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HEADQUARTERS  
3rd Battalion, 5th Marines  
1st Marine Division (Rein) FMF  
FPO San Francisco, California 96602

1 January 1967

From: Commanding Officer  
To: Commanding General, 1st Marine Division (Rein) FMF  
Via: Commanding Officer, 5th Marine Regiment

Subj: 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines Command Chronology Report for Period  
of 301601Z Nov66 to 311600Z Dec66

SERIAL NO. 001-67

Ref: (a) DivO 5750.2A  
(b) MCO 5750.2

COPY# 9 of 15 COPIES

Encl: (1)-Command Chronology  
(2)-Appendix A (List of References)  
(3)-Appendix B (Documentation)

1. The 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines Command Chronology, consisting of enclosures (1), (2) and (3) is hereby submitted in accordance with references (a) and (b).

*D. E. Esslinger*  
D. E. ESSLINGER

5TH MAR S&amp;C FILES

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DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS;  
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS,  
DOD DIR 5200.10

UNCLASSIFIED UPON REMOVAL OF  
ENCLOSURES (1), (2) AND (3)

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SECRETCOMMAND CHRONOLOGY1. ORGANIZATIONAL DATA

a. Headquarters, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division  
(Rein) Fleet Marine Force.

(1) Location: Chu Lai, Republic of Vietnam.

(2) Period Covered: 301601Z Nov66 to 311600Z Dec66

(3) LtCol D. E. ESSLINGER	Commanding Officer
Maj J. P. WHITE	Executive Officer
2ndLt B. F. BEGGS	S-1
Capt R. P. TATUM	S-2
Capt E. S. PIPER, Jr.	S-3
Capt S. S. GLAIZE	S-4
Capt C. KELLY	S-5
1stLt M. D. CAREY	H&S Company Commander
Capt J. M. SIMS	Company I Commander
Capt R. E. MARESCO	Company K Commander
Capt R. W. VORREYER	Company L Commander
Capt J. R. McELROY	Company M Commander

2. COMMANDER'S NARRATIVE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

a. The most significant event for the month of December was the assignment of Lieutenant Colonel D. E. ESSLINGER, formally the Executive Officer of the 7th Marines, as the Battalion Commander of the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines.

b. A Battalion (-) size operation, Operation CORTEZ, was conducted from 7 to 12 December by the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines. This operation was conducted as a result of an ARCLIGHT bombing mission on 5 December in the areas of grid squares BT 1519, 1518, and 1517, of Tien Phuoc District, Quang Tin Province. On the morning of the ARCLIGHT, one platoon reinforced from Company K was helilifted into the target area to exploit the mission. One of the CH-46 aircraft crash landed coming into the LZ, however no personnel were seriously injured. The platoon formed a defensive perimeter to protect the disabled aircraft until it could be evacuated. Throughout the day increasing sniper fire was experienced from the surrounded area. Patrols were sent out to evaluate the effect of the bombing mission. On 6 December, Company K (-) was helilifted into the platoon position. On 7 December, Company M and an Alpha Command Group deployed to reinforce the Company K position. This marked the commencement of Operation CORTEZ, the mission of which was to furnish security for the downed helicopter as well as to conduct extensive patrolling into the mountains and valleys of the objective area. Operation CORTEZ terminated on 12 December. (For a detailed account of Operation CORTEZ see Appendix B (Documentation)).

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c. In the early morning hours of 14 December 1st Platoon, Company M located at BT 434058 was attacked by an estimated force of thirty to forty VC. Casualties were ten USMC KIA and sixteen USMC WIA. VC casualties are unknown. Pursuant to this action, during the following week Company M units were withdrawn from positions at BT 434058 and BT 452038 (Hill 76) back to perimeter positions at the Battalion Command Post.

### 3. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

#### a. Personnel and Administration

(1) This organization began the month of December with an on-rolls strength of 31 Marine Officers and 1011 enlisted Marines. The Battalion still continues to have a shortage of Lieutenants O302, and enlisted MOS's 2533 and 3516. The shortages have been reported on weekly personnel status reports.

(2) During December, the turn-over in enlisted personnel was high. This was due to quotas for transfer particularly to 1st MP Battalion, casualties in general, and rotation back to CONUS for release from active duty. However, with the losses came many replacements. Strength at present is 34 Officers and 1069 enlisted. Replacements have included some Staff NCO's and two (2) Lieutenants O301.

(3) During the month of December, the regular promotion to Sergeant cycle helped somewhat to fill the shortages in this grade.

(4) A change of command ceremony was conducted on 23 December. Lieutenant Colonel D. E. ESSLINGER assumed duties as the new Battalion Commander. Major J. T. ELKINS was reassigned as Commanding Officer, 1st Motor Transport Battalion.

(5) The organization has experienced no major problems during the month in the areas of personnel administration.

#### b. Intelligence

(1) For a two-week period, the Battalion S-2 scouts supplemented the defensive positions of Company I as security for the 5th Marines CP.

(2) The predominant types of enemy activity continued to be small arms and automatic weapons harrassing fire, and booby traps. "Avoid the solid and attack the hollow" continues to be obeyed by the VC when physically assaulting any position. The Christmas truce was observed with only one VC initiated violation in which three sniper rounds were fired at a platoon patrol on 24 December.

(3) There have been no confirmed reports of any major enemy units (i.e. battalion or larger) within the 3/5 TAOR.

Enclosure (1)

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(4) Enemy casualties consisted of five KIA's (Confirmed), eight KIA's (Probable) and 25 VCS. Two rifles were captured along with assorted equipment.

c. Training

(1) During the month of December, four one-week Troop Indoctrination Courses were conducted for newly joined personnel of this command. A total of 140 men were processed through the course. Personnel received instruction on the rules of engagement, religion, history, history and customs of RVN, communications, intelligence, NBC, small unit tactics, and Civic Action.

(2) In accordance with the Troop Indoctrination Course, three two-day Land Mine Warfare, Booby Trap and Demolitions Courses conducted by the 1st Engineer Battalion were attended by a total of 140 personnel.

(3) A one-week  $\frac{1}{4}$  ton LIWC (Mule) Drivers School was conducted by the Battalion Motor Transport Platoon for 20 company personnel.

(4) A one-month Vietnamese Language School in Okinawa was attended by three personnel.

d. Special Operations

(1) From 1 to 3 December, Company L conducted heavy patrolling in the mountainous area within the southern sector of the TAOR.

(2) On 5 December a reinforced platoon from Company K deployed to the vicinity BT 465072 for a follow-up exploitation of an ARCLIGHT. One helicopter crash landed in objective area. On 6 December, the balance of Company K (-)(Rein) was flown in to reinforce the platoon. On 7 December, Company M and a Battalion Command Group were helilifted into the objective area and at 1300H Operation CORTEZ commenced. (For detailed summary see enclosed After Action Report for Operation CORTEZ.)

(3) On 20 December, the 3rd Platoon, Company K deployed on an alert mission into grid square BT 3708. The platoon made a thorough search of the area and was helilifted back to the Battalion CP the same afternoon.

(4) On 21 December, the 3rd Platoon, Company K deployed on an alert mission to search out Tho An Hamlet vicinity of BT 475953. 3rd Platoon returned to the Battalion CP the same afternoon. ps

(5) Company K (Rein) conducted "Operation PANTHER", a search and clear operation, from 27 to 30 December, in the northwestern sector of the Battalion TAOR.

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(6) Company M furnished one platoon and Company I furnished one squad to the 7th Marines in support of "Operation SIERRA". FAC teams were provided for 7th Marines operations on three occasions.

e. Artillery Support

(1) Utilization of artillery within the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines TAOR during the month of December was as follows:

(a) Total rounds for H&I - 1695 rounds.

(b) Total rounds for observed and unobserved fire missions: 53 rounds HEQ, 79 rounds WP, and 103 rounds illumination.

(c) Artillery preparation of one landing zone: 15 rounds HEQ and three rounds WP.

(d) Total rounds fired in counterattack and blocking fire plans: 66 rounds HEQ.

(2) During Operation CORTEZ, one fire mission was fired consisting of one round HEQ and one round WP and a total of 203 rounds HEQ were fired as H&I's.

(3) On 15 December, 1stLt J. M. STOY relieved 2ndLt MINAHAN as Artillery Liaison Officer.

f. Air Support

(1) During the month of December, seven medevac missions were requested requiring the evacuation of 10 persons, two of whom were civilians. Four requests were of an emergency nature, one taking nearly an hour to complete. The pick-up point was no more than four or five miles from MAG-36 and the helo was circling for about 10 minutes before radio contact was established.

(2) There were 12 troop movement requests lifting a total of 1123 personnel and 5000 lbs of resupply. Three of the requests were recon flights of the TAOR.

(3) An air mission was run this month in the form of a fixed wing strike on a VC Base Camp, controlled by a ground FAC. At least eight bunkers were destroyed and drag marks were found indicating one VC WIA. Two aircraft with rockets were used and one aircraft with 250 lb bombs. The strike was controlled from a distance of approximately 4000 meters.

(4) For a summary of Air Operations during Operation CORTEZ see enclosed After Action Report for Operation CORTEZ.

Enclosure (3)

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g. Logistics

(1) Motor Transport. Motor transport is excellent, considering the influence of weather on vehicle operations. A very efficient and effective maintenance program has been maintained. The maintenance effort is primarily preventive in nature. When a vehicle does become deadlined, maximum effort is made to accomplish the necessary repair. At the present only one vehicle has been deadlined over 15 days. This vehicle, a M-274 mule, has been deadlined since 30 October because of a broken universal joint. Parts are not obtainable at the present time.

(2) Supply. Recently there was a shortage of M-14 rifles, however, this has been alleviated for the present. There continues to be a shortage of individual equipment. Many items, including individual protective armor, are unserviceable or rapidly approaching that state. This shortage was accentuated due to transferring of personnel, from this command to other units in country, with individual equipment and weapons. Replacements were from CONUS and arrived without individual equipment and weapons. Because of this imbalance and rapid turn-over rate, it has been difficult or impossible in some cases to maintain the required items for issue to new personnel.

h. Civic Action

(1) Approximately 5,500 people were treated in the villages of Ky Lien, Ky Khoung and Ky Sanh. Dental Medcaps were held in the school houses of Long Phu I and Long Phu II. A total of 100 patients were treated, over 200 toothbrushes distributed, and a class of basic oral hygiene was given in each hamlet.

(2) English classes were initiated in Ky Khoung Village. These classes are taught by S-5 personnel on a daily basis, and are attended by approximately 65 children.

(3) During the month of December, movies have been shown on a regular basis at the Ky Khuong Hamlet School House, for the school children. Attendance and reaction have been impressive.

(4) Two truck loads of lumber (2x6 and 2x8) were distributed to the hamlets of Long Phu I and Long Phu II. This was used to remodel the schools. Marines assisted in the remodeling.

(5) A new school is near completion in the village of Ky Khuong. Materials were supplied through Civic Action.

(6) Approximately 200 pounds of garbage is distributed daily in the village of Ky Khuong in order to assist the Vietnamese in raising pigs.

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(7) One solatium payment was made in December to a family whose child was killed near the compound by an enemy booby trap.

(8) Over 2000 bars of soap were given to the Ky Khuong facility for distribution during the daily Medcap program. Additionally, over 50 pounds of clothing were distributed to the people of Ky Khuong.

(9) On 25 December, a Christmas party was held at the Ky Khuong medical facility. Two hundred children attended and gifts were distributed as follows: 50 articles of clothing, 100 pencils, 50 writing tablets, two cases of assorted candies, one case of assorted nuts, and one case of raisins. A party was also held for the elders of Ky Lien Village in the Company L area. Marines shared Christmas dinner with 18 Vietnamese elders who in turn distributed Vietnamese calanders. The response to both parties by all concerned was excellent.

#### 4. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 3 Dec 2nd Platoon, Company K returned from OPCON 1st Battalion, 5th Marines.
- 5,6 Dec Company K (-)(Rein) deployed to exploit ARCLIGHT.
- 6 Dec Brigadier General W. A. STILES, Commanding General, Task Force X-Ray, visited 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines Command Post to present awards.
- 7 Dec Company M (Rein) and the Alpha Command Group deployed to reinforce Company K (-)(Rein) and commenced Operation CORTEZ. Company C (-), 1st Battalion, 5th Marines occupied Company M positions within the TAOR.
- 9 Dec Major J. P. WHITE assumed duties as Battalion Executive officer vice Major P. M. JOHNSTON.  
1stLt M. D. CAREY assumed duties as H&S Company Commander vice 1stLt E. P. CONTI.
- 12 Dec 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines (-) terminated Operation CORTEZ.
- 16 Dec Capt J. R. MCELROY assumed duties as Commanding Officer, Company M vice Capt H. D. PETTINGILL.
- 23 Dec Change of Command ceremony. Lieutenant Colonel D. E. ESSLINGER assumed duties as the new Battalion Commander. Major J. T. ELKINS was reassigned as Commanding Officer, 1st Motor Transport Battalion.
- 27 Dec Company K (Rein) commenced Operation PANTHER.
- 30 Dec Company K (Rein) returned from Operation PANTHER.  
1st Platoon, Company K deployed to reinforce Company L.

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APPENDIX A (LIST OF REFERENCES)

1. Commanding Officer, 7th Marines verbal Frag Order for Operation CORTEZ.
2. Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines verbal frag order for Operation CORTEZ.
3. Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines Operational Status Report 002 as of 230200Z Dec66 - change of Commander (DTG 231004Z Dec66).

Enclosure (2)

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HEADQUARTERS  
3rd Battalion, 5th Marines  
1st Marine Division (Rein) FMF  
FPO San Francisco, California 96602

SERIAL NO. **00319-66**

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3121  
21 December 1966

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From: Commanding Officer, Third Battalion, Fifth Marines  
To: Commanding General, First Marine Division  
Via: Commanding Officer, Fifth Marines

Subj: Combat After Action Report

Ref: (a) Verbal order received from 7th Marines 6 December 1966

Encl: ✓(1) Operation Overlay  
✓(2) a. Diagram of General Cave Structure in Area  
b. Diagram of General Cave Structure in Area

1. CODE NAME. Operation CORTEZ.
2. DATES OF OPERATION. 071300H-121445H December 1966
3. LOCATION. Quang Tinh Province, Tien Phuoc District, Vietnam.
4. COMMAND HEADQUARTERS
  - a. Headquarters 3/5: Major J. T. ELKINS.
  - b. Company "K" 3/5: Capt MARESCO.
  - c. Company "M" 3/5: 1stLt MURRAY.
5. TASK ORGANIZATION

3rd Bn (-)(Rein), 5th Marines

H&S Co (-)  
FAC Tm  
Ln Tm, Btry F, 2/11

Company K (Rein)

Co K  
Det Engineers, 1st Engineer Bn  
Arty FO, Btry F, 2/11  
Sec (+) 81mm Mort Plat, H&S Co 3/5

Company M (Rein)

Co M  
Det Engineers, 1st Engineer Bn  
Arty FO, Btry F, 2/11

DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS;  
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## 6. SUPPORTING FORCES

### a. Artillery

(1) There was one four-gun 105mm Howitzer Battery (Battery F) from 2nd Battalion, 11th Marines at Tien Phuoc in direct support of the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines during Operation CORTEZ.

(2) There were no serious problems encountered with the employment and delivery of artillery. The missions were timely and accurate. All liaison nets were monitored constantly and missions were cleared in a minimum amount of time.

(3) Battery F, 2nd Battalion, 11th Marines fired one observed mission of 1 round WP and 5 rounds HE. Battery F also fired 26 H&I fires which totaled 203 HE rounds. The H&I night defensive fires were extensively used; procedures for requesting and clearing them were fully adequate.

### b. Air

(1) Standard medevac procedures were used and in only one case was there any difficulty. An outpost approx 1000 meters from the perimeter took 2 casualties (one of which was an emergency) and the radio operator had difficulty directing the gunship on target; thus delaying the evac 10 minutes.

(2) Another emergency medevac was cancelled about the time the aircraft arrived overhead because the WIA had died and the landing zone was not secure enough to merit trying to evacuate the body.

(3) During the operation an air delivery by C-130 aircraft was accomplished. Several problems were encountered which might possibly have been eliminated if the aircraft commander had realized the limitations of the PRC-41. The radio's very limited line-of-sight capability requires the aircraft to circle tightly overhead for the ground briefing. This was not done and the drop was made about 800 meters off target. This resulted in the supplies remaining outside the manned perimeter overnight.

(a) The C-130 was a success in that the supplies were recovered intact; however, communication was the major problem. M-663 (an FM frequency) was requested as a primary and M-99 (HF frequency) as back-up. As it turned out, the aircraft did not have an FM capability and the ground unit did not have the HF capability.

(b) The ALO was contacted on M-99 at the rear area and upon learning of the difficulty attempted to shift both aircraft and ground unit to "Button Red" (UHF) and, in turn, "Button Brown". Nevertheless, communications was not established.

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(4) The lifting of the downed CH-46 by the "flying crane" was handled competently and quickly. Originally it had been suggested that the crane upon departure from the area circle to the northeast; however, the pilot chose a straight line course, nearly eastward, and received enemy ground fire 2 miles outside of the safe perimeter. Nevertheless, no further difficulties were encountered and the mission was accomplished without incident.

(5) Three fixed-wing strikes were conducted on one hill mass during the first two days. The strikes were conducted by a gunship (TAC(A)) and monitored by an enlisted FAC representative. No fire was received from this particular area for the following six days.

(6) Extraction of the Battalion (-) started rather slowly with only 3 H-34's; however, within an hour gained momentum with the addition of 6 CH-46's. The lift was completed in slightly over 3 hours. Under the circumstances of distance moved and difficult approach, the time period is commendable. Noteworthy is the excellent cooperation of the pilots in negotiating the landing sites requested and shuttling refugees to Tam Ky New Lift Hamlet.

(a) Gunships proved invaluable during the extraction by suppressing the ground fire on the departure route.

#### 7. INTELLIGENCE

a. Based on interrogation and screening of VCS and refugees it is felt that there has not been significant main force activity in the CORTEZ area in recent months. This is substantiated by the fact that weapons encountered in enemy contact during the operation were limited to automatic and semi-automatic small arms and various types of booby traps. VC activity was limited to acts of a harrassing nature. No units, either local or main force, have been identified subsequent to CORTEZ. Based on statements made during screening of local citizens it appears that each hamlet has from three to ten armed guerrillas in addition to the normal infrastructure and organizations common to VC controlled areas, (e.g., old man's assn., youth assn., autonomous committee, security cadre, tax collectors, etc.). Many individuals concerned have been named in later interrogation reports processed by 9th ITT. The local VC appear to be well organized and equipped and have full control of the area exclusive of the times U.S. or ARVN operations are being conducted there.

b. Tunnel and cave complexes are common throughout the area (see diagrams). All villages and key terrain features were, to varying degrees, fortified. Sniping and booby trapping activities carried on by the local VC were effective but these forces at no time demonstrated willingness to engage the Marines in close or heavy combat.

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c. Judging from the number of refugees who were voluntarily evacuated (60) and statements made by them, they are less than satisfied with living conditions under VC domination. Many had heard of the "New Life" Hamlets and that the people there are happy. Apparently the peasants are subject to being taxed from 30% to 50% of their rice harvest. All their property must be declared at the regularly scheduled hamlet meetings; based on this, other taxes are periodically levied dependent of the local VC needs at that time. The fear of periodic bombings and shellings by ARVN and U.S. forces also contributes to their willingness to be evacuated. Many of the refugees lost relatives or had their homes and livestock destroyed in the recent ARCLIGHT raid. Based on these findings it is felt that PsyWar and Chieu Hoi efforts in this area might be met with some success.

d. Terrain in the CORTEZ area is dominated by low to high hills with medium to heavy scrub vegetation and primary jungle canopy in places of up to 100 feet. Paddies are generally well worked and are presently undated. Soil is chiefly sand and clay.

e. The main avenue of approach is a trail running from BT 160175 east to BT 172174 where it forks. The north fork runs generally northeast while the southern fork joins the Tien Phuoc-Tam Ky Road at BT 202162. Two other trails leading into the area are from the southwest and the north as indicated on the Tam Ky sheet 6040 II (Vietnam 1:50,000). Surrounding high ground, e.g., BT 162204 and BT 163167, can provide fair to good observation. Cover and concealment is excellent for stationary positions and secondary trails due to heavy undergrowth and prepared tunnels and fortifications. Movement along main trails and in paddy areas is generally exposed. The CORTEZ area definitely favors the defender.

8. MISSION. Following the execution of an ARCLIGHT raid, the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines was assigned the following mission:

a. At L-hour on D-day Company K (-)(Rein) was to land in the ARCLIGHT area and thoroughly recon and evaluate both physical damage and psychological effect achieved.

b. At 071455H on D+2 3/5 (-)(Rein) joined Company K in ARCLIGHT area with mission of providing security for downed CH-46 helicopter and conduct local search and destroy missions. The ARCLIGHT follow-up was given code name CORTEZ.

#### 9. CONCEPT OF OPERATION

a. At 1140H on D-day Company K (-)(Rein) lift from 3/5 CP area to designated LZ within the ARCLIGHT area. Once landed conduct sweep through impact zone in conjunction with attached reconnaissance team to execute assigned mission.

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b. At 1345H on D+2 reinforce initial unit with Company M (Rein) and 3/5 Alpha Command Group to provide security perimeter for downed CH-46 helicopter and conduct local search and destroy patrols.

10. EXECUTION

a. D-1 - 4 December 1966

(1) At approximately 041430H December 1966 the Unit Commanders involved in the ARCLIGHT follow-up were briefed and a fragmentary operation order was issued.

b. D-day - 5 December 1966

(1) At 051140H, Company K (-)(Rein) was helo lifted from the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines CP at BT 465073 and joined with a recon unit from the 1st Recon Battalion on the way to the landing zone. Units were airborne for approximately 25 minutes when one CH-46 crash landed 500 meters southeast of predesignated landing zone. Company K was forced to land at this position in order to provide security for the downed helicopter (BT 158172).

(2) At 051210H, Company K landed at the newly designated landing zone and immediately received three rounds of sniper fire. One WIA was incurred and was evacuated to 1st Med Battalion. No further sniper action was encountered.

(3) At 051248H, Company K established a perimeter defense around the downed CH-46 and began making plans for executing a mission of sweeping the ARCLIGHT area. Company K stressed the fact that they would be somewhat hindered in their mission due to the need in providing security for the CH-46.

(4) At 051430H, Company K sent the First Platoon, a recon unit, and an Arty FO to conduct a sweep in the southern portion of the ARCLIGHT area. The units were sent subject to immediate recall.

(5) At 051630H, Company K's perimeter (BT 169162) received three rounds S/A fire from enemy located at BT 164169. Two rounds 81mm HE mortar, 3 rounds M-79 and 40 rounds S/A fire were returned. Marines suffered 2 WIA's.

(6) At 051640H, Company K was ordered to plan on staying at present position for an additional three or four days and submit resupply request not later than 061200H. Company K was directed to request night defensive fires directly from the Tien Phuoc Special Forces Camp.

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(7) At 052100H, Company K received the following report from the First Platoon and Recon unit who had partially swept the assigned area: The terrain in area consisted mainly of rice paddies and low, heavily brush covered hills. Many large bomb craters 30 feet wide and 20 feet deep were found. Foliage had been blown back to a radius of seventy-five yards from the edges of craters. The units also discovered numerous caves, ten of which had been destroyed by bombing. Several houses had been demolished and Vietnamese civilians in the area were in a general state of shock. The First Platoon also found eight dead Vietnamese:

- 1 Woman age 50-60.
- 1 Woman age 20-30.
- 3 Men age 20-30.
- 3 Children age 6-12. Also approximately twenty wounded.

c. D+1 - 6 December 1966

(1) At 060910H, Company K was informed that security of the downed CH-46 would be of primary concern until reinforcements arrived. Company K was instructed to patrol the ARCLIGHT area wherever possible. Company K could expect to be reinforced by the 3rd Platoon at approximately 061400H.

(2) At 061515H, helicopters carrying Company K's resupply and the 3rd Platoon, arrived at the Company K CP and received approximately 30-40 rounds S/A fire from surrounding area while making the approach and landing. The helos again received approximately 30 rounds S/A fire upon lift-off. Company K suffered one WIA (bullet wound in upper thigh) who was evacuated in the same lift. Continuous sniper fire had been received from all directions during the day. Company K continued their ground recon of the central portion of the ARCLIGHT area and were moving into the northern sector.

(3) At 061700H, Company K reported that the downed CH-46 had settled into rice paddies up to the fuselage. Company K continued to strengthen its defensive positions. Numerous outposts were established on the surrounding high ground to east, west and south. The volume of sniper fire in area was constantly increasing.

(4) At 061735H, Company K was resupplied with rations and ammunition. A flare ship was alerted to provide illumination if needed. Extraction of the downed helicopter was requested as soon as possible for 7 December.

(5) At 061815H, Company K and the Recon unit had completed their ground sweep of the ARCLIGHT area. It was reported that the general trace of the ARCLIGHT strike ran from BT 150163 to BT 158192.

(6) At 062200H Company K radioed to the Battalion CP that their night defensive fires had not as yet been cleared and requested immediate clearance. Compliance was made.

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(7) At 062245H, Company K was informed that an additional Company and a Battalion Command Group would reach their CP at approximately 071330H. The reinforcement was in reaction to a suspected VC build-up and increased sniper fire and VC activity in the area.

d. D+2 - 7 December 1966

(1) At 071045H, Company K (Rein) at BT 165176 received 1 round sniper fire resulting in one (1) USMC WIA with gunshot wound in back. Company K returned 10 rounds S/A fire and 3 rounds M-79 killing one (1) VC wearing black pajamas. Marine WIA was evacuated.

(2) At 071100H, Company K apprehended four (4) VCS women and one (1) VCS male in area from which sniper fire came. At 071120H a VCS male age 30 was apprehended near the same location. All 6 VCS were evacuated to 9th ITT.

(3) At 071315H, Company K at BT 163167 received 20 rounds S/A fire from BT 163164 resulting in one (1) USMC WIA with gunshot wound in upper left thigh. Company K returned 20 rounds S/A fire and 3 rounds M-79. One squad was dispatched to search area for estimated two snipers and returned with negative results. Medevac of USMC WIA was completed at 071345H.

(4) At 071345H, Company M (Rein) and the Alpha Command Group were helo-lifted from LZ at the 3/5 CP to reinforce Company K's position.

(5) At 071415H, Company M and the Battalion Command Group landed in an LZ near the Company K position and set up a CP at BT 158172. Incoming troops received 20-30 rounds S/A fire from south and southeast from distance of 500 meters. Enemy fire was suppressed by 10 rockets and strafing from armed helicopters. With the addition of Company M and the Battalion CP the ARCLIGHT follow-up was given the name of Operation CORTEZ.

(6) At 071430H it was learned that a team was to arrive at the downed helicopter position sometime that day to strip the CH-46 and bring in a "Flying Crane". Air assistance was requested.

(7) At 071510H, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines CP in the field was ready to receive the helicopter disassembly team and crane. The zone of the downed CH-46 was secured with Company K on high ground on the northern half of the perimeter and Company M to the south. Both companies conducted extensive patrolling.

(8) At 071745H, a squad sized patrol from Company M found a cave and several fighting holes at BT 163169 and discovered a large punji trap at BT 164170. The punji trap was 3½ feet wide, 5½ feet long and 5 feet deep covered with green bamboo and containing 15 metal stakes. The patrol explored a cave and found its size to be 35 meters long, 3½ meters high and 3½ meters wide. Two digging tools were found at the end of the cave. Both the pit and cave were destroyed with demolitions.

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(9) At 071830H, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines CP in the field was resupplied. Sporadic sniper fire had been received throughout the day. The night perimeter defense was established employing several LP's and ambushes. Artillery and 81mm mortar concentrations and H&I fires were plotted.

e. D+3 - 8 December 1966

(1) At 080910H one platoon from Company M and one platoon from Company K moved to their predesignated areas to establish platoon patrol bases. Concentrated patrolling activities were conducted from these positions.

(2) At 080945H at BT 158172 two snipers were sighted running into a house at BT 166175. Company M fired one LA/W and 20 rounds of LMG fire at the house. A squad sized patrol moved forward to search the area and found one female VCS WIA (Age 25) who was given medical care. The two snipers escaped. The patrol found evidence of considerable local guerilla activity in the area.

(3) At 081015H a squad patrol from 3rd Platoon, Company M found a booby-trap at BT 158164. The trap consisted of an M-26 fragmentation grenade placed inside a broken beer bottle. Booby-trap was rigged with trip wire across trail. Device was blown in place.

(4) At 081120H, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines Rear CP requested that CP in the field send its resupply list for all units in the field to cover next 48 hours. The Battalion CP Rear requested that units in the field wait for air delivery supply drop the following day because X-Ray 6 desired to test resupply by this method. Company K and Company M continued their patrolling activities.

(5) At 081130H the Battalion CP in the field submitted its resupply request for rations, ammunition, and equipment. In addition, the field CP stated that an air drop would not be practical since the rice paddies were flooded and the local terrain was rugged and covered with thick vegetation.

(6) At 081200H field units were conducting aggressive patrolling into valleys to the east and west and into the high ground north and south of the field CP at BT 158172. A patrol discovered 10 freshly dug fighting holes and one tunnel 35 meters long at the edge of Dich An (2) Hamlet at BT 163171. The patrol also found a cave at BT 159173 containing three weapons and some equipment. The cave was destroyed with demolitions. Four (4) VCS males were captured at BT 154176. They were interrogated and stated that there was a small local VC force present. Probing patrols were continued from the present location. Plans were made to sweep the high ground to the north in search of VC units. To date, the captured weapons and equipment included:

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- 1 Rifle, French MAS 36
- 1 Rifle, Russian Carbine
- 1 Wooden crossbow
- 2 Raincoats
- 1 Utility belt w/ammo pouch made from US packs
- 1 Green uniform w/bullet holes
- 1 Fragmentation grenade booby-trap (not rigged)
- 2 Unmarked mortar cases (empty)
- 13 Metal punji stakes

Three of the captured VCS requested that they be evacuated with their families to the New Life Hamlet in Tam Ky. Villagers claimed that the fourth VCS had a son who was a local guerrilla but gave little more information.

(7) At 081255H Companies K and M were directed to patrol aggressively in the surrounding area and outpost and ambush the approaches to the Battalion CP. Also to establish good counter-sniper positions where possible on high ground for fire suppression during the helicopter extraction soon expected.

(8) At 081305H 18 refugees were reported for evacuation from area via return flight of supply helicopter.

(9) At 081445H the Battalion CP received word that the resupply and refugee evacuation flight was due to arrive in the field at 081515H.

(10) At 081456H the Battalion CP was informed that higher echelon still desired to try the air drop on 9 December 1966. A supply list was forwarded.

(11) At 081620H supplies were delivered to the field by helicopter; 17 refugees were evacuated to Tam Ky for New Life Village and 1 VCS to 9th ITT by return flight. Refugees said that local VC's tax them heavily and treat them harshly. Many families suffered losses of life and property in the recent ARCLIGHT strike.

(12) At 081640H a Company M patrol found 3 bunkers and underground tunnels running through their area at BT 166164. The patrol received 20-30 rounds small arms fire from 2 VC. One VC armed with A/W and one with S/A weapon. Patrol pursued VC and thoroughly checked out area with negative results.

(13) At 081950H 2 engineers with 6 satchel charges each were requested for transport to the field the next day for attachment to Company M. Additional C-4 was requested for demolition of caves.

f. D+4 - 9 December 1966

(1) At 090900H the 3rd Platoon, Company K, while continuing with patrol activities at BT 173174, observed and fired upon 3 VC carrying rifles in an open area at BT 176174. The patrol fired 20 rounds of small arms fire and received 3 incoming rounds. The area was checked with negative results.

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(2) At 091045H a Company M squad-sized patrol at BT 165164 received 5 rounds S/A fire from a hamlet at BT 169164. The patrol returned 10 rounds S/A fire and searched the area with negative results.

(3) At 091100H a recon team on high ground sighted eight (8) VC at BT 166149. Artillery fired five rounds 105 HE into the location. Results were undetermined because of the distance from friendly units.

(4) At 091400H word was received from higher echelon that the air drop resupply had been confirmed for 091700H. Directions were given to contact the C-130 aircraft on M-663 and to use M-99 as emergency frequency. Aircraft would approach the position from a southwesterly direction. It's call sign was FIREFLY.

(5) At 091710H a Company K patrol observed 2 enemy snipers with weapons running into hamlet at BT 167172. The patrol searched the area and found many caves, tunnels, trenches, and bunkers. One small suitcase containing military clothes was found. As many caves, etc. as possible were destroyed with demolitions. Ambushes were planned for the area. A second patrol from Company K saw 2 VC on a small trail at BT 157160 and the patrol pursued closely. The patrol discovered a Chicom grenade with trip wire as booby-trap on trail. Trap was blown in place. VC escaped in heavy foliage.

(6) At 091800H a C-130 aircraft made 2 observation passes at BT 159173 but could not establish communications. The C-130 made its final pass and dropped its cargo 800 meters beyond the drop zone into heavy foliage on high terrain. Aircraft received very heavy A/W fire from grid square BT 1816. A patrol was sent to retrieve cargo.

(7) At 091830H the patrol sent to recover air cargo was pulled back because of darkness and dense foliage. H&I fires were placed in vicinity of cargo drop all night.

g. D+5 - 10 December 1966

(1) At 100800H a Company M squad-size patrol on a search and destroy mission tripped a Chicom grenade or 60mm mortar round rigged as a booby trap. The grenade was secured to a tree about waist high. The patrol had two Marines wounded who were med-evaced to 1st Med.

(2) At 100900H a patrol from Company K recovered all the cargo which was dropped 800 meters beyond drop-zone. All cargo was intact and accounted for.

(3) At 101030H the Commanding Officer, 7th Marines visited the Battalion CP in the field for approximately 15 minutes. Seven refugees to be delivered to Tam Ky were evacuated via the return flight. Aggressive patrolling concentrated in the eastern sector continued.

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(4) At 101255H a Company K patrol found a booby-trap on trail at BT 165161. Trap consisted of trip wire attached to punji stake strung across trail to Chicom grenade inside a beer bottle. Grenade (8 inches long made of metal and wooden handled) was blown in place.

(5) At 101345H a Company M squad-sized patrol apprehended one VCS in village at BT 164121. The patrol found a bundle of documents and anti-American propaganda in VCS's house. All were forwarded to 9th ITT.

(6) At 102020H Company M lines received 20-30 rounds of BAR fire from a range of approximately 20 meters at BT 163170. Mike returned 10 rounds of small arms fire and 1 M-26 frag grenade. Probably 1 VC WIA but unable to confirm due to darkness. Night activities and H&I fires were established.

h. D+6 - 11 December 1966

(1) At 110930H Company M, First Platoon captured one male VCS age 47 hiding in a grain keeper in a small hut at BT 164166. His name was Loung Thuy. After interrogation VCS admitted to being a VC tax collector. VC was forwarded to 9th ITT.

(2) At 11050H Company K outpost at BT 181174 was fired upon by 6 VC with A/W from BT 180177. The outpost received 60 incoming rounds and returned 10 M-79 rounds and 30 rounds S/A fire. The enemy was physically pursued by the Marines but with negative results. 2 probable VC's WIA. Company K continued patrols from perimeter and destroyed numerous caves and tunnels.

(3) At 111150H a Company M squad-sized patrol apprehended one male VCS age 30 hiding under a bed in hut at BT 164166. VCS was forwarded to 9th ITT.

(4) At 111145H Company K, 3rd Platoon at BT 181174 received sniper and automatic weapons fire from an estimated three VC's at BT 178175. Platoon returned 5 M-79 rounds and 10 S/A rounds. Patrol pursued enemy with negative results.

(5) At 111200H Company K outpost was fired upon by several VC snipers. 1 Marine was wounded in stomach and med-evaced. One platoon (Rein) swept the area below the outpost with negative results. The patrol had 1 WIA, continued on route, and picked up several VCS in area. The VCS were forwarded to ITT.

(6) At 111715H the Battalion CP was fired upon by 4 VC with automatic weapons at BT 175174. The CP received approximately 20 rounds and returned 10 rounds S/A fire and 6 rounds 81mm mortar. Probably 2 VCS WIA.

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~~SECRET~~  
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(1) At 121030H word was received that 2 CH-46's were on their way to prepare downed helicopter for extraction. The high ground was well outposted to protect the lift.

(2) At 121135H 2 Marines on the point of a Company M patrol tripped a frag grenade booby-trap at BT 167164 while moving through heavy foliage on a narrow trail. The patrol suffered 1 KIA and 1 WIA.

(3) At 121310H the downed CH-46 was lifted from the area by "Flying Crane".. Supporting helicopters received only sporadic sniper fire. Gunships and fixed wing aircraft were on station. No enemy fire was received by the "Flying Crane" over the extraction area.

(4) At 121445H, the Battalion (-) commenced an extraction from the Operation CORTEZ area at BT 162174. A series of lifts over a three-hour period were conducted using UH-34 aircraft. The final lift was completed at 121815H with all troops back in the rear CP at BT 463073.

11. RESULTSa. Enemy

(1) The following is an assessment of VC personnel casualties inflicted by 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines:

(a) VC KIA Confirmed - 1.

(b) VC WIA Probable - 5.

(c) VC Suspects - 4.

(d) VC Captives - 1.

(2) A total of 60 refugees were evacuated from operational area.

b. Friendly

(1) Casualties sustained by 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines were as follows:

(a) Killed in Action - 1.

(b) Died of Wounds - 1.

(c) Wounded in Action - 5.

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c. Captured Equipment

(1) The following is a compilation of enemy equipment and material captured and/or destroyed by 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines:

- (a) 1 - rifle, MAS 36, French.
- (b) 1 - carbine, M-1944, Russian w/bayonet.
- (c) 1 - package of documents.
- (d) 1 - cartridge belt w/ammo pouch.
- (e) 1 - grey uniform.
- (f) 2 - raincoats.
- (g) 2 - Chicom fragmentation grenades (destroyed).

12. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

a. Resupply

(1) During Operation CORTEZ all resupply was accomplished by helicopter except one air drop on 9 December by C-130 AC. Air drop of supplies was conducted on an experimental basis and encountered some problems. The coordination of preloaded supplies for the air drop was accomplished at Danang.

(2) The major problem resulted from the fact that the C-130 aircraft was not FM equipped, resulting in negative communications with the ground units. Because of this communications problem the supplies were dropped 800 meters beyond the drop zone.

(3) Due to the duration and number of troops involved in the operation Logistical Support Area was located at the 3/5 field CP (BT 465072). No resupply problems were encountered.

b. Maintenance. Maintenance support was effective and no problems developed.

c. Treatment of Casualties and Evacuation and Hospitalization

(1) No significant problems were encountered in treatment of casualties during Operation CORTEZ. Wounded were expeditiously evacuated from the battlefield and excellent care was received throughout the evacuation chain.

(2) A representative from the Battalion Armory was maintained at First Medical Battalion, Chu Lai, to recover all gear of personnel evacuated. No problems occurred.

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d. Transportation

(1) Transportation to support tactical and logistical requirements was effectively accomplished via helicopter as necessary.

e. Communications

(1) During Operation CORTEZ the relay communications were barely adequate to provide the Commander with the proper command liaison because of distance and terrain interference.

(2) The Regimental Tactical Net was hampered by a faulty radio set at the Tam Ky retransmission site. Wire was not employed because of the mobile situation.

(a) After map studies, the Battalion Tac Net initially was set-up to utilize a relay site at Tam Ky. It is felt that a site of higher elevation should have been used to assure a line-of-sight communication line between the field, relay site and rear position.

(3) Adequate communications were on hand in the field for tactical control on the scene.

13. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUESa. Air Drop

(1) At 1800 on D+4 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines attempted its first resupply via airdrop. The only major problem encountered was with communications as has been previously explained.

(2) Air delivery, with minor improvements, should prove itself to be of great value as a means of resupply. Air delivery of this nature should, if rehearsed and refined, help relieve the helicopters in their resupply role. This will allow a greater number of helicopters to be free for supporting tactical troop movement and medevacs.

14. COMMANDER'S ANALYSISa. Civic Action

(1) Civic Action conducted during Operation CORTEZ was focused mainly upon the evacuation of refugees from the area of operation to the New Lift Hamlet at Tam Ky. Evacuation statistics for the operation are as follows:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>REFUGEES EVACUATED</u>
9 December	28
10 December	16
11 December	8
12 December	8
	<hr/> TOTAL 60

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15. RECOMMENDATIONS

a. FM radios are the ground unit's most effective means of communications; it is recommended that on future air drops of the nature described herein the aircraft be FM equipped. In any case, the pilot should be thoroughly briefed as to the capabilities of the PRC-41.

b. It is felt that more complete planning and briefing would have uncovered the communications problem, thus allowing an alternate plan to be put into effect.

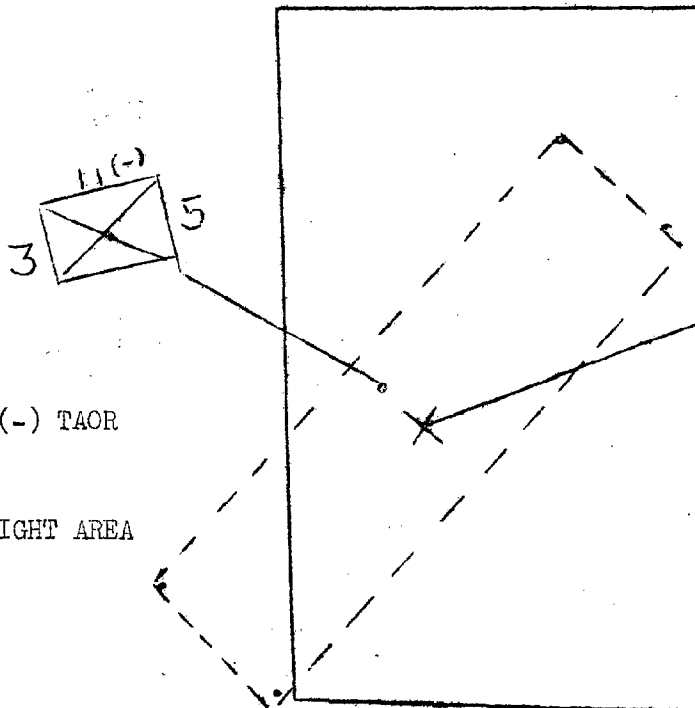
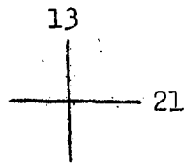
*J. T. Elkins*  
J. T. ELKINS

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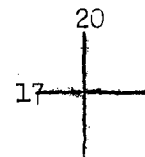
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OPERATION OVERLAY  
3RD BATTALION, 5TH MARINES  
OPERATION CORTEZ  
071300H - 121145H DEC66  
MAP: VIETNAM, 6640 II, 1:50,000

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DOWNED CH-46



— 3/5 (-) TAOR

- - - - - ARCLIGHT AREA

Enclosure (1)

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