

SECRET

SUMMARY

The tempo of action in I CTZ remained at low key during January, with neither combat nor pacification operations encountering sufficient enemy activity to signal an abrupt reversal of the trend. III MAF units, probing known and suspected base areas and lines of communication to preclude the enemy's staging supplies or assembling troops for the forthcoming TET period, accounted for 2,017 NVA/VC killed, another 65 taken prisoner, and 607 weapons seized.

Principal combat action again was concentrated in the tactical zone's three southern provinces and was limited primarily to brief clashes with enemy patrols or foraging units. In Quang Nam province, the Kingfisher operations (a heliborne patrolling technique employed by the 1st Marines) proved a highly effective tactic against VC/NVA movement in the populated coastal region just south of Da-nang. The major enemy-initiated action also took place in southern I CTZ's Quang Nam province - a costly and unsuccessful attack by the 409th Sapper Battalion against the 7th Marines Fire Support Base Ross near Que Son.

Pacification and revolutionary development operations were focused on placing into action the 1970 GVN Pacification and Development Plan, a comprehensive program designed to add to the momentum achieved during the 1969 plan. Pacification-oriented activities continued to flourish during January; the Chieu Hoi campaign claimed another 567 defectors, ARVN support operations accounted for nearly 700 enemy soldiers killed or captured, and the Combined Unit Pacification Program (formerly the Infantry Company Intensive Pacification Program) was expanded to encompass 26 target hamlets, compared to 13 so-designated in December.

SECRET

SECRET

Troop redeployments continued to command the detailed attention of logistic planners. KEYSTONE BLUEJAY, the third US redeployment, includes the displacement of 12,900 Marines and 400 attached US Navy personnel from the combat zone, a task scheduled for completion before end-March.

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

iv

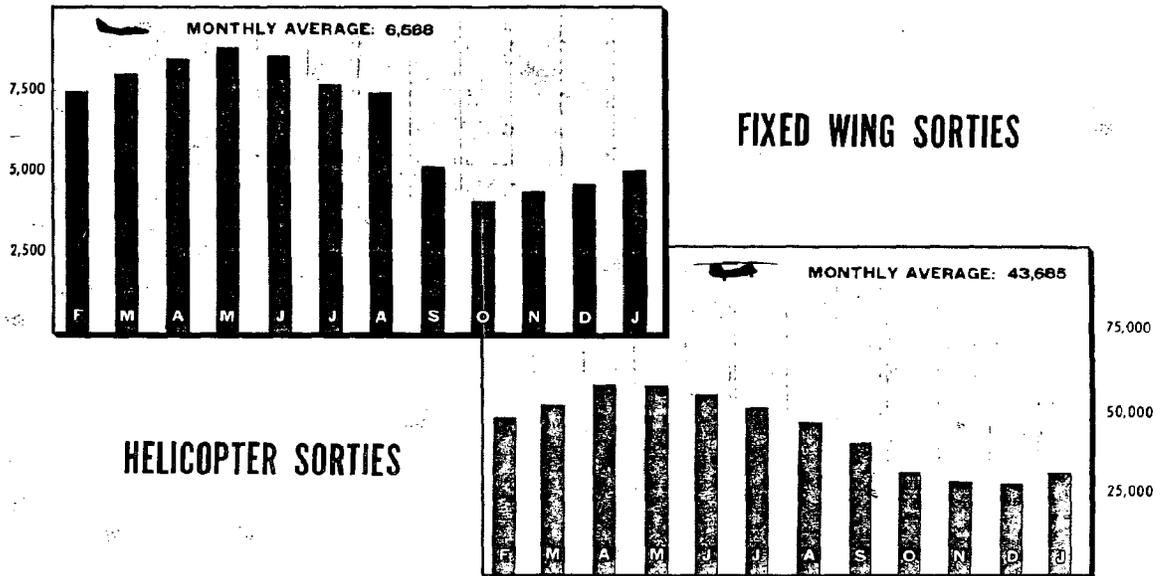
SECRET

AIR OPERATIONS

In coordination with Free World maneuver in the five northern provinces of the Republic of Vietnam, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing conducted 3,771 fixed wing and 30,942 helicopter sorties during January, maintaining a level of firepower and vertical mobility necessary for tactical operations composing the I CTZ battle plan. This effort, an 11 percent increase over December totals, provided 6,869 tons of air-delivered ordnance and the heli-lift of 71,978 troops and 5,459 tons of cargo. Out-of-country, the Wing continued assistance to interdiction and reconnaissance operations by flying over 1,000 missions.

The following chart compares January air operations totals with those compiled since February 1969.

MARINE AIR OPERATIONS: FEB 1969 - JAN 1970



REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

SECRET

In-Country Operations-Fixed Wing Support

Responding to the air support requirements of III MAF and other Free World units, Marine fixed wing aircrews conducted 3,771 sorties during the month, a combination of attack and reconnaissance flights ensuring depth and flexibility in fire support and surveillance throughout the tactical zone. The month's attack effort of 3,036 sorties, an increase of some 22 percent over December figures, was focused primarily on two missions -- support for friendly ground maneuver and interdiction of enemy lines of communication and harboring complexes. Several southern Quang Nam actions in late January exemplified the results available from coordinated air/ground response.

-At 1326 on the 22d, a patrol from the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion engaged an enemy force near the Song Thu Bon, 12 miles southwest of An Hoa combat base, employing a flight of F-4Bs from MAG-13 to reinforce its organic fire. The patrol subsequently searched the area, reporting nine Viet Cong killed - seven of which were credited to the air strike - and three weapons seized.

-The next morning, a platoon from Company A, 1st Marines attacked an NVA unit in the Dodge City area. Using fixed wing strikes to support its maneuver, the platoon accounted for eight enemy killed and one captured; no friendly casualties were sustained.

-On the 27th, an aerial observer supporting Company H, 5th Marines sighted ten enemy soldiers just south of Liberty Bridge. Following air strikes directed by the observer, the Company swept the area, reporting eight Viet Cong killed.

SECRET

SECRET

Disruption of the enemy's in-country lines of communication continued to be a high priority for air attack, as evidenced by the 1,344 sorties (44 percent of the Marine I CTZ strike effort) tasked to interdiction missions. Battle damage assessments described a portion of the toll exacted by the aerial campaign.

-On the 12th, 1st Wing F-4s and A-4s struck an enemy logistics complex west of A Shau Valley. A bulldozer, a truck trailer, and an automatic weapons position were destroyed by the initial explosions, while other strikes consumed numerous vehicle tires and POL stores and ignited three ordnance dumps.

-Four A-4s from MAG-12, during a 15 January mission 22 miles west-southwest of Quang Ngai City, attacked an enemy troop disposition; results included 21 soldiers killed, two structures destroyed, and a secondary explosion.

-On the 18th, striking another Quang Ngai troop target, two F-4s accounted for ten enemy killed and six fighting positions razed.

Adding dimension to the III MAF surveillance plan, the 1st Wing flew 735 combat support sorties in January. Of these, the OV-10As of Marine Observation Squadron (VMO)-2 amassed over 78 percent, as their aircrews conducted 410 visual reconnaissance flights and 114 to provide control for artillery and air strikes. The RF-4Bs of Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron (VMCJ)-1 completed 125 photographic and infrared coverage missions, while the Squadron's EA-6A aircraft flew 24 electronic warfare sorties.

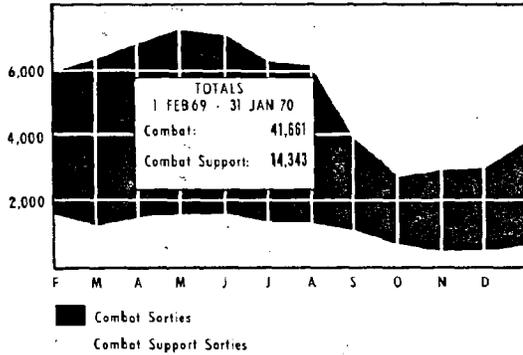
Comparisons of in-country fixed wing operations and ordnance delivery totals during the past year are portrayed in the following graphs.

SECRET

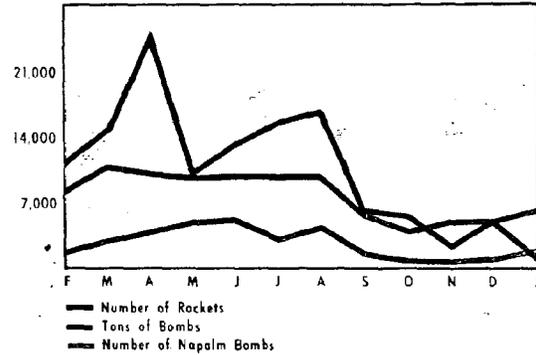
SECRET

**IN-COUNTRY FIXED WING SUPPORT BY MARINE AIRCRAFT
FEBRUARY 69 - JANUARY 70**

SORTIES FLOWN



ORDNANCE DELIVERED



-Helicopter Operations-

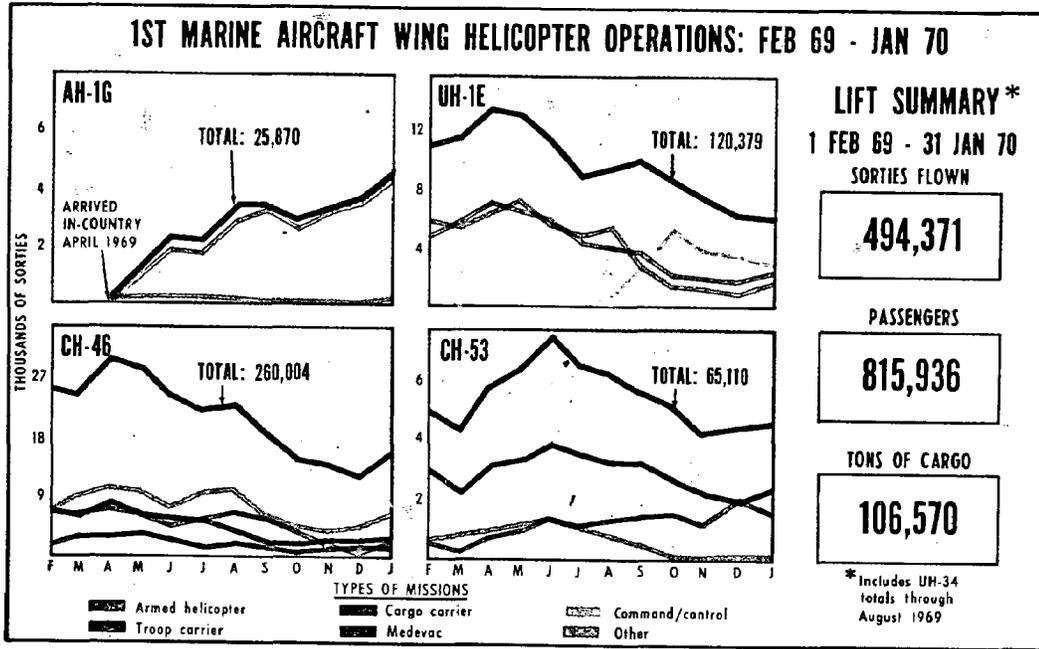
Continuing a prominent role in I CTZ combat operations, Marine helicopters in January compiled 30,942 sorties, a ten percent increase over the December total. Paramount among the month's helicopter accomplishments were 71,978 troops and passengers and 5,549 tons of cargo transported, 6,873 armed helicopter sorties, and 3,057 heliborne command and control missions. While a majority of the flights were in support of Marine units, some nine percent went to other Free World forces - ROKMC, 2,465 sorties; US Army, 162; USSF, 44; and ARVN, 39.

The following charts compare January mission assignments and total sorties, by type aircraft, with helicopter operations totals since February 1969.

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

SECRET



The responsiveness and flexibility inherent in heliborne operations were highlighted in January by 1st Marine Division Kingfisher operations. As detailed in the Combat Operations chapter of this edition, the use of heliborne infantry units to attack enemy positions or movement detected in the Danang lowlands has extended the effectiveness of the counter guerrilla campaign. The interaction of aerial observers monitoring the enemy's action with the infantry element conducting an immediate heliborne assault helps solve a longstanding difficulty experienced in the Danang area - that of effecting timely closure with easily dispersed guerrilla forces. Other examples of heliborne support were logged in reports of January reconnaissance and small unit actions.

-At 1540 on the 13th, armed helicopters supporting a platoon from Company I, 5th Marines engaged an enemy element carrying packs and weapons, five miles northwest

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

SECRET

of An Hoa. Sweeping the target zone, the platoon found ten NVA killed by the suppressive fires. Less than an hour later, the air/ground combination again precipitated action. Entering another LZ, a mile to the east, the helicopters responded to fire from a fortified position, while the infantry element engaged in a short-lived firefight; a search of the area revealed six NVA dead, four from the helicopter supporting fires.

-Early on the afternoon of the 16th, a 3d Force Reconnaissance Company patrol (code name BOX HILL) was inserted three miles west of A Luoi, in A Shau Valley. After responding to fire received during the landing, armed helicopter crews from Marine Aircraft Group-16 and 2d Squadron, 17th Cavalry sighted seven enemy trucks, a mile and a half to the northeast; attacking with rockets and machine gun fire, the aircraft destroyed all seven. Meanwhile, BOX HILL, encountering heavy enemy activity in its immediate vicinity, requested extraction. Again, the necessary support was provided, neutralizing the enemy force and destroying 20 bunkers. Departing the area, a CH-46 from HMM-161 concluded the day's action when its aircrew engaged and destroyed another enemy truck.

Out-of-Country Operations

Marine aircraft again contributed to mounting enemy logistical difficulties created by the Laotian interdiction mission. Providing both day and night strikes against truck traffic, choke points, and materiel staging sites, the 1st Wing committed 763 F-4, A-4, and A-6A sorties to the campaign during the month. Although battle damage assessments were not always available, those tallied were impressive, as evidenced by the following examples from the first week of the month.

-On the 1st, an A-6A from MAG-11 targeted a convoy 25 miles north of Tchepone, destroying four trucks and creating two secondary explosions.

SECRET

SECRET

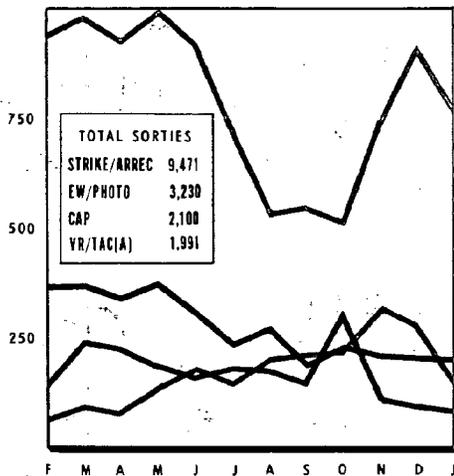
-The same day, two F-4s from VMFA-542 razed a gun position, 15 miles south of Mu Gia pass, accounting for three 23mm guns destroyed, one secondary fire, and four explosions.

-On the 2d, an A-6A aircrew destroyed three trucks and counted six secondary explosions and fires in a strike west of Ban Karai pass.

-In the same area on the following day, another A-6A was credited with four more trucks destroyed and four secondary explosions.

Providing support for out-of-country sorties and air operations in northern Quang Tri, the EA-6A aircraft of VMCJ-1 conducted 154 electronic warfare (EW) sorties. Requirements for EW protection against hostile radar-controlled AAA and surface-to-air missiles were documented during the month by heavy enemy reaction in the Mu Gia pass region.

MARINE OUT-OF-COUNTRY AIR OPERATIONS



Other out-of-country missions included 36 F-4B sorties tasked to the Seventh Fleet barrier combat air patrol program over the Gulf of Tonkin. There, the fighter/attack aircrews assisted US Navy pilots in providing protection for ships and aircraft in the Gulf region by maintaining an around-the-clock screen against the principal NVN air threat, emanating from the Hanoi/Haiphong complex.

Redeployment of 1st Wing Units

The 1st Wing commenced preparations in January for movement of those Marine air units committed to Phase III US troop redeployments. To be completed by mid-March, this phase

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

SECRET

will reduce Marine in-country assets by four tactical squadrons (three fixed wing and one helicopter), as well as a fixed wing aircraft group headquarters.

During the last week of the month, the aircraft of VMA-223 and VMFA-542 left RVN for the Philippines, departure point for the scheduled February trans-Pacific deployment KEY WALLOP. At the same time, HMH-361 was embarking its 14 CH-53 helicopters aboard USS TRIPOLI for movement to CONUS.

Terminating a combat record launched with its arrival in-country on 15 December 1965, VMA-223 departed Chu Lai on the 28th with 20 A-4E aircraft. A portion of the Squadron's combat contribution is found in the statistics of its operations. In May 1969, the A-4 unit recorded 1,234 combat sorties, by far the highest monthly total achieved by an attack squadron in Vietnam. During December 1968, VMA-223 delivered 1,723 tons of ordnance, including a record one-day drop of over 93 tons. Compiling over 32,000 combat sorties, the Squadron was credited with more than 600 NVA/VC killed, 7,500 bunkers and structures destroyed or damaged, and 1,300 secondary fires and explosions.

VMFA-542, with 15 F-4B aircraft, left the 1st Wing on the 31st. Since arrival at Danang on 10 July 1965, the fighter/attack squadron completed over 10,600 sorties. In addition to close air support for Free World forces, VMFA-542 performed escort missions for EW aircraft off the coast of North Vietnam, BARCAP assignments for the Seventh Fleet, and interdiction strikes against hostile traffic, both in and out-of-country. Delivering almost 20,000 tons of ordnance during its combat commitment, the Squadron accounted for over 500 enemy killed, 1,500 military bunkers and structures damaged or destroyed, 21 trucks destroyed, and more than 1,000 secondary fires and explosions.

SECRET

SECRET

Although in-country for but five months, HMH-361 contributed substantially to the 1st Wing's heavy-lift capability. Positioned initially at Phu Bai, and then at Marble Mountain, the Squadron supported both the 1st and 3d Marine Divisions, as well as other Free World forces, with troop and cargo lifts, casualty evacuations, and tactical aircraft recoveries. Its departure on the 31st left HMH-463 as the only CH-53 squadron in I CTZ.

Distribution of Marine Aircraft

The late-January redeployments reduced the 1st Wing to 16 aircraft squadrons - nine fixed wing and seven helicopter. Collocated with the Wing headquarters at Danang was Marine Aircraft Group (MAG)-11, with two A-6A squadrons, VM CJ-1, and the OV-10As of VMO-2. Based at Chu Lai were MAG-12 and 13, with two A-4 and three F-4 squadrons, respectively. And, MAG-16, the Wing's helicopter group, had five squadrons of aircraft positioned at Marble Mountain and two at Phu Bai.

The following chart, indicating the major air facilities in I CTZ, details the distribution of 1st Wing aircraft at end-January.

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

31

SECRET

Aircraft Losses

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing recorded two fixed wing losses during the month, as enemy forces continued a strong reaction to Free World air operations. In I CTZ, the extent of this effort was measured by 606 incidents of hostile ground fire; heavy opposition also continued along the Laotian resupply routes, especially in the Ban Karai pass region.

On the 5th, an F-4B from VMFA-542 was downed in Laos during an attack on a 37mm gun position, while ground fire south of Hoi An was responsible for the loss of an A-4E from VMA-211 on the 9th. In addition, three aircraft (one RF-4B, one AH-1G, and one CH-46D) were damaged during combat missions in January.

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

33

SECRET

SUMMARY

Despite a succession of reports and captured documents hinting at a marked intensification of enemy offensive activity to coincide with the annual celebration of TET, action throughout I CTZ remained sporadic. III MAF combat operations during February developed no major contact, as the enemy, yet unwilling to chance confrontation with the consistently-demonstrated superior strength and firepower of Free World forces, largely limited his attack effort to random shellings and isolated ground probes.

Results of III MAF combat operations again were a reflection of the light and scattered fighting which has prevailed throughout I CTZ for the better part of the past year - 1,701 NVA or VC killed, another 54 captured, and 459 weapons seized. Prominent among the month's action was the 1st Marine Division's series of operations in the Que Son mountains and northern Nui Loc Son basin. Pressing the attack in conjunction with Americal Division operations to the south, the 7th Marines dissevered one of the enemy's favored staging and harboring areas.

As predicted, the statistics derived from the first HES 70 hamlet evaluation showed a decrease in I CTZ security ratings; the drop was a product of an improved grading system rather than one of enemy achievement. A highlight of pacification and revolutionary development support operations was the performance exhibited by Vietnamese territorial forces. During February, I CTZ Regional and Popular Force soldiers and members of the Peoples' Self Defense Force killed over 650 enemy, bringing their 1970 record to some 1,350 NVA/VC killed and 600 weapons seized.

Having commenced on 28 January, the personnel, equipment, and cargo movements incident to the third phase of US troop redeployments dominated Marine logistic opera-

SECRET

SECRET

tions. By 28 February, the first five embarkation elements (over 4,500 troops and 13,000 measurement tons of cargo) had departed the war zone. March completion of KEYSTONE CARDINAL will raise the Marine total for the KEYSTONE series to 40,049 personnel, 1,000,592 square feet of vehicles or equipment, and 4,516,196 cubic feet of cargo moved since 13 July 1969 -- a success attained concurrently with continuing responsive support to combat operations of those Marine forces remaining in-country.

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

iv

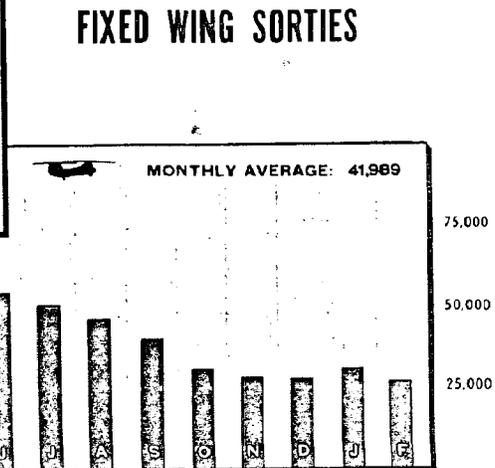
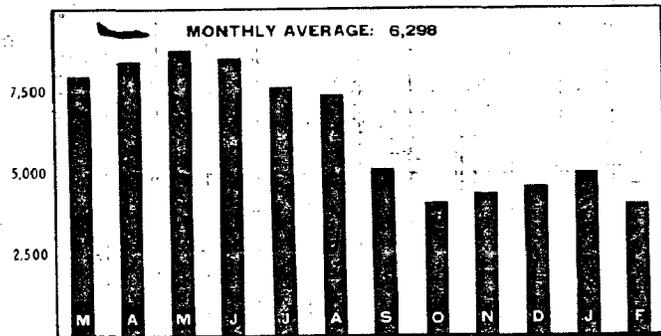
SECRET

AIR OPERATIONS

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing conducted a total of 31,818 fixed wing and helicopter sorties during February in response both to in and out-of-country air support requirements. Attack missions by A-4, A-6, and F-4 aircraft accounted for nearly 3,000 sorties, as Marine aircrews maintained support for Free World ground operations, while simultaneously contributing to the interdiction of enemy lines of communication and staging systems in I CTZ and Laos. Additionally, fixed wing combat support functions, including electronic warfare and photographic and visual reconnaissance efforts, counted over 1,000 flights. The Wing's helicopter group, MAG-16, compiled nearly 28,000 sorties during the month, which provided for the helilift of over 60,000 troops and passengers and 5,000 tons of cargo, in addition to other necessary heliborne support.

The levels of February 1st Wing air operations, reflecting declines resulting from Phase III redeployments, are compared in the following charts with monthly totals since March 1969.

MARINE AIR OPERATIONS: MAR 1969 - FEB 1970



HELICOPTER SORTIES

FIXED WING SORTIES

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

SECRET

In-Country Fixed Wing Operations

Although the arrested tempo of combat activity in I CTZ continued during February, the need for air support remained clearly evident; flexible supporting arms coverage again proved the answer to fleeting targets of opportunity acquired by various surveillance systems, as well as to resistance offered by NVA/VC units entrapped by small unit maneuver.

The following narratives illustrate the results of several coordinated air/ground actions, as reported by 1st Marine Division, ARVN, and Regional Force units.

-On the afternoon of the 1st, a Regional Force company engaged an unknown size enemy force, four and one-half miles south of Hoi An. Encountering determined opposition, the RFs twice pulled back, while two MAG-13 F-4s and two USAF F-100s made bombing runs. Securing the objective on the third assault, the Vietnamese unit counted 65 enemy dead, 50 as a result of the air strikes.

-At 2220 on the 3d, a 1st Force Reconnaissance Company patrol detected an estimated NVA/VC platoon in a base camp, eight miles west-southwest of Thuong Duc. The next morning, an OV-10A directed two A-4s from MAG-12 and several armed helicopters against the site; observing the action from its covert position, the patrol reported over 20 enemy killed.

-During the afternoon of the 11th, an aerial observer supporting 3d Battalion, 5th Marines spotted an enemy platoon six miles north of An Hoa. Inspecting the area after strikes by two A-4s and nearby artillery, the Marine ground unit found ten NVA and VC killed.

-On the 19th, ARVN units conducting DUONG SON 3/70 engaged a large enemy force, eight miles southeast of Hoi An. The Vietnamese attack, coordinated

SECRET

SECRET

with naval gunfire, ARVN artillery, and Marine OV-10A support, accounted for 26 NVA killed and six prisoners.

In addition to the 1,528 close and direct air support sorties committed to ground units during the month, another 821 were tasked against the enemy's hinterland base area and transportation network. While complete results of these strikes were seldom available, visible battle damage, as exemplified below, continued to evidence the cost paid by NVA units attempting to push supplies and replacements into the I CTZ coastal plains.

-On the 1st, strikes by A-4s and F-4s on an enemy position ten miles south-southeast of Khe Sanh razed 22 bunkers and ignited five secondary fires and explosions.

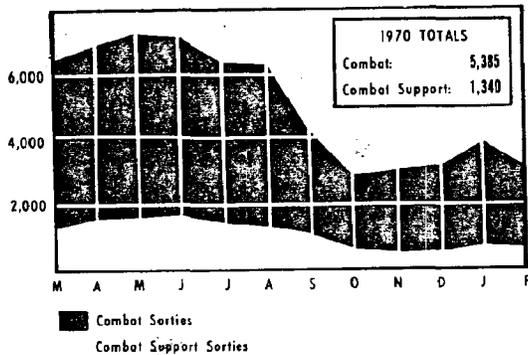
-In the same region, four F-4s from MAG-13 attacked a staging point on the 10th, destroying a truck and ten bunkers and setting off five secondary explosions.

-A strike by six F-4s against an enemy complex 16 miles west of Tam Ky on the 17th left 28 structures and bunkers destroyed and two 12.7mm machine gun positions silenced, while eight secondary explosions and fires consumed logistic stores at the site.

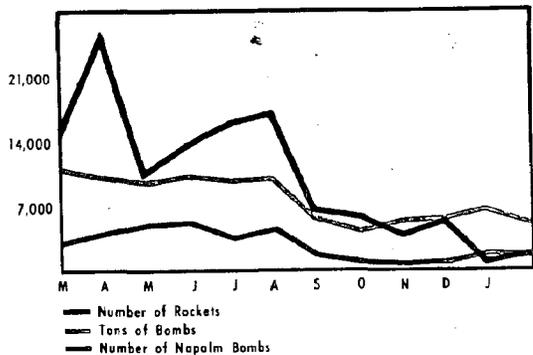
The following graphs compare in-country fixed wing operations during February with monthly totals since March 1969.

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

SORTIES FLOWN



ORDNANCE DELIVERED



REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

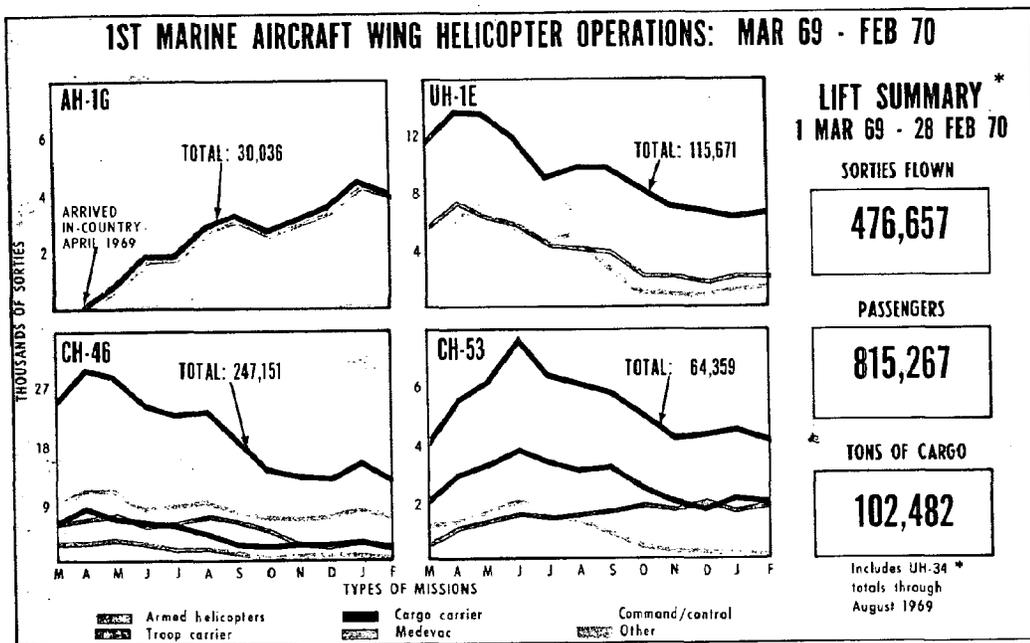
SECRET

SECRET

Helicopter Operations

During the month, Marine helicopter squadrons flew 27,878 sorties to accomplish the wide variety of heli-borne assignments common in the war zone. Almost one-third of the effort was conducted by CH-46 and CH-53 air-crews fulfilling vertical lift transport requirements; in all, these tactical and logistical flights moved 60,622 troops and passengers and 5,169 tons of cargo. As the major contributor of the Wing's high payload average, the CH-53s of HMH-463 carried 3,981 tons of supplies during 2,049 cargo lifts, establishing a monthly average of over 3,800 pounds per sortie. Other support during the month included 6,382 armed helicopter flights by AH-1Gs and UH-1Es, 1,610 medical evacuation missions, and 3,002 command and control sorties.

The following chart compares February helicopter operations, by aircraft type, with monthly totals since March 1969.



REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

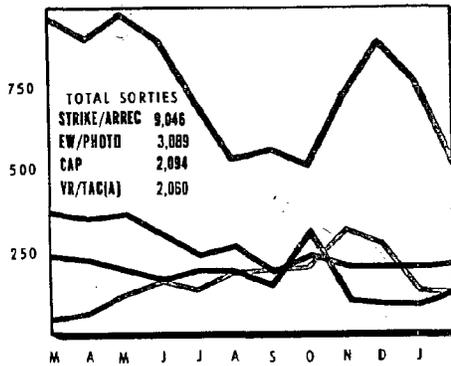
SECRET

SECRET

Out-of-Country Operations

Marine fixed wing aircrews compiled 986 sorties during February, as the 1st Wing continued to support out-of-country interdiction, air defense, and airborne reconnaissance operations. The largest portion of the effort again went to the Laos

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



interdiction campaign - 516 strike and armed reconnaissance sorties, supplemented by 320 support (electronic warfare and photo and visual reconnaissance) missions. An extension of the in-country air/ground interdiction program, the Laos air strikes continue to hamper NVA efforts to move personnel and logistics traffic along the many segments of the Ho Chi Minh trail. Of particular importance in the around-the-clock

Marine contribution is the A-6A. Tasked principally to armed reconnaissance missions, all-weather A-6As, utilizing various target acquisition modes, conducted 228 of their 238 sorties in February at night; of the 615 targets registered, over two-thirds were truck traffic, illuminated by the aircrafts' moving target indicator.

The aircraft of Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron (VMCJ)-1 totaled 213 out-of-country sorties during the month. Electronic warfare (EW) support, provided by 171 EA-6A sorties, minimized the North Vietnamese radar-controlled AAA and surface-to-air missile threat to Free World aircrews. To assist in meeting the photographic coverage requirements out-of-country, the Squadron's RF-4Bs flew 42 sorties, the majority to film critical areas in the Laotian panhandle.

SECRET

SECRET

Although redeployments have dictated a reduction in the scale of out-of-country support operations, the Wing continues to assign F-4B fighters to the US Navy's barrier combat air patrol (BARCAP) program off the coast of North Vietnam. Assuming the BARCAP on four occasions during the month, Marine aircrews flew a total of 58 sorties to assist in maintaining continuous air defense for US shipping and aircraft operating in the Gulf of Tonkin region.

Trans-Pacific Deployment KEY WALLOP

During February, two fixed wing aircraft squadrons accomplished the largest tactical trans-Pacific (trans-Pac) air movement yet recorded by Marine aviation units. Conducted in two concurrent phases, the move (code name KEY WALLOP) served to transfer VMA-223 (Phase I) and VMFA-542 (Phase II) from their staging position at Naval Air Station (NAS), Cubi Point, Philippine Islands to Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS), El Toro, California.

VMA-223, which departed RVN in late January as a portion of redeployment KEYSTONE BLUEJAY, commenced KEY WALLOP I on 1 February. From Cubi Point, the Squadron's 20 A-4Es made stops at NAS, Agana (Guam); Wake Island; and MCAS, Kaneohe (Hawaii) before arriving at El Toro. Because of limited fuel capacity, the A-4s required in-flight refueling once on each of the first three legs and twice between Hawaii and California; KC-130F refueler/transporters of VMGR-352, deployed from MCAS, El Toro, provided this necessary support, in addition to transporting required ground support personnel and equipment. Phase I of KEY WALLOP was completed on the 9th with the arrival of the last A-4E.

Initial departures of VMFA-542 aircraft from Cubi Point on 3 February signaled the start of KEY WALLOP II. Moving in trace of VMA-223, the Squadron's 15 F-4Bs made the same refueling/maintenance

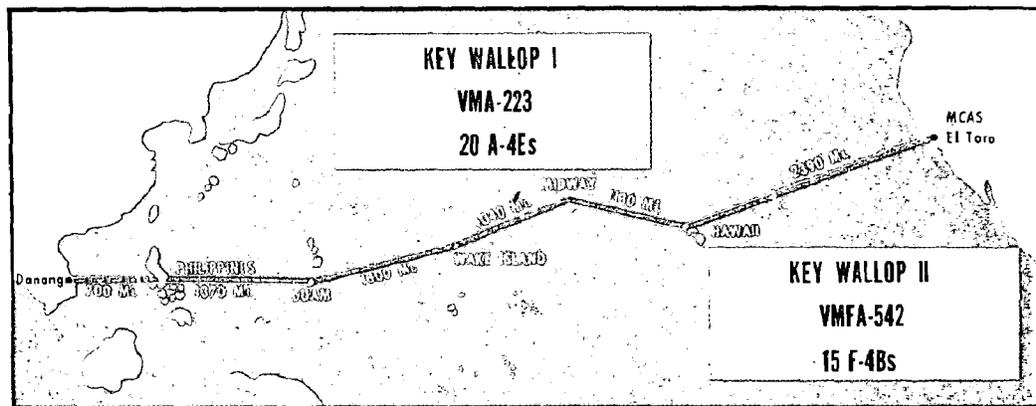
SECRET

SECRET

stops; however, in-flight refueling was required only on the last two legs. Recovery of the final F-4B at El Toro on the 11th concluded the record-setting KEY WALLOP trans-Pac.

The following map portrays the route and distances traveled by KEY WALLOP aircraft.

TRANS-PACIFIC DEPLOYMENT KEY WALLOP



Distribution of Marine Aircraft

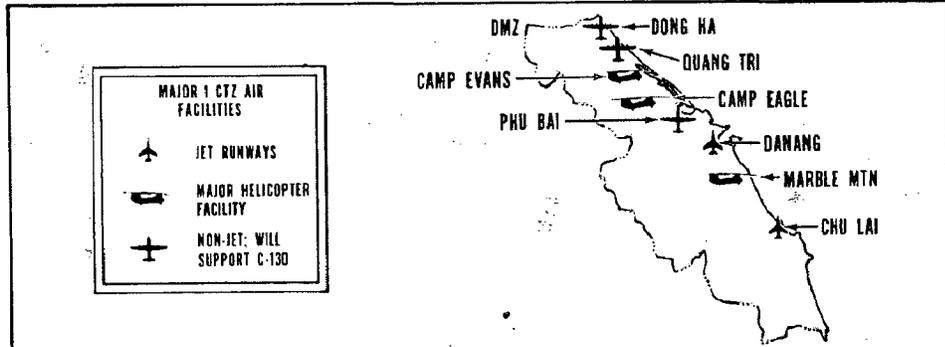
The final movements of 1st Wing units, as required by redeployment KEYSTONE BLUEJAY, were completed during February. On the 16th, VMA-211, with 12 A-4Es, transplanted to MCAS, Iwakuni, Japan. Additionally, the Wing was reduced by an aircraft group headquarters, when, on the 26th, MAG-12 was transferred to the 1st Wing (Rear) at Iwakuni. The departure of MAG-12 necessitated the transfer of the one remaining, in-country A-4E squadron (VMA-311) to MAG-13 at Chu Lai. In another in-country shift, all Marine helicopter assets were consolidated, as HMM-161 and 262 transplanted from Phu Bai to Marble Mountain, southeast of Danang.

The following chart, indicating the major air facilities in I CTZ, details the distribution of 1st Wing aircraft at end-February.

SECRET

SECRET

MARINE AIRCRAFT BASED IN I CTZ: FEBRUARY 1970



DANANG		CHU LAI		MARBLE MOUNTAIN (CON'T)	
1ST WING		MAG-13		HML-367	
H&MS-17		H&MS-13		UH-1E	2
C-117D	3	C-117D	1	AH-1G	28
US-2A/B	3	VMA-311		HMM-161	
MAG-11		A4-E	28	CH-46D	29
H&MS-11		VMFA-115		HMM-262	
C-117D	1	F-4B	25	CH-46D	25
TA-4F	12	VMFA-122		HMM-263	
VMCJ-1		F-4B	21	CH-46D	33
RF-4B	10	VMFA-314		HMM-364	
EA-6A	11	F-4B	19	CH-46D	29
VMA(AW)-225		TOTAL 94		HMH-463	
A-6A	12	MARBLE MOUNTAIN		CH-53A	3
VMA(AW)-242		MAG-16		CH-53D	20
A-6A	12	H&MS-16		TOTAL 225	
VMO-2		UH-1E	9	TOTAL USMCAIRCRAFT	
OV-10A	19	CH-46D	6	FIXED WING	177
TOTAL 83		HML-167		HELICOPTER	225
		UH-1E	41		

Aircraft Losses

Marine aircraft losses to direct enemy action during the month totaled five, three fixed wing (two F-4Bs and one A-4E) and two helicopters (an AH-1G and a CH-46D). Both F-4Bs sustained hits during close air support missions; similarly, the two helicopters were struck and subsequently crashed while operating out of combat landing zones. The A-4E, after being hit by ground fire during an interdiction mission along the Laotian border, developed a cockpit fire and crashed.

SECRET

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

SUMMARY

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

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

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

SECRET

iii

SECRET

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

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

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

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

SECRET

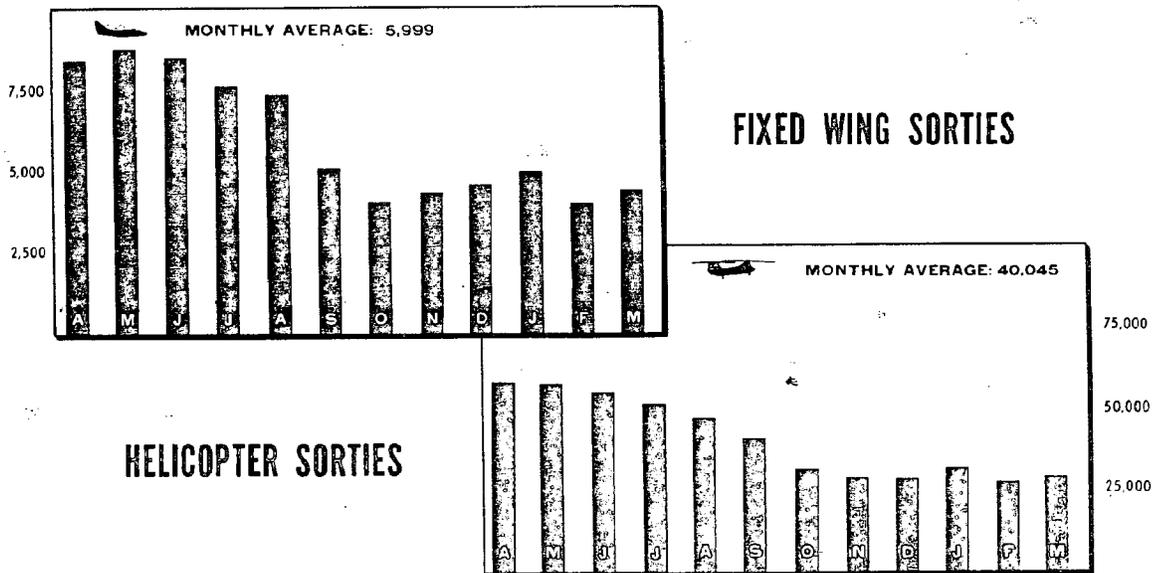
SECRET

AIR OPERATIONS

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

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

MARINE AIR OPERATIONS: APR 1969 - MAR 1970



REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

SECRET

In-Country Fixed Wing Operations

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

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

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

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

SECRET

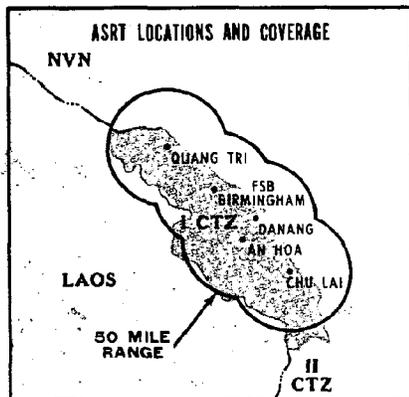
SECRET

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

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

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

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



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

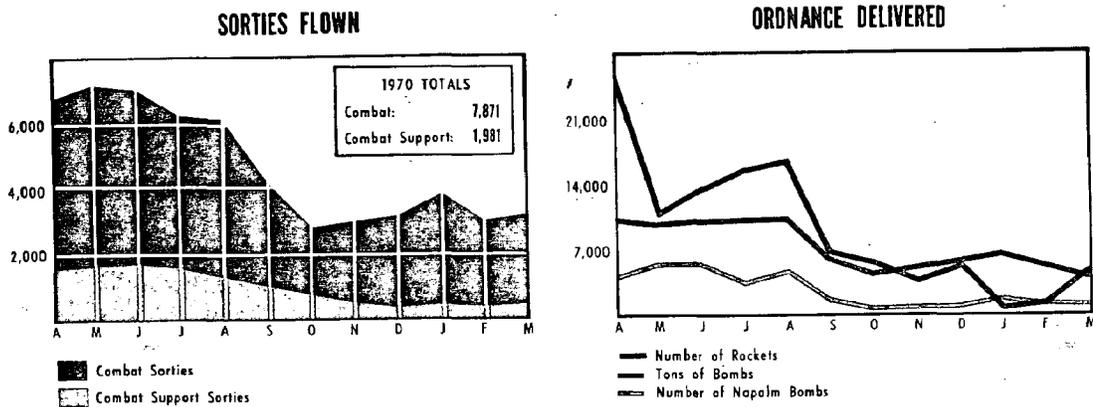
SECRET

SECRET

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

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

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



Helicopter Operations

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

SECRET

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

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

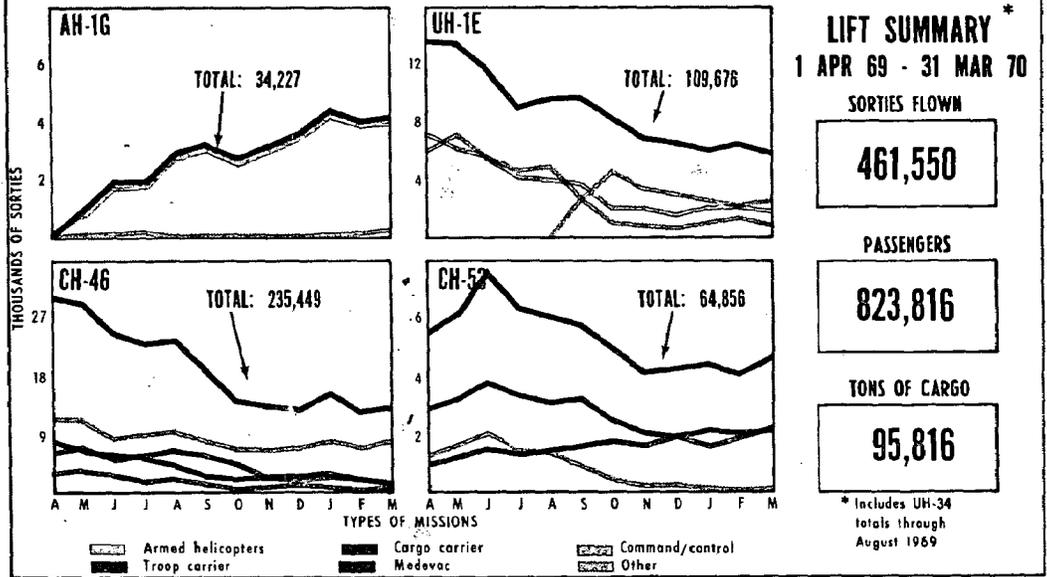
A significant example of air/ground mobility occurred on the night of 4-5 March during the execution of a night assault, which melded the 1st Wing's resources to support the ground scheme of a joint US/Korean Marine maneuver. Coordinated staff planning called for lifting some 700 Marines and associated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

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

SECRET

SECRET

1ST MARINE AIRCRAFT WING HELICOPTER OPERATIONS: APR 69 - MAR 70



-AH-1G Helicopter

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

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

SECRET

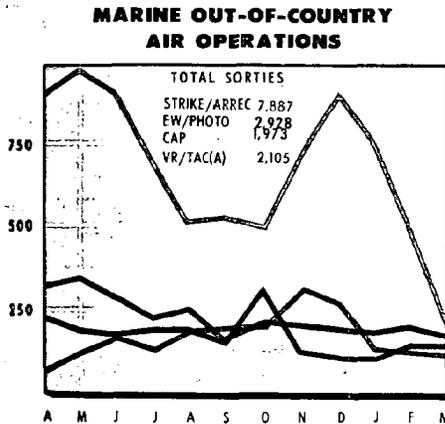
REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

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

Out-of-Country Operations

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



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

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

SECRET

SECRET

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

Aircraft Losses

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

Distribution of Marine Aircraft

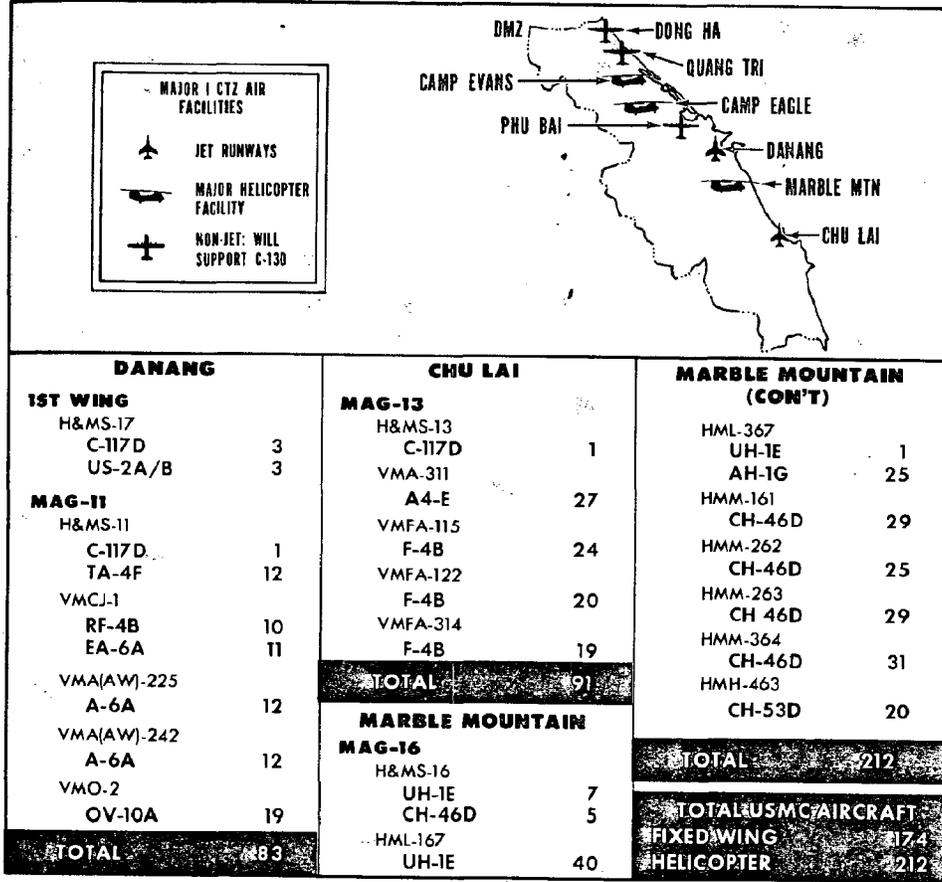
Stabilizing after Phase III redeployment the structure of the 1st Wing remained unchanged during March. Noteworthy, however, was the departure of the last increment of CH-53A helicopters initially introduced in-country during January 1967; this leaves Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH)-463 equipped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

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

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

MARINE AIRCRAFT BASED IN I CTZ: MARCH 1970



REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

SECRET

SUMMARY

In general, the patterns of activity—III MAF and enemy—remained unchanged from those prevailing since the beginning of the year. During May, 1st Marine Division combat operations, spoiling enemy attempts to disrupt pacification and revolutionary development, continued to inflict substantial losses on the NVA and VC throughout eastern Quang Nam province. First Marine Aircraft Wing flights, in addition to supporting the Division with thousands of helicopter and fixed wing sorties, ranged across I CTZ, Laos, North Vietnam, and, for the first time, Cambodia, to reconnoiter or attack enemy base areas and resupply routes and to support Free World forces. Although somewhat increasing attacks-by-fire and ground assaults, the enemy continued to direct most of his attention toward stalling pacification progress rather than attempting major confrontation with III MAF units.

Despite the fact that no major or prolonged battles took place during the month, the NVA and VC lost 742 killed, 87 taken prisoner, and 239 weapons captured during combat with Marines, including those in the Combined Action Force and Combined Unit Pacification Program. Patrols operating as part of the 1st Marine Division counter-rocket program accounted for a portion of the enemy losses. This program, largely coordinated and operated by the 11th Marines, has been highly successful since 1967 in diminishing frequency, intensity, and accuracy of rocket attacks against Danang and its environs.

Enemy activity near the population centers of Quang Nam, denied adequate resupply and support by continuing pacification, is heavily dependent upon materiel from North Vietnamese sources introduced into RVN via a network of interconnected roads and trails. Aerial bombardment of distant routes and base areas, reconnaissance

SECRET

SECRET

operations along intermediate locations, and III MAF maneuver against intra-Quang Nam supply routes have compounded enemy logistic problems, thereby lessening his potential for sustained combat.

A small increase in enemy activity in Quang Nam during April was reflected in pacification progress statistics which declined slightly more than one percent. A significant realignment of combined action platoons, partially designed to strengthen pacification efforts in Quang Nam, took place in early May. A portion of the Marines and Navy corpsmen, from 11 platoons deactivated elsewhere in I CTZ, were assigned with Popular Force elements to form seven new Quang Nam combined action platoons.

In another noteworthy change, the Naval Support Activity Hospital, located near Danang, discontinued operations in May, as the Navy continued a phased reduction of forces in connection with the redeployment program. The hospital had provided excellent medical service to Marines for over four years.

}
}
}
}
}
}
}
}
}
}
}

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

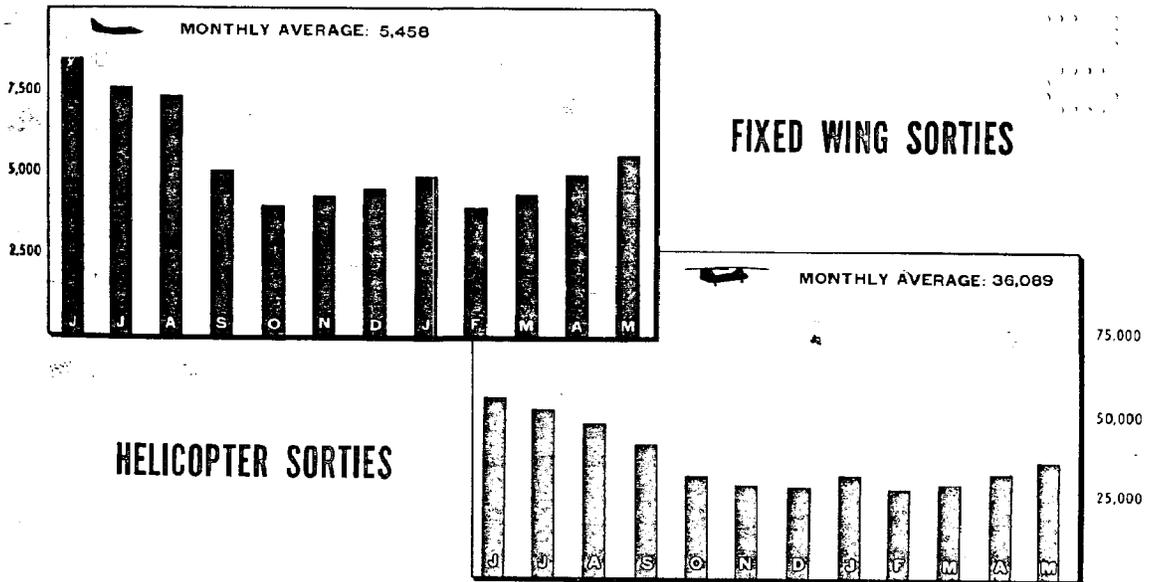
SECRET

AIR OPERATIONS

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing responded to the requirements of Free World forces with 40,975 fixed wing and helicopter sorties during May. This represents a 14 percent rise over April fixed wing sorties and a 12 percent climb in helicopter missions, most of which were registered in the CH-46D logistic and combat troop carrying category. Within the Republic of Vietnam, more than 3,300 attack missions dropped 8,643 tons of ordnance, while Marine helicopters lifted over 86,000 troops and passengers and 6,100 tons of cargo. During out-of-country operations, 849 strike and combat support sorties were logged over the Gulf of Tonkin and hostile regions of Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam.

Increased levels of 1st Wing air operations during May are compared with monthly totals of the past year in the following graphs.

MARINE AIR OPERATIONS: JUNE 1969 - MAY 1970



REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

SECRET

In-Country Fixed Wing Operations

Operations by Marine Air Groups-11 and 13 were an essential part of the flexible fire support and surveillance provided by 1st Wing during the month. Their 3,316 attack flights--an increase of 13.5 percent over April and 33 percent since March--provided the majority of close, direct, and interdiction air support required by Free World units in I CTZ. III MAF received 1,663 (38 percent) of the total fighter/attack sorties flown. Although contact with enemy dispositions remained at a low level, close air support was frequently required, as indicated by 2,519 missions logged wherein ordnance was delivered in close proximity to ground troops. Many of these flights were scrambled from a 15 minute alert pad, manned around-the-clock by A-4E and F-4B aircrews of MAG-13 to provide quick response.

In accomplishing their mission, 1st Wing aircraft delivered 4,518 air-to-ground rockets; 2,737 canisters of napalm; and 7,959 tons of bombs, ranging from 250 pounders to devastating 2,000 pounders, but using the medium, 500-pound size most often. Battle damage assessment of target areas revealed 314 military structures and 505 bunkers destroyed, 381 secondary explosions and fires among logistic stores, and 50 NVA/VC killed by Marine fixed wing strikes.

During May, there was also a significant increase in 1st Wing photo and visual reconnaissance sorties flown in I CTZ--145 by RF-4B aircrews and 579 by TA-4F and OV-10A crews. Some 450 of the more than 655 OV-10A flights by Marine Observation Squadron-2 were directed to visually reconnoiter possible enemy activity in the III MAF operations area. In addition, 121 TA-4F sorties made daily checks on enemy lines of communication (LOC) in the western border area where they connect with the Ho Chi Minh Trail resupply network.

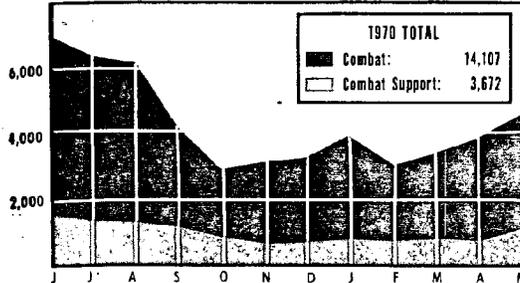
The graphs on the following page compare May fixed wing operations with monthly totals since June 1969.

SECRET

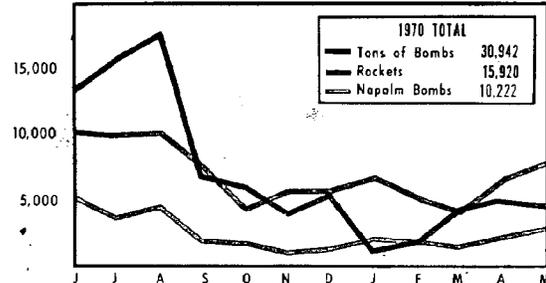
SECRET

**IN-COUNTRY FIXED WING SUPPORT BY MARINE AIRCRAFT
JUNE 1969 - MAY 1970**

SORTIES FLOWN



ORDNANCE DELIVERED



Helicopter Operations

For the third consecutive month, helicopter sorties (35,288) flown by Marine Air Group-16 squadrons increased considerably. The 86,096 passengers carried during the month were the largest number of people helilifted since May 1969.

CH-53D helicopters of HMH-463 continued to record impressive increases in passengers and cargo hauled--5,647 flights lifted 43,390 passengers and 5,217 tons of cargo, representing 51 and 85 percent, respectively, of the totals for all helicopters. Thirty-one sorties, a small portion of CH-53 utilization, were used to recover salvageable, tactical aircraft down away from their home field; thus, substantial time and dollar savings were achieved. Pilots and crew members of the four CH-46D squadrons logged 19,525 missions.

Including one or more armed helicopters (UH-1E or AH-1G) in medical evacuation, reconnaissance team support, or combat heliborne assault missions creates an aircraft package which can rapidly place suppressive fire on enemy attempting to interrupt helicopter missions or ground maneuver. Armed escort operations by HML-167, equipped with UH-1Es, and HML-367, with AH-1Gs, accounted for more than 6,900 flights.

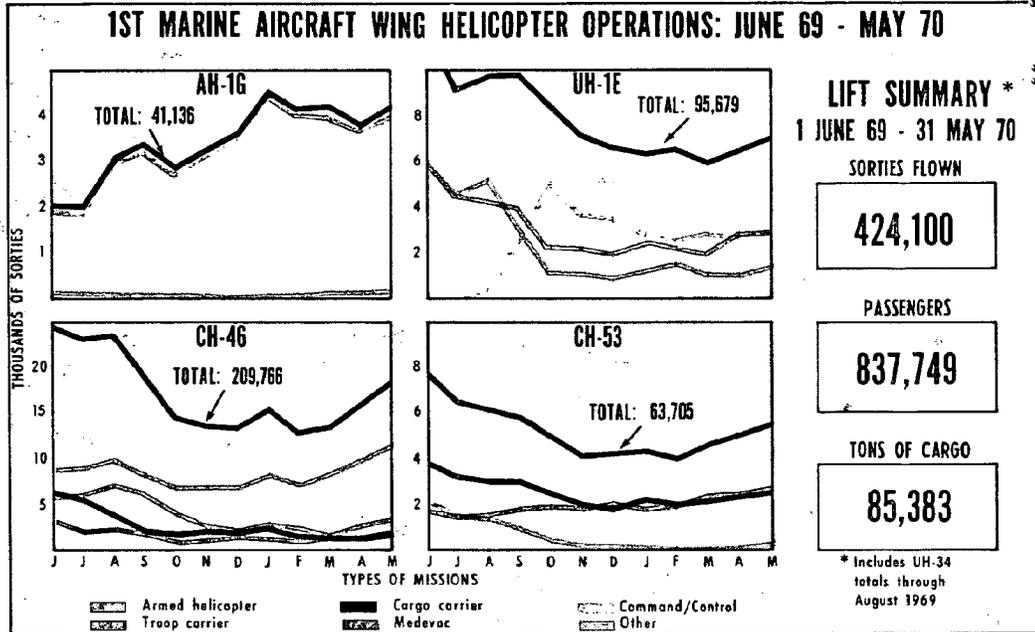
SECRET

SECRET

Several actions during May exemplify the effectiveness of armed helicopter operations. On the morning of 6 May, two AH-1Gs observed and attacked eight enemy infiltrators two miles south of Liberty Bridge, killing six. Two days later and just northeast of the bridge, four AH-1Gs were credited with killing 11 NVA/VC and contributing to the capture of two more. Toward evening the same day, reconnaissance team PENNY WISE, engaged in heavy contact 18 miles west of An Hoa, requested suppressive fire and immediate extraction. Repeated firing passes by armed helicopters killed 13 NVA and enabled successful extraction of the team.

In addition to armed reconnaissance, UH-1E aircrews logged 3,590 visual reconnaissance and command and control sorties. These daily flights afforded Marine ground unit commanders unobscured observation of trail activity, terrain, potential landing zones, and avenues of approach.

The graphs below reflect 1st Wing helicopter operations for the past 12 months.



REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

SECRET

Initially deployed to RVN in March 1966 with HMM-164, the CH-46 Sea Knight, powered by two T58 jet engines, has replaced the UH-34D as the Marine Corps primary vertical assault helicopter. As a result, III MAF gained a more powerful, medium transport helicopter, providing increased troop and cargo capacities. Standard operating procedure for logistic resupply was changed to take advantage of CH-46 superiority. At logistic support areas (LSA), larger quantities of stores were prestaged and rigged in cargo nets for quick hook-up underneath a hovering Sea Knight. The suspended, external load saved time at both LSA and destination (fire support base or field position of a maneuver unit); increased efficiency when comparing flight time versus stores delivered; decreased exposure time in a landing zone for both helicopters and serviced customers; and reduced either time or helicopters required for resupply missions.

Some supplies are carried internally loaded on small trailers or pallets, which are quickly rolled on and off utilizing the Integrated Cargo Handling and Rescue System. The arrangement consists of a rear cargo ramp and door, utility winch, and rollers in the aircraft floor. This procedure also provides faster aircraft turn-around and decreased handling of supplies.

The tandem rotor CH-46 has proven itself a dependable and versatile workhorse, capable of performing diverse tasks--troop and cargo transport, medical evacuation, visual reconnaissance, search and rescue, and tactical aircraft recovery--under varied operating conditions. The CH-46A has been replaced by the more powerful "D" model, which, like its predecessor, has performed well in mountain regions to the west and in humid, coastal areas.

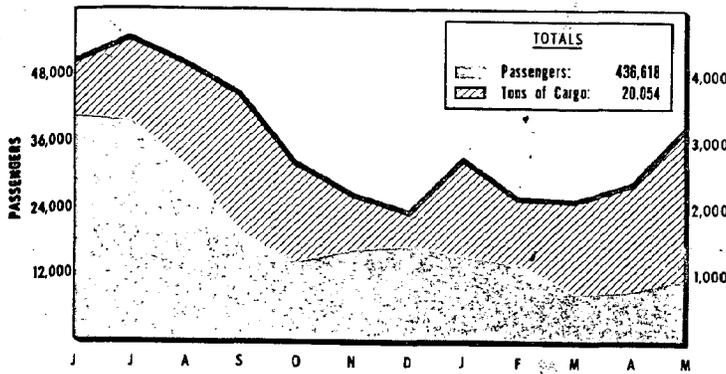
A review of CH-46 totals since the helicopter joined the 1st Wing reveals the magnitude of its role in III MAF operations. Since March 1966, the Sea Knight has flown 713,580 sorties--29 percent of USMC helicopter totals. During the past year, CH-46 aircrews logged 218,546 sorties, carried 436,618 passengers, and delivered 20,054 tons of cargo.

SECRET

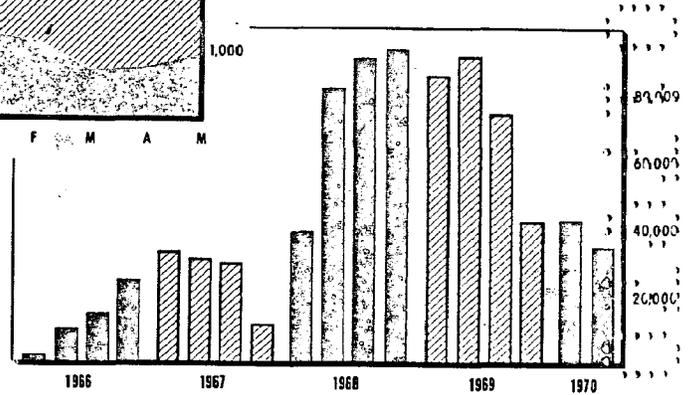
SECRET

The following graphs show CH-46 sortie totals since its introduction into RVN and passengers and cargo heli-lifted during the past 12 months.

CH-46 HELICOPTER OPERATIONS



TROOP/CARGO LIFTS
JUN 69 - MAY 70



QUARTERLY SORTIES
MAR 66 - MAY 70

Out-of-Country Operations

In May, 1st Wing fighter/attack aircrews produced another operational first, as Marine tactical jets struck in Cambodia, supporting attacks against enemy sanctuaries. Twenty-two direct and close air support missions were flown for US Army 4th Division and ARVN 22d Division elements in Operation BINH TAY I. The maneuver was targeted against Base Area 702 located approximately 12 miles south of the Laos-Vietnam-Cambodia tri-border area and 40 miles west of Pleiku, RVN. On 5 and 6 May, MAG-13 flew eight missions, employing 1,000-pound bombs to clear landing zones prior to heliborne assaults. Flights on 22 May, ten

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

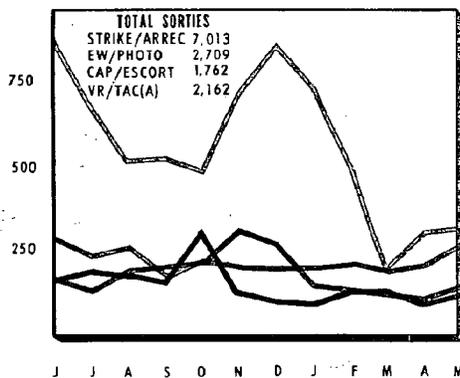
SECRET

more direct air support missions, dropped quarter-ton napalm canisters and 500-pound snake eyes (bombs with large fins that retard descent rate and allow accurate, low-level delivery). The final four sorties were scrambled on 23 May from the MAG-13 alert pad to provide close air support for an ARVN element in heavy contact with a bunkered enemy force.

The remaining 827 out-of-country missions carried out ongoing interdiction, air defense, and aerial reconnaissance efforts over Laos, NVN, and the Gulf of Tonkin. Over 220 were interdiction sorties by MAG-11 A-6A squadrons, VMA(AW)-225 and 242, which struck 610 stationary and 143 moving targets. The latter were detected by the plane's automatic moving target indicator (AMTI).

Several actions in Laos are cited to show the efficiency of AMTI and A-6A Intruder crews. On 1 May,

MARINE OUT-OF-COUNTRY AIR OPERATIONS



a single plane scored a highly successful mission during which four trucks were detected and destroyed and ten fires ignited. During the evening of 11 May, a flight of three A-6As located and hit enemy road traffic, accounting for seven trucks damaged, 15 secondary explosions, and two fires. Toward the end of the month, Intruders located an active AA gun position on Route 922 and a convoy of trucks. During subsequent bombing, seven trucks were damaged, the gun position was destroyed, and 20 secondary explosions were observed around the AA weapon site.

Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron-11 TA-4F pilots flew 150 sorties over Laos to detect hostile activity and control strike aircraft. Thus, two visual reconnaissance and three tactical air controller missions were averaged per day over North Vietnamese LOCs through the Laotian Steel Tiger area adjacent to I CTZ.

SECRET

SECRET

EA-6A and RF-4B aircrews of Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron-1 gathered intelligence and assessed strike damage in the Laotian panhandle, flying daily photographic and occasional electronic warfare (EW) flights. Laotian flights totaled 71, while 185 other missions located, and when necessary, jammed NVN radar sites. RF-4Bs logged four more NVN flights photographing areas of intelligence interest.

MAG-13 F-4B crews supplied barrier combat air patrols at Yankee Station over the Gulf of Tonkin for the US Navy on six occasions, logging 53 night sorties. These operations required on-station, in-flight refueling from a Marine KC-130 tanker at night, a maneuver requiring skillful coordination and flying by tanker and F-4B crews. Remaining F-4B missions included 61 armed escort flights for unarmed or lightly armed aircraft and 79 strike flights targeted against LOCs, truck parks, and staging areas in Laos.

Aircraft Losses

During May, two F-4Bs were lost as a result of direct enemy action. On the 15th, one was hit in the engine section by ground fire while on a close air support mission seven miles northwest of Danang. The crew ejected on final approach at Danang Air Base shortly after an explosion and fire occurred in the aft fuselage. The other F-4B was hit by AA fire while on an escort mission over Laos on the 27th and crashed near Quang Tri city.

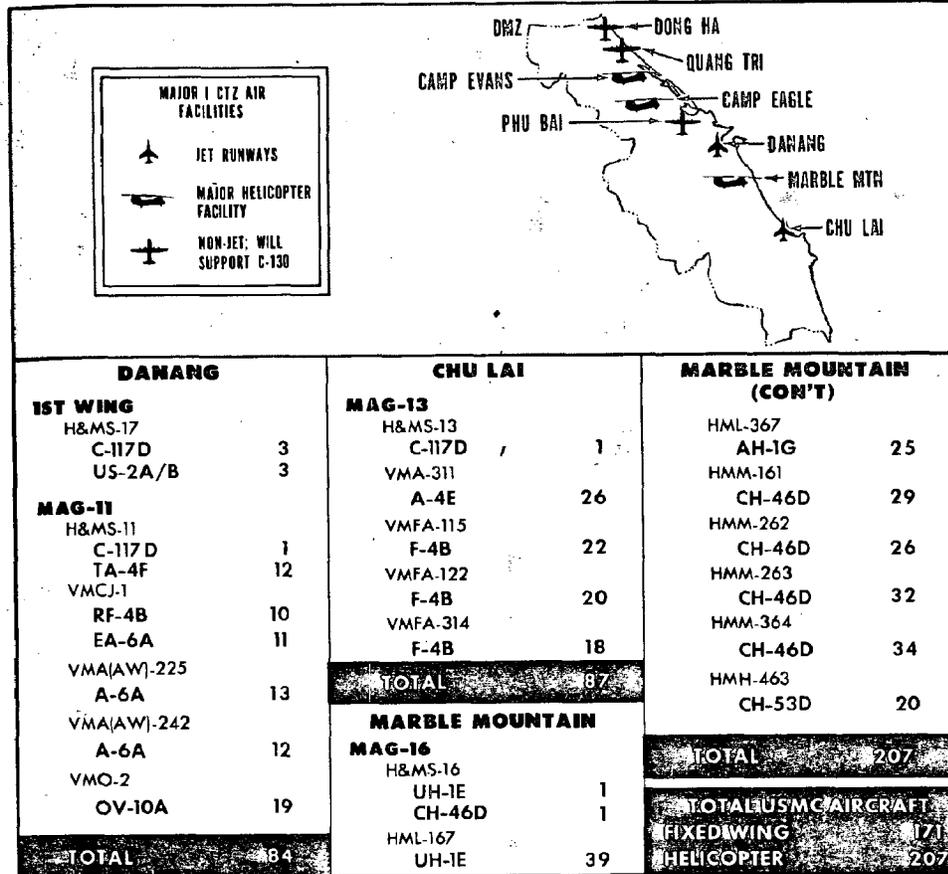
Distribution of Marine Aircraft

There were no changes in 1st Wing unit locations and only minor variances in numbers of aircraft assigned during May. The chart on the following page indicates allotments and placement at end-May.

SECRET

SECRET

MARINE AIRCRAFT BASED IN I CTZ : MAY 1970



REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

SECRET

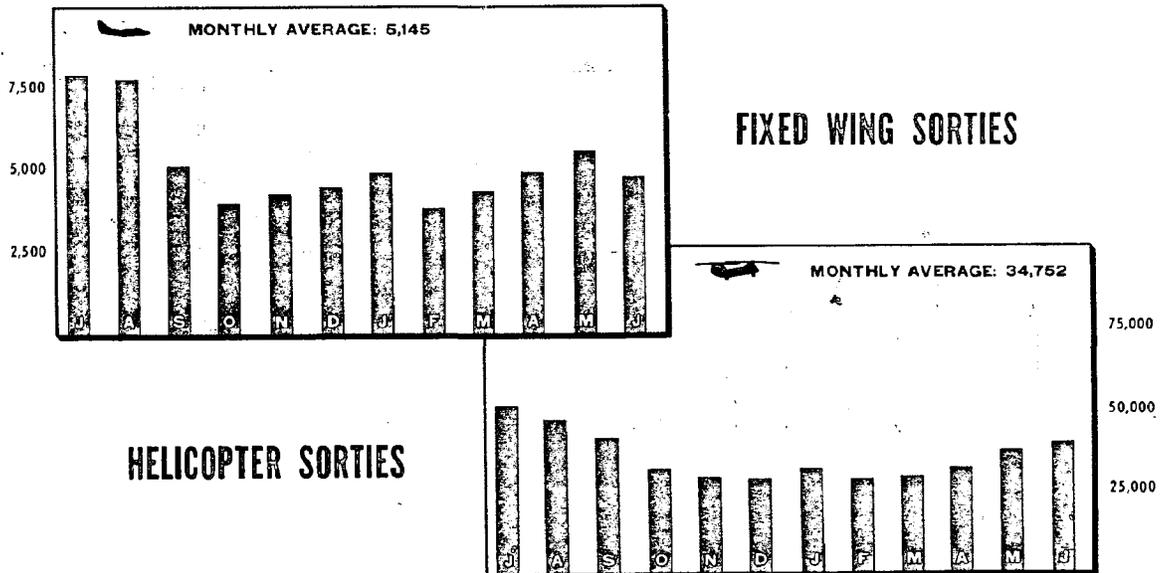
AIR OPERATIONS

In June, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing tactical squadrons flew over 42,900 fixed wing and helicopter sorties in support of Free World operations. More than 740 of the sorties were out-of-country fixed wing strike and combat support flights, either for interdiction and surveillance in Laos or for reconnaissance and combat air patrols over the Gulf of Tonkin. In excess of 38,000 sorties were logged by the Wing's seven helicopter squadrons in transporting over 85,000 passengers and 7,800 tons of cargo.

During the month, as the Wing continued to helilift troops and provide armed helicopter support for Pacifier patrols, another new technique involving helicopters was developed. The tactic, large air strikes with bombs and barrels of napalm, employed virtually every type of rotary and fixed wing aircraft possessed by 1st Wing.

The following graphs compare fixed wing and helicopter sortie totals during June with those since July 1969.

MARINE AIR OPERATIONS: JULY 1969 - JUNE 1970



REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

SECRET

In-Country Fixed Wing Operations

While the enemy refrained from committing forces to large-scale engagements in preference for small attacks against selected objectives, 1st Wing again increased missions to detect NVA/VC movements and locations. Three MAG-11 squadrons (H&MS-11, VM CJ-1, and VMO-2), tasked with surveillance as a primary mission, logged 731 photographic and visual reconnaissance (VR) flights. Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron-11 TA-4Fs, with two pilots in the tandem configured cockpits, ranged the AA-guarded border region of Laos and I CTZ, totaling 108 VR sorties.

In areas closer to friendly maneuver elements, VMO-2 OV-10A pilots, with aerial observers in the rear seat, flew 400 VR and 315 forward air controller (airborne) and artillery spotting missions. On the afternoon of 24 June, three visual reconnaissance flights by TA-4Fs and an OV-10A discovered substantial base camp activity in western Quang Nam province. One locale, believed to be a rest area for the 38th and 141st NVA Regiments and a transshipment point serviced by the 220th Transportation Regiment, evidenced well worn trails, neatly cultivated fields along the streams, numerous personnel huts, bunkers, and fighting holes. Additionally, a ten-foot tower with three long cables, apparently used for communications, was sighted.

Marine Air Groups-11 and 13 continued to supply essential fixed wing attack support, providing 2,497 strike missions. III MAF ground units received 1,345 fighter/attack sorties, 43 percent of all close, direct, and interdiction air support flown by the 1st Wing during June.

Several flights during the month illustrate results obtained from fixed wing employment. A single A-6A from MAG-11 struck an enemy position seven miles south of FSB Ryder on 15 June. An airborne Americal Division forward air controller (FAC) reported 17 bunkers and four structures destroyed by the aircraft.

SECRET

30

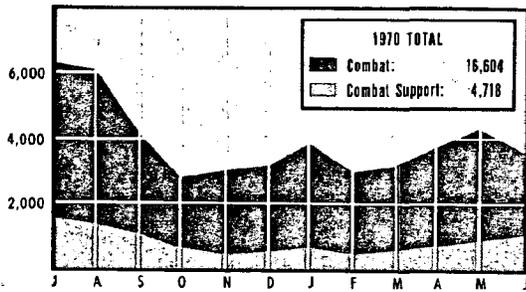
SECRET

The next day a Marine FAC, directing a strike five miles north-northwest of An Hoa, credited another A-6A with 13 secondary explosions. On the morning of 19 June, two F-4Bs were scrambled from the Chu Lai alert pad and headed for northern I CTZ to hit a newly discovered enemy logistic area. The final tally from the two-aircraft strike was 15 secondary explosions, eight fires, and a bunker razed. Two days later, preplanned F-4B sorties for the 101st Airborne Division struck a large fortified position and demolished 30 bunkers.

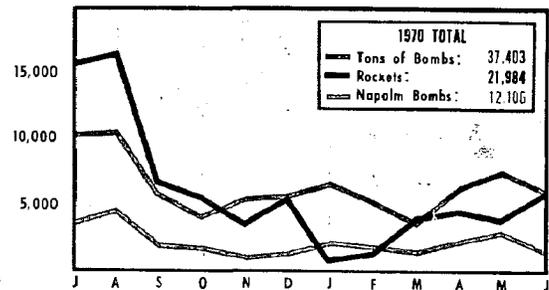
A resume of in-country fixed wing operations and ordnance delivered is illustrated on the following graphs.

**IN-COUNTRY FIXED WING SUPPORT BY MARINE AIRCRAFT
JULY 1969 - JUNE 1970**

SORTIES FLOWN



ORDNANCE DELIVERED



Helicopter Operations

During June, the total number of sorties flown by helicopter squadrons of Marine Air Group-16 substantially increased. The 38,109 sorties, the largest monthly total since September 1969, carried 85,499 passengers (a slight decrease from last month) and 7,826 tons of cargo, the highest volume since August 1969.

Following the normal operational pattern, CH-46Ds flew twice as many sorties (19,794) as any other USMC helicopter. The majority were logistic and combat troop lifts that carried over 43,400 passengers. Two of the largest

SECRET

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

lifts were accomplished in mid-June: on the 16th, nine CH-46Ds landed 500 men of the 51st ARVN Regiment two and one-half miles west-southwest of Thuong Duc on Hill 551; and on the 18th, eight CH-46Ds inserted 470 troops of 3d Battalion, 1st Marines into four landing zones in the north end of Elephant Valley, 15 miles northwest of Danang.

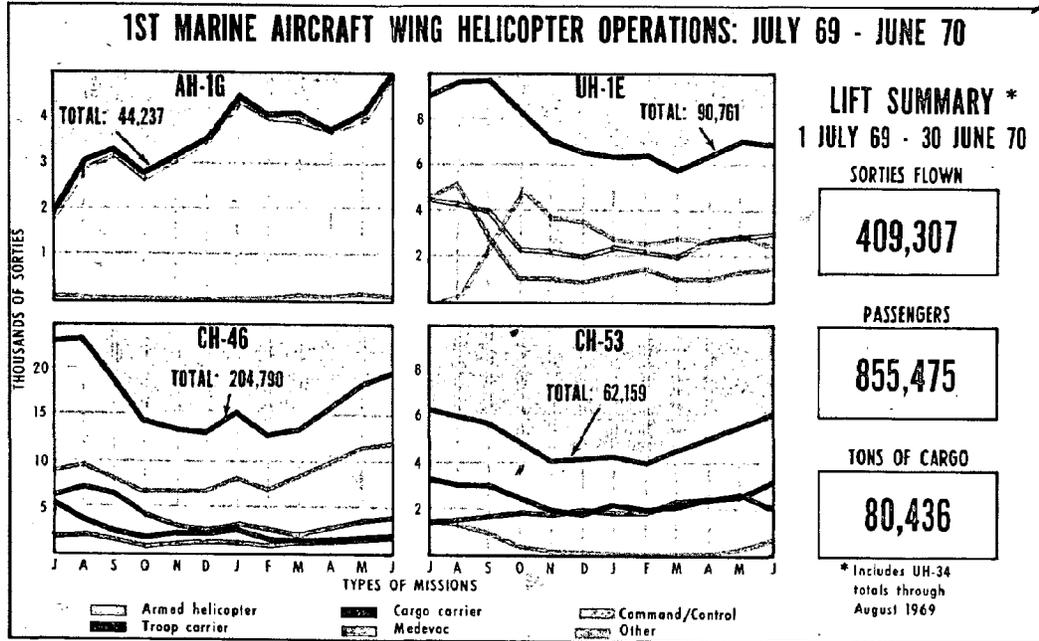
Of the 10,794 sorties flown by UH-1E and AH-1G aircrews, 7,981 were armed helicopter missions used to escort other helicopters on such missions as combat troop assaults. Participating in a cordon and search operation in the vicinity of Football Island three miles north-northeast of An Hoa on 30 June, four AH-1Gs caught three boatloads of VC attempting to escape across the Thu Bon river. The Cobras took them under fire, killing 16 and destroying the boats.

Besides delivering 6,717 tons of cargo, HMH-463 (20 CH-53Ds) helilifted 38,500 passengers/troops. Since January, the CH-53D has been used increasingly to insert combat troops into landing zones--a practice which permits rapid troop build-up due to greater capacity and speed of the aircraft. One such mission landed 165 men of the 5th Marines into a blocking force position 11 miles west of Hoi An on 9 June; another, on 16 June, moved 950 ARVN Rangers into a landing zone southeast of Thuong Duc. Representative of the carrying capacity of the CH-53D Sea Stallion was 113,000 pounds of ammunition and supplies brought to 3d Battalion, 1st Marines in northern Elephant Valley by three CH-53Ds shortly after the troops landed by CH-46Ds. Also, four CH-53Ds delivered (under fire) 80,000 pounds of 105mm howitzer ammunition to 5th Special Forces and 51st ARVN elements at Thuong Duc.

The CH-53D was employed in its newest tactical role--dropping large quantities of napalm in 55-gallon drums on the enemy--three times during the month. A complete discussion of these operations follows the graphs on the next page, which compare 1st Wing helicopter operations during the past year.

SECRET

SECRET



-Flame Drop Operations

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, by virtue of the fact that it has a variety of organic rotary wing as well as fixed wing aircraft, has consistently demonstrated its unique ability to tailor a special package of aircraft with different capabilities to accomplish a particular mission. A concept (named Thrashlight), which envisioned using large numbers of different types of helicopter and fixed wing aircraft to deliver tons of mixed ordnance on an area, started to evolve on 31 May and 3 June. On those dates, relatively small quantities of 55-gallon drums of napalm were dropped from CH-53D helicopters to support Korean Marines southwest of Danang. The barrels, as expected, burst on the ground spreading napalm in every direction. The mixture was then ignited by aerial rockets. As these flights confirmed feasibility of the helicopter napalm drop technique, the concept was expanded to include conjunctive use of fixed wing aircraft to deliver high explosive ordnance, armed helicopters to protect the napalm carriers, search and rescue helicopters, and command and control aircraft. Timing and control of such a package was recognized

SECRET

REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET

as a complex problem--one, however, that was solved through the Wing's close intersquadron working relationships and centralized control of all participating rotary and fixed wing aircraft.

An opportunity to try this new technique presented itself when intelligence reports indicated that a major enemy headquarters, the command post of Front 4, had moved from Base Area 112 to a position in western Quang Nam province, some 35 miles southwest of Danang. The new enemy camp was located in a mountainous area with deep ravines and canyons covered with dense, triple canopy jungle. Since the location of the area and prevailing tactical considerations precluded a ground assault against the headquarters, 1st Wing proposed to attack the target with a concentrated Marine air strike of helicopter-dropped napalm, augmented by 1,000 and 2,000-pound, delayed fuze bombs delivered by high performance attack aircraft.

The plan, executed at 0600 on 7 June, employed eight 12-plane CH-53D flights, with 20 55-gallon barrels of napalm in two standard cargo nets slung under each helicopter. Each flight consisted of four waves of three aircraft, spaced ten minutes apart and escorted by two AH-1G. Dropping the napalm from 1,500 to 2,000 feet above the terrain ensured penetration of the jungle canopy, bursting of the barrels, and spreading of the mixture. The napalm was ignited on the ground by white phosphorus and high explosive 2.75-inch rockets fired by an OV-10A or AH-1G. Sections of F-4Bs and A-6As carrying heavy, delayed fuze bombs struck the target before the napalm drops and then again between waves. In addition to the OV-10A FAC(A), a CH-46D for search and rescue and a UH-1E for command and control stayed on station near the strike zone during the eight-hour operation. Total sorties logged in the operation were 99 CH-53D, 60 AH-1G, five CH-46D, six UH-1E, 14 A-6A, 20 F-4B, nine OV-10A, and three RF-4B.

Post-strike photography by the RF-4Bs revealed bunkers caved in and numerous trails uncovered. One intelligence report indicated that the Front 4 Commander was forced to displace again. More specific bomb damage assessment (BDA) was precluded due to terrain, jungle canopy, and infeasibility of search by ground elements.

With the lessons learned and the knowledge that such a large, coordinated air effort could be highly successful,

SECRET

SECRET

1st Wing prepared a similar strike package for Quang Da Special Zone Headquarters. The operation was designed to facilitate ongoing 51st ARVN Regiment maneuver to relieve Thuong Duc from enemy pressure and diminish the enemy anti-aircraft capability which imperiled Wing aircraft resupplying forces in that area. Helicopters of the 1st Wing had encountered daily rocket and mortar fire on resupply missions to Thuong Duc and ARVN ground elements.

The ground scheme of maneuver called for 51st Regiment elements to move quickly from Hill 551 to the target area of a B-52 strike scheduled for 15 June. The avenue of approach into the target area was a narrow ridgeline controlled by the enemy. Approximately 1,900 yards of ridgeline, with deep bunkers dug just below the crest, was designated as the target for the Marine rotary and fixed wing strike. The B-52 strike went on schedule, but the flame drop operation was postponed one day due to heavy cloud cover.

From the outset of the drop at 0615 until 0900, three flights of CH-53Ds, interspersed with F-4Bs and A-6As, worked over the target to within 400 yards of friendly units. Starting at 0900, fixed wing aircraft with MK-77 napalm canisters and 20mm guns attacked within the 400-yard distance for a half hour. Again, OV-10A, AH-1G, UH-1E, and CH-46D planes were in the area to provide their respective services. As an added feature, a section of A-4Es carrying Rockeye II bombs (canisters that open at a preselected time after drop and disperse armor-piercing bomblets over a target area) were on station continuously to suppress expected AA fire. The ARVN battalion moved as scheduled at 0930, with the Thrashlight strikes continuing to the immediate northwest. At the same time, CH-46Ds lifted a second 500-man ARVN battalion to Hill 551. Originally scheduled to continue until 1300, the operation was terminated at 1130 in order to provide helicopters for another ARVN lift into a landing zone six miles east, where a second B-52 strike was targeted. An operation recap shows flights by 72 CH-53Ds, 25 CH-46Ds, 12 A-6As, 24 F-4Bs, 12 A-4Es, plus continuous coverage by OV-10As, AH-1Gs, and UH-1Es.

The Thrashlight cleared the way for the ARVN to move some 3,700 yards toward the objective in one day, unopposed except for occasional sniper fire. Enemy losses

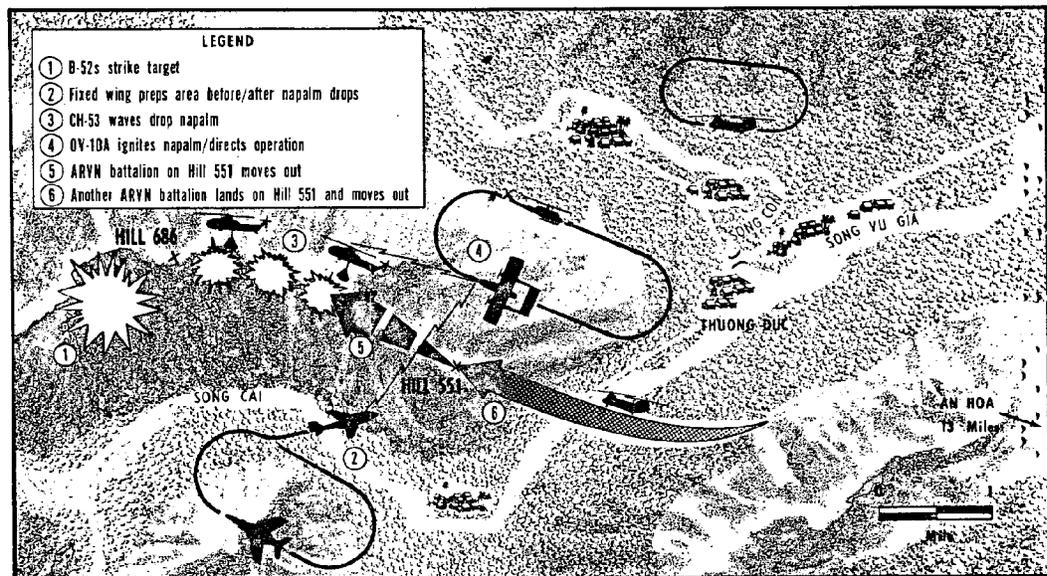
SECRET

SECRET

to the air operation were some 70 NVA/VC killed on or, near the ridgeline and seven 12.7mm AA sites destroyed.

The successful flame drop package developed by 1st Wing and executed on 16 June is depicted in the following representation.

THRASHLIGHT OPERATION: 16 JUNE 1970



Out-of-Country Operations

During June, fixed wing aircrews of Marine Air Groups-11 and 13 flew 741 strike and combat support missions over Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam, and the Gulf of Tonkin. Four of the strike missions seeded a fording point in Cambodia with MK-36 Destructor bombs (500-pounders detonated by magnetic influence or time fuzes) and 234 interdicted supply lines through Laos.

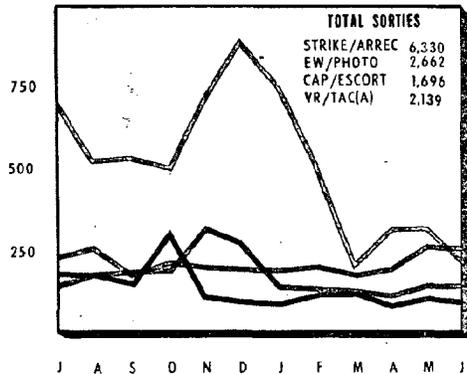
Two A-6A squadrons in MAG-11 flew 212 night sorties over Laos. During these missions, aircrews detected and dropped munitions on 79 moving and 547 stationary targets.

SECRET

SECRET

Single aircraft are scheduled for each Laotian armed reconnaissance mission and are assigned a specific

MARINE OUT-OF-COUNTRY AIR OPERATIONS



road network to search with its radar. In some instances, an F-4B armed escort is provided to detect and suppress antiaircraft fire directed at the A-6A. Flying behind and above the A-6A, the F-4B crew pinpoints AA weapons firing at the A-6A and attacks the weapon positions with Zuni rockets and Rockeye II dispensers. In addition to the expected benefits accruing from this tactic--destruction of AA guns and protection for the strike aircraft--a more

subtle, but no less desirable gain has resulted. The enemy, fearful of giving away his position to the F-4Bs, has often forbore from shooting at the A-6A.

VMCJ-1 aircrews flew 73 percent of their 213 electronic warfare (EW) missions in support of intelligence operations targeted against North Vietnam, while they also logged 41 photographic flights over Laos to document bomb damage assessment and film potential targets. All but one of the 156 EA-6A flights in support of NVN operations were flown off-shore over the Gulf of Tonkin, because the sophisticated electronic systems of the aircraft enable it to complete its mission offset at a distance to avoid exposure to enemy missiles or AA fire.

Normally scheduled for five flights a day, TA-4Fs of H&MS-11 flew 148 sorties over the area of Laos adjacent to I CTZ. The mission has a dual role--continuing visual reconnaissance of the Ho Chi Minh Trail network and controlling fixed wing on preplanned strikes or against targets of opportunity. Generally, one of the daily missions is scheduled for in-flight refueling from a Marine KC-130F tanker to extend time available for area reconnaissance.

SECRET

SECRET

MAG-13 aircrews had registered 22 sorties before ceasing F-4B combat strike operations in the Steel Tiger region of Laos on 16 June. Monsoon weather in the region, in-country attack requirements, and pending redeployments were the main reasons for discontinuing flights. Nevertheless, Marine F-4B armed escort flights over Laos for TA-4Fs, RF-4Bs, and A-6As continued, as F-4B crews logged 55 missions during the month. Taking advantage of its air-to-air weapons system, the versatile F-4B reverted to its fighter mode to fly barrier combat air patrols (BARCAP) for extended periods during four days. The 46 Marine F-4B BARCAPs and 12 associated KC-130F tanker missions provided relief for Navy units which normally give airborne protection to ships and special mission aircraft in the northern Gulf of Tonkin.

Aircraft Losses

Four 1st Wing aircraft were destroyed as a result of direct enemy action during June. Two CH-46Ds were lost while making emergency extractions of reconnaissance teams; the first overturned and burned upon detonating a mine in the landing zone and the other crashed and burned after taking heavy automatic weapons fire while hovering for extraction. Both an A-4E and F-4B were hit and downed on 7 June while delivering ordnance for close air support.

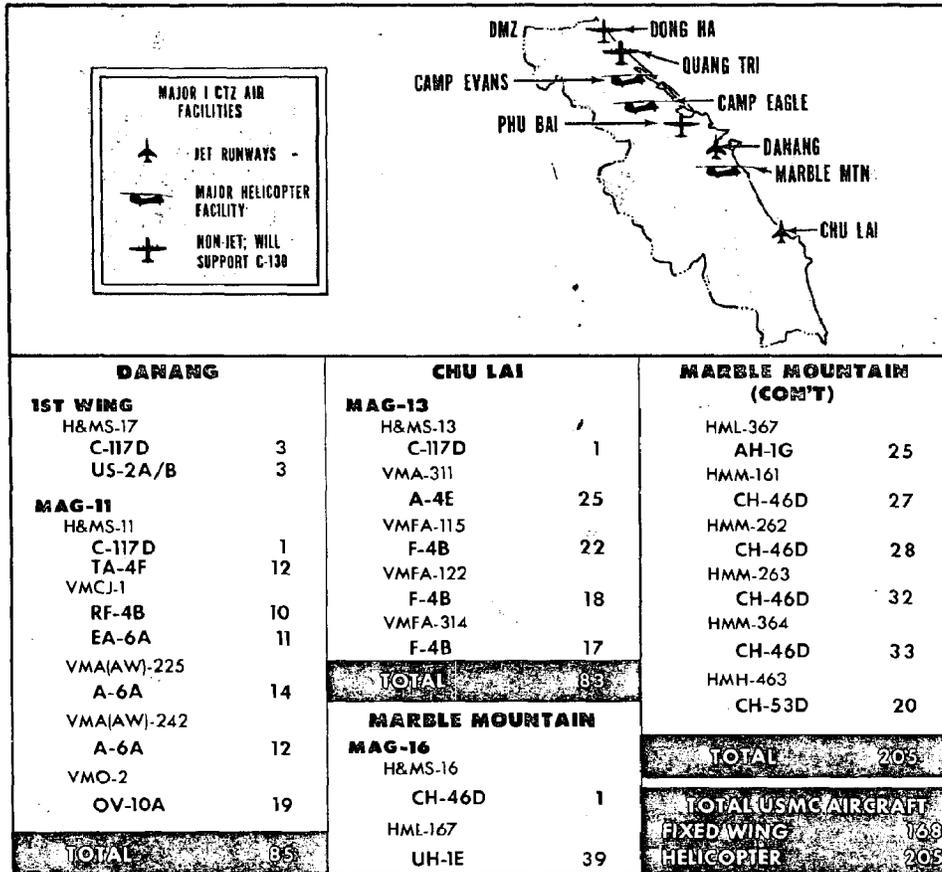
Distribution of Marine Aircraft

Although planning for increment four redeployments was in full swing, no actual changes were made in 1st Wing unit locations during the month. The following chart details the distribution of aircraft assigned at end-June.

SECRET

SECRET

MARINE AIRCRAFT BASED IN I CTZ : JUNE 1970



REPRODUCED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE

SECRET