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SUMMARY

The result of the four month period during which the enemy refrained from major combat activity, while simultaneously staging troops and supplies into advance attack positions within I CTZ, appeared on 29 January, with the enemy's launching of his lunar New Year offensive. Substantial in scope and intensity, the enemy's carefully coordinated efforts not only achieved a high measure of surprise, but also made plain that his campaign, still not ended, marks a maximum effort, an effort which signifies his departure from his doctrine of a protracted conflict in South Vietnam. Forthcoming events may well demonstrate that this all-out enemy surge heralds the climax of the Vietnam war.

Principal efforts by the enemy were aimed at the attainment of four complementary objectives:

-By attacks on the cities, to achieve civil administration paralysis and to generate popular uprising within these urban centers, both to be followed by the establishment of rump government. Although the enemy gained a strong foothold in Hue, and was able to maintain this lodgement, his moves to occupy Quang Tri, Danang, Hoi An, Tam Ky, and Quang Ngai were defeated. This failure marked a miscalculation by the enemy command. Contrary to his obvious and announced expectations, there were no mass uprisings by the people. Conversely, at Quang Tri City, for example, the enemy's ejection was followed by a spontaneous citizens' victory celebration in the streets; at Nam O, six miles northwest of Danang, hiding VC remnants were exposed by the citizenry. And the enemy's violation of the sacred Tet period, coupled with the misery suffered by the people as a result of his attacks, probably served to damp popular support of his movement, although they must certainly have increased fears concerning his strength. The

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degree of the enemy's failure in the cities may well be compounded should GVN action to feed, house, clothe and treat the suffering city dwellers be prompt and effective.

-The degradation, by attacks on the airfields, of III MAF's air capability. Here, the enemy again failed. Although considerable damage was done III MAF's aircraft by the enemy's Tet rocket and mortar attacks, the daily average of Marine fixed wing and helicopter sorties in the ten days following these attacks approached January's daily average (fixed wing sorties: January daily average, 226, compared to the post-Tet daily average of 223; helicopter sorties: January daily average, 1,095, compared to the post-Tet daily average of 1,107). The enemy's attacks did, however, result in airfield facility and equipment damage which has impeded the night-time maintenance effort.

-The degradation, by attacks against lines of communication, of III MAF's logistic capability. Here the enemy, by cutting roads, blowing road culverts, and dropping bridges, and by attacks against river convoys, attained his largest degree of success. In addition to placing the distribution of supplies throughout I CTZ at disadvantage, his road interdictions placed heavy burden, for the required movement and redistribution of troop formations, on the fully-committed in-country aircraft resources.

-The achievement of conclusive victory over one or more of III MAF's key positions in the DMZ region. The attacks necessary to this victory have not yet been set in motion, and the enemy forces positioned within striking distance of the Marine strongholds continue to suffer constant, heavy pounding by friendly artillery and air attack.

The countering of the enemy's campaign has caused diminution in the support of Revolutionary Development by both Marine and ARVN forces; the range and ultimate effects of this dilution of the RD effort are still to be assayed.

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Within I CTZ during January, the focus of large unit operations remained on that region north of the Hai Van pass. The 17 large unit operations conducted or in progress during the month resulted in 3,674 enemy killed and the capture of 100 prisoners and 490 weapons. Marine assaults against enemy forces in the DMZ region cost the enemy 1,160 troops, while the enemy attacks against Hue and Danang had resulted, by 9 February, in the loss of 2,343 and 1,473 enemy soldiers, respectively.

III MAF's counterguerrilla campaign in January encompassed 28,265 small unit actions and 575 company size search and destroy operations. These Army and Marine efforts did much to lessen the enemy's chances for success during his subsequent Tet campaign, and the 841 enemy killed by these operations constituted a heavy blow to the guerrilla structure in I CTZ. Marine STING RAY patrols, maintaining their surveillance over the enemy's hinterland lines of communication, accounted for an additional 275 enemy killed, a new monthly record for these deep ranging reconnaissance elements.

Marine air continued its round-the-clock support of III MAF's combat operations. Despite poor weather, fixed wing squadrons of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing flew 7,017 sorties, 384 of which were flown against lines of communication in Laos and 796 against targets in North Vietnam. Marine helicopter pilots of III MAF and the Special Landing Forces flew 34,957 sorties, lifting 50,925 troops and 6,617 tons of cargo.

The Combined Action Platoons executed 2,919 night ambushes and patrols and 1,602 daylight patrols in defense of their individual hamlets and adjacent roads, accounting for 366 enemy killed and the capture of 45 others. Increasingly the target of enemy attacks, with 47% of this enemy effort since 1 November 1967 having been directed at these

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combined Popular Force/Marine units, the CAP's capabilities were highlighted in January by engagements at Khe Sanh, Cam Lo, Phu Loc, and Danang. These CAP actions are described in the Large Unit and the Revolutionary Development sections of this edition.

The performance of ARVN forces during January was accented on 31 January, at the height of the enemy's Tet offensive, when elements of the 1st ARVN Division repulsed two enemy battalions in the northeast sector of Quang Tri City, killing 468 NVA soldiers and capturing 232 weapons in the process. In the battle at Hue, attacking Vietnamese forces had, by 8 February, retaken most of the Citadel and had killed 1,290 NVA/VC and captured 13 prisoners and 594 weapons. The price paid by the Vietnamese forces in Hue, through 8 February, was also high: 176 killed and 678 wounded.

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AIR OPERATIONS

Despite a backdrop accented by poor weather and an intensified enemy attack effort oriented toward the I CTZ aircraft bases, the month of January nevertheless saw an increase in the tempo of Marine air operations in support of Free World and ARVN forces within the northern five provinces of South Vietnam, in North Vietnam, and in Laos. During the month, pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing logged 7,017 fixed wing combat and combat support sorties, the highest number since July 1967, and the third highest yet recorded. Marine helicopter pilots of III MAF and the Special Landing Forces flew 34,957 sorties, an increase of 3,766 sorties above the number flown in December 1967.

Fixed Wing Operations

Marine attack and fighter aircraft flew 4,891 combat sorties in-country during January, of which 1,174 were close air support sorties, 3,651 were direct air support sorties, and 66 were helicopter escort, armed reconnaissance, or air defense sorties. These aircraft delivered 9,054 tons of bombs, the largest amount since July 1967, on known and suspected enemy positions, resulting in a confirmed loss to the enemy of 417 killed. An additional 692 in-country sorties, consisting of 476 visual reconnaissance and 216 sensor reconnaissance flights, provided ground commanders a portion of the battlefield surveillance required. Further aerial reconnaissance coverage was obtained through the 352 sorties flown by the US Army's 245th Surveillance Aircraft Company, attached to III MAF.

A total of 1,434 combat and combat support sorties represented the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing's out-of-

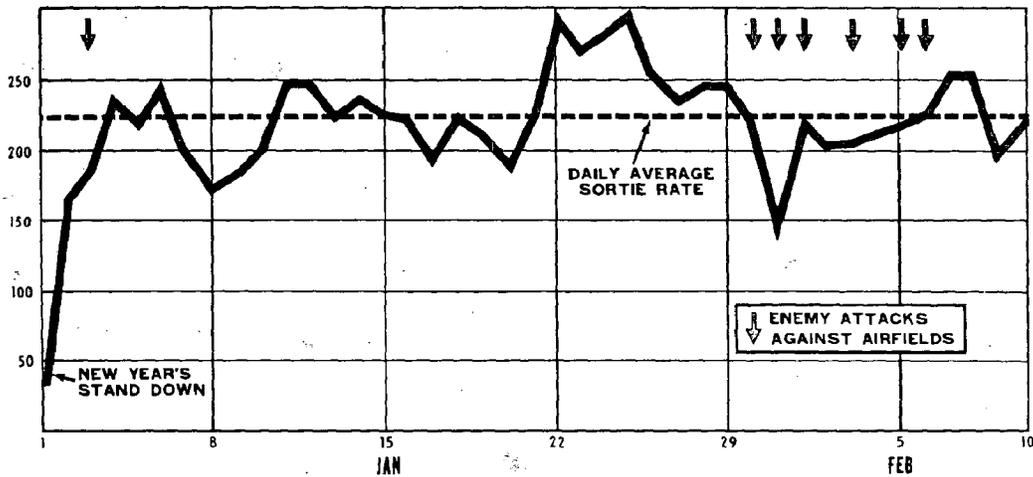
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country effort during the month, which included 1,180 strike sorties, 226 reconnaissance sorties, and 28 combat air patrol sorties.

The sum of the fixed wing effort, 7,017 sorties, gives evidence of the enemy's inability, thus far, to damage severely III MAF's air support apparatus. Although enemy attacks by fire on our air bases remains within his capability, the damage inflicted thus far has not impeded greatly III MAF's air operations. Below is a graph which depicts daily fixed wing sorties flown by Marine aircraft, from 1 January through 10 February; enemy attacks against the Danang and Chu Lai airfields are annotated.

DAILY FIXED WING COMBAT/COMBAT SUPPORT SORTIES
1 JAN - 10 FEB 1968



-Air in Support of DMZ Operations

Marine aircraft, without interruption, provided support to ground forces deployed in the DMZ region, attacking both known enemy troop and gun positions (as sighted by ground and air observers), and suspected enemy concentrations derived by airborne reconnaissance sensors. The character of the attack

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support provided maneuver elements by Marine aircraft is illustrated by the following examples, which took place near Khe Sanh in January.

-On 21 January, an A-6A from VMA(AW)-533 delivered twenty-eight 500 pound bombs while conducting a close air support mission against an enemy force attacking the Huong Hoa subsector headquarters two and one half miles south of the Khe Sanh combat base. Bomb damage assessment was recorded as 100 enemy troops killed and three bunkers destroyed.

-Also on 21 January, a Marine air observer flying in the mountainous area 13 miles south of Khe Sanh, and well within the enemy's effective small arms fire envelope, sighted and marked enemy positions for flights of fixed wing aircraft. The air observer-controlled attacks resulted in 40 North Vietnamese soldiers killed.

-On 22 January, a company forward observer, located approximately one mile southeast of Lang Vei, spotted an eight-man North Vietnamese Army patrol and requested a fixed wing air attack. The responding attack aircraft were credited with killing seven of the eight NVA soldiers.

-On 24 January, Marine attack aircraft delivered napalm on an enemy position one-half mile northeast of the Khe Sanh combat base, forcing ten NVA soldiers out into the open. Marine infantry then took the fleeing enemy under fire, killing all ten.

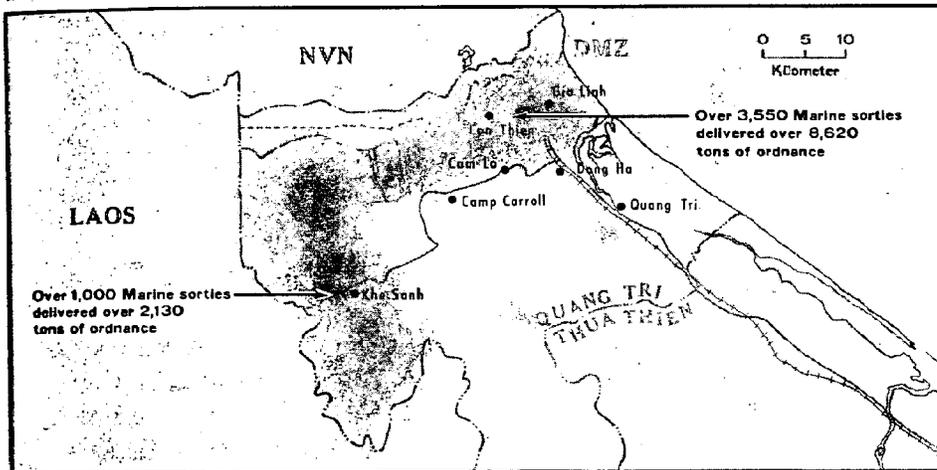
-On 28 January, an air observer flying in an area five miles to the northwest of Khe Sanh combat base directed air attacks and artillery strikes on 40 enemy troops, resulting in seven confirmed NVA killed.

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The effort expended by Marine fixed wing attack aircraft in the Khe Sanh/DMZ region is shown on the map below, which depicts attack sorties and ordnance delivered in November, December, and January in the critical Khe Sanh region and in the Con Thien - Gio Linh - Dong Ha complex of northern Quang Tri province.

**ATTACK SORTIES AND ORDNANCE DELIVERED IN DMZ AREA
1 NOV 1967- 31 JAN 1968**

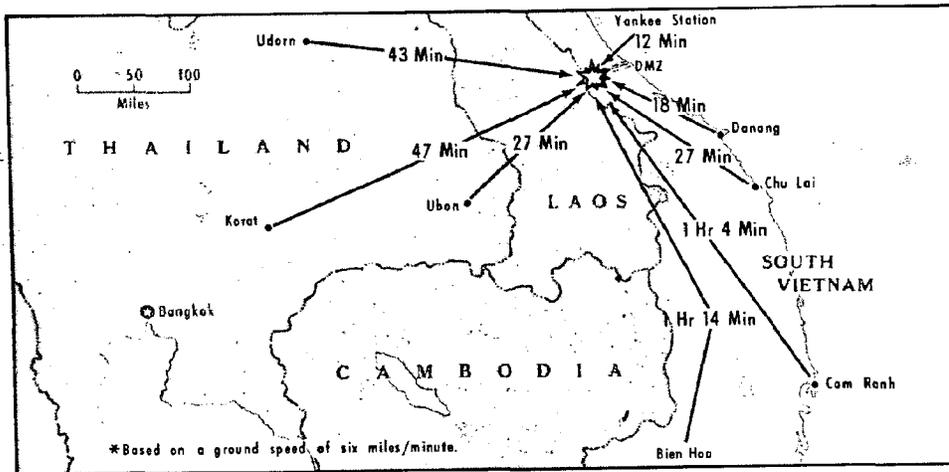


The nearness of the Danang and Chu Lai based Marine attack/fighter aircraft to targets within and proximate to the DMZ, provides a rapid means whereby the tactical situation there can be influenced. The time, once airborne from Danang to the Khe Sanh region, for example, is approximately 18 minutes for a fully loaded F-4B. This time can be increased by that required to process an air request or can be decreased by diverting from a previously assigned target, aircraft already airborne. On the following page is a map which depicts the flight time required for tactical aircraft launching from various airfields in Southeast Asia, as well as from Navy carriers positioned on Yankee Station, to reach targets in the DMZ region.

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FLIGHT TIME REQUIRED TO REACH DMZ AREA*

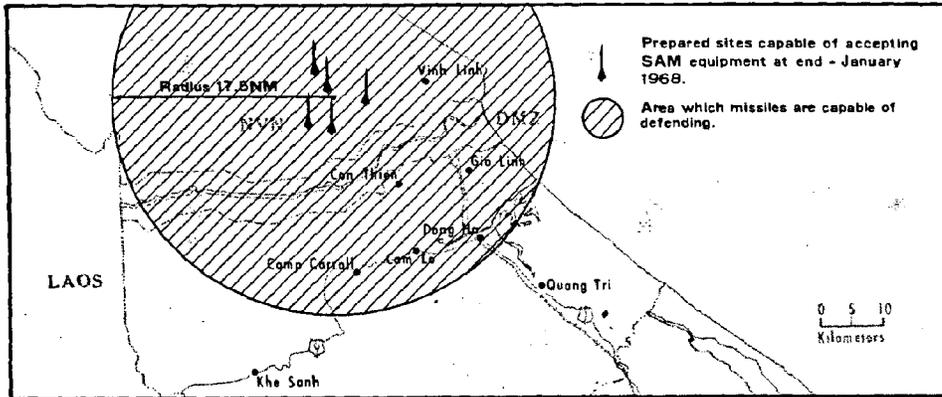
Enemy Surface-to-Air Missile Activity in the DMZ

Evidence of the hurt the enemy is suffering by these air attacks is shown by North Vietnamese surface-to-air missile (SAM) activity, which continued in the DMZ area during the month. SAM's were observed in flight twice in the DMZ area, on 11 and 29 January. In addition to the SAM firings, a new SAM site, heavily camouflaged and containing missile equipment, was photographed on 6 January approximately 11 miles northwest of Con Thien. Another site was reported on 28 January, located approximately one mile farther north. These two sites bring to nine the total number of sites discovered in the region just to the north of the DMZ. Four sites, however, are considered to be incapable of accepting SAM equipment, due to attacks by friendly fires. Thus, five SAM sites, currently capable of accepting missiles, oppose friendly air operations in the DMZ region. These sites are shown on the following page.

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ENEMY SURFACE TO AIR MISSILE SITES

-Marine All-Weather Operations

Fixed wing visual target acquisition and ordnance delivery procedures were at times severely hampered during January by the northeast monsoon. This cyclic weather condition, which begins in October and normally subsides during March, brought a continued low cloud coverage - a stratus condition known as crachin - to the coastal plains and to the mountain regions of I CTZ. In addition, a constant early morning fog, which often burned off in the lowland regions by mid-morning, frequently remained throughout the day in the highlands. Further, thunderstorm activity repeatedly occurred over the inland mountainous terrain. Continued use was therefore made of the six Marine TPQ-10 radar equipped air support radar teams (ASRT's) positioned at Dong Ha (two), Khe Sanh (two), Phu Bai, and Danang. The use of the ASRT's enhanced the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing's capability to provide continuous air support. In addition, the radar is capable, during poor weather and at night, of positioning aircraft through a voice link over a predetermined release

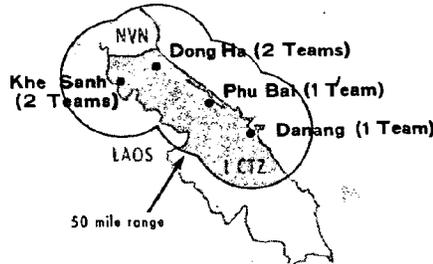
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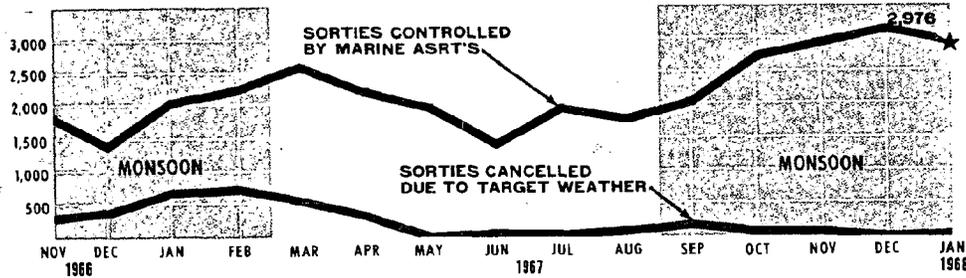
point for aerial resupply and flare drops. During the month there were 2,976 aircraft sorties controlled by the teams.

Below is depicted the present ASRT's locations, the area over which their radar is capable of controlling aircraft, the sorties controlled since November 1966, and the sorties cancelled due to target weather.

MARINE AIR SUPPORT RADAR TEAM LOCATIONS AND COVERAGE



ATTACK SORTIES CONTROLLED BY MARINE ASRT'S



-Out-of-Country Operations

During January, 796 strike sorties were flown against enemy targets in North Vietnam (739 of which were in the Route Package I area, immediately to the north of the DMZ) and 384 strike sorties were flown

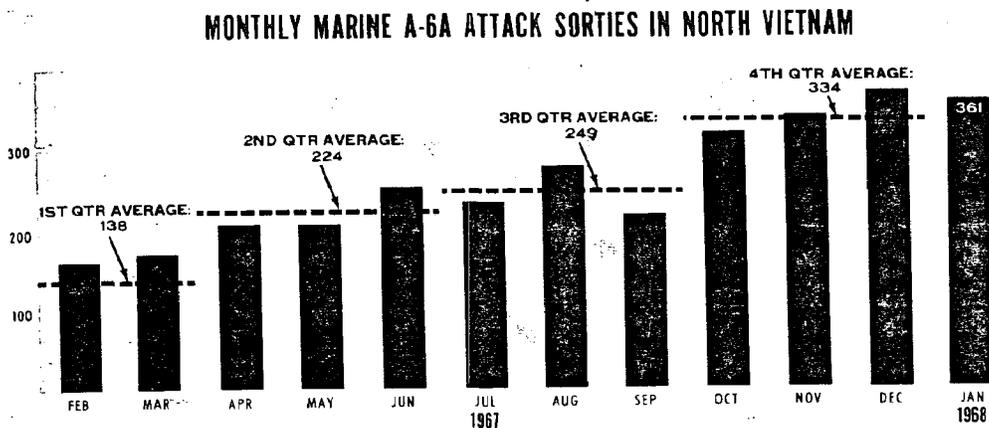
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against enemy lines of communication in Laos. Of the North Vietnam strikes, 350 were flown by the A-6A Intruders of VMA(AW)-533 and VMA(AW)-242, which delivered 6,587 bombs against 1,028 targets - of which 944 were moving targets.

Below is shown the A-6A attack effort in NVN since January 1967.



Companion to the A-6A flights out-of-country, the EA-6A's of VMCF-1 flew 56 sorties over the most distant reaches of North Vietnam, providing the attacking A-6A's with electronic counter-measure protection against enemy missiles and radar controlled antiaircraft fire.

Helicopter Operations

During January, Marine helicopter pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing flew 31,957 sorties, while pilots of the Special Landing Forces flew an additional 3,000 sorties. These brought the total number of Marine combat and combat support helicopter sorties flown since March 1965 to over 1,115,000. A total of 50,925 III MAF, ARVN, and ROKMC troops were lifted during

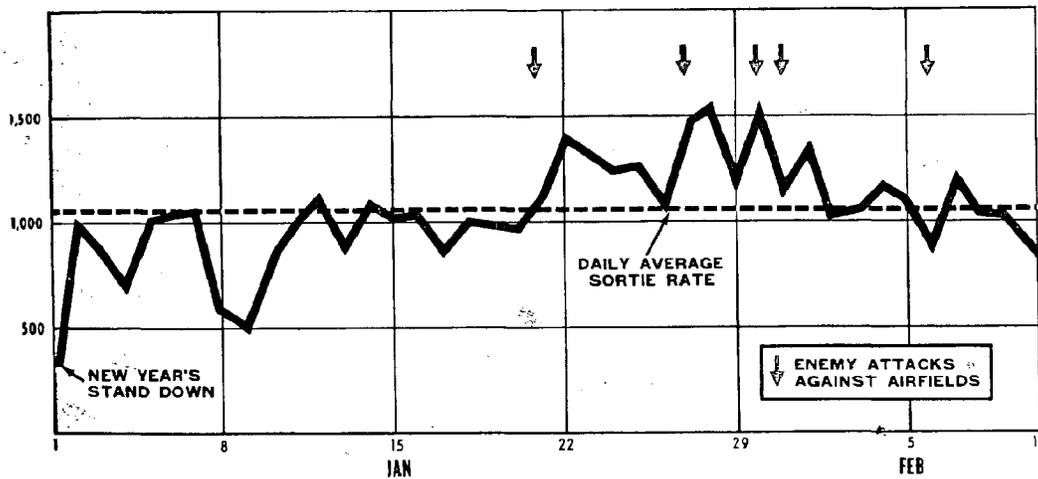
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the month, as were 6,617 tons of cargo. III MAF's CH-46's contributed 12,308 sorties to the helicopter effort, compared with the CH-46 monthly average of 3,980 sorties during October, November, and December 1967, compiled while the CH-46 helicopter modification program was in progress.

At the end of January, assigned Marine WestPac helicopter strength was 129 UH-34's, 78 UH-1E's, 133 CH-46's, and 35 CH-53's, while the on-hand strength was 111 UH-34's, 68 UH-1E's, 97 CH-46's, and 33 CH-53's. As seen in the graph below, which depicts daily helicopter sorties flown from 1 January through 10 February, the enemy attempts to hinder III MAF helicopter flight operations by attriting these helicopter resources proved largely unsuccessful. The enemy attacks on those I CTZ airfields where Marine helicopters are located are also annotated.

DAILY HELICOPTER SORTIES
1 JAN - 10 FEB 1968



Casualty Evacuation

During January, 3,744 casualties were helicopter lifted

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from the battlefield to medical facilities in rear areas for further treatment, compared with 2,412 during December. The typical responsiveness of Marine helicopter pilots to the urgent requirement for quick evacuation of battle casualties is shown by the following example. On 20 January, a Marine attack against an estimated North Vietnamese battalion in the mountains five miles northwest of the Khe Sanh combat base, resulted in 103 of the enemy killed. During the battle, 29 Marines were wounded and required evacuation. In the midst of the action, Marine helicopters landed in a zone still swept by heavy enemy automatic weapons and sniper fire, successfully evacuating the Marine casualties.

Fixed Wing and Helicopter Losses

The intensity of the combat in I CTZ during January was evident by the number of aircraft lost due to enemy activity. Seven fixed wing aircraft (three A-4E's, one F-4B, one F-8E, one EF-10B, and one A-6A) and six helicopters (three CH-46's, one UH-34, one CH-53, and one UH-1E) were lost, while airborne, to enemy ground fire. On the airfields, seven fixed wing (six F-4B's and one A-6A) were damaged beyond repair by the enemy's mortar and rocket attacks. Thus, during the period March 1965 - 31 January 1968, the total number of aircraft lost due to direct enemy action was 80 fixed wing and 119 helicopters. In addition, a total of 328 aircraft (290 sustaining minor damage) were damaged by enemy fire while airborne during the month, while 104 aircraft (91 sustaining minor damage) were damaged by the enemy's mortar and rocket attacks of the airfields.

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SUMMARY

The enemy's Tet offensive in I CTZ, conceived by the National Front for Liberation as a means of destroying the combined GVN/US Revolutionary Development and pacification efforts, achieved favorable psychological effect, world wide notoriety, but little lasting success on the ground. Although shaken, bewildered, and injured by the violence of the enemy's attacks, the civilian population refused, en masse, to rally to the enemy's ranks. Instead, they stood fast in support of their elected government.

Following the initial shock of the enemy attack, the GVN, slowly regaining its cohesion, organized Operation RECOVERY, a 90-day relief and reconstruction effort to bring meaningful help to the thousands of suffering civilians throughout the I Corps area. Focused primarily on Hue, the scene of catastrophic destruction, the relief effort brought food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention to that city's 116,000 displaced persons.

By end-February, following reappraisal of the RD/pacification campaign in the wake of the enemy's Tet activities, it was apparent that the basic tools of the campaign remained sound -- the Combined Action Program was intact; the RD campaign, newly bolstered by seven additional trained cadre teams, had regained its momentum; ARVN operations in support of RD had reached a record level in February, despite the month-long commitment of forces to the battle for Hue; and Operation RECOVERY, in the face of continued enemy harassment, was progressing reasonably well.

February combat in I CTZ moved at a record pace, as III MAF large unit operations killed 6,512 enemy - almost double the war's previous monthly high of 3,674.

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established in January 1968. The center of the heaviest fighting remained in the two northern provinces, between the DMZ and the city of Hue.

In the DMZ region, Marine operations athwart the enemy's north-south lines of communication, killed over 1,000 front line enemy troops and impeded his movement of supplies. And in the month long battle for Hue, the combined Marine and Vietnamese counterattack to recapture the city cost the enemy over 5,000 troops, the equivalent of two regiments. And the Khe Sanh combat base, manned by 5,700 Marines and 500 ARVN Rangers, stood fast in the face of some 4,404 rounds of enemy artillery, rockets, and mortars, as well as minor ground attacks.

The reflection of the war's increased intensity was not limited to enemy losses - 422 Marines and 282 soldiers were killed in I CTZ's February large unit operations.

The Marines' counter guerrilla effort during the month resulted in 18,258 small unit operations which were credited with killing 1,398 of the enemy, the highest monthly small unit action toll against the enemy by Marines thus far in the war. And 63 Marine STING RAY patrols, continuing their round-the-clock monitoring of the enemy's hinterland movements, accounted for another 117 enemy dead, at a cost of one Marine. On 22 occasions during the month, and despite possible enemy reprisals against themselves or their families, Vietnamese civilians volunteered information to friendly troops. In one instance, a III MAF unit was led to a cache containing 54 brand new enemy weapons.

Pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing flew 6,788 fixed wing combat and combat support sorties in February, nearly 1,000 more than during February 1967. Marine A-6A's flew 829 sorties, the highest monthly number, by 57, since the plane's introduction in-country during November 1966.

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And helicopter pilots of the 1st MAW and the Special Landing Forces, despite prolonged periods of marginal weather, flew 32,455 sorties, compared with the 33,670 sorties flown in February 1967. The Marine helicopters lifted 7,724 tons of cargo (a new record) and 41,159 troops.

With the northeast monsoon requiring continued reliance on ground controlled radar bombing attacks, the six Marine air support radar teams (ASRT's) positioned in the I CTZ controlled over 4,000 sorties, the highest monthly number thus far recorded. In testimony to the effectiveness of these systems, only seven sorties were cancelled, due to target weather, during the month.

Combat and combat support sorties flown against targets in North Vietnam and Laos totalled 948, the fewest since June 1967, due to the intensified support provided ground units deployed in northern I CTZ. All but 29 of these sorties were flown in the North Vietnam region contiguous to the DMZ. Aircraft losses due to direct enemy action during the month totalled 15 (12 helicopters and three fixed wing aircraft), which brought the total number of planes lost since March 1965 to 83 fixed wing and 131 rotary wing aircraft.

The continued deployment of additional US forces to northern I CTZ, including the late-February arrival from the United States of Marine Regimental Landing Team-27 and the 3d Brigade of the US Army's 82d Airborne Division, placed a severe strain on the logistic mechanism in I Corps Tactical Zone. The challenge was met, however, and the flow of required personnel and supplies to the operating forces continued.

In support of his campaign in I CTZ during February, the enemy expended 15,286 rounds of major, mixed-caliber supporting arms fire (5,077 rounds of artillery,

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1,924 rockets, and 8,285 mortar rounds). He expended, in addition, a confirmed total of 14,344 troops, of which 8,756 were killed by Marine and Army units of the III Marine Amphibious Force.

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AIR OPERATIONS

During February, Marine fixed wing fighter and attack airplanes of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and Marine helicopters of III MAF and the Special Landing Forces continued to provide tactical air support to Free World and ARVN forces in South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and Laos. Hampered severely by poor weather, Marine fixed wing pilots nevertheless flew 6,788 fixed wing sorties, compared with 5,798 sorties in February 1967, while Marine helicopter pilots flew 32,455 sorties, compared with 33,670 sorties in February 1967.

Fixed Wing Operations

February saw the northern I Corps Tactical Zone, from the lowlands bordering the South China Sea west to the mountains, experiencing a near-continuous cycle of overcast cloud conditions, with ceilings varying from 200' to 800' during the night, then lifting to 500' to 1500' in the afternoon. Visibility was restricted due to rain, fog, and haze, ranging from near zero to three miles at night, increasing usually during the afternoon. Southern I CTZ fared somewhat better, with higher ceilings and greater visibility during the day, although at night the same cycle of low ceilings and poor visibility prevailed.

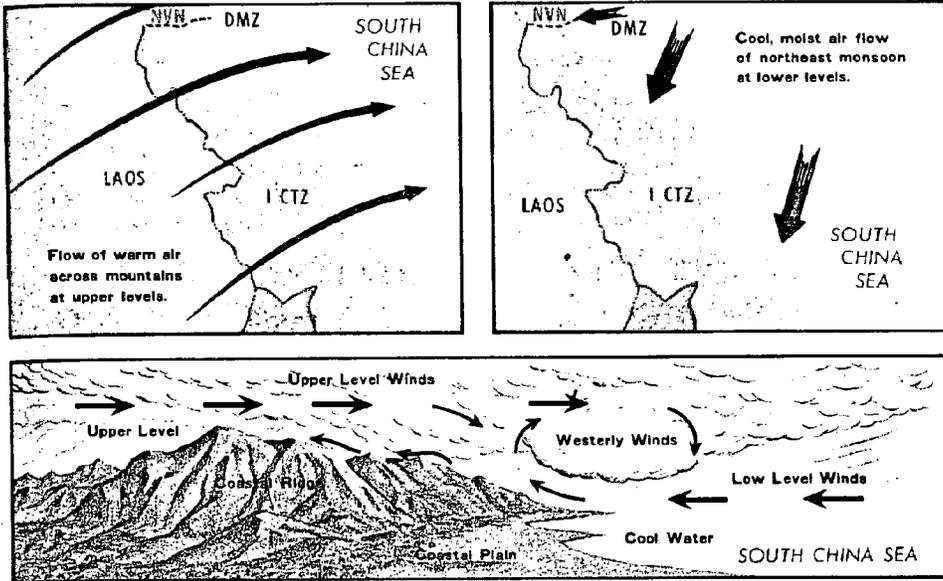
On the following page is depicted the flow of the cool northeast monsoon air, the flow of warm upper air across the mountains, and the resultant saturated cooler air below, constrained by the temperature inversion. This condition, known as Crachin, reaches its most intense period during the latter part of the November - February northeast monsoon.

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NORTHEAST MONSOON WEATHER (NOV - FEB) IN I CTZ



In order to attack the enemy positions under these conditions, extensive use was made of ground directed radar bombing missions, controlled by the six Marine air support radar teams (ASRT's). These teams, located at Khe Sanh, Dong Ha (two), Phu Bai, and Danang (two) controlled 4,098 fixed wing attack sorties, the highest number yet recorded. Additional testimony to the effectiveness of these systems is the fact that only seven sorties were cancelled, due to target weather, during the month.

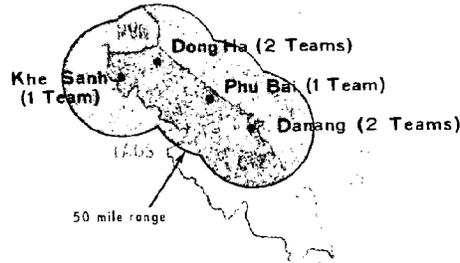
On the following page is depicted the end-February ASRT locations, area of radar coverage, attack sorties controlled since December 1966, and the number of sorties cancelled due to target weather.

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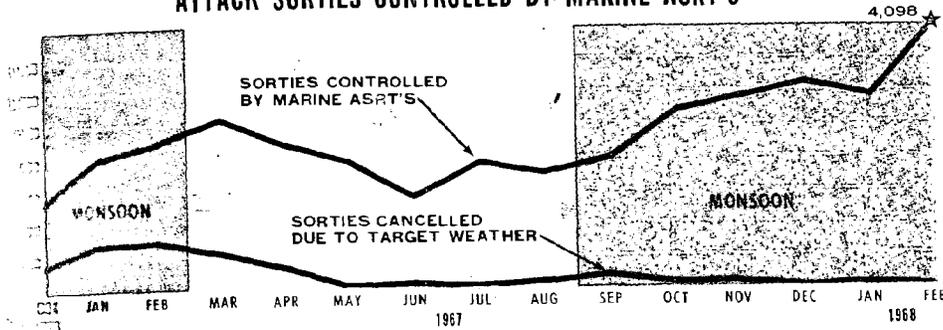
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MARINE AIR SUPPORT RADAR TEAM LOCATIONS AND COVERAGE



ATTACK SORTIES CONTROLLED BY MARINE ASRT'S



The Marine attack effort in-country was comprised of 1,475 close air support sorties, 3,651 direct air support sorties, and five armed reconnaissance sorties, which delivered 9,656 tons of bombs - the highest amount since July 1967 - on the enemy's known and suspected positions. Other ordnance delivered by Marine attack aircraft during the month included 5,444 rockets, 55,105 rounds of 20mm ammunition, and 1,735 napalm bombs. The personnel and equipment damage suffered by the enemy through these attacks included 355 enemy killed, 151 bunkers destroyed, 99 weapon positions destroyed, three tanks destroyed, and 315 secondary fires and explosions ignited, the latter giving evidence of munitions and POL caches destroyed.

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The close coordination of Marine aircraft with maneuvering ground units, and other supporting arms, was illustrated on 16 February during a two-company Marine sweep, one mile northwest of Gio Linh in the Operation KENTUCKY area. Approximately 30 NVA were engaged shortly after the companies left the line of departure at first light. The enemy was well entrenched in camouflaged bunkers and was screened by trees and undergrowth which impaired the effectiveness of the Marines' rocket launchers. Both fixed wing air attacks and artillery were coordinated during the assault of the enemy positions, and further, an air observer on station directed air attacks against the enemy as they fled. Results of this contact were 24 NVA dead, ten of which were killed by the attack aircraft.

The air support provided to large unit operations, as typified by the above example, amounted to 2,393 attack sorties, or 45% of the total in-country attack effort.

Support in the DMZ Area

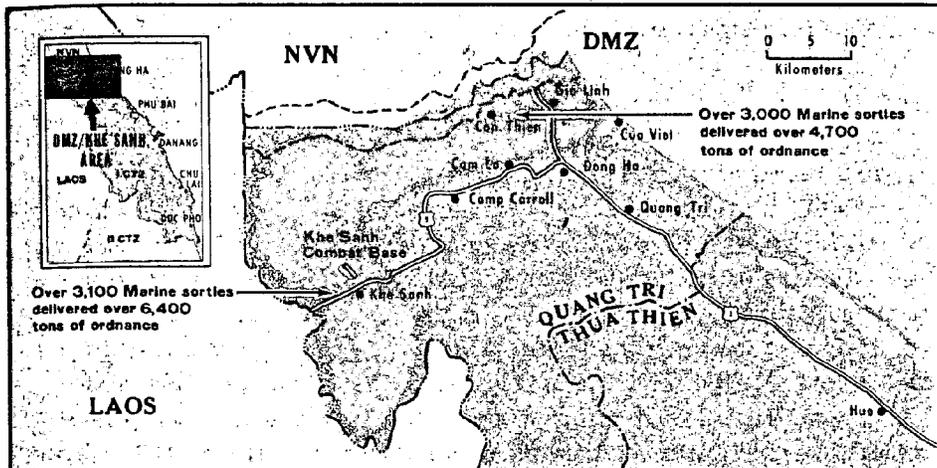
Marine fixed wing aircraft contributed substantially to the support given units in the DMZ region. The constant use of airborne observers, normally in the afternoon when the weather lifted, permitted numerous attacks of visually acquired targets by fixed wing aircraft. On 26 February, for example, an air observer sighted five enemy artillery pieces ten miles to the southeast of the Khe Sanh combat base. Air strikes directed against the position resulted in at least two guns destroyed and, as evidenced by 30 to 35 secondary explosions, destruction of an ammunition cache. Two days later, four air observer-controlled attacks, by friendly artillery fires and air strikes, also in Khe Sanh area, resulted in ten NVA killed and substantial damage to four trench lines.

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Below is a map showing the air support provided to deployed units in the Khe Sanh/DMZ region, since the beginning of 1968.

**ATTACK SORTIES AND ORDNANCE DELIVERED IN DMZ AREA
1 JAN 1968 - 29 FEB 1968**



Other In-Country Fixed Wing Operations

Other Marine in-country fixed wing sorties included 26 helicopter escort sorties, 22 air defense sorties, and 537 reconnaissance sorties. These latter sorties included 247 visual reconnaissance flights by the O-1C/G, TA-4F, F-4B, F-8D, and A-6A aircraft; 91 tactical air coordinator airborne (TAC(A)) flights by the O-1C/G and TA-4F aircraft; 162 photographic flights by the RF-4B aircraft; 29 infrared sensor flights by the RF-4B aircraft; and eight electronic intelligence gathering flights by the EF-10B aircraft. In addition, and not included in the total Marine sorties, were over 180 side looking

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airborne radar (SLAR), 60 infrared sensor, and 50 visual reconnaissance sorties flown by the OV-1's of the US Army's 245th Surveillance Aircraft Company, attached to III MAF. This total reconnaissance effort, using both visual and sensor techniques, provided the ground commander a part of the reconnaissance coverage of the battlefield required.

Air Operations in North Vietnam and Laos

During the month, a total of 948 combat and combat support sorties were flown over North Vietnam. These sorties, the fewest since June 1967, due to the intensified support given to ground units deployed in the northern I CTZ, included 693 strike, 35 combat air patrol, six armed reconnaissance, 199 electronic countermeasure, and 15 photographic reconnaissance sorties. All but 29 were flown in Route Package I, the area bordering the Demilitarized Zone. Other out-of-country sorties included 124 strike and combat air patrol sorties over the Steel Tiger area of the southern panhandle of Laos.

A-6A Operations

February saw the highest number of Marine A-6A sorties flown since their introduction into I CTZ during November 1966, as the Intruder pilots of VMA(AW)-242 and 533 logged 829 sorties. Of these, 243 sorties were flown against targets located in North Vietnam, 24 against targets in Laos, and 562 sorties were flown in support of ground forces located in South Vietnam. While the number of sorties flown in the northern Route Package areas of North Vietnam decreased - six sorties in February compared to 34 during January 1968 - the combat-tested companion tactics of the A-6A and EA-6A remained effective.

For example, a night Intruder strike against the Hanoi radio station on 21 February was flown under the

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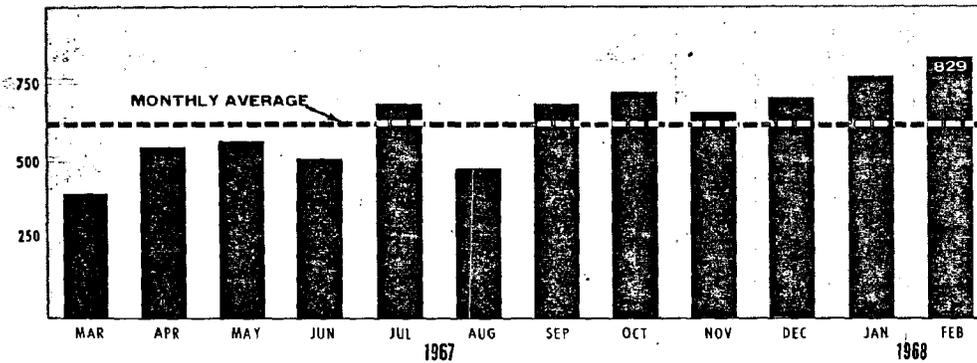
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protective electronic countermeasure cloak of an EA-6A. The target area had a potential threat of 55 SAM sites with numerous track radars located in the area. During the high-speed, low-level run-in to the target in zero visibility weather, only one SAM was launched, detonating approximately 200 feet above and behind the A-6A. The target was successfully struck and egress was made without further incident. The EA-6A, jamming enemy radars from southwest of the target area, contributed to the success of the mission, as shown by the fact that only one SAM was launched against the strike aircraft.

The continued enemy endeavors to build missile sites near the DMZ underscores the requirement for ECM protection in that area, as well as in the northern portions of Vietnam.

Below is shown graphically the increase of Marine A-6A sorties, in and out-of-country, since January 1967.

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



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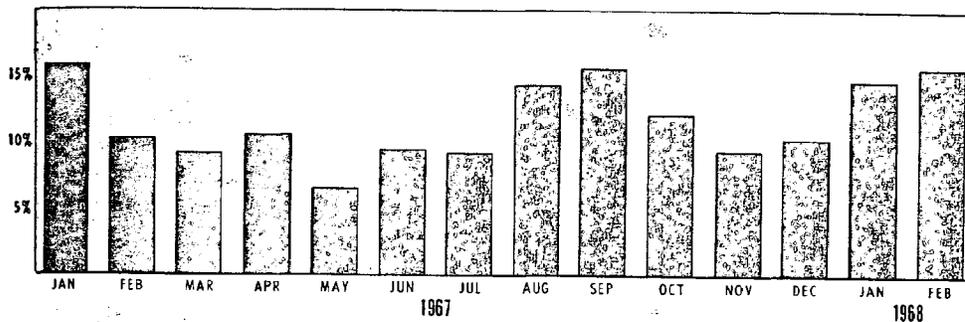
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Helicopter Operations

During February, 32,455 helicopter sorties were flown by the pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and the Special Landing Forces, in support of Marine, US Army, ARVN, and ROKMC units. Of the total hours flown, 1,346, or 12.9%, a serious draw-down on already thinly stretched Marine assets, were flown in support of other than Marine forces. Below is a graph showing the helicopter support provided other than Marine units since January 1967.

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



The amount of cargo lifted by Marine helicopters totaled 7,724 tons, the highest monthly total tonnage transported thus far. Additionally, 41,159 personnel were transported, compared with 50,925 during January. Of these totals, 1,026 tons and 2,721 troops were transported to/from Khe Sanh combat base by 1,583 sorties during the month.

The important helicopter task of medical evacuation of wounded troops, frequently under intense fire, and the

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coordinated effort required, was underscored on 1 February during a reconnaissance team insertion in the mountains eleven miles southwest of Danang. The CH-46A helicopter transporting the reconnaissance team received intense enemy ground fire, including 50 caliber machine gun fire, during the approach to the landing zone. An armed UH-1E delivered suppressive fires as the crippled CH-46A crash landed, its crew and the reconnaissance team getting out of the aircraft just prior to its bursting into flame. The circling UH-1E, having radioed for fixed wing support, directed the arriving A-4E Skyhawks against a force of over 200 VC closing rapidly on the downed aircrew and reconnaissance team. A second CH-46A then landed, again under enemy fire, and safely extracted all of the downed Marines. Six Viet Cong were killed by the supporting air during this brief engagement.

The helicopters presently assigned to WestPac Marine forces include 118 UH-34D's, 77 UH-1E's, 125 CH-46's, and 33 CH-53A's, while the on-hand strength is 105 UH-34D's, 59 UH-1E's, 93 CH-46A's, and 30 CH-53A's.

The CH-53 is the heavy lift helicopter of the deployed Marine forces. It is powered by two T-64 turboshaft engines and has a maximum lift capability of over six tons. Under normal operating conditions it is capable of carrying approximately 9,000 pounds. During 1967, the CH-53A retrieved 125 helicopters and six light observation aircraft downed outside of secure areas, while during the first 57 days of 1968, a total of 25 such retrievals were accomplished. Each retrieval is normally done by the initial insertion of ground troops for area security, followed by an attempt to repair the aircraft in order to fly it out. If this is not possible, the workhorse CH-53A is called upon to lift the aircraft.

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Aircraft Losses

The intense battle that took place in I CTZ during February was evidenced by the number of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters damaged by enemy fire, both during airborne operations and during enemy attacks against the air bases. In addition, weather conditions during the monsoon required helicopters frequently to fly at altitudes below 1,000 feet, placing them well within the effective enemy small arms fire range. And fixed wing aircraft, working under a low overcast, also were placed within the enemy's effective small arms envelope.

Enemy attacks by fire against Khe Sanh combat base accounted for three helicopters destroyed; one UH-34, one UH-1E, and 1 CH-46A. Airborne losses of Marine aircraft, due to direct enemy action, totaled 12; one A-4E, one A-6A, one KC-130, two UH-1E's, one UH-34D, four CH-46A's, and two CH-53A's. In addition, 362 fixed wing aircraft and helicopters received combat damage, although 341 (or 94%) were recorded as sustaining only limited damage, requiring relatively few manhours to repair. Total Marine aircraft losses due to enemy action during the period March 1965 - 29 February 1968, stood at 83 fixed wing and 131 helicopters.

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SUMMARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

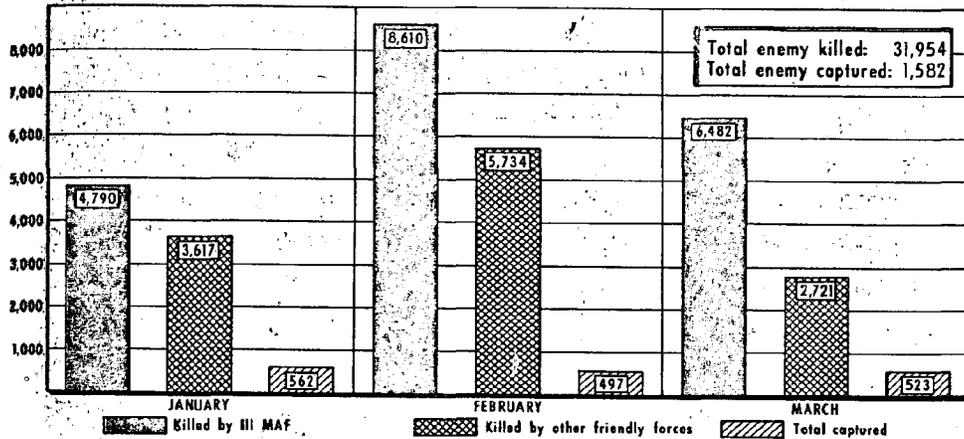
Coupled with these material losses, and perhaps even more serious a psychological blow to the enemy formations, was the increasing evidence of the enemy's inability to honor his long standing pledge to his troops, the promise of decent burials for those killed in action. On 16 March, for example, III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

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

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



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AIR OPERATIONS

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

Fixed Wing Operations

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

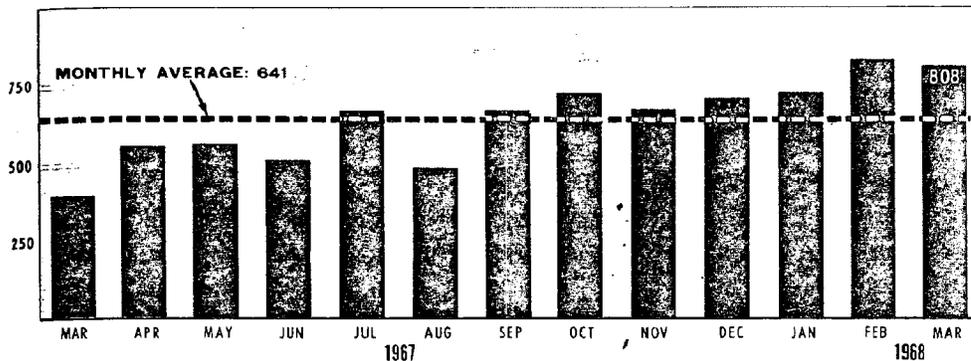
Marine out-of-country operations totalled 1,142 sorties. Of these, 969 sorties were attacks against enemy targets in the Route Package I region of North Vietnam and the Steel Tiger region of Laos, while the remaining 173 sorties were reconnaissance, electronic counter measure, escort, and combat air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

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

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



Helicopter Operations

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

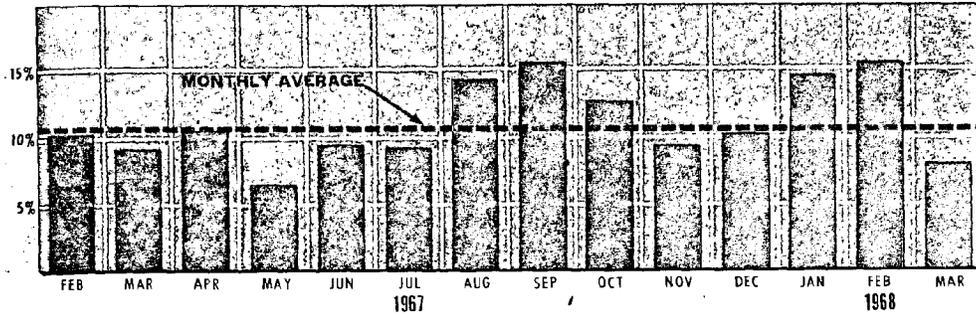
The drawdown of helicopter flight hours from Marine support decreased during March, amounting to 6.9% of the total hours flown, compared with February's 12.9%. The largest portion (64%) of this non-Marine support was provided to the 2d ROK Marine Corps Brigade. On the following page is a graph showing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

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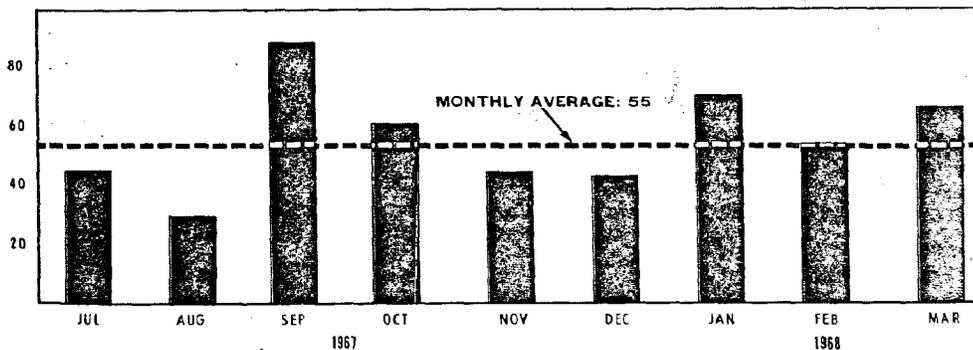
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MONTHLY PERCENT OF MARINE HELICOPTER SORTIES
IN SUPPORT OF OTHER THAN MARINE FORCES
FEB 1967 - MAR 1968



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

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



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Aircraft Losses

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

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

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

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

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

The Marine Combat Control System

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

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

Initial Air Support Directives of CINCPAC and COMUSMACV

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

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

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

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

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

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USMC and USA Application of Organic Air Support Assets

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 4) - COMUSMACV message 180009Z January 1968 (S)
- 5) - CINCPAC message 181145W January 1968 (TS)
- 6) - CINCPAC message 242345Z April 1965 (S)
- 7) - CG, III MAF message 241256Z February 1968 (TS)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Comparison of the Two Systems

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

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

Preplanned Air Support

Immediate Air Support

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- Preplanned Air Support

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

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

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

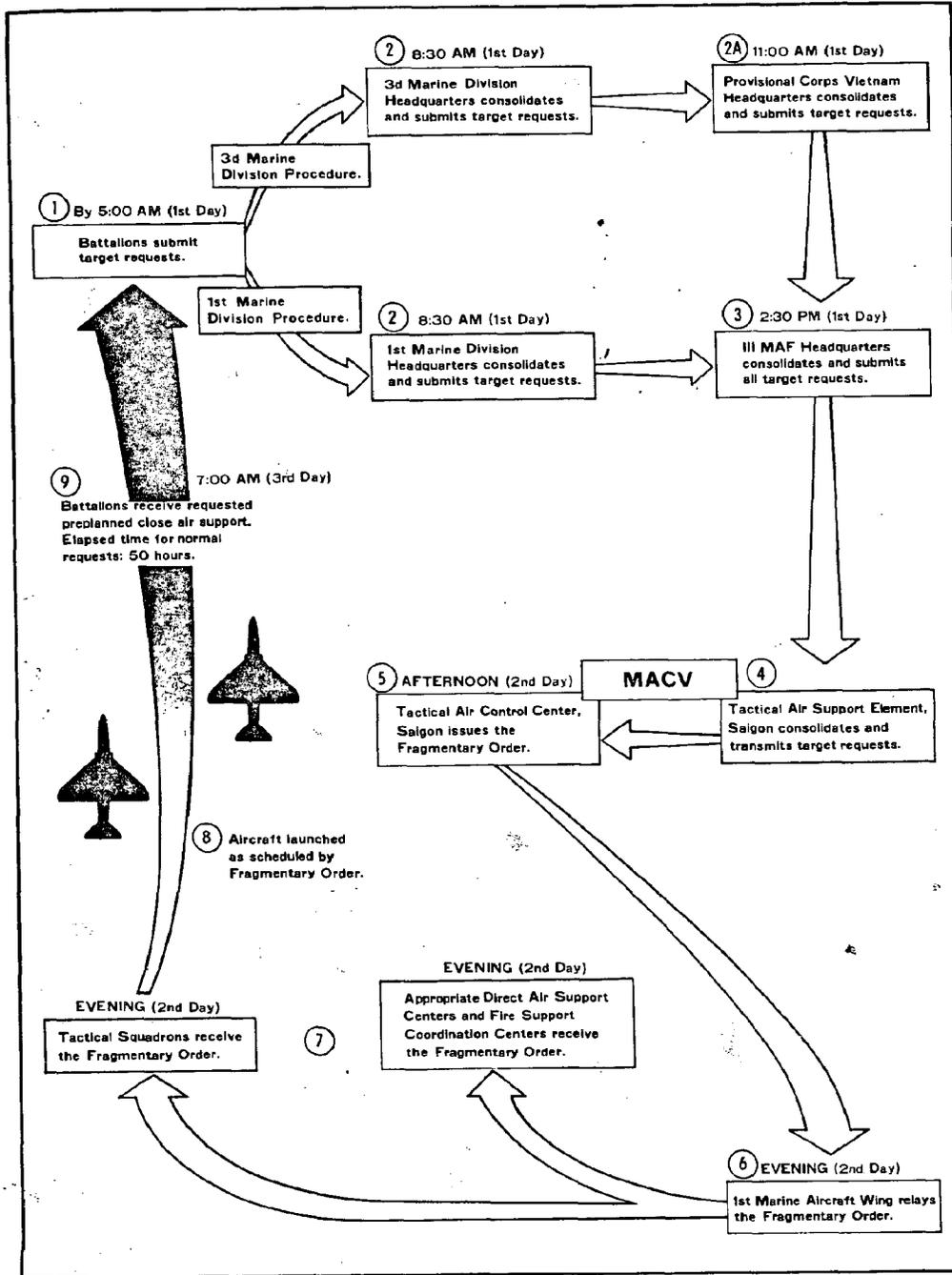
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USAF SYSTEM FOR PREPLANNED AIR REQUESTS AFTER 10 MARCH 1968



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

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

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

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

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

-Immediate Air Support

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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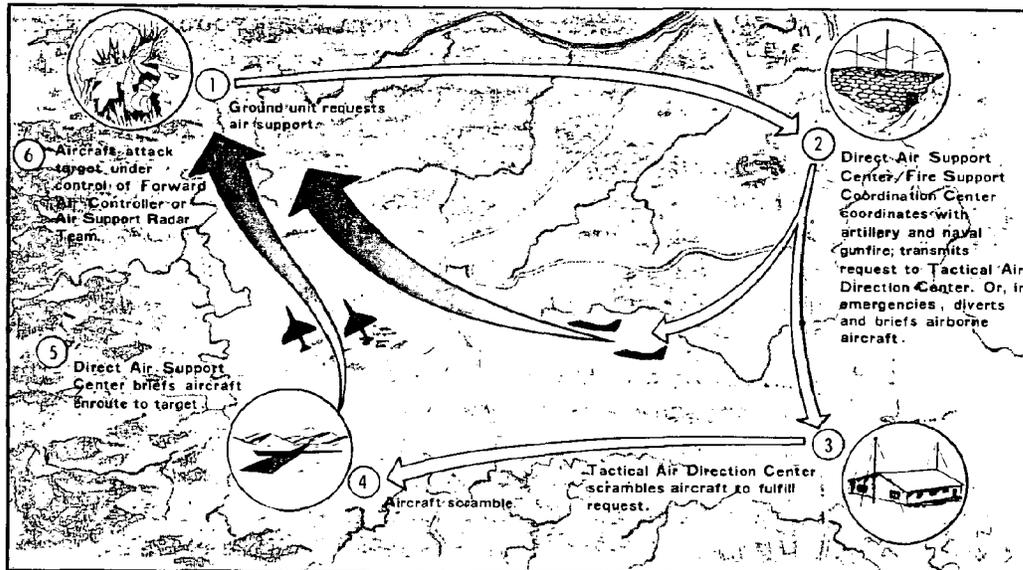
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Similarly, in the same region on 5 April 1968, a near disaster was averted only because, for some unknown reason, bombs that were dropped failed to explode. In this instance, the 26th Marines had submitted a preplanned request to Provisional Corps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

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

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



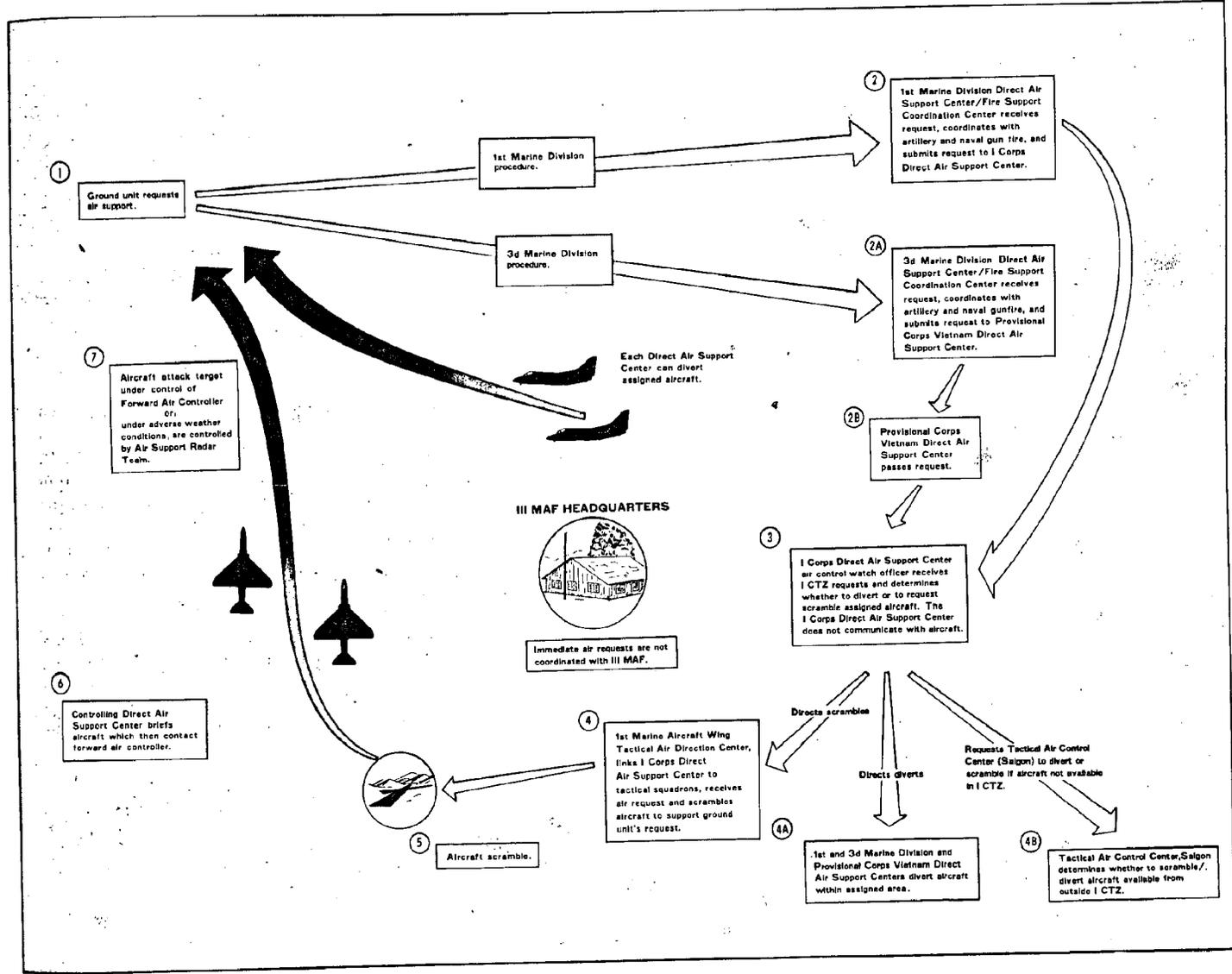
System identical in both 1st and 3d Marine Divisions.

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USAF SYSTEM FOR IMMEDIATE AIR SUPPORT AFTER 10 MARCH 1968



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

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

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

-It is producer oriented, rather than consumer oriented.

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

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

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

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SUMMARY

Focused in northern I CTZ for the fourth consecutive month, III MAF large unit operations continued to combine firepower with ground and heliborne mobility, and inflicted defeats upon enemy forces at both flanks of the DMZ.

Exploiting the enemy defeat at Khe Sanh, the 18 battalion combined Operation PEGASUS/LAM SON 207 encountered little organized enemy resistance in western Quang Tri. Of the two NVA divisions (the 325C and the 304th) which had encircled the Khe Sanh garrison from 20 January through 31 March, only elements of the 304th remained to be engaged during April. And testifying to the hurt sustained by the 304th, its elements withdrew in disorder, abandoning weapons, supplies, and unburied dead on the battlefield.

On the eastern flank of the DMZ, and led by a Marine counterattack, III MAF and ARVN units combined during late April and early May to repulse a division-size enemy attack aimed at Dong Ha. By mid-May, friendly forces, pursuing the disorganized remnants of the 320th NVA Division, had begun to uncover large quantities of weapons and supplies -- hard evidence of the same lack of battlefield discipline which characterized the 304th Division's earlier withdrawal in the western DMZ.

Since 1 January, the NVA has committed three divisions (the 325C, the 304th, and the 320th) to combat in the DMZ region. By 8 May, these units had lost over 10,000 dead to III MAF and ARVN actions, thus already exceeding his 1967 DMZ-region losses of 9,553.

Compounding the enemy defeats in northern I CTZ during April, was the III MAF assault into the enemy troop marshalling and supply staging redoubt in the A Shau Valley.

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From 19 April through the end of the month, two brigades of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), ranged through the valley, capturing over 600 weapons and destroying tons of assorted enemy supplies and equipment.

The III MAF counter guerrilla campaign continued uninterrupted during the month, with 20,327 patrols, ambushes, and small unit operations costing enemy guerrilla units 705 killed, 34 captured, and 100 weapons lost. And 87 Marine STING RAY patrols, while losing one Marine killed in action, were responsible for the elimination of 457 enemy, a new monthly record.

While exploiting locally developed intelligence sources and cultivating an increasing confidence among their civilian confederates in the hamlets, the 84 Combined Action Platoons conducted 3,716 night patrols and ambushes, and 2,169 daylight patrols, accounting for 89 enemy killed and the capture of 38 prisoners and 56 weapons.

In April, Marine fixed wing pilots flew 7,216 sorties in support of ground operations and in interdiction of enemy LOC's. Of these total sorties, 2,278, an all-time high, were flown in support of other than Marine ground units. Out-of-country commitments were supported by 1,274 Marine sorties and Marine A-6A pilots, establishing a record monthly total, flew 453 sorties outside South Vietnam. Helicopter operations increased significantly for the second consecutive month, as Marine pilots flew 50,134 sorties, lifting over 65,000 passengers and 7,500 tons of cargo. Good weather and the increased effectiveness of CH-46 helicopters highlighted April's lift operations. Aircraft losses for April dropped significantly from the March figure of 18, as Marine air units lost two fixed wing aircraft and four helicopters. And attesting to the intensity of combat were the 125 aircraft which received battle damage during the month.

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The tonnage moved through the various I CTZ ports continued to increase, and April saw 32 new cargo handling records established. Typical of the marks established was at Chu Lai where, on 5 April, 3,940 S/T (or more than twice the daily rated capacity of 1,800 S/T) of material and supplies were introduced through the port facility.

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AIR OPERATIONS

Continuing the high level of 1968 air operations in Vietnam, Marine fixed wing and helicopter units flew 57,350 sorties during April. Tactical air support was provided Marine Corps, US Army, and other Free World Forces heavily engaged in ground fighting, while interdiction operations continued in North Vietnam and southern Laos. Fixed wing pilots accumulated 7,216 sorties, and helicopter operations, increasing significantly for the second consecutive month, surpassed 50,000 sorties.

Fixed Wing Operations

Pacing the tempo of ground operations in I CTZ, Marine fixed wing aircraft flew 3,016 close air support and 1,090 direct air support sorties. As additional support for in-country combat efforts, 464 reconnaissance sorties and 1,372 helicopter escort, interdiction, and air defense sorties were flown by Marine pilots during April.

Requirements for aerial ordnance deliveries decreased during April with the defeat of NVA forces in the Khe Sanh area. Attack aircraft, striking enemy lines of communication in South Vietnam, and supporting ground unit operations, delivered 8,410 tons of bombs, as compared with the 1968 monthly average of 9,281 tons. Confirmed enemy personnel losses from Marine*air during the month totaled 447 killed as Marine infantry unit leaders, artillery observers, and air controllers continued to employ coordinated fire support against enemy forces.

-Operating southwest of Danang on 7 April, a Marine reconnaissance team, a tactical air coordinator

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(airborne), and fixed wing pilots coordinated attacks on five groups of VC. Air strikes, accurately controlled by the TAC (A), resulted in 79 VC killed.

-Two A-4E's, on a close air support mission during Operation PEGASUS, were directed against an impeding enemy position. Accurate delivery of bombs and napalm, which destroyed four bunkers, killed three NVA, and exploded an ammunition storage area, opened the infantry route of advance.

-On 9 April, another Marine patrol operating southwest of Danang directed an artillery mission on 44 VC. An air observer supporting the patrol directed air strikes by MAG-11 and -12 pilots for additional target coverage. Confirmed results of 31 VC killed were credited to the combined supporting arms.

-Near Khe Sanh on 21 April, Marine units attacked an estimated enemy company in fortified bunkers. Supported by fixed wing air strikes and Marine artillery, the Marines successfully secured the position, killing 21 NVA.

During April the out-of-country effort by the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing was focused near the DMZ. All sorties flown over North Vietnam were directed against enemy targets in the Route Package I area, as Marine pilots executed 1,049 combat sorties and 108 electronic countermeasure sorties. In southern Laos, Marine aircraft flew 117 sorties in interdiction of enemy lines of communication.

The month also saw the highest number of Marine A-6A Intruder sorties (453) flown outside of South Vietnam since the aircraft's arrival in-country during November 1966. Of this total, 444 were flown against

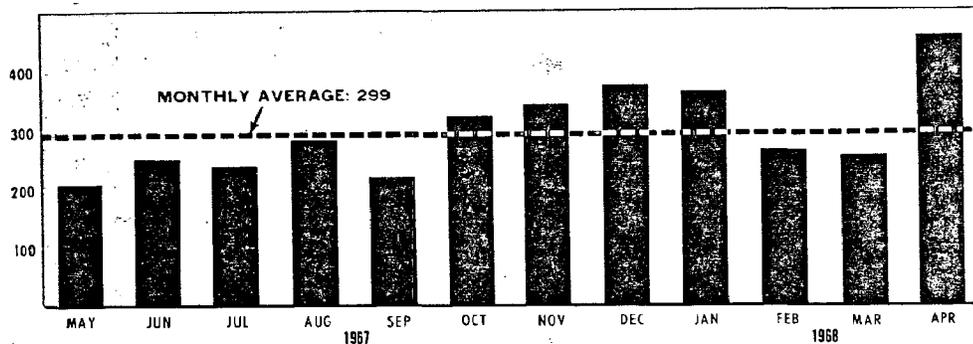
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enemy targets located in Route Package I, the southernmost portion of North Vietnam, while nine A-6A attack sorties were flown against enemy targets located in the Steel Tiger region of the Laotian panhandle. The A-6A pilots of VMA(AW)-242 and 533 delivered 9,496 bombs while attacking 2,012 targets - 1,715 of which were moving targets. Of the 453 A-6A sorties flown out-of-country during April, 436, or 96%, were flown at night.

Below is illustrated the monthly A-6A attack sorties flown out-of-country since May 1967.

MONTHLY MARINE A-6A SORTIES FLOWN OUT OF COUNTRY
MAY 67 - APR 68



In support of the A-6A and other fixed wing strikes out-of-country, the EA-6A and EF-10B electronic countermeasure (ECM) configured aircraft of Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron -1, flew 108 sorties. The necessity of providing ECM coverage is underscored by the continued presence of enemy surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites in the area contiguous to the DMZ. Intelligence reports confirm that one enemy SAM battalion is operating in the DMZ area; the presence of a second SAM battalion

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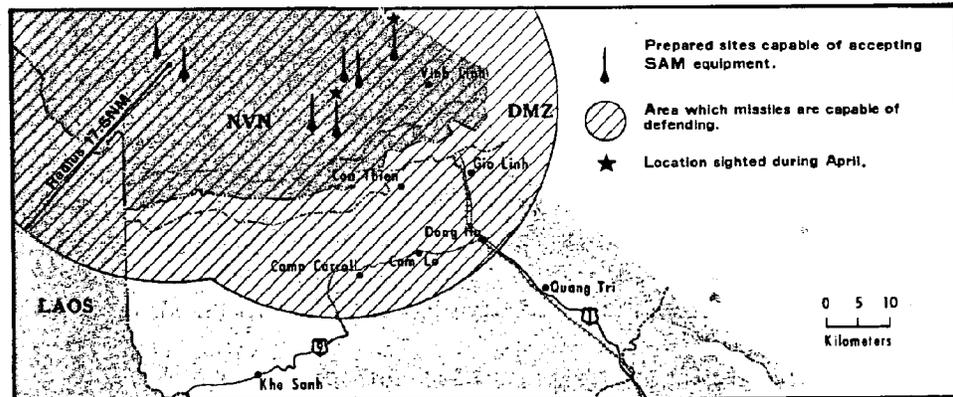
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in this region is suspected. At the end of April, seven confirmed enemy SAM sites were located in this area, two of which were sighted there during the month.

NVA use of the SAM system was evident to pilots during the month. On 1 April, in the DMZ region nine miles northwest of the Khe Sanh combat base, a pilot reported sighting an airborne projectile with a 10 to 15 foot fire-trail. The pilot took evasive action and watched the projectile explode at approximately 15,000 feet. And on the night of 4 May, a Marine A-6A pilot on a mission in the vicinity of Dong Hoi, 25 miles north of the DMZ, observed an in-flight SAM tracking his aircraft. The pilot, flying at 4,000 to 5,000 feet, took evasive action by making a hard turn downward, and watched the missile cease tracking, gain altitude, and detonate three miles away from the aircraft.

Below is a map depicting the end-month confirmed enemy SAM sites located in the DMZ area.

ENEMY SURFACE TO AIR MISSILE SITES



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

On 10 March 1968, all Marine fixed wing and reconnaissance aircraft, and their associated Marine air control assets, were assigned by COMUSMACV to the mission direction of the COMUSMACV Deputy for Air Operations, the Commanding General, 7th Air Force. This program of Air Force control achieved full operational status on 1 April. By end-month the diminution of the tactical air support provided Marine ground combat commanders was evident. During the period 3-30 April, due largely to the long lead time required under the 7th Air Force system for the scheduling of preplanned missions, only 36% (1,547 of 4,331) of those targets Marine ground commanders wished to be attacked by air were scheduled for attack by the Saigon-based Tactical Air Control Center. And, of those scheduled, only 44%, or 680 targets, actually were attacked. Thus the Marine ground commander was required, during April, to rely heavily on the less effective unscheduled sorties (or diverts) which accounted for 58% (or 2,862) of the total tactical sorties flown in support of the Marine ground attacks.

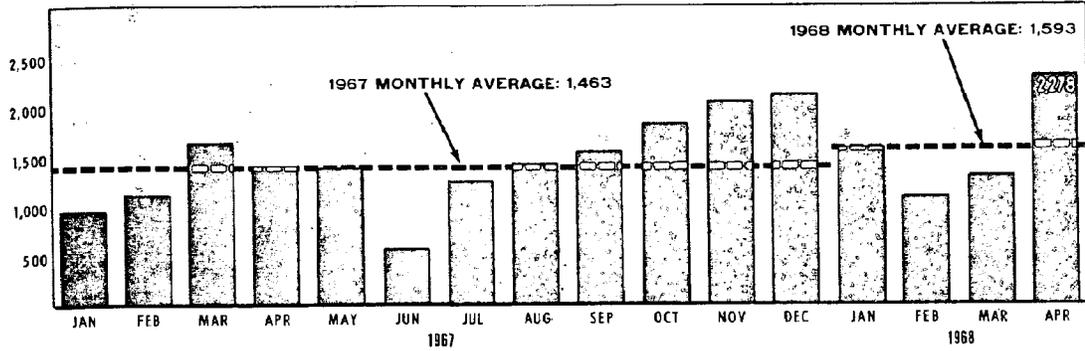
During April the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing flew 2,278 sorties, an all-time high, in support of other than Marine ground units. This compares with the monthly average of 1,716 Marine sorties provided to other than Marine units during the six month period prior to the single manager system's initiation in March 1968.

The graph on the following page illustrates, by month, the number of Marine fixed wing aircraft sorties flown in support of US Army, USSF, ARVN, ROKMC, and out-of-country operations during the period January 1967 through April 1968.

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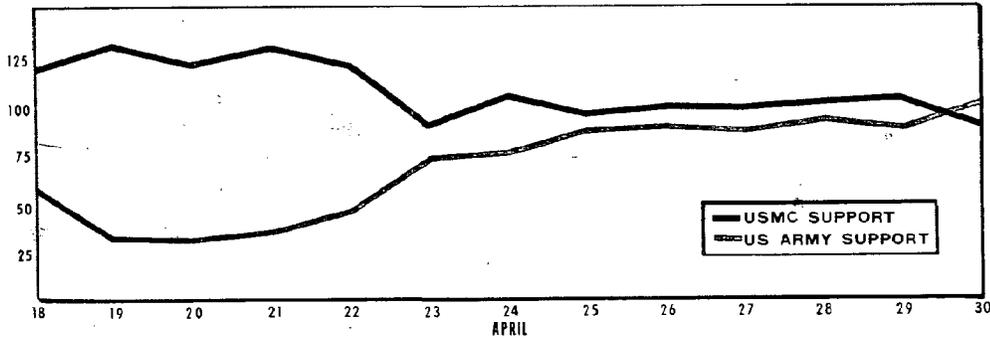
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MARINE FIXED WING SORTIES IN SUPPORT OF OTHER THAN MARINES JAN 1967 - APR 1968



In April, a significant increase in the number of Marine sorties (788) flown in support of US Army units occurred, as compared to the previous high (149) flown in September 1967. Below is a graph which depicts, for a 13 day period during April, the increased number of Marine fixed wing attack sorties scheduled for support of US Army units, and the decrease of attack sorties scheduled for support of Marine ground units.

MARINE FIXED WING SORTIES SCHEDULED IN SUPPORT OF USMC AND US ARMY UNITS: 18 - 30 APRIL



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The Commanding General, III MAF, after analysis of the effectiveness and responsiveness of the air support being provided Marine combat units under the 7th Air Force system, voiced his dissatisfaction with the system to COM-USMACV on 22 April and again on 4 May. And, on 8 May, the Commanding General, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (the Tactical Air Commander for the Commanding General, III MAF) presented to COMUSMACV and later, on 10 May, to CINCPAC, the items of dissatisfaction generated thus far, by the single manager system. The concluding recommendation was that control of Marine fixed wing strike and reconnaissance aircraft revert to the Commanding General, III MAF.

Helicopter Operations

The intensity of combat in I CTZ during April was reflected in the highest monthly total of helicopter sorties flown since July 1967. Experiencing generally good weather, Marine pilots logged 50,134 sorties, as they transported 65,815 passengers and delivered 7,538 tons of cargo.

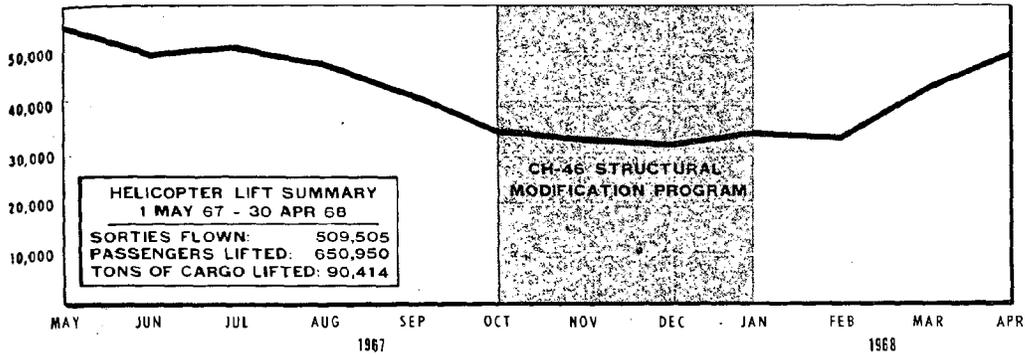
CH-46 aircraft carried almost 60% of the passengers and cargo helilifted during April as they compiled 20,838 sorties. Having flown a monthly average of only 3,959 sorties during the CH-46 modification program conducted in the 4th Quarter 1967, the helicopters have since contributed heavily to the increasing lift support provided I CTZ units. Thus far in 1968, a monthly average of 14,825 sorties has been flown by CH-46 helicopters.

The total sorties flown each month by Marine helicopters since May 1967 are shown by the graph on the following page.

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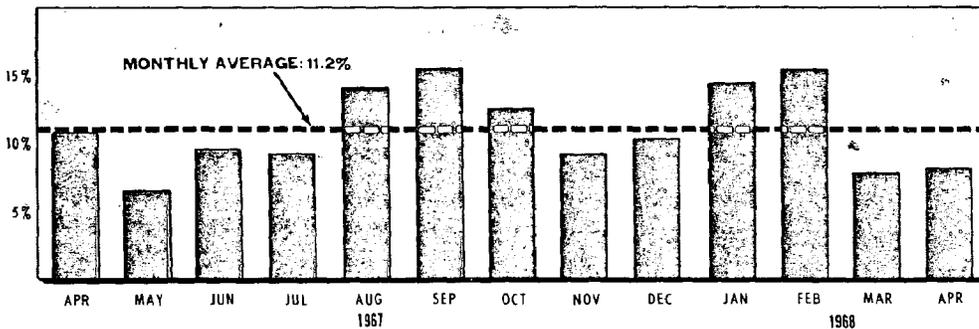
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MARINE HELICOPTER SORTIES: MAY 1967 - APR 1968



Requirements for helicopter support to non-Marine units increased slightly during April. Of the total sorties flown by Marine helicopters, 8.4% were committed to other I CTZ forces. ROK Marines utilized 77% of the extraneous support, while US Army, Special Forces, and ARVN forces received 3, 8.5, and 11.5%, respectively. The following graph portrays helicopter support provided other than Marine units since March 1967.

MONTHLY PERCENT OF MARINE HELICOPTER SORTIES
IN SUPPORT OF OTHER THAN MARINE FORCES
APR 1967 - APR 1968



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Support of helicopter operations within the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing was streamlined last month with the formation of a new helicopter group. To increase efficiency and control of the widely dispersed helicopter population, Provisional Marine Air Group 39 was activated at Quang Tri on 16 April. Assigned to ProvMAG-39 for combat operations are HMM-163, HMM-262, and VMO-6.

Fixed Wing and Helicopter Losses

Declining significantly from the March figure of 18, Marine aircraft losses for April totaled six. Four aircraft (two fixed wing and two helicopters), in the process of conducting ordnance deliveries or in battlefield landing zones, were lost to enemy small arms fire. The two fixed wing aircraft (one A-4E and one TA-4F) lost during April bring the total number of fixed wing aircraft lost due to direct enemy action for the period March 1965 - 30 April 1968 to 88. For the same period, helicopter losses now total 150, reflecting four helicopters (two UH-1E's, one UH-34, and one CH-46) lost during April. During combat sorties in April, three fixed wing aircraft and three helicopters sustained major damage, while 37 fixed wing aircraft and 82 helicopters received minor damage. Enemy mortar and rocket attacks on airfields caused minor damage to eight aircraft.

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SUMMARY

Although the northern reaches of Quang Tri province were the scene of major combat activities in I CTZ during May, central I CTZ, for the first time since the Tet offensive, also saw large scale action when Marine Operation ALLEN BROOK, accounting for nearly 700 enemy killed, spoiled enemy preparations for an assault against Danang.

The principal battles in the DMZ region were fought along the northern approaches to the Marine base at Dong Ha, and in the area south of the Khe Sanh combat base. Twice during the month, the coordinated combat power of III MAF and ARVN forces detected and repulsed division-size thrusts by the 320th NVA Division against Dong Ha. And at Khe Sanh the Marines killed 1,154 NVA regulars as they broke the 304th NVA Division's move against Khe Sanh.

From Quang Tri City to Phu Bai, and along the trace of Route 547 into A Shau Valley, the US Army divisions of III MAF's Provisional Corps Vietnam (the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and the 101st Airborne Division) inflicted substantial troop and material losses on enemy formations attempting to maintain lodgments in the mountains and piedmont of western I CTZ.

In sum, the 18 large unit operations conducted by III MAF Army and Marine formations in May accounted for 8,581 enemy killed and the capture of 326 enemy and 5,029 weapons -- all new monthly marks for battalion or larger size actions.

The four Marine infantry battalions assigned to counter-guerrilla operations during the month conducted 14,407 small unit operations in the Danang sector (an average of 113 per day by each battalion), while US Army units in southern I CTZ conducted an additional 2,226 of these patrols, am-

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bushes, and company-size operations. Enemy losses credited to the Marine and Army small units totaled 427 killed, and 42 prisoners and 89 weapons captured. Marine STING RAY teams continued effectively to impede enemy movement along the periphery of the central I CTZ vital area and, controlling 241 artillery missions and 17 air strikes, accounted for the deaths of 405 enemy troops, a toll second thus far in the war only to the 457 enemy eliminated by these teams last month.

Reflecting the increasing pace of air operations thus far in 1968, fixed wing pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing flew 8,623 sorties, a new monthly record. And, in addition to the support provided Marine operations, Marine attack and fighter squadrons flew 2,216 sorties in support of other than Marine units. Matching the tempo of ground operations, Marine helicopter pilots also set support records by providing 62,837 sorties, which lifted 77,674 passengers and 7,891 tons of cargo. The intensity of the month's combat resulted in 22 Marine aircraft (13 helicopters and nine fixed wing) lost to enemy fire. In addition, 63 fixed wing aircraft and 197 helicopters received battle damage while airborne.

On 22 May, Combined Action Platoon 3-5-5 was activated eight miles northwest of Phu Bai, bringing to 85 the number of CAP's now active in I CTZ. Although continuing to be a primary target for enemy attacks, the combined Marine/PF platoons made substantial progress in their campaigns against the Viet Cong infrastructure, accounting during the month for 123 enemy killed and the capture of 21 prisoners and 32 weapons.

Marine operations in May resulted in 6,200 enemy killed, the highest monthly total of enemy losses to Marine forces thus far in the war. Seven hundred forty-three Marines and 37 US Navy personnel, however, also the highest III MAF losses in any month of the war, were killed in action or died of wounds in May.

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AIR OPERATIONS

The level of 1968 air operations continued to rise during May, as Marine pilots flew 71,460 sorties in support of I CTZ ground operations and interdiction programs aimed at enemy lines of communication in North Vietnam, Laos, and I CTZ. Marine fixed wing aircraft compiled 8,623 sorties, while helicopter pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and the two Special Landing Forces flew 62,837 sorties.

Fixed Wing Operations

Supporting III MAF and ARVN forces engaged in heavy fighting throughout the month, Marine fixed wing pilots, flying 5,774 close air support and 905 direct air support sorties, delivered 11,714 tons of bombs against enemy positions in I CTZ. Aerial ordnance, including 12,979 rockets, 4,597 napalm bombs, and 128,424 rounds of 20mm ammunition, resulted in 521 enemy killed and 1,301 bunkers and 180 weapon positions destroyed. Damage to enemy ammunition, supply, and POL dumps was reflected by the 327 secondary explosions and 250 fires reported by Marine attack pilots and observers.

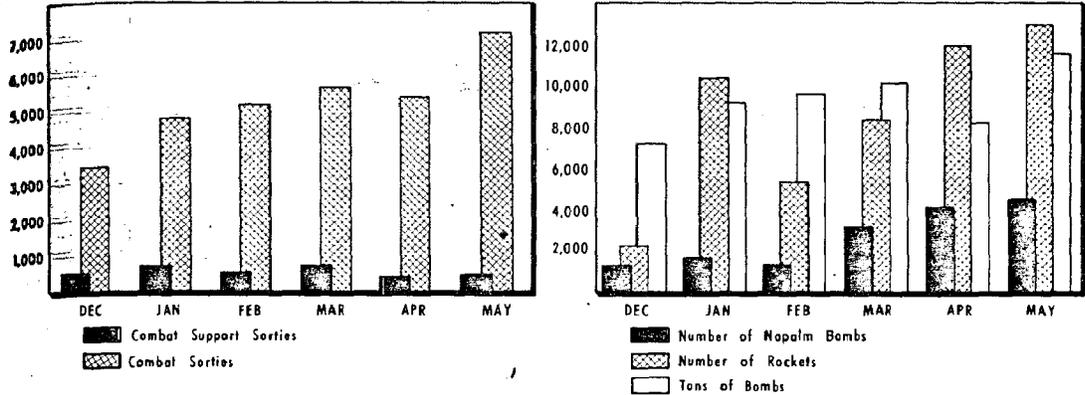
In addition, 1,003 fixed wing combat support sorties were flown to provide air reconnaissance, helicopter escort, interdiction, and air defense in I CTZ.

The graphs on the following page compare monthly totals for Marine fixed wing support within I CTZ during the last six months.

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IN-COUNTRY FIXED WING SUPPORT BY MARINE AIRCRAFT: DEC 67 - MAY 68



-Support of Large Unit Operations

Encountering heavy fighting throughout the month, Marine forces engaged in Operations KENTUCKY and NAPOLEON/SALINE coordinated 328 Marine attack sorties with other fire support to sunder elements of the 320th NVA Division. Using preplanned sorties, armed with weapons for designated targets, and strip alert attack aircraft, immediately available with a variety of aerial weapons, ground commanders north of Dong Ha directed the delivery of over 650 tons of ordnance on enemy targets and emplacements. During the last three weeks of May, attack aircraft supporting Operation ALLEN BROOK averaged 22 sorties a day, as 906 tons of air ordnance were delivered to assist the Marine infantry scheme of maneuver. Other missions, including aerial reconnaissance, photographic coverage, helicopter escort, and airborne supporting arms control, also assisted in reducing the effect of the NVA and VC forces.

In support of 18 large unit operations during May, Marine pilots flew 2,983 attack sorties and delivered 5,950 tons of ordnance. The following examples, taken from offensive operations

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conducted during May, illustrate the results of supporting arms firepower, accurate airborne and ground observation and control procedures, and close air/ground coordination.

-On 1 May, elements of BLT 2/4, attacking a large NVA force north of Dong Ha, came under intense and well directed hostile artillery fire. Spotting the NVA forward observer team, an aerial observer called for fixed wing air to attack the position. Accurate ordnance deliveries resulted in 13 NVA killed and an immediate reduction of incoming artillery fire on the Marine infantry.

-In the same area, three days later, an enemy force moving on the flank of the Dong Ha battlefield was attacked by two Marine F-4B's. Directed by an aerial observer, the strikes resulted in 37 NVA killed.

-During the early morning hours of 10 May, the night defensive positions of the 3d Battalion, 21st Infantry came under heavy ground attack. The effects of coordinated fire support, provided by artillery batteries, armed helicopters, Marine attack aircraft, and naval gunfire, were seen as the enemy assault ended within the defensive wire. Counting 94 enemy dead around the positions, the ground forces credited Marine air with 25 NVA killed.

- Supported by artillery, an estimated NVA battalion attacked a Marine company position south of Khe Sanh at 0300 on 28 May. Before daylight, Marine artillery and fixed wing air had assisted in repulsing two assaults. Attempting to disperse and withdraw at dawn, the NVA battalion was held in place by Marine armed helicopter fire support. During the subsequent Marine counterattack, which accounted for 230 NVA killed, 20 Marine attack sorties dropped 57 tons of ordnance, with some deliveries targeted 20 meters from friendly positions.

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-Additional support to ground operations was provided by air attacks on enemy base areas and lines of communication. Evidence of this support, and of the damage inflicted during interdiction missions, was obtained near Khe Sanh, as NVA prisoners continued to reveal the low state of morale and the high rate of casualties resulting from attack and bomber aircraft strikes. Further, in A Shau Valley, III MAF units conducting Operation DELAWARE VALLEY found fifty 2 1/2 and 3-ton trucks previously damaged by air strikes.

-Out-of-Country Operations

During May, Marine aircraft flew 941 sorties in support of out-of-country interdiction operations. North of the DMZ, Marine pilots flew 754 strike and 134 electronic countermeasure (ECM) and electronic intelligence (ELINT) sorties against enemy targets in the Route Package I area of North Vietnam. Interdiction of enemy targets in the Steel Tiger region of the Laotian panhandle was supported by 53 attack sorties.

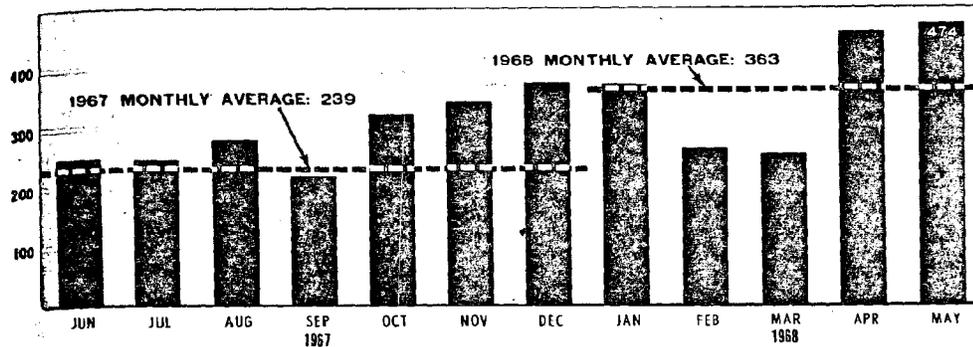
A-6A aircraft support continued at a high level during May. Taking full advantage of the aircraft's all-weather target acquisition radar and moving target indicator systems, A-6A pilots flew 444 of their 473 sorties at night. As enemy traffic mounted during the periods of darkness, Marine pilots, identifying 890 moving targets and 356 stationary targets, delivered 2,038 tons of ordnance to impede further movement of troops and supplies in the region north of the DMZ.

The graph on the following page illustrates the monthly A-6A attack sorties flown out-of-country since June 1967.

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MONTHLY MARINE A-6A SORTIES FLOWN OUT OF COUNTRY
JUNE 67 - MAY 68



Accompanying Marine aircraft on missions in Route Package I, the ECM-equipped EA-6A's and EF-10B's of Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron-1 flew 134 sorties during the month. Requirements for ECM protection remained evident, as the eighth surface-to-air missile (SAM) site in the DMZ area was confirmed during May. Sixteen SAM firings were reported over NVN during the month, with one, and possibly two, of the hostile missiles sighted in flight near Con Thien. In addition, there has been a recent southerly extension of the NVN air threat. Intelligence from the Vinh area of NVN, 145 miles north of the DMZ, has reported evidence of radar capable of providing intercept control to MIG's flying as far south as the lower Route Packages and the DMZ area. The SAM threat and the increased NVN air threat further emphasize the importance of the ECM support provided by Marine EA-6A and EF-10B aircraft.

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

For the second month, all Marine fixed wing and reconnaissance aircraft, and their associated Marine air control assets, continued operations under the mission direction of the COMUSMACV Deputy for Air Operations, the Commanding

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General, 7th Air Force. Although the Marine aircraft were assigned to this program of Air Force control by COMUSMACV on 10 March 1968, the single manager system did not achieve full operational status until 1 April. During the first month of operations, designated by COMUSMACV as an evaluation period, the Commanding General, III MAF noted serious diminution in the tactical air support provided to Marine ground commanders.

During the second month of single manager control, scheduled response to requests for preplanned sorties remained at a low level. Of the targets Marine ground commanders requested be covered by preplanned air strikes, those actually scheduled for attack by the 7th Air Force Tactical Air Control Center in Saigon dropped from 36% during April to 32.9% in May. And, of the 1,875 targets scheduled to be hit, only 831 (or 44.3%) actually were attacked. Further, the Marine ground commanders, for the second consecutive month, had to rely on the less effective unscheduled sorties, or divers, for 57.6% of the total number of sorties flown in their support.

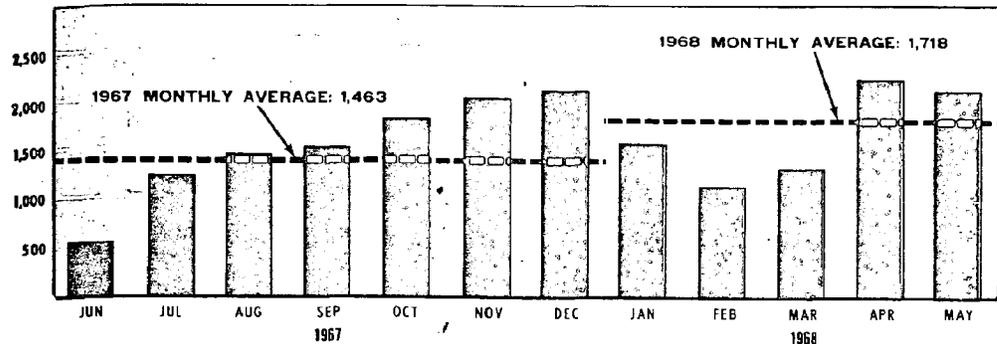
Continuing at a high level, sorties flown in support of other than Marine ground units totaled 2,216. The trend toward increased support of US Army units continued, as Marine sorties in support of Army operations climbed from 788 sorties during April to 958 in May.

The graph on the following page illustrates, by month, the number of Marine fixed wing aircraft sorties flown since June 1967, in support of US Army, US Special Forces, ARVN, ROKMC, and out-of-country operations.

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MARINE FIXED WING SORTIES IN SUPPORT OF OTHER THAN MARINES JUNE 1967 - MAY 1968



Based on the April evaluation of the new air control system, the Commanding General, III MAF sent his Tactical Air Commander (CG, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing), to present to COMUSMACV on 8 May, and to CINCPAC on 10 May, the items of dissatisfaction generated by the single manager program. The concluding recommendation in the III MAF presentation was that control of Marine fixed wing strike and reconnaissance aircraft revert to the Commanding General, III MAF.

Immediately following the III MAF presentation to CINCPAC on 10 May, a representative of the Commanding General, 7th Air Force, presented the Air Force evaluation of the single manager program. Implicit in the evaluation was the recognition that single management had proven to be unwieldy and had not accomplished all the results desired. To meet the day-by-day requirements of ground commanders, the 7th Air Force proposed certain improvisations intended to restore flexibility, responsiveness, and continuity in the management of preplanned air support. This modified arrangement divided preplanned sortie allocations into two groups. Seventy percent of the sorties would be allocated in a weekly fragmentary order,

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while the remainder would be allocated in a daily preplanned, fragmentary order. The intent of the weekly fragmentary order was to provide each ground commander with sorties that he could use in any manner he considered would support his tactical plans most effectively, so long as his intended use was consistent with aircraft and control capabilities. The daily fragmentary order, on the other hand, would provide ground commanders with additional sorties with which to respond to the ever-changing ground combat situation.

Accepting this latter proposal, rather than the III MAF proposal to revert operational control of Marine fixed wing strike and reconnaissance aircraft to CG, III MAF, COMUSMACV, with CINCPAC concurrence, ordered the modifications into effect on 30 May. Selecting the month of June as a second period for experimentation, and announcing another evaluation at the end of the test, COMUSMACV encouraged his commanders to submit constructive comments concerning the revised system.

Even while the single manager system was undergoing this critical evaluation, and while plans were being formulated to improve it, events at the Kham Duc Special Forces camp, on 12 May, demonstrated that some of the characteristics of the pre-single manager control system had remained intact. Early on the morning of 12 May, the Kham Duc camp, 52 miles southwest of Danang, came under siege by a superior NVA force. To relieve the camp, COMUSMACV, at 0830 that morning, ordered a "Grand Slam" effort -- the priority concentration of tactical air support which had proven so successful under the previous air control system, particularly during the battle of Con Thien in September 1967. Although the concentration of tactical air within this confined area during the day (120 Air Force and 18 Marine strike sorties) was potentially disastrous, the operation succeeded because of the efforts of Marine and Air Force airborne Forward Air Controllers, who were overhead throughout the day controlling air strikes.

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Fixed Wing Squadron Rotation

On 10 May, with the deployment of Marine All Weather Fighter Squadron-235 from Danang to Iwakuni, Japan, Marine employment of the F-8 Crusader aircraft in South Vietnam ended. Since December 1965, three Marine F-8 Crusader squadrons (VMF (AW)-312, 232, and 235) had engaged in combat operations in Vietnam, flying a total of 20,955 sorties in support of both Marine ground operations in South Vietnam, and interdiction missions in North Vietnam and Laos. VMF (AW)-235, the last of the three squadrons to serve in-country, was replaced at Danang by Marine Fighter Attack Squadron-542, with 18 F-4B Phantom II's.

Helicopter Operations

Responding to increased combat troop and cargo lift requirements created by wide-spread search and clear operations, and other operational requirements, the Marine helicopters in I CTZ, establishing an all-time high for combat support, flew 62,837 sorties, lifting 77,674 passengers and 7,891 tons of cargo.

Indicative of helicopter operations during May, Marines conducting Operation MAMELUKE THRUST received 1,631 helicopter sorties during a ten-day period. Operating without vehicular support in the jungle-covered mountains southwest of Danang, the Marine units maneuvered 1,839 troops by helicopter, while helilifted resupply deliveries totaled 238 tons.

The versatile aircraft further assisted ground operations during the month by providing airborne reconnaissance and fire support coordination, medical evacuation, and close-in fire support. As an example, on 28 May, five members of a STING RAY patrol, 28 miles southwest of Danang, were blown over a cliff by an enemy grenade. One member of the patrol was able to regain the top of the cliff and call for helicopter

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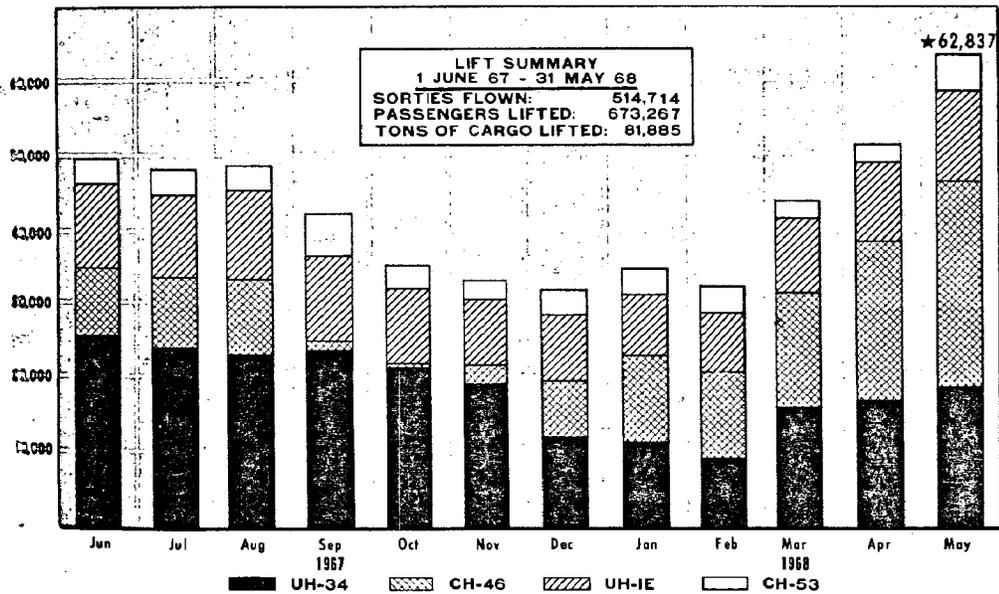
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support, while a reaction force secured a landing zone. While hovering above the four wounded Marines, the rescue aircraft lowered a sling hoist to the cliff-side position and lifted the men, individually, to the secure landing zone one-quarter of a mile away. Following the four rescue efforts, the helicopter evacuated the total force.

The CH-53 helicopters of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron-463 completed their first year of full squadron combat operations on 24 May. Amassing 38,107 sorties, the squadron moved 162,385 passengers and 403,087 tons of cargo during the year and, utilizing its heavy lift capacity, performed 476 tactical aircraft recoveries. One hundred ninety of the retrievals, returning downed helicopters and small fixed wing aircraft from battlefield locations, represented an aircraft-replacement savings of approximately \$67,669,000.

Total monthly support provided by Marine helicopters since June 1967 is shown by the following graph.

MARINE HELICOPTER SORTIES: JUNE 67 - MAY 68



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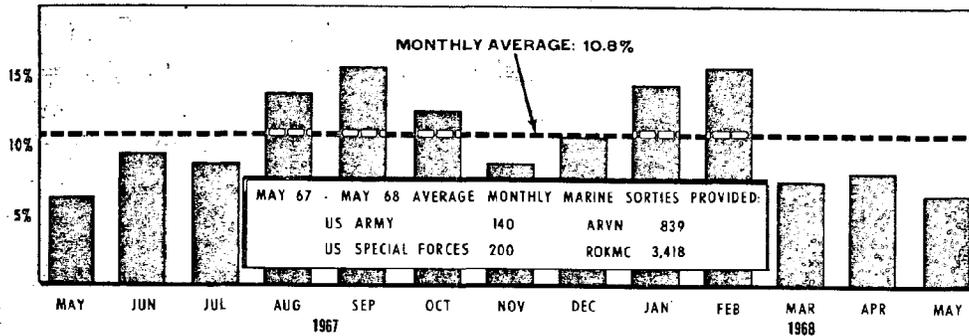
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Marine helicopters, continuing to provide helilift assistance to non-Marine forces, flew 6.8% of their sorties in support of extraneous commitments. During the battle at Kham Duc Special Forces camp, Marine CH-46 helicopters, on 10 May, lifted 500 soldiers of the 2d Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment into the besieged outpost. Two days later, Marine pilots again supported the Army units, as 14 CH-46's flew 110 sorties to complete evacuation of all friendly forces from the camp.

The following graph depicts support received by other than Marine forces during the past 13 months.

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



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SUMMARY

Marine helicopter pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and Special Landing Forces Alpha and Bravo, flying a record 70,494 sorties during June, surpassed by 7,657 the previous high (62,837) established in May 1968. The June effort resulted also in new marks for the total number of passengers (98,163) and tons of cargo (8,871) lifted during a one-month period by these helicopter units. Marine A-6A's, with 483 (also a new monthly record) of their total 858 sorties executed out-of-country, delivered over 2,270 tons of ordnance on 1,713 Laos and North Vietnam targets, 1,369 (or 80%) of which were moving targets. And, taking full advantage of its all-weather capabilities, 450 (or 93%) of this attack aircraft's out-of-country sorties were flown at night.

Highlighting III MAF large unit operations during the month was the heliborne penetration by two Marine regiments of NVA strongpoints south of Khe Sanh. This action, coupled with other large unit operations against an I CTZ enemy currently unwilling to risk major engagement, resulted in an enemy loss of 3,368 killed, and the capture of 286 soldiers and 2,197 weapons.

These large unit successes were complemented in good measure by the III MAF counter guerrilla effort, which numbered in June 8,991 patrols, 5,405 ambushes, and 75 company-size search operations. Although the guerrilla followed the lead of his NVA cohorts, and avoided contact where possible, he nevertheless lost 386 soldiers and 156 weapons to the small unit actions of III MAF.

With the exception of long range artillery attacks against the installations at Cua Viet and Dong Ha, enemy ordnance attacks against the major bases in I CTZ were largely frustrated during June. In the Danang area, the publicly pro-

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claimed enemy plan to launch massive rocket and mortar attacks against III MAF installations was fragmented, albeit temporarily, as Marine units, thrusting deep into his base areas in the piedmont southwest of Danang, captured 58 rocket launchers and 146 rockets.

The pacification program in I CTZ displayed progress in June, as the civilian population within those III MAF areas considered secure rose by more than 48,000 over that of May. And consolidation of Marine influence in the Phu Loc area, 16 miles southeast of Phu Bai, resulted in the inclusion of four secure villages, all situated along Route 1, in the Phu Bai pacification area. As of 30 June, therefore, all of the villages astride Route 1 between Danang and Hue were considered secure.

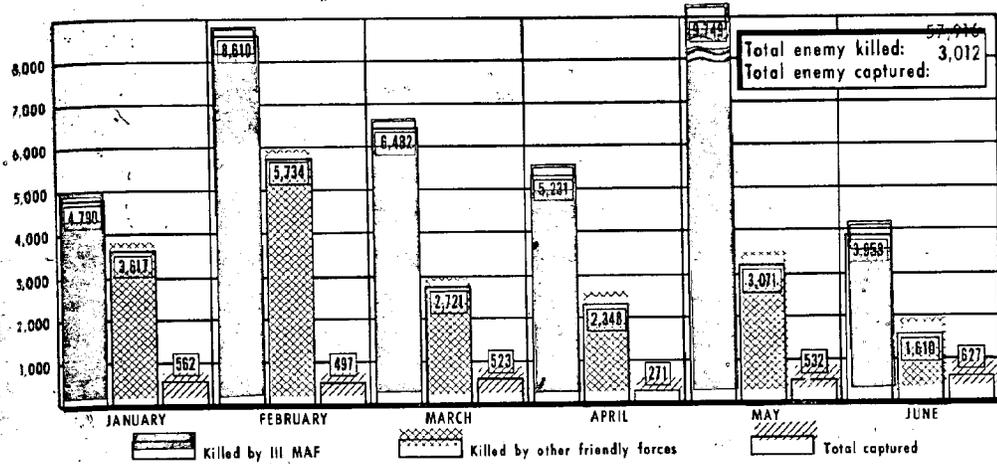
Combined Action Platoon 3-3-6, activated on 28 June in Hoa An hamlet, five miles northeast of Hue, brought the total of the combined Popular Force/Marine platoons to 86. During June, these combat teams conducted a record 6,841 patrols and ambushes, 4,694 (or 69%) of which were night operations. Enemy losses to the CAP's were 115 killed and 70 prisoners and 53 weapons seized.

As indicated on the graph which follows, operations of III MAF units and the two Special Landing Forces during the first six months of 1968 have resulted in 38,815 enemy killed, while Vietnamese forces and Republic of Korea Marines in I CTZ accounted for an additional 19,101 killed. During the same six-month period, 3,012 enemy (696 North Vietnamese soldiers and 2,316 Viet Cong) were captured in I Corps Tactical Zone.

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ENEMY TROOP LOSSES IN I CTZ
1 JAN - 30 JUN 1968



It is of interest to note that the combined total (57,916) of enemy troops confirmed killed in I CTZ during the first half of 1968 exceeds, by 16,744, the number of enemy confirmed killed (41,172) in I CTZ during 1967.

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AIR OPERATIONS

The combined total of 78,183 fixed wing and helicopter sorties flown in June by pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and Special Landing Forces Alpha and Bravo, represented the highest monthly total of sorties flown by Marine pilots since the beginning of the war in Vietnam. Of these sorties (which surpassed by 6,723 the previous combined high of 71,460 flown in May 1968), 7,689 were fixed wing combat and combat support sorties flown in I CTZ, in Route Package I (the southern-most air strike sector of North Vietnam), and in the Steel Tiger region of the Laotian panhandle. In addition, 70,494 helicopter sorties were flown in I CTZ in support of III MAF, ARVN, and ROKMC forces.

Fixed Wing Operations

Marine fixed wing attack sorties in I CTZ during June totaled 5,919, of which 4,380 were close air support sorties, 1,150 were direct air support sorties, and 389 were helicopter escort, interdiction, or air defense sorties. In addition, 692 combat support sorties (visual reconnaissance and photographic, for example) were flown in I CTZ by Marine pilots. The 1,078 combat and combat support sorties flown out-of-country brought to 7,689 the total number of fixed wing sorties flown by 1st Marine Aircraft Wing pilots.

The substantial decrease in fixed wing sorties flown in June (7,689) from those flown in May (8,623) can be attributed to several causes. First, the enemy's month-long reluctance to risk his forces in significant engagements was particularly evident in the eastern region of the DMZ, where fixed wing support of Operations LANCASTER II, KENTUCKY, and NAPOLEON/SALINE decreased by more than 200 sorties from May's total of 484. Second, the termination of Operation DELAWARE VALLEY/LAM SON 216 in A Shau Valley on 17 May, accounted for only 27 Marine sorties being flown in that area during June, 424 less than were flown in May. And

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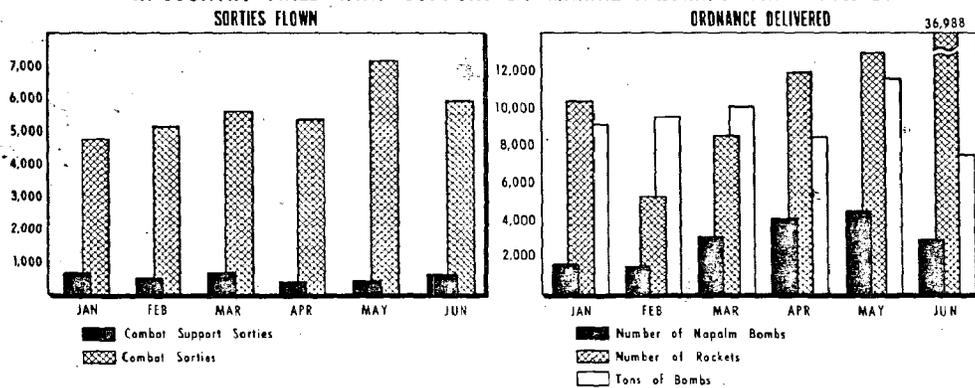
finally, eight large unit operations terminated in May, as opposed to the three new operations which began in June.

The 5,919 combat sorties flown by Marine pilots in support of III MAF, ARVN, and Free World forces operating in I CTZ delivered 7,882 tons of bombs, 2,963 napalm bombs, 36,988 rockets, and 183,320 rounds of 20 millimeter ammunition on enemy units and positions. This firepower accounted for 353 enemy killed, 12 bridges destroyed (and an additional 16 damaged), and 1,222 bunkers and 63 weapons positions destroyed. In addition, 203 secondary explosions and 131 secondary fires evidenced the damage to enemy logistic (ammunition and POL) caches.

In order to provide ground commanders a portion of the required air reconnaissance coverage of the battlefield, Marine pilots flew 692 combat support sorties. These included 147 photographic missions, 38 infrared sensor flights, 166 electronic countermeasure flights, 40 electronic intelligence missions, 84 tactical air coordinator (airborne) sorties, and 217 visual reconnaissance flights.

The following graphs depict the monthly combat/combat support sorties flown, and ordnance delivered, by Marine pilots during the first six months of 1968.

IN-COUNTRY FIXED WING SUPPORT BY MARINE AIRCRAFT: JAN - JUN 68



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-Support of Large Unit Operations

Though June was characterized by a decline in enemy contacts, there was still a significant number of ground tactical engagements requiring fixed wing support. Nearly 1,500 sorties (25% of the month's total combat sorties) were flown in support of ground units engaged in Operation SCOTLAND II, attesting to the relatively high tempo of operations in the western portion of the DMZ. The remaining 75% (or 4,400) were flown in support of 14 other large unit operations and the Danang rocket belt, in A Shau Valley and along Route 547, and in support of small unit operations.

The following close air support missions typify the support provided ground units daily in I CTZ:

-During the evening of 7 June, two F-4B aircraft of Marine Fighter/Attack Squadron-115 attacked an enemy force located seven miles northeast of the Khe Sanh combat base. Employing twelve 500-pound bombs and 152 rockets, the Marine pilots were credited with six NVA soldiers killed and one automatic weapon position destroyed.

-On 18 June, elements of the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines received an early morning probe from a large enemy force ten miles south of the Khe Sanh combat base. The Marine unit coordinated the placement of organic small arms, mortar, and artillery fires and air strikes on the enemy force for over 11 hours. A subsequent sweep of the area revealed a combined battle damage assessment of 131 NVA soldiers killed (49 of which were credited to Marine aircraft) and 34 individual weapons and nine crew-served weapons captured. Twenty of the 49 enemy killed by Marine air were the result of a close air support mission flown by three A-4E's of Marine Attack Squadron-311.

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-At 0845 on 24 June, two A-4E aircraft of Marine Attack Squadron-121 were directed on a close air support mission in support of ROK Marines then under attack by a Viet Cong force about nine miles south of Danang. The Marine aircraft struck the enemy unit with 500-pound bombs and 20mm guns, killing 13 VC and breaking the enemy assault.

-At 1515 on 25 June, in response to a request for air support from a Marine reconnaissance unit supporting Operation ALLEN BROOK, two A-4E's of Marine Attack Squadron-121 dropped nineteen 250-pound bombs on an enemy force, killing 23. One hour later, two F-4B's of Marine Fighter/Attack Squadron-542 attacked an enemy force about one-half mile from the action described above. Dropping twelve 250-pound bombs and firing 57 rockets and 600 rounds of 20mm ammunition in close support of friendly elements, the Marine aircraft accounted for 40 enemy dead.

-On 26 June, Company L, 3d Battalion, 3d Marines attacked an estimated North Vietnamese Army platoon located in a bunker complex four miles east of Con Thien. Coordinated supporting arms provided heavy fire on the fortified position and enemy routes of egress as the infantry assault drove the enemy into the open. A close air support strike by two F-4B's of Marine Fighter/Attack Squadron-542, loaded with twelve 500-pound bombs and 50 rockets, accounted for 53 of the 59 enemy soldiers killed in this action.

-Out-of-Country Operations

In support of out-of-country interdiction operations, Marine pilots flew 1,078 sorties during the month of June. Of this number, 846 strike sorties and 115 electronic intelligence, electronic countermeasure, and photographic sorties were flown in the Route Package I area of North Vietnam. In addition, Marine attack sortie support in the Steel Tiger region of the Laotian panhandle more than doubled over the previous month, with 117 sorties being flown against enemy targets and lines of communication.

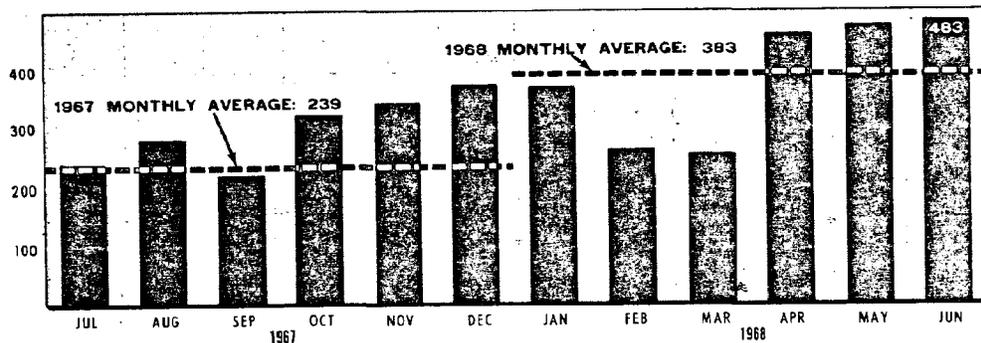
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Marine pilots flew a total of 858 A-6A sorties during the month, of which 483 sorties (a record high), were flown out-of-country. This aircraft's unique ability to deliver its ordnance accurately, under instrument conditions or at night, through the utilization of its all-weather target acquisition radar and moving target indicator systems, is documented by the fact that 450 (or 93%) of the out-of-country sorties were flown at night. In the out-of-country attacks, 2,270 tons of ordnance were dropped on 1,713 targets, 1,369 (or 80%) of which were moving. One example of A-6A effectiveness was seen on 21 June, when 11 attack sorties, striking 23 moving and seven stationary targets in Route Package 1 accounted for a partial damage assessment of one 130mm gun destroyed and one damaged, one truck destroyed, three secondary explosions, and two secondary fires.

The following graph depicts the monthly A-6A attack sorties flown out-of-country since July 1967.

**MONTHLY MARINE A-6A SORTIES FLOWN OUT-OF-COUNTRY
JULY 67 - JUNE 68**



In addition to the combat strike effort, Marine ECM-equipped EA-6A's and EF-10B's, flying 89 and 25 sorties respectively, were instrumental in providing protection to US aircraft against possible SAM firings and MIG threats. During June, there were two new SAM field sites discovered in the DMZ

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area, bringing to ten the number of sites capable of launching missiles against aircraft flying in, and contiguous to, the DMZ. However, of these ten sites, only one, located 22 miles northwest of Dong Ha (and ten miles north of the Ben Hai river), was known to be occupied at end-month.

The continued presence of MIG-17 and MIG-21 aircraft in the Vinh area of North Vietnam was verified during the month. The existence of these aircraft, and the resultant threat posed to US planes operating north of the DMZ, continues to emphasize the need of the Marine ECM protection provided to US pilots.

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

As recounted in the May edition of this report, COMUSMACV, to correct the major system deficiencies then evident, on 30 May directed certain modifications to the single manager system. Further, an evaluation of the results of these modifications was to be conducted by 26 June.

As the June evaluation progressed, it was evident that the modifications (primarily the 70/30% split in the pre-planned weekly/daily sortie ratio) were resulting in an I CTZ air control arrangement basically similar to the Marine tactical air control system obtaining in I CTZ prior to 10 March 1968. The weekly allocation of sorties was, with few exceptions, a stable, unchanging air support schedule; the daily allocation of sorties, in turn, provided the vehicle through which COMUSMACV maintained the flexibility to mass his air strength, as required.

Although the modified arrangement is a distinct improvement over the cumbersome single manager system it replaced, the system's still-current requirement that times-on-target be prescribed one week in advance remains an ineffi-

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cient use of fixed wing sorties, and denies CG, III MAF the flexibility required for the most productive use of his air effort. In partial compensation of this shortcoming, however, 30% of III MAF's Marine air effort during the evaluation period was provided by scrambles or "add on" sorties, thereby adding increased responsiveness to the support provided to ground combat units.

In any case, by end-June the initial evaluation of the modified procedures had been completed both by COMUSMACV and CG, III MAF. The evaluations had been forwarded to CINCPAC and were under review at that level.

OV-10A Aircraft

In May, the first detachment of six OV-10A aircraft and seven pilots departed CONUS by ship enroute to the Republic of Vietnam via NAS, Cubi Point, in the Philippines. This seaborne deployment, as well as the requirement for application of several aircraft modifications (principally, improved cockpit instrumentation), and a series of test flights at Cubi Point, delayed the aircraft's arrival in Vietnam until 6 July.

A twin-turboprop, multi-purpose aircraft, the OV-10A Bronco, is intended to fill the void left by the attrited O-1 aircraft. The missions planned for the Bronco include tactical visual aerial reconnaissance and observation, forward air controller (airborne), liaison, aerial photography, aerial delivery, and such other operations as may be directed.

On 6 July, the six aircraft, having been certified operationally ready, were flight ferried from Cubi Point to their new command, Marine Reconnaissance Squadron-2, located at the Marble Mountain Air Facility, Danang. Two OV-10A's were launched on their first combat support missions (one visual reconnaissance mission and one tactical air control (airborne) mission) only three hours after their arrival in-country.

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Marine Air Support Radar Teams

The past six months have seen the relocation of several of the Marine Air Support Radar Teams (ASRT's) positioned in RVN. These teams, utilizing TPQ-10 radar equipment, are capable of directing aircraft to a pre-designated target, where, on command of the controller at the radar site, the ordnance load is released. The radar, having a functional radius of approximately 50 miles, is positioned throughout I CTZ as necessary to provide the best coverage for the ground tactical situation. Used primarily during periods of poor weather and at night, the ASRT's have run 27,175 missions, controlling 32,141 aircraft over the past 12 months.

During the period July-December 1967, five ASRT's were located in I CTZ. Since January 1968, six teams, operating at different times at Chu Lai, Danang, Phu Bai, Khe Sanh, Dong Ha, and Camp Carroll, have controlled air strikes against enemy emplacements, lines of communication, and supply dumps. As of end-June, two teams were located in the DMZ area (one at Dong Ha and one at Camp Carroll), one team was positioned at Phu Bai, two at Danang, and one at Chu Lai.

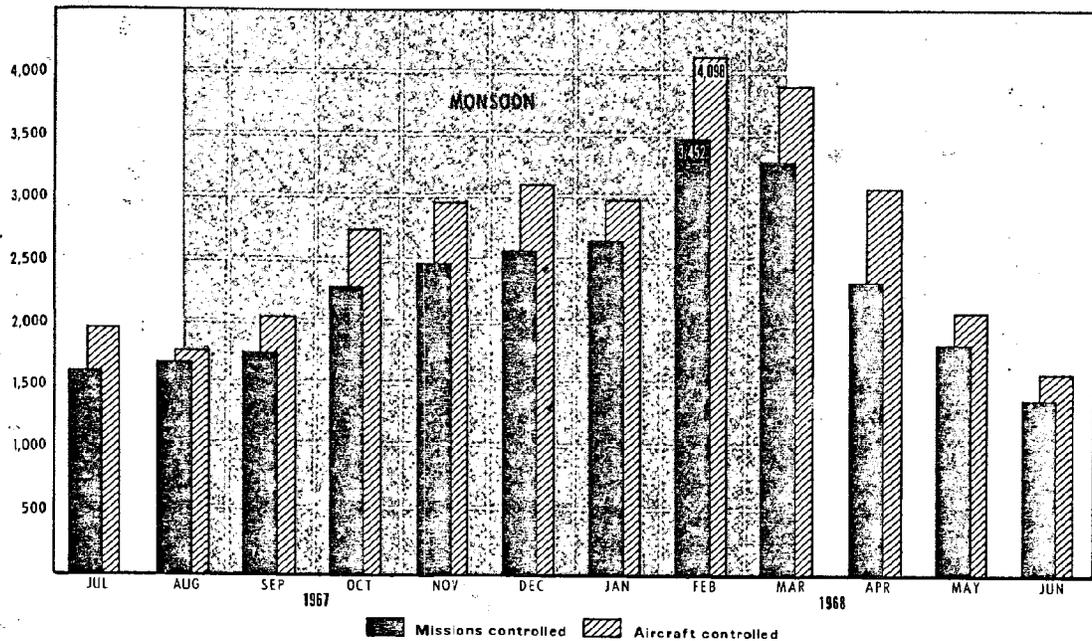
The graph on the following page portrays the number of missions and aircraft controlled by the Marine ASRT's during the past 12 months, as well as the decreased activity of the ASRT's during periods of good weather.

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MARINE AIR SUPPORT RADAR TEAM ACTIVITY: JULY 67 - JUNE 68

Helicopter Operations

During June, pilots of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and Special Landing Forces Alpha and Bravo flew a record 70,494 helicopter sorties, surpassing by 7,657 sorties the previous high (62,837) established in May 1968. Records were also set in the number of passengers transported (98,163) and in the amount of cargo lifted (8,871 tons). Support of US Army, ARVN, and ROKMC elements accounted for 4.8%, or 3,432 of the sorties flown. This percentage, though relatively small, was still a significant draw down on thinly stretched Marine helicopter assets.

In an effort to clear those enemy base sites four and one-half miles south of the Khe Sanh combat base, a multi-regiment attack within the Operation SCOTLAND II area was conducted during the period 2-19 June. The 1st and 4th Marines, supported by six 105mm howitzer batteries, two 155mm howitzer batteries, an 8" howitzer platoon, and a 175mm gun platoon, conducted this operation, with logistic support provided primarily by helicopters

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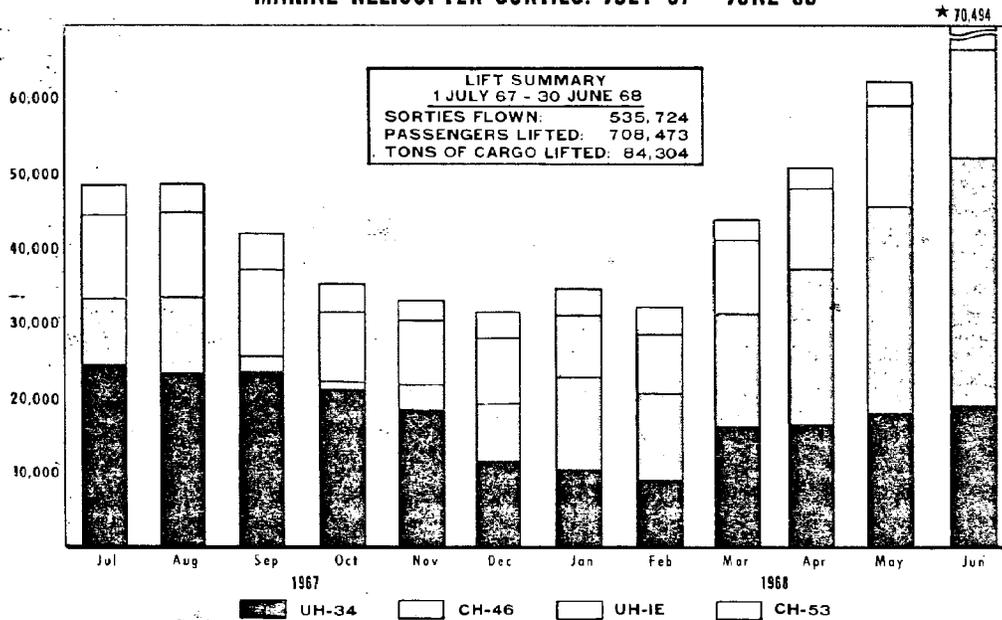
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(CH-46's, CH-53's, UH-1E's, and UH-34's) of Marine Aircraft Groups 36 and 39. During the 15-day period of this operation, more than 18,700 infantry and support troops and 3,100 tons of food, water, and ammunition were helilifted into, and within, the zone of action.

The helicopter's role in the insertion/extraction of small units, as well as that of casualty evacuation, was clearly demonstrated on 3 and 4 June when a reconnaissance patrol came under heavy attack from an estimated 30 to 50 Viet Cong approximately 33 miles south-southwest of Danang. Following reestablishment of communications with the patrol, a reaction force was dispatched to the scene by helicopter to clear the area and to assist in the recovery of the Marine dead and wounded. The patrol and the reaction force were subsequently helilifted out of the area.

The following graph depicts the total monthly support provided by Marine helicopters during the last 12 months.

MARINE HELICOPTER SORTIES: JULY 67 - JUNE 68



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Crew, Passenger, and Aircraft Losses

Since 1 January 1966, 155 crew members have been killed or listed as missing in Marine aircraft mishaps related to the war in Vietnam. Further, 105 passengers (three in fixed wing airplanes and 102 in helicopters) have lost their lives. June saw the loss of one helicopter crewman and two passengers when a UH-1E of Marine Reconnaissance Squadron-6, while taking evasive action from enemy ground fire five and one-half miles southeast of the Khe Sanh combat base, crashed into the side of a hill and burned. In addition, an A-4E pilot of Marine Attack Squadron-121 ejected from his crippled aircraft after receiving small arms fire during a close air support mission 32 miles northwest of Danang. Efforts to recover the pilot were unsuccessful due to the intensity of enemy fire in the area. Finally, 11 Marines were killed when the helicopter in which they were passengers, a CH-46 of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron-165, crashed and burned after lift-off from a landing zone five miles southeast of the Khe Sanh combat base. The cause of the accident was attributed to enemy small arms fire.

There was a significant decrease in June in the number of aircraft lost as a direct result of enemy action. Two fixed wing planes (compared to nine during May), both A-4's, were lost as a result of small arms fire. Six helicopters (three CH-46's, two UH-1E's, and one UH-34) were lost, three of them as a result of small arms fire (as opposed to 13 lost in May). No aircraft were lost as a result of enemy rocket or mortar attacks against III MAF bases.

In all, 25 fixed wing aircraft and 71 helicopters were damaged by enemy fire during June. All of the fixed wing and all but two of the helicopters received the damage while airborne. These figures also compare favorably to May, when 77 fixed wing and 245 helicopters were damaged (63 of the fixed wing and 197 helicopters receiving damage from enemy fire while airborne).

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