema
VMGR-352 (Det)	KC-130F	2	2	0	0	0	Futema

## Helicopters

HMM-164	CH-46D	14	14	0	0	0	LPH
	CH-53D	6	6	0	0	0	LPH
	UH-1E	4	4	0	0	0	LPH
HMM-165	CH-46D	14	13	1	0	0	LPH
	CH-53D	7	6	0	0	1	LPH
	UH-1E	4	4	0	0	0	LPH
HMA-369	AH-1J	7	7	0	0	0	LPD
H&MS-36							
Det "D"	CH-46D	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Nam Phong
TOTAL		173	146	15	7	1	

Logistics

To combat the heat and humidity problem at Nam Phong, Third FSR on Okinawa outfitted 12 trailer vans with bunks and air-conditioning as special aircrew sleeping vans. Also, environmentally controlled facilities were required to perform proper maintenance on the sophisticated avionic packages. To assist in alleviating this problem, three experimental fiberglass buildings were shipped to Nam Phong to be used as controlled spaces. The buildings, 25' x 40' in size, were to be evaluated for possible future structure application to Marine Corps use.

Three, Quick Camp Modules, each 8' x 8' x 20' in size, were also shipped to Nam Phong for testing. These units were prototypes of a larger system designed to provide remote area camp facilities. The units were developed by the Navy to support Seabee deployments. The units in use at Nam Phong were released on indefinite loan by the Navy for Marine Corps use and testing.

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OPERATIONS

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1972

9th MAB Operations

October was marked by an increase in the intensity of the peace negotiations taking place in Paris, and a decrease in military operations in MR-1, Republic of Vietnam. While the negotiators were at work in Paris, 9th MAB and subordinate units remained in the amphibious holding area, just off the coast of northern MR-1.

From the amphibious holding area, members of the 9th MAB staff, conducted liaison visits in MR-1 with the Commanding General, First Regional Advisory Command (CG, FRAC) and VNMC units ashore. Discussion covered evacuation of U.S. personnel and equipment, and support of future Vietnamese operations. The MAB, however, did not participate in any tactical support of VNMC operations during October.

November again was filled with talk of a cease fire and peace in Vietnam. Yet when a peace settlement appeared imminent one day, the next day would find an increase in ground activity throughout the Republic. The VNMC was still deeply involved in operations around Quang Tri City where they continued to be supported by U.S. air and naval gunfire. The 9th MAB, while not involved in supporting ground operations, remained active in contingency planning for MR-1 and on 24 November promulgated the 9th MAB Concept Plan for evacuation, by ARG/BLT, of DaNang and Hue/Phu Bai.

Also during November, COMUSMACV informed CINCPAC that the ARG/MAU was the only available resource capable of

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providing the required security and possessing the tactical flexibility necessary to support evacuation operations. COMUSMACV's concern over loss of the ARG/MAU, for evacuation operations, resulted from the planning in progress to use ARG/MAU assets for mine clearing operations in North Vietnamese waters.

In December, the headquarters element of 9th MAB aboard the USS PAUL REVERE, spent the major portion of the month in port at Subic Bay and Okinawa. While at Subic, initial planning began for the forthcoming amphibious exercise, Golden Dragon III, which was to be conducted in Korea from 31 March to 8 April 1973. Golden Dragon III was being planned as a MAB amphibious exercise with participation by two PHIBRONS. The availability of two PHIBRONS was made possible by conducting the exercise during the turnover of PHIBRONS One and Five in latter March 1973.

9TH MAB ORGANIZATION 31 DECEMBER 1972

9th MAB	TG 79.1
SU-1 H&S Co III MAF	TU 79.1.0
Det 1st Rad Bn	TE 79.1.0.1
NGF Spot Det	TE 79.1.0.4
Prov Comm Spt Co	TU 79.1.1
31st MAU	TG 79.4
Hq 31st MAU	TU 79.4.0
BLT 3/4	TU 79.4.1
HMM-165	TU 79.4.2
LSU	TU 79.4.3
33rd MAU	TG 79.5
Hq 33rd MAU	TU 79.5.0
BLT 1/9	TU 79.5.1
HMM-164	TU 79.5.2
LSU	TU 79.5.3
HMA-369	TG 79.8

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Average Monthly Strength December 1972

	USMC		USN	
	OFF	ENL	OFF	ENL
SU-1 H&S Co III MAF	23	40	0	0
Det 1st Rad Bn	2	18	0	0
NGF Spot Det	0	0	0	0
Prov Comm Spt Co	2	35	0	0
31st MAU	116	1553	7	51
33d MAU	120	1535	5	46
HMA-369	<u>22</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTAL STRENGTH	285	3273	12	97

-Operations of the Marine Amphibious Units (MAU's)

In October the BLT's assigned to the MAU's were replaced when BLT 3/4 relieved BLT 2/4 on the 14th, and BLT 1/9 relieved BLT 2/9 on the 28th.

The 31st and 33d MAU Headquarters were involved in a cross deck transfer on 22 October and subsequent change in OPCON of subordinate units. The purpose of this transfer was to achieve the optimum military posture in the event of a stand down in Vietnam operations. After the transfer, the 31st MAU sailed for the Gulf of Tonkin while the 33d MAU, with BLT 2/9, sailed to Okinawa for a BLT turnover.

BLT training during the month consisted of a Field Firing Exercise conducted by BLT 3/4 on 20 October with organic crew served weapons. This was followed by a ZAMLEX conducted by the BLT in the Zambales training area on 23 and 24 October. The purpose of the ZAMLEX was to test the BLT's contingency landing plans.

A CH-46 accident in the United States on 14 October required the grounding of all Marine CH-46 aircraft until appropriate tests could be made on the rotor blades.

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The MAU's did not have the necessary equipment to perform the required tests at sea and therefore entered Subic Bay to use the facilities at Cubi Point.

Early in November the schedules of HMA-369 and the 33d MAU were modified temporarily as planning advanced for execution of operation Formation Sentry II (Mine Clearing Operations). On the 10th of November HMA-369 ceased operations in the GOT and sailed for Okinawa. Also on the same day, the 33d MAU which had arrived in Subic on the 2d sailed for Okinawa. Both movements were the result of the implementation of certain Formation Sentry II directives; however, after one day underway toward Okinawa, both units were directed by higher headquarters to reverse course and return to their original stations and duties. The peace talks had not advanced as expected.

The 31st MAU departed the GOT on 14 November to conduct a port visit in Taiwan prior to returning to Subic Bay on 20 November. The 33d MAU arrived in the GOT on the 22d of November where they remained until 28 November when they departed the GOT for Okinawa.

On 13 December the 31st MAU backloaded from the MAU camp at Subic and sailed for the Gulf of Tonkin. While in the GOT from 15-19 December, liaison and planning visits were made to FRAC facilities in Hue and DaNang, VNMC units at Huong Dien, and the 11th U.S. Army Combat Aviation Group at DaNang, for a survey of possible evacuation landing zones. On 19 December the ARG/MAU sailed to Hong Kong for a liberty visit over Christmas. They departed Hong Kong on the 27th of December and arrived on the 29th in Subic Bay, where they spent the remainder of the month.

The beginning of December found both the 33d MAU and HMA-369 at Okinawa where they were involved in a change of shipping. The USS CLEVELAND (LPD-7) was relieved from MARHUK operations and was replaced by the USS JUNEAU (LPD-10). On 4 December, the USS CLEVELAND became the ARG/MAU Flagship when the 33d MAU Headquarters cross-decked from the USS OKINAWA (LPH-3). The OKINAWA, with

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HMM-164 and BLT 1/9 embarked, then proceeded to Subic Bay to effect a turnover with the USS INCHON (LPH-12).

On 5 December the Headquarters and remainder of the 33d MAU sailed to Taiwan for a port visit and also to provide shipboard training for the Chinese Marine Corps. The training took place aboard the USS CLEVELAND and the USS FRESNO on 8 and 9 December. The MAU elements departed Taiwan on 11 December en route to Subic Bay where they re-joined the rest of the MAU (HMM-164 and BLT 1/9) which had embarked on the INCHON. On the 19th the MAU departed Subic Bay en route to Singapore, arriving on the 23rd for a visit over the Christmas holidays. On 28 December the MAU departed for the GOT, arriving on 31 December.

Sub Unit One, 1st ANGLICO

ANGLICO spot and liaison teams continued to support South Vietnamese forces throughout the country. The ability of naval gunfire to provide mobile fire support, where required along the entire coastline of South Vietnam, enabled South Vietnamese artillery to concentrate on areas inland. The effectiveness of naval gunfire was illustrated when NVA prisoners captured by the 1st ARVN Airborne Division in MR-1 stated that there was a great fear of naval gunfire delivered along the Thach Han River and that many of the prisoners captured had resulted from the effects of naval gunfire.

The U.S. Marine advisers with the VNMC reported in December that naval gunfire continues to be relied on as an all weather supporting arm, capable of massing heavy fires on enemy attacking forces.

A comparison between the number of 155mm artillery rounds and NGF rounds fired in support of the VNMC provides an indication of the VNMC reliance on NGF support. During November and December--31,555 155mm howitzer rounds were fired in support of the VNMC while naval gunfire expended 69,576 rounds in support.

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In the three month period, October-December, NGF ships, coordinated and controlled by ANGLICO personnel, expended 211,700 rounds of all types and calibers in support of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces.

#### Air Operations

As prospects for peace and a ceasefire in Indo-China appeared and then disappeared during the fall and early winter, the enemy was making an attempt at a land grab prior to the cessation of hostilities. This attempted land grab was met with heavy allied air attacks. Aircraft from the First Marine Aircraft Wing, flying out of Bien Hoa, RVN and Nam Phong, Thailand, flew continuous missions in support of COMUSMACV's and South Vietnamese efforts to thwart the renewed enemy offensive throughout Indo-China.

All of the efforts of the First Marine Aircraft Wing however, were not in support of the war in Indo-China. In November, two CH-53 aircraft from HMH-462 participated in an Engineering and Radiological Survey of Eniwetok Atoll in support of the Department of Defense and the Atomic Energy Commission. The aircraft were used for aerial photographic mapping and radiological survey of all 29 islands located in the atoll. A total of 70 flight hours were flown in support of this mission. On completion of the survey the aircraft were returned to Subic Bay on the USS RANGER (CVA-61).

#### -Bien Hoa

In October, operations at Bien Hoa continued at a steady pace with the squadrons of MAG-12 (FWD) averaging just under 51 combat sorties a day.

Throughout the month intelligence reports indicated a high attack threat existed in the Bien Hoa area. As a result of the attack threat, MAG-12 (FWD) formed two reaction platoons of 30 men each and deployed them on the flight line and in the cantonment area to increase internal security. Additionally, on 11 October, 7th Air Force

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placed four MAG-12 (FWD) aircraft on a 15 minute alert and another eight aircraft on one hour alert, to increase the readiness in support of external reaction forces in the Bien Hoa area.

On 22 October Bien Hoa received a rocket attack consisting of 61 rounds of mixed 122mm and 107mm rockets. One Marine was wounded in the attack but there was no damage to MAG-12 (FWD) facilities or aircraft.

Normal combat operations continued at Bien Hoa during November with the two squadrons of MAG-12 (FWD) averaging in excess of 50 combat sorties a day. On 11 November, Bien Hoa received another rocket attack with approximately 55 rounds of 122mm rockets hitting the base complex. MAG-12 (FWD) did not sustain any personnel casualties or aircraft damage. There was minor damage however, in the material storage area and flight operations were delayed one hour due to runway cratering and after action debris increasing the risk of foreign object damage.

The two A-4E squadrons of MAG-12 (FWD) in December continued to provide support for Free World Forces with the majority of missions conducted in MR-3, MR-4 and Cambodia. Weather hampered air operations in the MAG-12 (FWD) area during the first part of the month, with 50 combat sorties being cancelled by Seventh Air Force in the first six days. The weather subsequently improved and the Group at Bien Hoa returned to its normal output of 50 sorties a day.

There were four small rocket attacks on Bien Hoa AB during December in which approximately 37 rounds of mixed 107mm and 122mm impacted; however, no damage or casualties were inflicted upon MAG-12 (FWD) personnel or aircraft.

On 9 December the 10,000th combat sortie was flown by MAG-12 (FWD) since their arrival at Bien Hoa on 17 May 1972. This represented an average of just under

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49 combat sorties a day over the seven month period. An excellent performance for a unit with only two tactical squadrons assigned.

-NAM PHONG

Continued emphasis was placed on the maintenance and upgrading of facilities at Nam Phong during October. Progress was made in the areas of electrical power distribution, communications, and improvement of living quarters. Early in the month, spalling of the runway was discovered with the damage extending about 5000 feet on the centerline of the runway. On 30 October repairs by a commercial contractor commenced with work being performed at night to minimize the loss of operational flights.

After the restriction on bombing above the 20th parallel in NVN was imposed on 24 October, the participation of MAG-15 in the Barrier Air Combat Patrol (BARCAP) mission was discontinued. The Group's F-4 and A-6 aircraft now concentrated on close air support and interdiction sorties in Military Regions 1 and 2 in RVN.

The four CH-46's assigned to Task Force Delta remained busy during the month. On 3 October, two aircraft responded to a request by Udorn RTAFB for flare support to assist in repelling a sapper attack. The attack was successfully repulsed and the aircraft returned to Nam Phong. On 7 October the CH-46's responded to an Air Force request to assist in the search for a USAF F-4 which had gone down approximately 60 miles north-northeast of Udorn RTAFB. Eight sorties were flown in support of this mission and the mission was successfully completed when a Marine CH-46 helicopter succeeded in locating the downed F-4.

Air combat operations originating at Nam Phong in November continued to support RVN operations in MR 1 and 2. The excellent performance of the two F-4 squadrons at Nam Phong was noted when the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing representative to the 7th Air Force reported--VMFA-115 and VMFA-232 had the highest sortie rate of any land based F-4 unit operating in SEA.

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With the resumption of bombing north of the 20th parallel in North Vietnam on 18 December, the F-4s of MAG-15 resumed the BARCAP mission in support of Seventh Air Force Linebacker operations. On 30 December the BARCAP missions were again suspended when another bombing halt was ordered north of the 20th parallel. Night all-weather bombing missions in NVN by MAG-15 A-6s were suspended from 19-21 December when the magnitude of other air operations precluded their effectiveness.

On 19 December when a B-52 crashed 12 miles south-east of Nam Phong, a CH-46 from H&MS-36 Det D was dispatched and rescued the seven crewmen, two of whom were injured. A 14-man security team from Task Force Delta also assisted Thai police in securing the crash site.

#### -Carrier Operations

VMFA-333 deployed with the USS AMERICA, served its fourth and fifth line periods, on "Yankee Station" in the GOT from October through December 1972. During this period the squadron from 2d MAF flew 587 combat sorties over North Vietnam and lost one F-4J when it was shot down by enemy AAA fire. The aircraft was able to stay aloft until it reached the South China Sea, where the crew ejected safely and were rescued.

#### -VMCJ 1 and 2 Detachments

Through October the EA-6A's primary mission was to provide active ECM coverage for Navy carrier based air strikes. With the promise of peace and a reduction of bombing in the latter part of October, tasking was shifted to support photo reconnaissance missions. On 18 December however, resumption of large scale bombing over North Vietnam saw VMCJ EA-6A's employed for virtual round-the-clock operations supporting Navy carrier based strikes and Air Force B-52 strikes. During this period the aircraft availability and full systems status reached an all time high. The total VMCJ-1 and 2 Detachment assets were committed to the support role and resulted in seven of

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the available eight EA-6A's being airborne on combat missions at the same time. CINCSAC commended the EA-6A detachments for their "outstanding SAM suppression" in support of the December B-52 Arc Light operations.

During the intense bombing in the last half of December the North Vietnamese largely abandoned the use of the Fansong radar as active guidance for the Guideline SAM missile and began employing new radars. One of the new radars, designated the T8209, a high frequency India band emitter was employed against friendly aircraft and the only ECM aircraft capable at the time of jamming the T8209 was the EA-6A.

-Operational Air Losses

On 12 October an A-6A from VMA(AW)-533 was lost in the southern panhandle of NVN. A SAR effort was conducted but was secured after three days. Both of the crew members were listed as missing in action.

On 20 November an F-4J from VMFA-232 was shot down by ground fire over the southern panhandle of Laos. Both crew members ejected from the aircraft but only the pilot was rescued and the RIO was listed as missing in action.

On 27 December an A-6A from VMA(AW)-533 did not return after a mission over North Vietnam. Last contact with the aircraft was 36 minutes after take-off prior to entering the assigned operational area. A check of all suitable divert fields produced negative results, and after three hours the aircrew were presumed down and the crew was listed as missing in action.

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SUMMARY OF AIR COMBAT OPERATIONS OCT - DECMAG 15 - NAM PHONG

	VMA (AW)-533	VMFA-115	VMFA-232	VMGR-152 (DET)
	A-6A	F-4B	F-4B	KC-130
Average Aircraft On Hand	11	13	16	4
Combat Sorties	600	1089	1182	253
Non-Combat Sorties	67	175	151	173
Ordnance				
MK-82	5151	5361	6850	
MK-83	942	1566	1588	
ZUNI	541	1436	1163	
ROCKEYE	1087	7	198	

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<u>MAG 12 (FWD) - BIEN HOA</u>	VMA-211	VMA-311
	A-4E	A-4E
Average Aircraft On Hand	16	15
Combat Sorties	2282	2286
Non-Combat Sorties	107	89
Ordnance		
MK-81	7432	7658
MK-82	8783	8320
MK-83	556	599
ZUNI	1741	1942
<u>VMCJ 1 &amp; 2 - CUBI POINT</u>		
	EA-6A	KC-130
Average Aircraft On Hand	8	2
Combat Sorties	319	
Combat Support Sorties	473	173

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-MARHUK Operations

HMA-369 spent a limited time in the Gulf of Tonkin during October as the USS CLEVELAND had a scheduled upkeep period in Sasebo, Japan. The Cobras were on station from 1-8 October but adverse weather during the period limited their effectiveness. The weather also caused a standstill in the offloading activities by the Chinese Communist merchant ship.

The USS CLEVELAND departed the Gulf of Tonkin on the 8th and offloaded HMA-369 at Okinawa, where they remained until the 26th, performing maintenance and pilot training. On the 29th the CLEVELAND and HMA-369 returned to the Gulf of Tonkin and resumed operations.

HMA-369 spent most of the month of November in the Gulf of Tonkin where adverse weather, in the Hon La operating area, once again hampered much of the surveillance effort. Cobra operations were halted on 10 November as a result of proposed Formation Sentry II operations. However, this decision was reversed the following day by higher headquarters and by the 13th, the Cobras were back on station. On the 28th, the CLEVELAND departed the Gulf of Tonkin to return HMA-369 to Okinawa.

HMA-369 was en route from the GOT to Okinawa as December began. On arrival at Okinawa, HMA-369 off-loaded from the USS CLEVELAND and moved to MCAS Futema on 2 December. On 5 December, HMA-369 embarked aboard the USS DUBUQUE (LPD-8) and departed Okinawa on the 6th for Subic Bay to take on aviation ordnance. MARHUK missions commenced on 12 December; however, adverse weather caused cancellation of most missions for the first three days on station. Missions were now flown primarily during daylight hours as there was a lack of illumination support and an absence of rescue aircraft in the operating area. 21 December marked the end of another line period for MARHUK operations and the ship sailed for Kaoshiung, Taiwan, for a port visit. On the 28th, the DUBUQUE departed Taiwan for Subic Bay to replenish supplies and complete a scheduled upkeep period.

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By the end of December, the AH-1J Cobras of HMA-369 had flown a total of 820 combat sorties since the inception of MARHUK operations in June 1972. In addition, HMA-369 aircraft had controlled 98 fixed wing aircraft flights and 49 NGF missions, in support of MARHUK activities, in North Vietnamese waters.

AH-1J BATTLE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT 22 JUNE - 31 DEC 1972

<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>DESTROYED</u>	<u>DAMAGED</u>
Waterborne Logistics Craft (WBLC's)	59	64
Supply Areas	13	8
Trucks	10	6
Hostile Gun Emplacements	20	16
Bunkers	4	2
Coastal Defense Sites	1	3
100 pound Supply Bags	4725	

From June through December four merchant ships attempted to offload their cargo at the Hon La anchorage. The unloading effort was largely thwarted by the MARHUK operations and in the process, HMA-369 had sustained no aircraft losses and only nine aircraft were damaged by enemy ground fire.

-Formation Sentry II

Peace negotiations in Paris had stipulated that U.S. Naval forces in the Pacific would clear the mines from the harbors and waterways of North Vietnam. This placed a burden on Navy mine sweeping assets as the majority of the U.S. mine sweeping ships were no longer in the active fleet and the major task of sweeping mines, had to be assigned to helicopter units.

Formation Sentry II, the code name for the mine sweeping operations in North Vietnam, was to mark the first time in the history of the U.S. Navy that airborne mine countermeasures were to be employed. Clearing the U.S. planted mines from NVN waters, constituted a most ambitious and complex undertaking.

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The U.S. Navy had only one operational squadron, HM-12, with 13 H-53 helicopters available for mine counter measures operations. When orders were issued in November 1972 to prepare for mine sweeping operations, the navy squadron was flown by C-5A aircraft from the east-coast of the United States to Cubi Point. While at Cubi, HM-12 began to prepare for mine sweeping operations in the waters of North Vietnam.

Because of the number of mines and minefields that had been laid in North Vietnamese waters, it became apparent the Navy did not have available helicopters to adequately complete the mission and that assistance was required to augment the Navy helicopter mine sweeping assets.

To provide the required assistance, FMFPac was requested to augment the Navy mine sweeping helicopters by assignment of Marine Corps CH-53 helicopters to the mine sweeping force. The use of Marine CH-53 helicopters for mine-sweeping is not an assigned or desireable mission in normal operations, as the assignment of secondary missions could seriously degrade the capability of supporting Marine ground forces in both the ship to shore movement and subsequent operations ashore. However, due to the exigency of the mine sweeping operation, Marine helicopters were assigned.

CG, III MAF immediately began planning for Marine Corps participation in Formation Sentry II and reconstitution of the ARG/MAU to support emergency evacuation plans for MR-1. The mine sweeping force required the use of two LPH's and three LPD's to support the mine sweeping helicopters. It was determined by III MAF and CTF-76 to return the 33d MAU to Okinawa where it would off load from ARG shipping and remain available for contingency operations with a load reaction time of 168 hours. The 31st MAU would, when directed, return to Subic Bay and reconstitute as a surface configured BLT to be embarked on one LKA, one LSD and three 1179 class LST's. The headquarters of the 31st MAU was to remain on board the USS CLEVELAND

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(LPD-7) during mine sweeping operations, where they would be available to join the BLT, along with an LPH from mine countermeasures operations, if evacuation requirements in MR-1 so dictated. The BLT was to maintain a 72 hour reaction time to MR-1.

Planning for Formation Sentry II continued and on 7 December, HMH-463, a heavy helicopter squadron from the First Marine Brigade, at Kaneohe, arrived at Cubi Point, aboard the USS INCHON (LPH-12). The addition of this squadron increased Marine assets committed to Formation Sentry II, to 25 CH-53s, 20 CH-46s, 4 UH-1Es and personnel from four helicopter squadrons; HMM-164, HMM-165, HMH-462 and HMH-463. Over two-thirds of the helicopters committed to support Formation Sentry II operations in sweeping mines from NVN waters were from FMFPac resources.

The initial configuration and planned assignment of aircraft to the Mine Countermeasures Force at the end of December, was as follows:

- a. Flagship unit-USS NEW ORLEANS (LPH-11)
  - 7 USN CH-53
  - 10 USMC CH-46
  - 2 USMC UH-1E
  - 1 USN CH-46 (organic to LPH)
- b. AMCM unit ALFA-USS CLEVELAND (LPD-7)
  - 3 USN CH-53
- c. AMCM unit BRAVO-USS OGDEN (LPD-5)
  - 3 USN CH-53

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d. AMCM unit CHARLIE-USS INCHON (LPH-12)

9 USMC CH-53

10 USMC CH-46

2 USMC UH-1E

1 USN CH-46 (organic to LPH)

e. AMCM unit DELTA-USS DUBUQUE (LPD-8)

3 USMC CH-53

DEPLOYED AVIATION ASSETS AS OF 31 DECEMBER

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>TYPE ACFT</u>	<u>ASG</u>	<u>OH</u>	<u>PAR</u>	<u>DAM</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
H&MS-15						Nam Phong
VMFA-115	F4B	16	14	2		Nam Phong
VMFA-232	F4J	16	16			Nam Phong
VMA(AW)-533	A6A	11	10		1	Nam Phong
H&MS-12						Bien Hoa
VMA-211	A4E	18	16	2		Bien Hoa
VMA-311	A4E	21	16	5		Bien Hoa
VMCJ-1 (Det 101)	EA6A	8	4	2	2	Cubi Pt
VMCJ-2 (Det 102)	EA6A	3	3			Cubi Pt
VMGR-152	KC-130F	13	11	2		Futema
HMM-164	CH-46D	16	12	3	1	LPH
	CH-53D	8	6	2		LPH
	UH-1E	4	4			LPH
HMM-165	CH-46D	16	11	5		LPH
	CH-53D	6	6			LPH
	UH-1E	4	4			LPH
HMA-369	AH-1J	9	7	1	1	LPD
H&MS-36 Det D	CH-46D	4	3	1		Nam Phong
HMH-463	CH-53D	14	12		2	Cubi Pt

Logistics

In October, all of the approved construction at Nam Phong was completed by the Naval Construction Forces and

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was accepted by Task Force Delta. Facility maintenance was now provided via an Interservice Support Agreement (ISSA) by a USARSUPTHAI contractor. Funds to support the ISSA were allocated by CINCPACFLT.

Plans were completed by III MAF in October, to move MAG-12 (FWD) from Bien Hoa, RVN to Iwakuni, Japan, when directed by higher authority. The enthusiasm over the initial peace talks made the move seem imminent, but the NVA and VC continued to press their war effort and at the end of December, MAG-12 (FWD) was still operating out of Bien Hoa. All logistic arrangements and plans had been completed however, and when directed to depart RVN, MAG-12 (FWD) was prepared.

Primary emphasis in logistics during November was directed towards Project Enhance Plus, a concerted effort to provide material and equipment to South Vietnam under the Vietnamization Program. Special attention was directed toward fixing the closest geographical location to RVN of USMC equipment to be supplied. Loading commenced at Okinawa on 8 November and the project was successfully completed on 27 November, when all the equipment had been delivered to the VNMC Compound in Saigon.

Under Project Enhance Plus, 1 LVTR-5, 2 LVTP-5 (Cmd), and 29 LVTP-5's were obtained from WestPac units and shipped to RVN for use by the Vietnamese Marine Corps. The LVTP-5s were programmed for exchange, on a one-for-one basis, with the LVTP-7s when they became available.

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**CEASE-FIRE****UNCLASSIFIED**

JANUARY - MARCH 1973

Cease-Fire

In January the long hoped for cease-fire in Vietnam became a reality. While a stable peace still appeared to be sometime away for the Vietnamese; the culmination of the Paris peace talks resulted in the implementation of a cease-fire on 28 January 1973. American combat forces were to be withdrawn from South Vietnam by the 28th of March 1973. The involvement of FMFPac forces in South Vietnam came to an end with the withdrawal of MAG-12(FWD) from Bien Hoa on 29 January and the deactivation of Sub Unit One, 1st ANGLICO in-country on 14 March 1973.

During the January - March 1973 time frame, III MAF began a reposturing of forces in preparation for a return to the pre-April 1972 Force-in-Readiness. The retention of the 31st MAU afloat, a ready BLT on Okinawa, training at Camp Fuji in Japan and the forward deployment of 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, would provide ready Marine units if WestPac amphibious forces were again committed.

9th MAB Operations

January and February found the 9th MAB forces in a period of transition. Early in January the headquarters of 9th MAB left Okinawa for the Gulf of Tonkin (GOT). They arrived on the 8th and remained until the 12th, when they departed the GOT for Subic and a subsequent port visit to Keelung, Republic of China. On 28 January while in Keelung, 9th MAB passed operational control of HMA-369 (MARHUK operations) to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and upon arrival of the 9th MAB at Okinawa on 31 January, operational control of the 33d MAU was passed to III MAF. The cease-fire and requirements for ARG shipping and III

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MAF helicopters to support mine clearing operations in North Vietnamese waters, necessitated these two changes.

At the end of January, 9th MAB was organized as follows:

9th MAB	TG 79.1
SU 1 H&S Co III MAF	TU 79.1.0
Det 1st Rad Bn	TE 79.1.0.1
Det NGF Spot	TE 79.1.0.4
Prov Comm Spt Co	TU 79.1.1
31st MAU	TG 79.4
HQ 31st MAU	TU 79.4.0
BLT 3/4	TU 79.4.1
LSU	TU 79.4.3

On 7 February, CG III MAF, with the concurrence of COMSEVENTHFLT, directed the reduction of the 9th MAB staff to a nucleus brigade staff which would be capable of rapid expansion to meet contingencies and training requirements. On 9 February, the 9th MAB Headquarters was disestablished and the 9th MAB Staff Nucleus/III MAF(Fwd) was established. This small staff of approximately 21 personnel was to be deployed with CTF-76 (COMPHIBGRU ONE) aboard the amphibious flag ship.

Concurrently, with the disestablishment of 9th MAB, operational control of the 31st MAU passed to III MAF. The operational control of both the 31st and 33d MAU had now passed to CG III MAF. Ninth MAB nucleus staff, if required, could quickly be augmented to become a viable MAB headquarters again.

#### -Operations of the Marine Amphibious Units (MAU's)

##### --31st MAU

During the month of January the principle activities of the 31st MAU consisted of conducting training and updating plans for contingency operations. As the month began, the MAU was in Subic Bay conducting field training in the Zambales training area. On the 7th, the MAU sailed

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~~for the~~ Gulf of Tonkin. While in the Gulf of Tonkin, Marine and Navy personnel aboard the USS MONTICELLO conducted LVT training for 54 officers and men of the Vietnamese Marine Corps. On 18 January the MAU departed the Gulf of Tonkin for a port visit to Singapore.

The expectations of a cease-fire caused the 31st MAU to depart Singapore on 26 January for Subic Bay, where ships from the ARG and helicopters from HMM-165 were required to commence training in support of Operation END SWEEP. The ground elements of the MAU were to disembark at Subic where they would be reconfigured as a BLT.

On 1 February, OPCON of HMM-165 was passed to CTF 78 (Mine Sweeping Force), while concurrently, ARG ALFA and BRAVO ships were assigned new missions to support mine sweeping operations and ARG/BLT requirements. To provide the contingency evacuation force, BLT 3/4 and the LSU were embarked as BLT ALFA aboard the newly constituted surface configured five ship Amphibious Ready Group. On 4 February the ARG/BLT departed Subic Bay for an area off DaNang, where they assumed a twelve hour emergency evacuation reaction time. On 14 February the ARG/BLT reaction time to MR-1 was extended from 12 hours to 120 hours and as a result, the ARG/BLT departed the GOT for Subic Bay on 16 February.

The ARG/BLT (3/4) departed Subic Bay on 19 February for Taiwan to conduct scheduled orientation classes for the Chinese Marine Corps at Kaohsiung and Tsoying. The ARG/BLT departed Taiwan on 26 February and returned to Subic Bay early on the 28th.

On 13 March, ARG/BLT ALFA (3/4) departed Subic Bay for a five day port visit at Hong Kong prior to relief of 3/4 on Okinawa. After the completion of the port visit on 20 March, the ARG/BLT sailed for Okinawa where BLT 3/4 was relieved as the afloat/ready BLT by the 1st Bn 4th Marines.

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At the end of March the ARG/BLT ALFA (now BLT 1/4) was preparing to sail for Subic Bay where the BLT would join with the 31st MAU headquarters located ashore at the MAU camp, Subic.

--33d MAU

The 33d MAU, aboard ARG BRAVO shipping, was in the Gulf of Tonkin as January began. The MAU spent 2 through 6 January training South Vietnamese Marines in the operation of the LVTP-5. On 4 January, the helicopters from the 33d MAU (HMM-164) participated in a SAR mission for a B-52 which had gone down in the GOT. The squadron employed six CH-46s in the SAR effort, which resulted in all six B-52 crewmen being rescued.

The 33d MAU departed the GOT on 7 January for a period of ship upkeep at Subic and training for the Marines at the MAU camp. Arriving on the 9th, the 33d MAU commenced a training program which included combined training in the Zambales training area with two companies of Philippine Marines.

The 33d MAU sailed from Subic for the Gulf of Tonkin on 20 January and arrived off the coast of MR-1 on the 22nd. Plans had been made to continue the LVT training program for the Vietnamese Marine Corps; however, after the announcement of the cease-fire in Vietnam, the MAU was directed, on 26 January, to proceed to Okinawa where they were to offload, but were to maintain a 168 hour load reaction time. The offload was completed on 31 January and operational control of the 33d MAU was passed from 9th MAB to III MAF. The MAU shipping, with HMM-164 aboard, proceeded to Subic Bay to join other forces in preparation for mine sweeping operations.

The 33d MAU spent the months of February and March at Camp Schwab, Okinawa where the major effort was directed toward preparing for GOLDEN DRAGON 73. On 28 February, BLT 2/4 relieved BLT 1/9 as the 33d MAU BLT.

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The 33d MAU headquarters embarked aboard the USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC-19) on 28 March in preparation for the movement to Korea and exercise GOLDEN DRAGON 73. The BLUE RIDGE, USS TULARE (LKA-112), USS MONTICELLO (LSD-35), USS SAN BERNARDINO (LST-1189), USS RACINE (LST-1191), USS FRESNO (LST-1182) and the 33d MAU departed Okinawa on 30 March for Korea.

Sub Unit One, 1st ANGLICO

Throughout January Sub Unit One continued to support Free World Forces in all four military regions. The naval gunfire ships of Seventh Fleet, controlled by Sub Unit One spotters and liaison personnel, fired 79,752 rounds of all types and caliber in support of forces in South Vietnam during January. On 28 January, the Sub Unit ceased operations in support of the South Vietnamese but remained in field positions until 17 February 1973.

On the 17th of February, Sub Unit One ceased to have an operational mission and all efforts were directed toward deactivation of the unit. On 6 March, CG FMFPac assumed operational control of Sub Unit One from MACV and directed them to initiate deactivation. On 14 March 1973, Sub Unit One, 1st ANGLICO was deactivated as the last of the ANGLICO personnel departed from Saigon.

The departure of Sub Unit One, 1st ANGLICO brought words of praise from the Commandant of the Marine Corps and CG FMFPac. CG FMFPac noted--The completion of Sub Unit One, 1st ANGLICO's combat support mission in South Vietnam ends more than seven years of continuous naval gunfire support to Free World Forces throughout South Vietnam. From the initial entry of Sub Unit One in May 1965 through the recent NVA invasion in March 1970, the outstanding support provided by this small but highly professional unit has been noted at all levels. The aggressive spirit displayed by ANGLICO airborne and ground spotters, combined with the fire power of 7th Flt NGF ships, was given considerable credit for stemming the tide of the NVA invasion in MR-1 during March/April 1972. The professionalism and esprit de corps of the officers and men of

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Sub Unit One during these past seven years are an indication of what "a few good men" can do when faced with a challenge.

Sub Unit One, 1st ANGLICO was the last of FMFPac's ground units to depart South Vietnam.

### Air Operations

Units of the 1st MAW continued to conduct a broad range of combat and combat support operations throughout SEA during January-March 1973. However, there were no Marine Corps aircraft lost in combat during this time frame. As a result of the cease-fire MAG-12 (FWD), at Bien Hoa, the last American combat aviation unit in Vietnam, stood down from combat operations in January and commenced redeployment to Iwakuni, Japan.

#### -Bien Hoa

In accordance with the terms of the cease fire, MAG-12 (FWD) discontinued combat operations on 27 January and commenced preparations for redeployment to MCAS Iwakuni, Japan. On 29 January the first A-4 aircraft from MAG-12 (FWD) departed Bien Hoa, arriving at Iwakuni on the 30th and by the 31st, 28 A-4's had arrived with the final two aircraft en route. Over 50% of the Group's personnel and equipment were relocated at Iwakuni by the close of the month and on 3 February the entire MAG-12 move was completed.

During the 1312 combat sorties conducted in Military Regions 2, 3 and 4 of RVN and in Cambodia during January, MAG-12 (FWD) was credited with 807 confirmed enemy killed, 53 secondary explosions, and 67 sustained fires. Logging 1548 flight hours, the A-4 aviators further accounted for 198 structures and 770 bunkers destroyed.

Bien Hoa AB was struck by two 122mm rocket attacks prior to the institution of the cease fire agreement in January. An attack on 21 January caused neither personnel

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casualties nor significant damage to the MAG-12 (FWD) facilities; but on 25 January, in a brief early morning barrage, one enlisted Marine was killed and another wounded, numbering them with the final few U.S. Vietnam casualties.

The return of the "Avengers" of VMA-211 and the "Tomcats" of VMA-311 marked the close of another chapter of Marine aviation combat history in Vietnam. MAG-12 (FWD) was the last American combat aviation unit stationed in Vietnam. During the deployment of MAG-12 (FWD) in Vietnam, which began on 19 May 1972, the A-4s of VMA-211 and VMA-311 flew 11,959 combat sorties, 453 non-combat sorties and compiled 14,874 flight hours. During this period they delivered 80,917 bombs (18,002 tons), 16,024 rockets and 323,261 rounds of 20mm cannon fire on enemy forces deployed in MR-2, MR-3, MR-4, South Vietnam and Cambodia. With only 32 A-4 aircraft, MAG-12 (FWD) had flown an average of 50 sorties per day for a 1.57 daily sorties rate. This was accomplished by maintaining the aircraft availability rate at 85 percent.

-Nam Phong

MAG-15 continued combat air operations in North and South Vietnam in January and in northern and southern Laos and Cambodia during January and February.

January for the Marines of Task Force Delta and MAG-15 at Nam Phong RTAFB, Thailand, was another month of heavy commitment to combat operations. The F-4 squadron from VMFA-232 was utilized primarily in an air-to-ground role in Military Region 1 of South Vietnam, in support of RVNAF forces, until 27 January. During the first weeks of the month the A-6 aircraft of VMA(AW)-533 continued to fly night systems interdiction missions in Route Package One of NVN and the Steel Tiger Area of Laos. Strikes against Communist concentrations by the MAG-15 aircraft were conducted throughout the entire month in Laos, as the cease-fire agreement specifically effected combat operation in NVN and RVN only.

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MAG-15 in January flew 975 combat sorties during 1566 flight hours. Bomb damage assessments credit the Group with 74 confirmed enemy KBA, 223 secondary explosions and 78 sustained fires.

While being rearmed at DaNang AB on 26 January, one day prior to the cease-fire, two F-4J aircraft from VMFA-232 sustained minor damage during a rocket attack. Both aircraft were still flyable and completed their assigned missions prior to returning to Nam Phong.

With the cease-fire in Vietnam, the H&MS-15 Detachment which had provided turn around support for aircraft from Task Force Delta at DaNang, was relocated to Nam Phong, on 29 January.

The units of Task Force Delta continued combat operations in Northern and Southern Laos and Cambodia until 25 February. A cease fire agreement was reached in Laos on 22 February. Subsequently, TF Delta units were only fragged once, on the 25th, for combat operations in Cambodia. For the rest of the month Task Force Delta's units concentrated on unit and individual aircrew training. On 30 March MAG-15 again began flying combat sorties into Cambodia.

#### -Carrier Operations

The departure of the USS AMERICA (CVA-66) with VMFA-333 aboard in February, for the Atlantic Ocean, marked the end of fixed wing Marine carrier operations in Southeast Asia. VMFA-333 had arrived in July 1972, as the replacement for VMA(AW)-224, another carrier based 2d Marine Aircraft Wing squadron. During the eight months that VMFA-333 operated in WestPac, they served six line periods on "YANKEE STATION," in the Gulf of Tonkin, and had flown a total of 1,538 combat sorties and 3,161.3 hours. Additionally, on 11 September 1972, VMFA-333 provided the first Marine aircraft kill of a MIG-21 since renewal of Marine air participation in April 1972. The high sorties and aircraft availability rate of the 2d Wing Squadron, while engaged in combat operations, was noted at all levels of command.

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-VMCJ 1 and 2 Detachments

During the first fifteen days of January the Marine EA-6A aircraft of the VMCJ detachment based at NAS Cubi Point, R.P., continued their electronic countermeasure support of 7th Fleet air operations against NVN. On 23 January the VMCJ-2 element of the combined VMCJ-1/VMCJ-2 EA-6 detachment, at Cubi Point, commenced a Trans-Pac movement back to MCAS Cherry Point, N.C. The VMCJ-2 unit, which had arrived on 14 April 1972 to augment the VMCJ-1 electronic warfare assets, was returned to the OPCON of 2nd MAF on 27 January 1973.

The end of February also marked the completion of the VMCJ-1 Detachment's combat role, with the passing of operational control from Seventh Fleet to III MAF on 18 February. Commander Seventh Fleet stated on the departure of the VMCJ detachments--I take this opportunity to commend you for your outstanding performance and significant contribution to the effectiveness of the Seventh Fleet in the historic Linebacker campaign. Since your first TF 77 support mission flown on 7 April 1972, until the end of your EW support missions in mid-January 1973, your unique role in electronic warfare provided invaluable support to the U.S. air striking forces which were penetrating a most formidable and sophisticated anti-air warfare environment. Your completion of over 98 percent of the Detachment's scheduled missions, in support of B-52 and Seventh Fleet air strikes against targets in North Vietnam, demonstrated the highest degree of dedication and professionalism on the part of both flight and ground crews.

During the ten months VMCJ-1 and 2 Detachments operated in support of Seventh Fleet air operations they flew 1032 combat sorties and 1463 combat support sorties.

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SUMMARY OF AIR COMBAT OPERATIONS - NAM PHONG 1 JANUARY-31 MARCH AND BIEN HOA 1-28 JANUARY 1973

<u>MAG-15 - Nam Phong</u>	VMFA	VMFA	VMA (AW)	VMGR-152
	115	232	533	Det D
Average Aircraft on Hand	14 F-4B	16 F-4J	11 A-6A	(KC-130)
Combat Sorties	594	668	280	-
Combat Support Sorties	-	-	-	111
Non-Combat Sorites	116	122	71	95
Hours	1139.7	1175.3	563.5	837.7
Ordnance				
MK-82	5589	6468	3495	-
MK-83	51	55	25	-
MK-46/47	2075	2344	155	-
ROCKEYE	22	207	702	-
ZUNI	306	493	8	-
JP-4	-	-	-	2,941,361
<u>MAG-12 (FWD) - Bien Hoa</u>		VMA	VMA	
		211	311	
Average Aircraft on Hand		15 A-4E	15 A-4E	
Combat Sorties		654	658	
Non-Combat Sorties		32	29	
Hours		784.6	782.2	
Ordnance				
MK-81		2,791	2,315	
MK-82		2,448	2,907	
20mm		9,812	12,456	
MK-46/47		-	280	

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MCJ 1 and 2 Detachments - Cubi Point

(EA-6A) (KC-130)

Combat Sorties	54	-
Combat Support Sorties	86	37
Non-Combat Sorties	59	8
Hours	363.8	124.5

-MARHUK Operations

HMA-369 was in port at Subic Bay, during the first week in January. On 6 January, the DUBUQUE, with HMA-369 embarked, departed Subic for the Gulf of Tonkin, arriving there late on the 7th. The first mission of the sixth line period for HMA-369 was flown early on the 8th of January, in the Hon La anchorage area. Activity in the anchorage was quiet as MARHUK operation continued to fly random daylight sorties and scheduled night sorties. The effectiveness of night sorties was again degraded however, due to a lack of illumination support.

On 15 January, HMA-369 was directed to suspend all MARHUK operations and on the 17th the DUBUQUE received orders to sail for Subic Bay. HMA-369 arrived at Subic Bay on 20 January where they remained until 26 January. The DUBUQUE was then ordered to sail to Okinawa and offload the squadron at MCAS Futema. HMA-369 arrived at Okinawa on the 28th of January, offloaded, and 9th MAB simultaneously passed operational control to 1st MAW. MARHUK operations were at an end, after eight months of operations, in North Vietnamese waters.

MARHUK COMBAT OPERATIONS SUMMARY 1 - 28 JANUARY 1973

Combat Support Sorties	48
Hours	60.8
Ordnance	
ZUNI	24
2.75 Rkts	272
20mm	7725

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-Operation End Sweep

Planning and coordination of Marine Corps participation in Operation END SWEEP (formerly FORMATION SENTRY II) continued during January. Numerous changes to plans during the month resulted in the following Marine aviation assets being committed to the mine clearing operation by the end of the month: 25 CH-53s, 11 CH-46s, 4 UH-1Es and support personnel from four helicopter squadrons; HMM-164, HMM-165, HMM-462 and HMM-463.

February was a month of intensified preparation for the mine clearing forces and as the operations were about to begin, Marine helicopters were located as follows:

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>AIRCRAFT</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
HMM-165	3 CH-53	New Orleans
	5 CH-46	" "
	2 UH-1E	" "
HMM-463	9 CH-53	Inchon
	6 CH-46	"
	2 UH-1E	"
	3 CH-53	Cleveland
HMM-462	9 CH-53	Cubi (End Sweep back-up)
	9 CH-53	Futema
HMM-164	12 CH-46	Futema

Operations commenced when Air Mine Countermeasure (AMCM) units Alpha and Bravo arrived in the Haiphong Anchorage on 23 February following an uneventful transit. Initial Marine Corps participation consisted of mine countermeasure support flights into NVN beginning on 24 February. The flights transported the mine countermeasures negotiating team into Cat Bi Airfield NVN and assisted in delivering supplies and equipment for clearing the inland waterways. Although the flights operated under heavy restrictions imposed by the North Vietnamese, no significant problems were encountered. Flight routes into NVN were strictly adhered to and ETA's and ETD's were limited to plus or minus five minutes.

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A breakdown in release procedures concerning POW's caused the abrupt departure of all AMCM units from Haiphong harbor on 28 February. The AMCM units rendezvoused in the holding area where HMM-165 and HMH-463 conducted day and night carrier refresher operations and additional MK-105 sweep training.

Following the return of TF-78 to Haiphong on 4 March, HMM-165 helicopters towing MK-105 Sweep Sleds commenced sweeping operations on 7 March. HMH-463 flew their first tow missions on 12 March in a newly opened Haiphong sweep area.

CINCPACFLT tasked FMFPac on 11 March to provide, on temporary loan, six 2½ ton trucks with 180 days supply of repair parts to the mine sweeping force. The trucks were to be used by the North Vietnamese to support mine clearing efforts in their inland waterways. On 24 March, III MAF delivered the first vehicles to the North Vietnamese at Haiphong. The vehicles were accompanied by two Marine maintenance personnel who were to remain in NVN for approximately 30 days, at which time, the North Vietnamese were to assume maintenance responsibility for the trucks. It was recommended that the trucks be permanently transferred to NVN so the "owners" of the vehicles would assume full responsibility for all aspects of their use.

An accident on the East Coast of the U.S. by a 2d Marine Air Wing CH-53 helicopter caused a temporary grounding of the mine sweeping helicopters on 13 March. The problem involved the attachment of blades to the main rotor heads. Prior to resuming sweeping operations, an ultrasonic test had to be made on all rotor heads of mine sweeping helicopters. This was accomplished and a requirement was established for continued ultrasonic inspections after each ten hours of flight by the CH-53's.

On 18 March the first helicopter mine sweeping casualty occurred when a CH-53, from HMH-463, crashed off the Haiphong area. The CH-53 was clear of known mine fields when it crashed into the water as it was towing a sweep sled. The six crew members from the helicopter

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were rescued by small boats from the USS NEW ORLEANS and USS CLEVELAND, however, all six crew members sustained injuries from the crash. The cause of the aircraft accident was unknown, but the aircraft was retrieved from 65 feet of water in an attempt to determine the cause.

The mine sweeping operation were expected to continue into the summer months and until mine sweeping operations were completed, III MAF forces would be forced to operate without its full complement of helicopters. Additionally, the afloat forces would be operating without an LPH and LPD.

#### Disestablishment of the U.S. Marine Advisory Unit

On 29 March the Marine Advisory Unit in RVN was disestablished and their functions were turned over to the Vietnamese Marine Corps Logistic Support Branch, Navy Division of the Defense Attache Office. The Marine Advisory unit was initially established in 1955 as the Marine Advisory Division, Navy Section, MAAG, Vietnam. While the Marine Advisory Unit did not come under the cognizance of FMFPac, close coordination was maintained with the unit through III MAF and 9th MAB. When the Vietnamese Marine Division moved from Saigon to Military Region I in April 1972, support by III MAF forces as noted earlier contributed greatly to their success in defeating North Vietnamese and VC forces in northern MR-1.

The following paragraph and charts provide a short history on the evolution of the Marine Advisory Unit.

#### -Evolution of the Marine Advisory Unit

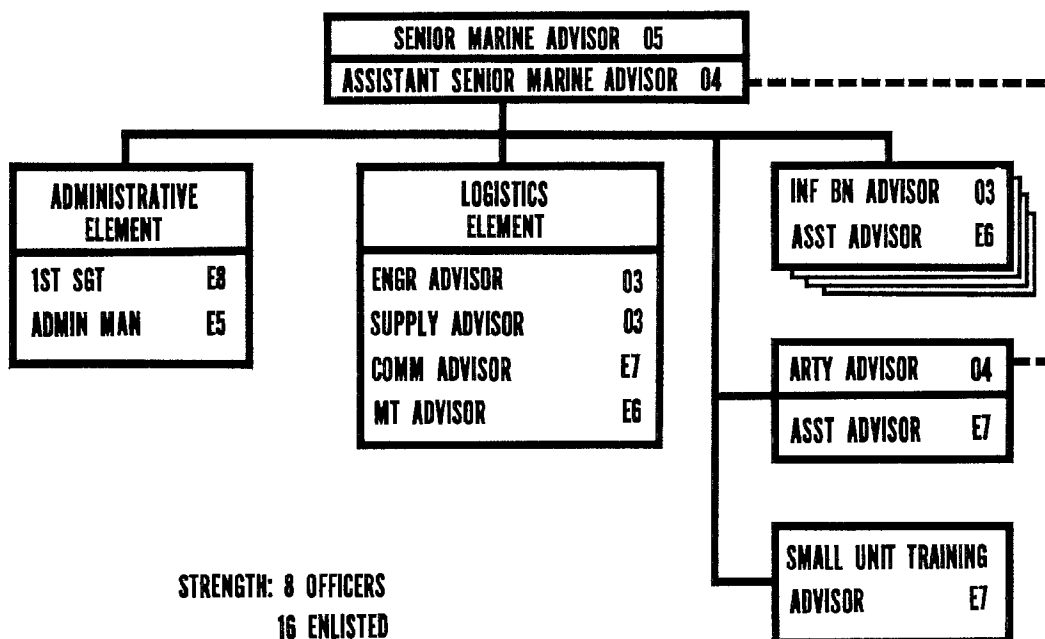
From the time it was established in 1955 until December 1961, the Marine Advisory Division, Navy Section, Military Assistance and Advisory Group, Vietnam, consisted of a Lieutenant Colonel as the Senior Marine Advisor, and two Captains as Assistant Marine Advisors.

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In 1961 the Table of Organization was expanded to provide additional advisors to the growing and developing Vietnamese Marine Corps. Within the Vietnamese Marine Corps, increased emphasis was placed on combat support and combat service support functions. As a consequence, logistics advisors were added to the Table of Organization for the Marine Advisory Division as well as additional field advisors. In December 1961, the Table of Organization for the Marine Advisory Division was as indicated in the following chart.



In April 1963 the Table of Organization was reduced through elimination of the First Sergeant and the four Assistant Infantry Battalion Advisor billets. An additional Small Unit Training Advisor (0369) was added.

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The Marine Advisory Division was transferred on 15 May 1964 from the Military Assistance and Advisory Group, Vietnam and became the Marine Advisory Unit, Naval Advisory Group, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. This change was part of an overall reorganization of the entire U.S. military advisory program which brought all U.S. units under the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. In November 1964, the Marine Advisory Unit was increased to 20 officers and 11 enlisted, and on 31 January 1965, the Marine Advisory Unit's strength was reduced to 25 officers, 2 enlisted and 1 USN enlisted man. This shift recognized the requirement for officer advisors as opposed to enlisted advisors.

By January 1968, the Marine Advisory Unit had expanded to keep pace with the steady growth of the Vietnamese Marine Corps. The principle effort was still directed at tactical advice and assistance; however, staff and logistics advisors had also increased in numbers parallel to the expansion of these functions in the Vietnamese Marine Corps.

The Marine Advisory Unit was again expanded in March 1969. The authorized strength at that time was 47 Marine officers, 9 enlisted Marines, 2 Navy officers and 2 Navy enlisted. As in previous changes, the changes in the Marine Advisory Unit were consistent with changes in VNMC force structure and reflected the requirement for additional staff advisors.

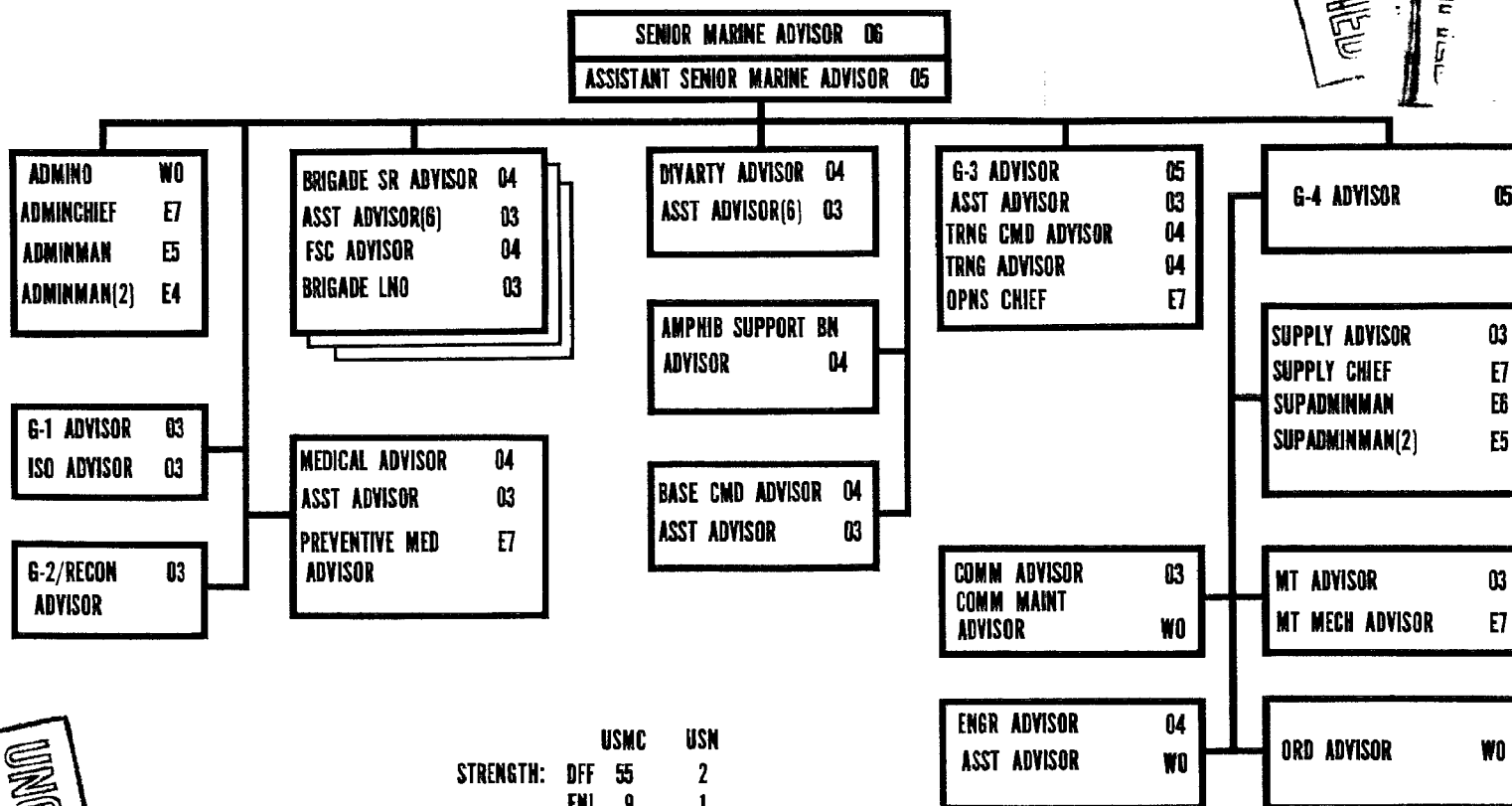
The Marine Advisory Unit reached its peak strength in early 1972. The Table of Organization called for a total of 67 personnel. By this time, the advisory effort had shifted its primary emphasis to providing advice and assistance in logistics, training and staff functioning. Permanent Battalion Advisors had been withdrawn from infantry battalions and were consolidated at brigade headquarters for deployment to battalions as required for control of U.S. supporting arms. The Table of Organization as of March 1972 is shown in the chart on the next page.

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# MARINE ADVISORY UNIT (MARCH 72)



STRENGTH: USMC USN  
 DFF 55 2  
 ENL  $\frac{9}{64}$   $\frac{1}{3}$

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In May 1972, the Marine Advisory Unit was reduced to an authorized strength of 41 officers and 11 enlisted. This was a result of the drawdown of Free World Military Forces in South Vietnam. Almost concurrently with this reduction in the Marine Advisory Unit strength, the NVA Easter Offensive required deployment of most of the advisors to the field due to the total commitment of the Vietnamese Marine Division against the NVA threat in Military Region I. In essence, the Marine Advisory Unit was, during this period, totally committed. As a consequence of the continued periods of combat for the tactical advisors along with inadequate diet and insufficient rest, several cases of advisor exhaustion and illness occurred. To compensate for this, in July 1972, the Marine Advisory Unit was augmented by nine Marine officers assigned to temporary additional duty for a ninety day period. A second group of like number and duration arrived in October. The temporary additional duty assistance was terminated in January 1973 with the reduction of the level of conflict in Military Region I.

When the Vietnamese Marine Division deployed to Military Region I in April 1972 and assumed an area of operations in defense of Hue City, additional U.S. forces were placed in direct support of the division and attached to the Marine Advisory Unit. Although not termed advisors, these U.S. forces played key roles in assisting in the advisory effort. Sub Unit #1, 1st ANGLICO, Force Troops, FMFPac provided naval gunfire liaison teams with the infantry brigades. The 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron, USAF, provided a tactical air control party at the division level. A detachment of the 1st Radio Battalion, Force Troops, FMFPac provided timely intelligence and the 14th Signal Company, 1st Signal Brigade, U.S. Army, provided teletype and radio relay communication support. To assist the Marine division with VNAF air support coordination and planning, a USAF officer was attached to the Marine Advisory Unit and performed duties as the Air Liaison Officer Advisor.

The advisory program initially was designed to improve the expertise of the tactical unit commander. The

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success of this program enabled the Marine Advisory Unit to reorient its efforts so that by early 1972, permanent battalion advisors were no longer required. At that point in time, liaison officers were provided to battalions on an as required basis for coordination of U.S. supporting arms. Emphasis was primarily directed toward brigade and division level advice and assistance as well as technical and management guidance in the logistical and administrative fields. By the time of the withdrawal of the Marine Advisory Unit, the Vietnamese Marine Division was almost totally self-sufficient in tactical operations and had made giant strides in self-sufficiency in all other areas. The Marine Advisory Unit with its withdrawal from the Republic of Vietnam, after eighteen years, can look back on its history with a sense of pride and accomplishment.

### Golden Dragon III

Golden Dragon III (1973) was scheduled as a combined MAB amphibious exercise to be conducted in Korea from 31 March to 8 April 1973. The scheduled exercise participants were U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine, ROK Navy and ROK Marine forces. It was envisioned the scenario would be much the same as the one written for Golden Dragon II (1972) which was cancelled at the last moment, as U.S. amphibious forces were diverted on 30 March 1972 for contingency operations in South Vietnam.

Planning for Golden Dragon III commenced in January with members of the 9th MAB staff and Korean representatives. However, in late January the Korean Country Team informed CINCPAC that while the conduct of an amphibious exercise of the magnitude of a MAB landing was desirable from a military standpoint, the current political constraints prevalent in the Korean area excluded an exercise of this scale. The Country Team did agree to support a low key combined amphibious exercise, not to exceed one U.S. BLT and one ROK BLT with supporting shipping.

It was decided, since a MABLEX was considered undesirable by the Country Team, to conduct Golden Dragon III as a combined MAU level amphibious exercise during the

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original time frame. A MAU level exercise was supported by the Country Team and was approved by JCS on 21 March 1973.

CG III MAF decided to retain the 33d MAU headquarters as the controlling headquarters for Golden Dragon III. On completion of the exercise, the 33d MAU headquarters was to be disestablished, and the WESTPAC ready posture would return to the pre-April 1972 ARG ALFA/31st MAU, ARG BRAVO/BLT BRAVO structure.

Golden Dragon III was scheduled to employ both a vertical and surface sea launched assault into the objective area. However, the USS TRIPOLI (LPH-10) encountered mechanical difficulties and was not able to participate in the exercise, so only a surface assault was to be conducted from the sea, with the vertical assault to be conducted from land bases.

On 31 March 1973, the 33d MAU with BLT 2/4 sailed for Korea. The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing was ready to support the exercise from Japan and Korea. A year had passed from the time III MAF forces were prepared to sail for Golden Dragon II, when the NVA invasion of South Vietnam caused the cancellation of the exercise, and entered III MAF forces into ten months of combat operations in support of South Vietnamese forces.

#### Posture

As can be seen from the map on the next page, general positioning of major FMFPac air and ground forces on 31 March 1973 approximates that prior to April 1972. There is, however, one significant difference, Task Force Delta, with MAG-15, is located at Nam Phong, Thailand. The relocation of Task Force Delta to Iwakuni, Japan is expected to occur in the near future. The ARG/MAU and ARG/BLT reaction times have returned to the pre-April 1972 reaction times, of 120 hours to MR-1 for the ARG/MAU and 168 hours for the ARG/BLT.

The Force-in-Readiness was preparing once again to provide on short notice, forces required to meet assigned operational commitments.

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OKINAWA  
III MAF HQ  
3D MARINE DIVISION -  
4TH MARINES  
9TH MARINES  
12TH MARINES  
3D FORCE SERVICE REGIMENT  
MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-36

IWAKUNI, JAPAN

1ST MARINE AIRCRAFT WING  
MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-12  
MARINE AIR CONTROL GROUP-18  
MARINE WING SUPPORT GROUP-17

KANELOE BAY, HAWAII

1ST MARINE BRIGADE  
3D MARINES  
MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-24

NAM PHONG, THAILAND

TASK FORCE DELTA  
MARINE AIRCRAFT  
GROUP-15

CAMP SMITH, HAWAII

HQ FMFPAC

29 PALMS

FORCE TROOPS, FMFPAC

CAMP PENDLETON

I MAF HQ  
1ST MARINE DIVISION  
1ST MARINES  
5TH MARINES  
7TH MARINES  
11TH MARINES  
1ST FORCE SERVICE REGIMENT

EL TORO/SANTA ANA/YUMA

3D MARINE AIRCRAFT WING  
MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-11  
MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-13  
MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP-16  
MARINE WING SUPPORT GROUP-37  
MARINE AIR CONTROL GROUP-38  
MARINE COMBAT CREW READINESS  
TRAINING GROUP-10  
MARINE HELICOPTER TRAINING  
GROUP-30

MAJOR FMFPAC UNIT LOCATIONS  
31 MARCH 1973