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HEADQUARTERS  
3rd Battalion, 7th Marines  
1st Marine Division (Rein), FME  
FPO, San Francisco, California 96602

UNCLASSIFIED

3/EDP/4or  
5750  
5 July 1967

From: Commanding Officer  
To: Commanding General, 1st Marine Division (Rein), FME  
Via: Commanding Officer, 7th Marines

Subj: Command Chronology: month of June 1967

Ref: (a) MCO 5750.2a

Encl: ✓(1) Overlay indicating unit positions as of 312400H June 1967  
✓(2) Revised Task Organization of 3rdBn(Rein), 7th Marines, DAI LOC District  
✓(3) A/RPT (opn BUTLER

1. In accordance with reference (a), the Command Chronology for the month of June is submitted. A Commander's Narrative of Significant Events is included.

*J. P. Counselman*  
J. P. COUNSELMAN

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3rd Bn. 7th Mar. Log No  
022-67 Copy # 1478

7th Mar 67 Log Nr.  
0465-67 147

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DOD DIR 5200.10

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3 RDBN/7th Mar

and down

June 1967

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## Command Chronology, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines June 1967

1. Organizational Data

a. Location: DAI LOC, RVN

b. Period Covered: 1-30 June 1967

c. Commanding Officer, Staff and Chief Subordinates:

Commanding Officer  
Executive Officer  
S-1  
Personnel Officer  
S-2  
S-3

ALO  
S-4  
SupplyO  
MFO  
Civil Affairs (S-5)  
Bn Surgeon  
Bn Chaplain  
CommO

H&S Co  
I Co  
K Co  
L Co  
M Co

LtCol J. D. COUNSELMAN  
Major G. H. TURLEY 11-30Jun  
2ndLt W. E. KELLER, JR  
2ndLt K. J. WILKERSON  
2ndLt E. J. POLASEK  
Major G. H. TURLEY 1-10Jun  
Major J. A. POLAND 11-30Jun  
Capt J. A. HALSTEAD  
1stLt C. S. SIM  
1stLt E. C. RATHBUN  
1stLt J. A. WILSON  
1stLt J. B. FLYNN  
Lt F. E. WONG (MC) USNR  
Lt D. J. WILLIAMS (CHO) USNR  
Capt C. W. ROSS 1-6Jun  
1stLt W. F. CONNORS, JR. 7-30Jun  
2ndLt D. R. RICHARDS  
Capt R. M. CLARK  
Capt G. W. JONES  
Capt J. M. PLATT, JR.  
Capt J. B. HICKS, JR.

d. Attachments: Enclosure (2) lists all attachments and all units assigned in Direct Support of the Battalion.

e. Average Monthly Strength During Period:

USMC  
32 Officers  
1036 Enlisted

USN  
2 Officers  
50 Enlisted

f. Sequential Listing of Significant Events, especially as they relate to:

Personnel. The total number of personnel on hand within 3rd Battalion 7th Marines as of 30 June was 1033. The total effective strength on 30 June was 1033. During the month of June, 153 new personnel were joined to this organization; 105 were dropped from the rolls; 55 personnel rotated; 41 personnel were wounded in action; 8 personnel were killed in action. Non-battle casualties evacuated totaled 30, 22 of whom have since returned to duty by 30 June 1967.

Administration. No unusual or significant problem areas were encountered.

g. Intelligence

Information received from DIOCC and higher headquarters continued to indicate the presence of Main Force/NVA troops in the battalion area of operations. Intelligence gained from documents captured during Operation ARIZONA confirmed the existence of the R-20 Bn in the TAOR.

The mission of these units as evidenced by their activities, is to destroy GVN influence in the DAI LOC-HIEU DUC Districts. Thus, principal targets have been CAP units, refugee hamlets, including terrorist attacks on friendly villagers.

On 060155H CAP B-4 was attacked and penetrated by an estimated 100 Main Force VC. The nature of the attack was very similar to the attacks on CAP 21 in April and CAP 22 in May. The attacks were carried out swiftly by well

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trained, well equipped personnel who employed M-2 AT rockets, rifle grenades and mortars to prep the positions before penetrating the wire and assaulting the bunkers. Two refugee villages under construction were attacked during the month, one at AT 940663 and another at AT 943693. A PF who worked at CAP 3-4 was beheaded by VC terrorists on 15 June. These events again confirm the mission of VC units within our TAOR to harass, terrorize and attack CAP units, refugee hamlets, revolutionary development programs and isolated outposts. Indications are that during the month of July there will be an increase in this type activity by the VC throughout the TAOR.

Operation ARIZONA was a significant success for this organization. Aside from providing a means of escape for over 1100 refugees and capturing 2500 lbs of rice from enemy forces, 3/7 units accounted for 26 VC KIA (C) and 28 VC KIA (P); 35 VCS were detained; friendly losses were very light, no KIA's and only 8 WIA.

Enemy contact for the month during daylight hours was very light. Moderate sniper fire, which characterized the hours of darkness, was directed principally toward CAP units, refugee hamlets, and night activities. The month of June witnessed a significant increase in contact in the vic of Hill 52. Sighting and brief fire-fights occurred on an almost daily basis. Anti-personnel and anti-vehicular mines were increasingly employed by the VC in that area. Of particular note were the destruction of two (2) LVT's which detonated 250 lbs bombs resulting in 3 KIA and 9 WIA.

In the TAOR as a whole, an increase of mines was noticeable especially as this reporting period drew to a close. Route 5 north to DANANG in the vic of Hill 41 was the location of most of the activity. The VC went so far as to string barb wire across the road and place anti-American signs in the vicinity.

Saturation patrolling continued during the reporting period in the "Rocket Belt" portion of the TAOR. Co I, 3/1 (OPCON 3/7) from positions on Hill 41 and Co K from positions of Hill 10 each conduct two three-day platoon size patrols in area. Of the Battalion's 12,570 small unit activities, 6,966, or more than half, were conducted in the Rocket Belt. This represents an increase over last month of over 3000 small unit activities in that area; to the immediate west of this Battalion Rocket Belt SOR, Operation BUTLER was conducted by Co K and Co I, 3/1 in the CAO SUNG Valley, which has been long suspected as an enemy route of movement into the DANANG area.

There has been a definite increase in anti-U.S. propaganda appearing in the TAOR. The main themes have been: 1) to discourage people from moving to new life hamlets, 2) to unify South Vietnam against American aggressors, 3) to create a break between U.S. and Popular Forces in the TAOR and cause desertion in Popular Force/ARVN units. It has been noted to higher authority that this increase of propaganda has occurred and that it is recommended that the Government of Vietnam publish a counter-propaganda leaflet.

d. During June, formal training consisted of:

(1) Orientation and indoctrination lectures to newly assigned personnel.

(2) Assignment of 54 personnel to Land Mine Warfare School, 18 personnel to NCO Leadership School, 5 personnel to Vietnamese Language School, (OKINAWA), 15 personnel to Vietnamese Language School (DANANG), 1 person to Embarkation School. The scope of lectures to replacement personnel, has been expanded and new lectures concerning the M-16 have been instituted into the program. All replacements are instructed on the M-16 and participate in fam firing before being sent to the field. Each unit fam fires the M-16 a minimum of once per two days.

(3) An FO school was conducted by the FSCC Officer for CAP unit leaders. The instruction period, which lasted 7 days, provided the personnel with the confidence and ability to direct fire support on behalf of their units.

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e. Special Operations

Operation BUTLER, a search and destroy operation in the CAO SUNG Valley (AT 8568), commenced on 10 June. The operation terminated on 12 June with negative contact reported.

Operation ARIZONA, a regimental search and destroy operation which commenced on 14 June in the INDEPENDENCE area was participated in by Bn Cmd Group, Co L, Co M and Co I of this organization. The operation terminated on 19 June with this Battalion engaging the enemy successfully on 4 occasions.

f. Command and Control

The 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines was under operational and administrative control of the 7th Marines during the entire month. OPCON of Co I, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines was passed back to its parent organization on 211000H June 1967. This organization assumed OPCON of Co L, 3rd Bn, 1st Marines on 21 June 1967. For 3 days when commitments to their parent organization necessitated their deployment back to 3rd Bn, 1st Marines.

g. Fire Support

(1) Artillery. Btry I, 3rd Bn, 11th Marines continued to provide timely and effective Direct Artillery Support. Btry K, 4th Bn, 11th Marines provided General Support/Reinforcing Fires as requested.

A total of 54 targets of opportunity were engaged during this reporting period. Only one surveillance was available due mainly to the distance of the missions from friendly units. A total of 3 VC KIA (C) were credited to artillery for the month. Thirty seven targets acquired through District and USMC intelligence agencies were engaged, with negative surveillance. In addition, precision registrations for both Btry I and Btry K were conducted on a daily basis.

(2) Armor. 4 tanks from Co B, 1st Tank Bn provided timely and accurate direct fire on targets of opportunity throughout the reporting period from positions on Hill 65 and Hill 41. During Operation ARIZONA Co B, 1st Tank Bn (Rein) participated and also provided blocking position support. During the operation elements of Co B, 1st Tank Bn, crossed the SONG VU GIA River.

2 Ontos from Co C, 1st Anti-Tank Battalion, provided direct fire support capability from positions in CAP 21. Two Ontos positioned on Hill 37, the Bn CP, gave the Battalion a quick reaction force capability for units located in the center of the TAOR.

During Operation ARIZONA 4 Ontos reinforced blocking positions along the SONG VU GIA.

h. Logistics

The battalion logistical support improved during the reporting period. Completion of the new MCB Bridge at AT 914587 has significantly reduced traffic problems in the village of DAI LOC. With its 60 ton capacity, heavy vehicles are afforded quicker access to the Battalion CP and out lying areas. The new bridge has also made possible the rapid deployment of units positioned at the Bn CP to areas north along route 5. Five combat bases have therefore been eliminated or shifted in view of this new capability.

From 7-10 June, the FMF PAC Food Services Assistance Team visited the Battalion. Suggestions made by this team resulted in a marked improvement in mess facilities, food preparation, and sanitation.

Lack of vehicles because of breakdowns and repairs continued to hamper the support capability of the motor transport unit. The Battalion did receive 4 M-37 personnel carriers, however, which alleviates some problem areas.

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From 18-21 June, the Division Inspector visited the Bn Supply and fiscal sections. The inspection was satisfactory with discrepancies, which were corrected by 27 June.

At the end of the reporting period, priority of Class IV materials was to CAP units. Engineer equipment was also made available to CAP units on a priority basis.

During Operation ARIZONA, no problems of resupply for personnel or armor were encountered primarily due to pre-staging at the AN HOA LSA.

J. Air Defense. None

K. Combat Air Support. The battalion made very limited use of air during the month of June. The only large use of helicopters was for med-evacs. The battalion had 69 med-evac missions for 115 Marines, PT's and civilians. A large helicopter troop lift was accomplished during Operation ARIZONA. A very limited number of fixed wing missions were requested, completing only 6 strikes. The battalion did, however, make large use of TPQ-10's requesting 249 missions.

1. Civil Affairs

a. Significant Activities. On 9, 10 June 1967 a county fair operation was held in the HOA MY TRUNG Hamlet complex (vic AT 897568). 1100 indigenous personnel were interrogated and exposed to GVN propaganda. The operation proved a success both in achieving its intended purpose and also in serving as a training vehicle through which refinements in technique can be made prior to future operations in less pacified areas.

b. Materials Distributed

Clothing - 1200 pounds

Food-

Bulgar - 6500 lbs

Corn Meal - 9000 lbs

Powdered Milk - 2000 lbs

Salad Oil - 52 cases

Soap - 1000 lbs

Flour - 3100 lbs

c. The civil affairs program within this SOR is presently concerned with completing previously initiated programs. These include a school and orphanage in both HIEU DUC and DAI LOC villages. Both of these projects are and have been delayed by the unavailability of such building materials as cement. An additional four school projects have been submitted to province headquarters for approval. All four schools will be located at existing CAP units if approved.

d. Apparent Results of the Civic Affairs Program

The civil affairs program in the DAI LOC-HIEU DUC area is presently stymied due to conflicts at the local level. The results of the policy that no project will be undertaken until all material is on hand is a noted lack of progress on projects that have been approved by Province Headquarters. Province in turn, is unwilling to release added material or approve new projects.

Non combat claims rose to 3 for this reporting period, as opposed to 2 for the month of May. The most serious of these claims resulted when a tracked vehicle indiscriminantly crossed a cultivated area off the main highway. Backlash reports markedly decreased this month, due primarily to the fact that all large operations were held outside of the immediate DAI LOC area. Approximately 4500 indigenous personnel participated in our Med-Cap and Dent-Cap program this month.

e. Nuclear, Biological, Chemical, or other Special types of warfare.

None.

3. Commander's Narrative of Significant Events.

(1) On 011720H Co I, 3rdBn, 1stMar (OPCON 3/7) squad combat patrol observed

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 3 Vietnamese females moving across a rice paddy trying to avoid the patrol at AT 952674. Giving pursuit the patrol captured 2 of the women but a third was killed as she tripped a M-26 anti-personnel mine planted in a cave entrance. A M-26 grenade was taken from one of the women.

(2) On 032130H CAP 22 located at AT 864574 received 100 rounds of S/A fire from an estimated 6 VC NW of the perimeter at AT 864576. Quickly returning fire the CAP unit forced the enemy to break contact. There were no casualties.

(3) On 032400 the new MCB Bridge loc at AT 923588 received 30 rounds of S/A and A/W fire from an estimated 4 VC at AT 920585. The VC were driven off by M-60 and M-16 fire along with 4 3.5 rockets. The bridge was not damaged.

(4) On 042330H CAP 31 (AT 946698) took under fire an estimated 5 VC crossing a rice paddy at AT 942698. A search of the area produced 2 blood trails and one ChiCom grenade, 2 VC KIA (P).

(5) On 050155H an estimated 100 Main Force VC attacked CAP B-4 at AT 943664 with grenades, stachel charges, S/A and A/W. Penetration occurred in the SW part of the perimeter. The CAP unit returned over 1000 rounds of 5.56 and called in artillery and 81 missions for illumination and to interdict likely VC withdrawal routes. A reaction force of tanks and 1 sqd arrived within 10 minutes of the initial assault and restored the perimeter security. The casualties included 5 USMC KIA, 4 USMC WIA, 5 PF's WIA, 2 bunkers destroyed, 7 M-16 rifles were lost as was one M-79 and 7 LAAWS. Eight VC bodies were observed to be dragged away.

(6) On 061130H the point element of a Co K platoon sweep at AT 899679 came upon 10 VC at AT 870920 dressed in green uniforms with packs and weapons. The VC immediately broke contact and fled west. Artillery was fired on likely withdrawal routes and a Sparrowhawk was provided by Co L and established blocking positions/OP's in the vic of Hill 92 (AT 888678). Two large blood trails were found and 1 Vn female was apprehended during the engagement. One VC KIA (P).

(7) On 071915H a Co I, 3/1 squad security patrol at AT 960695 uncovered 15 fresh graves and empty coffins. The graves were approximately one thousand meters from CAP B-4 which was attacked on 5 June.

(8) On 071450H a Co I, 3/1 (OPCON 3/7) squad security patrol observed 1 VC with helmet, cartridge belt, grenades and medical supplies at AT 952645. The VC threw the supplies and a grenade in a ditch in an attempt to destroy them. Upon investigation the medical supplies were found undamaged by the grenade and were forwarded to S-2.

(9) On 072330H 3rdPlt, Co L OPCON to Co I on Hill 65 (AT 878577) observed movement of an estimated 100 VC at AT 853587 through infra red and illumination devices. TOT's totalling 92 rounds of 105 and 155 were fired. Under flareship illumination, 5 fixed wing strikes were conducted. Co M along with a Sparrowhawk from Co E, 2/7 swept the area on 8 June with negative results.

(10) On 080800H Co I commenced a County Fair in the HOA MY TRUNG hamlet complex at AT 895568.

(11) On 080125H CAP B-4 ambush at AT 943665 observed 4 VC with weapons approach their position. Taking them under fire, 1 VC was observed to fall. The VC returned 20 rounds of S/A. A search of the area revealed no trace of casualties.

(12) On 091415H a Co L platoon(-) sweep of the PHU SON (4) hamlet at AT 895568 resulted in the detention of 6 VC sympathizers and members of VC associations.

(13) On 091330H a Co M squad patrol pursued by fire a Vn male in khaki uniform attempting to evade the patrol at AT 810569. The VCS was killed and a bottle of medicine was found on him.

(14) On 112045H an estimated 10 VC probed the refugee camp at AT 965573 with S/A fire. CAP 22 ambush called in 105 and 81 HE on the VC. There were no known casualties.

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(15) On 100700H Co I, 5/1 (OPCON 3/7) Co K and 1 Plt Co E, 2/7 (OPCON 3/7) commenced Operation BUTLER in the CAO SONG Valley (AT 8769).

(16) On 140700H a Co I 3/1 squad combat patrol pursued 1 VC with a weapon at AT 962693. A search of the area uncovered the VC hiding in a tunnel. After throwing a grenade at the patrol, the VC was killed by 20 rounds of 5.56. One weapon, an AK-50 was captured along with 2 M-26 grenades, 1 cartridge belt with 2 magazines and a map of DANANG.

(17) On 140700H 3rdBn(-) 7th Marines commenced participation in Operation ARIZONA in the INDEPENDENCE area south of the SONG VU GIA.

(18) On 141430H Co L platoon patrol on Operation ARIZONA engaged an estimated 10 VC at AT 845543. A subsequent search of the area found large amounts of blood and pieces of flesh; 1 VC KIA (C) and 1 VC KIA (P); 6 detainees were apprehended running from the patrol at AT 832545.

(19) On Operation ARIZONA at 142330H, Co M blocking position #2 (AT 834-550) using infrared night vision devices, observed 10 to 15 VC attempting to cross the SONG VU GIA vic AT 823550 using reeds as breathing devices. Tanks in the blocking position effectively prevented the main body of the group from completing the crossing. A fireteam maneuvered to the crossing point and engaged 5 VC fleeing the scene. Several blood trails and bloody clothing were found. A total of 8 VC KIA (P) were claimed.

(20) On Operation ARIZONA on 151030H Co L at AT 840542 directed artillery on 10-15 VC fleeing from a village. A subsequent search of the area found three VC KIA (C), one M-14 bayonet, 6 ChiCom grenades and 1 cartridge belt with 3 .45 cal pistol magazines.

(21) On Operation ARIZONA on 151700H, Co M's blocking position at AT 863568 observed 4 VC with weapons moving along the south bank of the SONG VU GIA. Tanks using .50 and .30 cal MG resulted in 2 VC KIA (C) and 1 VC KIA (P).

(22) On Operation ARIZONA at 151725H Co A, 1/7 OPCON 3/7 at AT 855518 fired 90mm cannister on 10 NVA fleeing east 300 meters away. Five VC KIA (P) were recorded when blood trails were found in the vicinity.

(23) On Operation ARIZONA one VC was apprehended on 161445H by a Co L squad patrol at AT 836532 as he attempted to hide in a cave. Two 57mm RR rounds and one 81mm mortar round plus assorted documents were found.

(24) On 171150H, Co K, 3/1 (OPCON 3/7) apprehended 2 detainees attempting to elude a squad patrol at AT 964699 by jumping into the SONG YEN. A third, however, escaped in the river. All three wore khaki uniforms.

(25) On Operation ARIZONA at 180800H a mechanized column from Co L engaged 20-25 NVA with packs, weapons, and extensive camouflage in a trench line on the western edge of the PHU AN (1) hamlet at AT 872520. Pursuing the enemy into the PHU AN (1) hamlet, the unit received heavy S/A and A/W fire, including 20 rds of 60mm mortar and 5 RPG-2 rockets. The NVA continued to fall back attempting to draw the Marine units into a "U" shaped ambush. The marine platoon held its ground, however, and requested artillery and fixed wing missions. AmTracs with Infantry reinforcements killed 10 NVA in spider holes as they fought to take the high ground, Hill 11, at AT 877517. A sweep of the area uncovered large pools of blood, packs and weapons. Captured were 1 M-14 with magazines, 1 M-16 with magazine, 1 AK-47 with magazines, 1 BAR, and 1 ChiCom K-44 rifle. A total of 1 VC KIA (C) and 14 VC KIA (P) were recorded.

(26) On 192055H an unknown number of VC attempted to destroy the refugee village at AT 935664 with stachel charges and small arms. The village was unoccupied and the VC were driven off by a tank reaction force from Hill 41. Seven of the 8 structures were damaged but were still standing.

(27) Operation ARIZONA terminated at 191200H.

(28) On 191345H, an LVT P-5 moving personnel from Hill 65 to Hill 52 detonated a 250 lb bomb rigged as an anti-tank mine at AT 816556. 1 USMC KIA, and 6 USMC WIA resulted. The LVT and mechanical mule M-274 were totally destroyed.

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(29) On 191830H a Co M squad combat patrol at AT 807567 observed 5 VC with/packs at AT 808578. An artillery mission covered area and a search revealed drag marks. Two VC KIA (P).

(30) On 201700H 1 Vn male, LE THANH TUC, surrendered to Co M on Hill 52 (ZC 19550). He said the VC forced him to fight and claimed he was kept prisoner in a camp in the mountains.

(31) On 210430H as Co K squad ambush returned to PPB at AT 908801, VC force of unknown size threw 5 grenades at 2 defensive positions. S/A fire was also received by a second Co K squad ambush. After the Platoon returned 20 rds M-16 and 10 rounds M-79 along with 7 rds 60mm mortar, the VC fled NW. Search of area revealed 1 M-16 magazine at AT 911701 and matted down grass at AT 907-705. Three different villagers reported subsequently that 16 VC were involved in the attack and 3 were killed.

(32) On 220530H a Co M squad ambush at AT 924553 fired upon a VC in a boat attempting to cross the SONG VU GIA. The boat sank and the body floated away. 3 pairs of black pajamas and 1 pair of black shorts were found.

(33) On 230915H a Co M squad security patrol at ZC 205543 engaged 7 VC with packs and weapons at ZC 197536. 1 VC KIA (C) was recorded. As the unit maneuvered to retrieve the VC body and weapon, a heavy volume of fire forced them to shift position. No further contact could be made.

(34) On 251500H, Co M resupply LVT detonated a 250 lb bomb rigged as an anti-tank mine at AT 814557. 2 USMC were killed, 2 were wounded, 1 Vn interpreters was also wounded.

(35) On 26155H a Co M squad patrol at AT 80553 fired upon 3 VC with packs and cartridge belts, 1 VC KIA (C) was the result; a search produced 1 bayonet, 1 canteen, and one pack.

(36) On 261625H Co M combat base on Hill 52 (ZC 213552) received 15 rds of sniper fire from an unknown number of VC at ZC 203543 while a CH-53 was attempting to raise an observation tower into position. Two USMC were wounded by the S/A which were effectively silenced by MG fire and an 81mm barrage. A search of the area was prevented by the SONG VU GIA.

(37) On 290130H 4 USMC from a Co M squad night raid received shrapnel wounds from incoming grenade as they attacked a house suspected of harboring 6 VC. 1 VC KIA (C) resulted from the raid.

(38) On 281950H an anti-personnel mine was detonated in the center of a platoon leaders meeting at a Co K platoon Patrol Base at AT 920704. 8 USMC were med evaced, 2 subsequently died of wounds.

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LAP/olp

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5 July 1967

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on CO 3rd Bn, 7th Marines ltr 3/WEG/dig over  
3480 of 1 June 67

S & C FILES  
HEADQUARTERS

1ST MARINE DIVISION, FMF

From: Commanding Officer  
To: Commanding General, 1st Marine Division

Subj: Combat After Action Report; Operation DE SOTO

67-2926/1<sup>st</sup> EUD

Copy 1 of 31 copies

Ref: (a) CO 7th Marines ltr 3/LID/jfs ser 3480 of 9 April 1967

1. Forwarded.

2. Reference (a) submitted appropriate After Action Reports for those phases of Operation DE SOTO during which the Commanding Officer, 7th Marines either had operational control or provided the staff for the forces involved. The report attached hereto is the only report submitted by the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines and is all-inclusive of the entire operation. The delay in its submission was occasioned by its temporary misplacement. The loss was discovered during a monthly review of reports submitted.

3. This report contains a thorough discussion and analysis of the forces involved, the operations conducted, the problems encountered and the overall results obtained during Operation DE SOTO, which proved extremely challenging, both tactically and logistically. Tactically, it involved the simultaneous establishment of an isolated base camp, and the conduct of extensive daily search and destroy missions. Ground activities encompassed almost every conceivable situation that a Marine unit might encounter in Vietnam. Contact ranged from the apprehension of suspected Viet Cong laborers to attacks against well-armed main force Viet Cong fortified hamlets. Logistically, although several problems were encountered while supporting the operation from an LSA completely dependent on helicopter transportation and resupply, adequate support of combat essential equipment was provided to units in the field.

4. A secondary mission of conducting pacification programs was also assigned to the battalion. A variety of programs were initiated immediately upon arriving in the BUC PHO area. These programs included Psyops leaflet drops, stressing the "Chieu Hoi", Med Cap and Dent Cap programs and the construction of refugee camps. Additionally, refugees were protected by USMC Units when they returned to their homes to salvage their possessions. The general response to these programs in an area which was initially 90% VC-oriented is considered noteworthy and encouraging.

5. The thoroughly professional manner in which the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines successfully accomplished a plethora of diversified missions holds valuable lessons for all unit leaders. Careful scrutiny of the After Action Report should be beneficial to all commanders.

C. C. CROSSFIELD

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Operation DE SOTO

DISTRIBUTION:

CG 1st Mar Div	10
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Total	46

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HEADQUARTERS  
3rd Battalion, 7th Marines  
1st Marine Division (Rein) FMF  
FPO San Francisco, California 96602

3/WHG/dlj.  
3480  
1 June 1967

From: Commanding Officer  
To: Commanding General, 1st Marine Division (Rein), FMF  
Via: Commanding Officer, 7th Marines

Subj: Combat Operations After Action Report

Ref: (a) DivO 3480.1  
(b) Task Force X-Ray Op Plan; Admin Plan 1-67

S & C FILES  
HEADQUARTERS  
1ST MARINE DIVISION, FMF  
67 2926  
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1. Code Name. Operation DESOTO
2. Dates of operation. 260800H Jan 67 to 071200H April 67
3. Location. DUC PHO District, QUANG NGAI Province, RVN
4. Control or Command Headquarters. Third Battalion, Seventh Marines; Task Force X-Ray
5. Task Organization. Several changes from the original Task Organization (Ref b) were made during Operation DESOTO because of the operation's duration. The following T/O was in effect when the operation terminated 07 April 1967. Not included is Co M, 3rd Bn, 5th Marines which participated from 311730H Jan to 231800H Feb 67, and Co F, 2nd Bn, 7th Marines which relieved Co M/3/5. Co F/2/7 was subsequently relieved by Co G, 2nd Bn, 7th Marines 290845H March. Other deletions and/or additions to the T/O were relatively insignificant.

2nd Bn (Rein), 7th Marines

H&S Co(-)  
4th Sect, 81mm Mort Plt, H&S Co  
2nd B, 7th Marines  
Det, 3rd Bn, 11th Marines (ARTY Ln)  
Det, 3rd Bn, 11th Marines (NGF Ln)  
Det, Hq Bn  
Det, 9th ITT, FMF  
Det, 7th CIT, FMF  
Det, CivAfrs Unit (AA)  
Sqd, MP Co.  
Det, MASS 3  
Det, 7th Comm Bn (RR Tm)  
Det, Scout Sniper Plt, 7th Marines  
Clr Plt (Rein), Co D, 1st Med Bn  
Co C(-), 1st SP Bn  
2nd Plt(-), Co C 1st Engr Bn  
LSA, FLSG-BRAVO  
3rd Plt, B Co, 1st Antitank Bn

2ndLt RICHARDS

014-67 Copy # 1/2/47

Co I (Rein)

CAPT CLARK

Det, H&S Co, 1st SP Bn  
Det, Btry 1, 3rd Bn, 11th Marines  
Det, 81mm Mort Plt, H&S Co  
Det, 106RR Plt, H&S Co  
Det, 2nd Plt, C Co, 1st Engr Bn  
Det, 81mm Mort Plt, H&S Co  
Det, Hq Btry, 3rd Bn, 11th Marines (NGF Spot Tm)

7thMar S&C Log Nr.  
0385-67 Copy # 1246

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Co K (Rein)

Capt JONES

FAC Tm  
FO Tm, 81mm Mort Plt, H&S Co  
FO Tm, Btry I, 3rdBn, 11thMar  
Tm, 2nd Plt, C Co, 1st Engr Bn  
Det, Hq Btry, 3rd Bn, 11thMar  
(NGF Spot Tm)

Co L (Rein)

Lt PIATT

Det, HST, C Co, 1st SP Bn  
FAC Tm  
FO Tm, 81mm Mort Plt, H&S Co  
FO Tm, Btry I, 3rd Bn, 11thMar  
Tm, 2nd Plt C Co, 1st Engr Bn  
Det, Hq Btry, 3rdBn, 11thMar  
(NGF Spot Tm)

Co M (Rein)

Capt ROSS

FAC Tm  
Det, HST, C Co, 1st SP Bn  
FO Tm, 81mm Mort Plt, H&S Co  
FO Tm, Btry I, 3rdBn, 11thMar  
Tm, 2nd Plt, C Co, 1st Engr Bn

Co G, 2nd Bn, 7th Marines

Capt WILSON

Det, HST, C Co, 1st SP Bn  
FO Tm, 81mm Mort Plt, H&S Co 2/7  
FO Tm, Btry H, 3rdBn, 11thMar  
Tm, 2nd Plt, C Co, 1st Engr Bn

Btry I, 3rdBn, 11th Marines

Capt MORGAN

Btry I  
Plt, Btry K, 4thBn, 11thMar  
Plt, Whiskey Btry, 3rdBn, 11thMar

Co D(-), Det, 1st Recon Bn1st Plt (Rein) A Co 1st Tank Bn6. Supporting Forces

a. Artillery. Btry I, 3rd Bn, 11th Marines was assigned in direct support of the battalion upon displacement of both units to NUI DANG. Four 105mm Howitzers were emplaced vic BS 817384 in existing ARVN positions. Initially, reinforcing fires were provided by one platoon of 155 Howitzers (T) (ARVN 21st Arty Bn) located at NUI DAU, and manned by personnel from 4th Bn, 11th Marines. On 12 March Btry I, 3/11 displaced from its position atop NUI DANG to a previously prepared position vic 813384. This displacement resulted in a substantial decrease in the battery's effective minimum range, greatly increasing its availability for close defensive fires around the battalion CP/LSA. Fire support available to the battalion substantially increased with the arrival of two 155mm Howitzers (T) from Btry K, 4th Bn, 11th Marines and two 4.2 in mortars from Whiskey Btry, 3rd Bn, 11th Marines on Mar 25. Both units were in direct support and were located at NUI DANG positions. The ARVN plt of 155mm at NUI DAU reverted to ARVN control at this time.

Ammunition expenditures for Operation DESOTO were:

	105mm Howitzer	107mm(Howitzer)	155mm(Howitzers)
HE	16,195	674	351
WP	2,410	425	49
ILLUM	697	239	30
SMK	67		
VT	356		

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7th Marines S&amp;C No. 0442-67

Copy No. 2 of 48

28 June 1967

**FIRST ENDORSEMENT** on CO 3rd Bn, 7th Mar ltr 3/EDP/dlj serial 3480  
of 20 June 1967

From: Commanding Officer

To: Commanding General, 1st Marine Division (Attn: A C/S G-3)

Subj: Combat After Action Report: "Operation BUTLER"

1. The Combat After Action Report for Operation BUTLER is readdressed and forwarded herewith.
2. Although there was no enemy contact, Operation BUTLER was considered a success. The primary purpose of the operation was to conduct an extensive search of a likely avenue of approach into the DA NANG Air Base complex, and this was accomplished.
3. Valuable terrain analysis information was gained from Operation BUTLER. No sign of recent enemy activity was discovered, and the dense, heavily vegetated terrain encountered indicates that the CAO SUNG Valley possesses limited potential for enemy use as an effective access into the rocket belt area. However, the SONG LO DONG river presents a possible route via shallow draft boat. By utilizing the river exclusively, little or no sign of enemy activity would be evident.
4. The information on terrain gathered by Operation BUTLER will enable the 3rd Battalion to more effectively monitor the likely approach routes into the rocket belt.

*C. C. Crossfield*  
C. C. CROSSFIELD

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3rd Battalion, 7th Marines  
1st Marine Division (Rein) FMF  
FPO San Francisco, California 966023/EDP/dlj  
3480  
20 June 1967

From: Commanding Officer  
 To: Commanding Officer, 7th Marines  
 Subj: Combat After-Action Report, Operation BUTLER  
 Ref: (a) DivO 3480.1

7thMar S&C Log Nr.  
 0437-67 Copy # 2 of 48

1. Code name: Operation BUTLER
2. Dates of operation: 100700H to 121600H June 1967.
3. Location: HIEU DUC District QUANG NAM Province, RVN
4. Control or Command Headquarters: Third Battalion, Seventh Marines
5. Task Organization:

H&amp;S Co(-)

Command Group Alpha

Co I(Rein), 3rd Bn, 1st Mar

CAPT LYNCH

Tm, Scout Sniper Plt, 7th Marines  
 FO Tm, Btry C, 1st Bn, 11th Marines

Co K(-)(Rein)

CAPT JONES

Tm, Scout Sniper Plt, 7th Marines  
 FO Tm, Btry I, 3rd Bn, 11th Marines  
 FO Tm, 81mm Mortar Plt, H&S Co  
 FAC Tm, 3rd Bn, 7th Marines  
 HST, 1st Shore Party Bn

1st Plt, Co E, 2nd Bn, 7th Marines

FO Tm, Btry H, 3rd Bn, 11th Marines

3rd Bn, 7th Mar. Log No

769-67 Copy # 3 of 49

SER. 019-67

6. Supporting Forces

a. Air 1st MAW provided air support which included daily missions by aerial observation aircraft and 1 medical evacuation mission on 12 June. No fixed wing strikes were requested; there were no resupply missions.

b. Artillery Btry I, 3rd Bn, 11th Marines, from positions on Hill 65 (AT 884578) remained in Direct Support for the operation. Btry K, 4th Bn, 11th Marines also from positions on Hill 65 continued in its General Support role but with priority fires to units involved in BUTLER. Fourteen observed missions and 5 unobserved prep fire missions provided offensive coverage for company objectives. Extensive H&I fires were plotted on suspected VC routes of movement. Illumination rounds greatly aided the night movement of Co I, 3/1 through thick foliage. The rounds were utilized to determine position and direction. No on-call or close defensive fire missions were conducted.

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

7. Intelligencea. Anticipated VC Strength, Location and Disposition in Objective Area

(1) It was anticipated that up to one company of Main Force/NVA personnel could be located in the objective area. Frequent intelligence gathered by District agents indicated the area was being utilized as a route of movement into and out of the DANANG area. These reports

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were confirmed to some extent when a Co K long range patrol engaged 10 NVA on 6 June on the periphery of the objective area at AT 895679.

b. VC Strength and Disposition Encountered

(1) During the operation there were no encounters with Main Force/NVA. The only reported contact involved 2 local guerillas.

c. Significant Intelligence Gained.

(1) The hamlets in the objective were completely deserted and appeared to have been abandoned for over a year. There was no indication of indigenous personnel attempting to work the rice paddies which are now over grown with high grass.

(2) A possible harboring site was uncovered at AT 850682, but it appeared to have been unused for about 3 weeks. The trails found in the objective area were not well used and in some instances completely overgrown.

d. Terrain

(1) Critical Terrain. Hill 112, (AT 888688) and the ridge line running north east were considered key terrain and were utilized by Co K as blocking positions/OP's.

(2) Observation and Fields of Fire. In the objective area itself no observation was possible because the valley floor is completely overgrown with high elephant grass. There are no points of observation from the surrounding hill masses which are heavily canopied. The rice paddies in the northern portion of the objective are becoming overgrown with weeds and probably will offer limited observation in the future.

All engagements with VC enemy would be at close quarters.

(3) Cover and Concealment. Because of the density of the vegetation, covered and concealed fighting and ambush positions are numerous.

(4) Obstacles. The permanent obstacle was the terrain itself. Heavily overgrown with high canopy, the movement of Co I, 3rd Bn, 1st Marines through the jungle had to be accomplished with machetes. Stream crossing presented no difficulty because of the shallowness of the water. However, with the advent of the monsoon season, it is anticipated that the water depth will rise and the current will become much swifter.

(5) Avenues of approach. The trails indicated on the map proved to be impassable. No evidence could be found of their prior use. In some instances trails were non existent. The trail running through the pass between the mountainous areas in GS AT 8667 is completely overgrown and had to be hacked out with machetes. At AT 860678 a one (1) foot deep stream was discovered running to the west to AT 857678. It is not shown on the map and offered the only means of passage into the objective area. Throughout the whole operation area streambeds proved to be the only reasonable avenues of approach. They offer some comfort from the heat and more importantly provide a ready source of water. It is believed that the VC are also utilizing the streams as routes of movement.

e. Weather There was no inclement weather during the operation.

8. Mission. 3rd Bn(-)(Rein), 7th Marines conducts three (3) day search and destroy operation the CAO SUNG Valley (vic AT 860690).

9. Concept of Operation. 3rd Bn(-)(Rein), 7th Marines executes a three company search of the CAO SUNG Valley along prominent waterways from the 83 N-S Grid Line through the 90 N-S Grid Line. On D-Day, Co I, 3rd

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(b) 0

(c) 0

b. Fortifications and Equipment.

(1) Co I, 3/1 destroyed a 10 ft long, 2 ft wide, 3 ft high tunnel at AT 920680 on 101520H.

(2) 1st plt, Co E, 2/7 disarmed a Z-10 anti-personnel mine at AT 849729 on 111000.

12. Administration Matters. Administrative planning was thorough and detailed.

a. Supply. There was no resupply during the operation since long range patrol rations were utilized. Water was readily available from wells and streams. Troops carried a BA of ammunition.

b. Maintenance. There were no maintenance problems.

c. Treatment of Casualties. Med evac for the 3 WIA's and 1 NBC was adequate.

d. Transportation. Rotary wing aircraft provided field commanders with frequent reconnaissance flights over the objective area. Trucks were utilized to carry personnel to their respective bases.

e. Communications. A radio relay was established on Hill 41; no serious problems were encountered.

f. Medical Evacuation. See 12 c.

13. Special Equipment and Techniques. None

14. Commander's Analysis.

a. The primary purpose for Operation BUTLER was to conduct an extensive search of a most likely avenue of approach into the DANANG Air Base complex. The objective area was on in which movement is extremely restricted by heavy overgrowth. Also all previous operations venturing into the DAU SUNG Valley were conducted southerly up the valley floor with no blocking positions in the rear. These probing sweeps allowed any hostile forces to simply move ahead and away from the assault forces.

b. Operation BUTLER provided valuable terrain analysis information on a vital segment of this Battalions Sector of Responsibility. The knowledge gained on the VC's limited potential military use of the CAO SUNG Valley as an effective entrance into the Rocket Belt area will allow this Battalion to monitor their approach routes more often more effectively.

15. Recommendations

a. Operations of this nature should be continued throughout the TAOR. It enables the unit commander to physically cover every foot of his assigned SOR and provides him with the intimate terrain analysis he must have to be responsive to potential VC staging, assembly area.

b. A second and vital achievement is it allows the Battalion Command Group to deploy and operate under field conditions. The lack of field experience of any staff that has over a 100% rotation factor every year, could be the deciding margin in a heavily committed rapid developing situation.

*J.D. Counselman*  
J.D. COUNSELMAN

Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps



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Bn, 1st Marines (OPCON 3/7) conducts one day sweep of PHUOC NHAN Valley vic Grid Square 8966. Under cover of darkness, employing deceptive artillery and air support, deploy and cross hill mass vic GS 8667 and covertly establish blocking positions in western section of CAO SUNG Valley. On D plus 1 two companies conduct overt search operations to south and west establishing blocking positions on north side of SONG TUY LOAN, with these forces implaced, Co I. will commence search and destroy operations eastward out of CAO SUNG Valley.

#### 10. Execution

a. D-Day, 10 June 1967. At 100700H Co I, 3rd Bn, 1st Marines (OPCON 3/7) commenced search and destroy operation in PHUOC NHAN Valley. Extensive small unit activities were conducted as planned from the company patrol base vic AT 902671. Preparations were made to appear as if Co I, 3/1 would be establishing night defensive positions. While deceptive artillery and TPQ-10's were utilized to the southwest of the position, Co I, 3/1 moved west at 102015H to establish blocking positions in GS AT 8567, 8467, and 8468. Movement at night through the dense brush was slow and illumination was utilized in a directional aid capacity. There was negative contact although Co I did blow a small tunnel at AT 920680.

b. D plus 1, 11 June 1967. At 110700 Co K(-) conducted open and deliberate search and destroy operation westward from positions on Hill 10 to Hill 112 (AT 888688) where it established a blocking position OP. A platoon blocking position was also set up on the ridge at AT 893696. All positions were assumed by 110900. At 0815 1st platoon, Co E, 2nd Bn, 7th Marines crossed the LOD, vic AT 850740, and conducted an open sweep of the valley in the vic of GS AT 8573 and 8572. Co I, 3/1 arrived at the blocking position in vic of GS AT 8567 at 111015H and determined it to be unsatisfactory. Objective A (AT 844676) was therefore by passed and Co I pushed north toward Objective B (AT 837693) and Objective C (AT 857688). Reaching these objectives at approximately 1200, Co I then moved to establish night defensive positions vic of Objective D (AT 855704) and Objective F (AT 876644). 1st platoon, Co E, 2nd Bn, 7th Marines swept to AT 861709 where it established night defensive positions. The platoon discovered and disarmed a Z-10 anti-personnel mine at AT 849729. The only contact occurred when the Co K blocking position/OP on Hill 112 directed 26 HE 105 rounds on 2 VC in black without weapons running in a paddy at AT 885675. An AO flying over the area reported no subsequent sign of VC activity.

c. D plus 2, 12 June 1967. Co I, 3/1 swept through Objectives E (AT 871709) and Objectives G (AT 881701) by mid morning and effected a rendezvous at Objectives H (AT 884704) at 121300H. 1st platoon, Co E, 2/7 was chopped OPCON to 2/7 at 121200H. Co K and Co I, 3/1 returned to their combat bases by 121400H. The only contact consisted of Co I, 3/1 sustaining 3 WIA from anti-personnel mines at AT 887703. The operation terminated at 121600H.

#### 11. Results.

##### a. Personnel.

##### (1) Friendly Losses

(a) KIA - 0

(b) WIA - 3

(c) NBC - 1

##### (2) Enemy Losses

(a) 0

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Approximately 50 rounds per night were expended on H&I targets. A total of 606 fire missions were submitted by observers in the field while 129 selective missions were fired unobserved based on district and provincial intelligence reports. Total artillery surveillance for Operation DESOTO included: 111 VC KIA (Conf), 295 VC KIA (prob) and 19 VC WIA (prob). Extensive structural damage was also inflicted on fortified hamlets in the DUC PHO operating area. Despite ammunition expenditures well in excess of planned levels, no significant problems were encountered in resupply; a minimum of 600 rounds of 105mm HE were on position at all times. The average ammo status on station was approximately \_\_\_\_\_ rounds HE.

Significant events included the use of artillery illumination fuzed for ground impact to mark targets for night air strikes when TACA or AO control was unavailable. This technique was used on two separate occasions with excellent results to mark targets for both flarship and tactical attack aircraft. Operations in the DUC PHO area also proved the ineffectiveness of delay fuzes against fortified structures. Even tamped earth bunkers caused the fuze to break and malfunction. The situation was remedied by the use of CP fuzes with a increase in the effectiveness of both direct and indirect fire against fortified enemy positions. Also significant was the employment of artillery in conjunction with tactical helicopter assaults. After initial landing zone prep artillery fires, artillery continued to fire suppressive fires parallel to previously planned helicopter approach and retirement lanes. Fire was initiated and ceased on command of the helicopter flight leaders. Detailed briefings and positive checkpoints insured the safety of both aircraft and friendly troops.

## 7. Air

a. Both fixed and rotary wing air support provided by the 1st MAW, was used extensively during Operation DESOTO. Rotary wing support roles included company resupply, tactical troop-lifts, day and night medevacuations, reconnaissance missions and attack aircraft control. In addition, UH-1E gunships were called on daily to provide suppressive fires and/or observation for engaged or deployed units. Tactical troop-lifts were conducted between artillery, on station direct support, aircraft and helicopter flight leaders to provide constant fire on landing zones prior to touch down. Both air and artillery preparatory fire were thoroughly discussed with flight leaders of both escort and tactical lift aircraft prior to operations to insure that the requirements of infantry units as well as those of the air wing were met satisfactorily. Fixed wing attack aircraft were used extensively throughout Operation DESOTO. Control varied between TACA and FAC depending upon the tactical situation. A total of 900 attack missions were flown in support of the tactical battalion. In addition numerous AO and UH-1E missions were flown, not included in the above total. Target acquisition was mainly accomplished at the Battalion FSCC level. Additional targets were passed through 1st Mar Div (G-2). Radar controlled aerial bombing (TPQ-10) played an important role in the DUC PHO area of operations. An average of 65 drops per night were used to engage various targets with good effect. Also, selective targets, acquired through DUC PHO District intelligence sources and the Battalions' operational experience, were engaged with intense TPQ-10 programs over varying 36 hour periods. Flare-ship support was requested and received on 11 occasions without significant problems. Miniguns were also employed with success. There were four instances of friendly aircraft inflicting casualties on Marine forces in the DUC PHO area. The first of these occurred on 1 Feb at approximately 0345H, two bombs, of unknown size, exploded within Co M's defensive perimeter at BS 823403 resulting in 1 USMC KIA, 8 USMC WIA (Evac), 3 USMC WIA (Non-evac). An initial investigation of the incident indicated an error had been made in a TPQ-10 drop which had been scheduled for 1 Feb at BS 827410. No further report on the incident has been made available to this organization to date. On February 18 a CH-46 helicopter on a medevac mission for Co I delivered suppressive fire while entering an LZ at BS 802418, resulting in 1 USMC KIA and 2 USMC WIA (Evac). Up until the time of the incident the aircraft had been running on a target approximately 300 meters to the north of the above coord under control of both TACA and FAC. A correction was given.

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with the intention of moving the strike farther north when the aircraft strafed friendly positions. No further report on this incident has been made available to this organization to date.

On 30 March Co G/2/7 sustained casualties from friendly air strikes. The target was requested for BS 757356 and was under the control of a TACA. The target was marked by the TACA and confirmed by Co G. Both attack aircraft identified the target, and fired rocket ripples. The first aircraft's rockets impacted on target. The second's however, impacted within a Co G's platoon position 400 meters short of the target. Four (4) USMC KIA, 1 USMC DOW, and 19 USMC MIA (Evac) resulted. No further report on this incident has been made to this organization to date.

c. Naval Gunfire. Naval Gunfire was employed extensively throughout the DUC PHO ACR, in support of maneuvering elements as well as air and ground observers. Three permanent observation posts were established in the DUC PHO area, and were manned by Naval Gunfire spotters on a 24-hour basis. These positions included NUI DAU (vic BS 874325), NUI DANG (vic BS 818385), and NUI CUA (vic BS 849391). In addition, deployed units were supported by attached spotter teams from Hq. Btry, 3rd Bn, 11th Marines. Naval Gunfire support was both timely and accurate, and proved extremely effective in relieving pressure on heavily engaged units. This was particularly true of the initial phases of the operation when artillery ammunition was in short supply, and LSMR's were on station. The ship's high rate of fire, preplanned positioning to offer an optimal gun target line, and accurate target location permitted the use of 5" rockets within a few hundred meters of maneuvering elements. Naval Gunfire also played a role in the battalion's nighttime H&I program, providing the added range to interdict deep targets in previously uncontested areas. Two TOTs were employed using both Naval Gunfire and artillery with excellent effect. A lesson learned from Operation DESOTO's employment of supporting arms was that Naval Gunfire can be employed effectively in close support missions, despite its range dispersion. Preplanned positioning of the ship or ships involved overcomes the range dispersion problem, and a much more versatile weapon is added to the ground commander's disposal. Ships participating in Operation DESOTO included: USS ST. FRANCIS RIVER (LSMR 525), USS MANLY (AB940), USS CANBERRA (CAG 2) USS WHITE RIVER (LSMR 536), USS CLARION (LSMR 409), USS TURNER JOD (DD 951), USS PROVIDENCE (CLG 6) USS OZBOURNE (DD 846) USS FRECHETTER (DD 870) and the Australian Naval Gunfire support ship HMAS HOBART. A total of NGF ammunition expenditure for Operation DESOTO is not available at this time, however, based on the operational averages for certain reporting periods the following is estimated: HE 9,500; WP 300; Illum 20; HE (fz vt) 400.

## 7. Intelligence

### a. Anticipated VC Strength, Location, Disposition in the Area of Operations

(1) It was anticipated that all hamlets in the DUC PHO TAOR would be well-fortified, and defended by hamlet guerrillas of undetermined strength, who would be reinforced by corresponding village guerrillas. The local populace was not expected to support USMC operations because of vigorous Communist military, economic, and political control of the area. It was estimated that 90 percent of the civilian population was Communist indoctrinated.

(2) Viet Cong units expected in DUC PHO District included four previously confirmed Local Force Companies (C-17, C-19, C-21, C-219), three probable Local Force Companies (195th, 5064, C-217), two confirmed Local Force Battalions (38th, 48th), and one probable Local Force Battalion (19th). The total estimated strength of these units was reported to be 1600.

(3) Local Force VC units were expected to be reinforced by the 2nd Regiment of the 3rd NVA Division, deployed by BINH DINH Province. The strength of these units was estimated at 4,900.

### b. Source of Intelligence Prior to D-Day. Task Force X-Ray Op Plan 1-67.

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CONFIDENTIALc. VC Strength and Situation Encountered.

(1) During initial operations, VC forces in well-prepared defensive positions were encountered. They attempted to block the movement of USMC forces from the base of operations at NUI DANG to the northeast. It was assumed that the enemy encountered was an unidentified Local Force Battalion equipped with 60mm mortars and .50 cal. machineguns. This unit appeared well disciplined and trained. The fortified positions which they occupied in the hamlets of TAN TU, SA BINH, and HAI MON were oriented generally to the west toward Highway One. This was the factor that decided attacks by helicopters assault from the east which drove the VC north across the SONG CAU from the HAI MON hamlet complex/Hill 26 area vicinity BS 833397 in one instance, and from the THUY TRIEU (1) hamlet complex westward along the trace of the SONG TRA CAU.

(2) Operations and patrolling gradually resulted in USMC control of the hamlets just north of the SONG TRA CAU. Heavy resistance was encountered there as before. It was discovered at this time that new bunkers and trenches were being constructed to repel attacks from all directions. The buildup of fortifications in this area was conducted mainly during February's TET Lunar Truce. Throughout the operation, however, USMC forces continued to report freshly-dug trenches and fortifications, throughout the DUC PHO TAOR.

(3) By establishing one combat base at SA BINH, BS 822403 and by aggressive patrolling, control of the hamlets south of the SONG TRA CAU to NUI DANG, and the control of HAI MON hamlet was established. Efforts were then turned to areas south and west of NUI DANG. In both areas moderate-to-heavy resistance and new fortifications indicated that VC forces anticipated friendly operations in these areas.

(4) On 24 March, from 0050 to 0130, an attack was conducted on the Battalion CP/LSA at NUI DANG. Between 200-250 rounds of 60mm, 82mm mortar, 57 and 75mm recoilless rifle fire were received. Reports on 25 March indicated the attack was conducted by either the 95th Battalion of the 2nd NVA Regiment or the 83rd Local Force Battalion (AKA 38th Bn).

(5) On 1 April, at 0300 a 20-man reconnaissance OP located at BS 772395 was attacked. Initially, the OP reported an attacking force of 12-15 VC. It was later reported, however, by the National Police of DUC PHO District, that the unit which conducted the attack was a company of the 95th Battalion reinforced by guerillas of PHO PHUOC Village.

(6) Throughout Operation DESOTO, VC harassment and defense of some strategic areas indicated their strong desire to maintain control of much of DUC PHO contested hamlets. Recurrent reports indicated a buildup of Main Force units west of DUC PHO with the mission of containing USMC operations within a small radius of the NUI DANG CP.

(7) Operations west of DUC PHO in the vicinity of VINH LAC, AN LOI and THANH LAM hamlet complexes vicinity Grid Squares 7538, 7539, 7638, 7639, 7737, 7738, 7837 and 7838 resulted in the capture of well-supplied corpsman's packs. Moderate-to-heavy contacts, recurrent reports, and the material captured indicated the area may have been a substantial source of VC medical aid.

(8) During Operation DESOTO little significant intelligence was gained from the interrogation of detainees. Few detainees volunteered information. This substantiated already confirmed intelligence that the DUC PHO area was vigorously VC controlled. Few detainees reported any sightings of Main Force Units. One interrogation revealed that vicinity NUI DAU, 50 Main Force VC were observed wearing gold stars pinned on the shirts who were known as VC from the Gold Star Division (NVA). This was not confirmed, however, by agencies under our control.

d. Units Identified

(1) Through captured documents, the C-219 Co and 120th Co (Unit 120) were confirmed. The 206 was believed to be a village guerilla company A Unit 511 (believed to be an alternate designation for the 22 VC Regt) was also confirmed through captured documents.

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(2) Reports were also received from the DOIC of DUC PHO and analyzed by the Battalion S-2. Most reports were of an Order of Battle nature and rice cache targets. Units continuously reported but mostly unconfirmed were as follows:

120th Co  
C-219 Local Force Co  
C217 Local Force Co  
38 Local Force Bn  
48 Local Force Bn  
307 Local Force Bn  
95 Bn (2nd Regt)  
1st VC Regt  
2nd NVA Regt (Yellow/Gold Star)  
22nd NVA Regt

(3) Intelligence evaluations tended to confirm that Local Force companies had the missions of assisting guerillas in controlling the people, harassing 3/7's combat patrols, and denying USMC access to areas under VC domination. It was also determined by the trend of reports received that the mission of the 95 Bn, and Local Force battalions was to protect both the flow of supplies received on the coastal beaches by waterborne traffic, and the rice harvest. Reports of the 307 battalion indicated that its mission was to patrol the hills west of DUC PHO and maintain the established north-to-south supply routes.

e. Significant Intelligence Gained.

(1) Continuous enemy contact of various degrees, the presence of weapons such as .50 cal MG, 75mm RR, 57mm RR, 82mm mortars, and sighting by AO's and recon units of uniformed troops, confirmed the presence of at least elements of Main Force/NVA units in the DUC PHO area.

(2) Recurrent reports during Operation DESOTO confirmed the fact that the VC were using waterborne traffic to infiltrate medical supplies, ammunition and possibly troops into the DUC PHO area. Aerial and ground surveillance of the nearby coastal beaches was maintained but coastal areas north near MO DUC and south near SA HUYNH could not effectively be observed from NUI DANG/NUI NUA positions.

(3) Documents captured indicated the presence of Main Force units and affirmed their coordinated operations with local guerillas. The possibility of Main Force personnel reinforcing Local guerillas on a permanent advisory basis was also possible.

(4) Translated documents listed the names of village and hamlet guerillas and the related VC infrastructure of PHO PHUOC, PHO BINH and PHO TAN hamlets. Documents also indicated the strengths of the guerillas by village and hamlets. Some personal letters also indicated a lowering VC morale due to high rates of casualties and homesickness.

(5) It was determined by the volume of official correspondence found ~~that no fewer than three of the VC KIA during the operation were~~ ~~important political cadres or VC platoon commanders.~~

(6) Translated documents indicated that village and hamlet guerillas had a mission of reporting USMC reconnaissance helicopter inserts to Main Force personnel, and coordinating attacks on the USMC units with Main Force units. USMC reconnaissance OP's frequently were harassed and attacked in the DUC PHO area. These units were immediately extracted in all cases, upon being compromised regardless of the degree of enemy contact.

(7) Ground reconnaissance and AO sightings confirmed armed VC and VC Boigars using VC MSR's. The route running North to South through the hills to the west of DUC PHO along BS 76035 to BS 785330 used in conjunction with the main route running east to west through BS 770430.

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8. Mission. The following is the mission as stated in Battalion Op Order 1-67: 3rd Bn (Rein), 7th Marines deploys to area of NUI DAU/DUC PHO/NUI DANG, QUANG NGAI Province, RVN to relieve designated ARVN forces; to establish and maintain control of NUI DANG and NUI DAU positions; to react rapidly to enemy forces threatening DUC PHO District Headquarters; to conduct unilateral or coordinated search and destroy operations; to establish control over assigned TAOR; and to carry out other missions as assigned.

9. Concept of Operations. The following is the Concept as stated in Task Force X-Ray Operation Plan 1-67:

a. On D-2, 3rd Bn (Rein), 7th Marines deploys advance party by helicopter to NUI DAU (BS 8138), DUC PHO (BS 8037), and NUI DAU (BS 8732).

b. On D-1 deploys one platoon (rein) by helicopter to relieve 2d ARVN Div infantry units on NUI DANG and provides security for artillery and communications established thereon.

c. Conducts helicopter assault with two companies at H-Hour on D-Day vic NUI DANG; initially conducts search and destroy operations within radius of three kilometers of NUI DANG.

d. On D-Day deploys Bn command group and rifle co (-)(Rein) by helicopter to establish CP vicinity DUC PHO.

e. On D-1 deploys one rifle company (rein) by helicopter to relieve 4th Bn, 4th Regt, 2d ARVN Div on NUI DAU.

f. On D-2 assumes responsibility for TAOR; RZ as indicated.

g. Establishes and maintains control of NUI DAU and NUI DANG positions and surrounding areas; prepares to react rapidly to enemy forces threatening District Headquarters at DUC PHO.

h. Maintains two companies in mobile status to conduct daily unilateral or coordinated search and destroy operations against enemy forces in the area; priority initially to area NW, N and NE of DUC PHO and NUI DANG.

i. Plans gradual expansion of area under control to open and secure Highway 1 within TAOR.

j. Plans and conducts Golden Fleece operations in coordination with District Chief.

k. In coordination with District Chief, establishes measures to control movement and activities of Vietnamese engaged in fishing and other boat activity along the South China Sea coast.

l. Periodically conducts coordinated operations outside of the TAOR with district and/or province forces to deny salt harvest to the enemy.

m. Conducts military civic action programs in coordination with district officials.

10. Execution. 3rd Bn, (rein), 7th Marines was alerted to deploy to the DUC PHO, QUANG NGAI Province area in mid January. Preparations for the deployment began with a tactical displacement from the DAI LOC, DANANG TAOR to the NW DANANG TAOR which was completed 151500H Jan 1967. The battalion retained responsibility over the NW DANANG TAOR for approximately one week prior to administrative displacement to CHU LAI, and further tactical deployment into the DUC PHO area. On 22 Jan, after the battalion had displaced to CHU LAI, it received the Task Force Op Plan 1-67 and Admin Plan 1-67, and coordination with attached and direct support units began. The following detailed description of the conduct of operations of Operation LESOTO was compiled from journals and debriefings of ground commanders after the incident

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one U.S. Carbine, one French submachine gun; seven chicom grenades, five packs, and ammunition boxes.

(b) At 010900H March, Co M, conducting a squad size combat patrol following the westward trace of the TRA CAU River engaged 3 VC with packs and weapons at BS 807407, killing two VC (C) and capturing 1 Russian carbine, one M-1, and 2 cartridge belts.

(c) At 021100H April, Co K, while conducting a search and destroy mission along the TRA CAU River in Grid Square BS 7841, came upon an estimated platoon of VC. During the firefight, the enemy maneuvered toward the flank and rear of Co K, but were observed at BS 775413 and engaged with small arms mortars, artillery, and UH-IE gunships. A search of the area produced one VC KIA (C), 8 VC KIA (P) and resulted in the capture of one M-1 carbine and one gas mask.

(d) At 021100H April, Co M moving into blocking position in support of a sweep by Co K, received sniper fire from the fortified hamlet of TAP AN NAM, BS 805415. An artillery mission caught 5 VC in the open and resulted in 3 VC KIA (P). Pursuing the enemy, Co M again made contact at 021545 with 4 VC at BS 789419. Two more VC KIA from small arms fire were confirmed.

(e) At 030845 Co M observed an estimated 35 VC wearing green uniforms with packs and weapons traveling west in groups of 4 and 5 at BS 805414, BS 805414, and BS 813415. Taking them under fire with small arms, automatic weapons, artillery and fixed wing, 24 VC KIA (P) were recorded.

(f) Three sightings were made on 3 April by a reconnaissance unit located at BS 6835. Seven VC KIA (P) were recorded when a 155mm barrage was called in on them at BS 691353. Heavy foliage prevented assessment of artillery missions called in on one squad of VC in brown and khaki uniform with packs and rifles at BS 682359 and BS 688359.

(g) On 4 April, acting upon information volunteered by a local villager to District Operational Intelligence Center, a platoon size patrol from Co L located a command detonating 250 lb anti-personnel mine on the "refugee trail" at BS 791384. A Vietnamese male refugee voluntarily agreed to aid in the search for the bomb. After discovering the bomb, he cut the command wire which led to a hamlet 300 meters away at BS 789381. Engineers then destroyed the bomb.

(h) A VC ambush was effectively thwarted on the morning of 6 April by a platoon size patrol from Co M at BS 813405. The point fireteam fired upon what was apparently a VC sentry, killing him, causing the ambush to be prematurely sprung. The patrol then received automatic weapons fire from a squad of VC at BS 812405 and BS 809408. While one squad laid down a base of fire, the point squad pressed the attack by fire and maneuver against the ambush element. The aggressive tactics of the patrol and the excellent coverage of the area by artillery caused the VC to break contact leaving 3 VC KIA (C). Pursuit by the patrol resulted in no further contact but a 155mm shell devised as an anti-personnel mine was discovered.

(i) At 051750H a fireteam OP at BS 843366 from Co G/2/7 tripped a 105mm artillery shell devised as an anti-personnel mine. As a UH-IE med-evac helicopter hovered over the LZ at BS 841367. A large explosion occurred under the helicopter causing it to disintegrate. While rushing to aid the wounded, marines of Co G 2/7 tripped another large explosive device at BS 844367. A search of the area disclosed a 300 meter length of comm wire leading from the LZ to a cane field at BS 846367, indicating the helicopter was destroyed by a command detonated bomb. Analysis of both craters showed that the explosives used were at least 250 lb bombs or larger. USMC casualties were 10 KIA, and 13 WIA.

(j) While sniping incidents continued near the termination of Operation DESUTO, the VC seemed to place more emphasis on anti-personnel mines. Most devices were dud 105 artillery shells and 250 lb bombs, some rigged with trip wires; others were capable of being command detonated.

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Information from Provincial Reconnaissance Units indicated the VC were armed with automatic weapons, local villagers were forced to bear their ammunition, and twelve recoilless rifles were used in the attack.

(h) Acting on an intelligence report from DUC PHO District that stated a small VC unit was hiding in a canefield at BS 831349, elements of Co G searched the area killing one VC KIA (C), detaining one VC, and capturing one U.S. Carbine.

(i) At 271420H March, the USS Ozbourne (DD 846) lying offshore north of NUI CUA received approximately 18 rounds of recoilless rifle fire from VC positions at BS 835427. Supporting arms were brought to bear on the VC positions. There was no damage to the destroyer.

(j) On 27 March, Co K conducted a search and destroy operation of DONG THUONG, vicinity of BS 845354; the Vietnamese village chief and national police representatives accompanied Co K on the operation. Co G 2/7 established blocking positions to the west and both ground and airborne psywar broadcasts were made; villagers were warned that USMC forces had surrounded the hamlet and that they were to remain in the area near their houses. When VC suspects were seen slipping into the water (DAM LAM BINH) vicinity of BS 839350, they were warned again by fire and loudspeaker. While screening the DONG THUAN villagers, initially, Co K apprehended 3 detainees. Continuing its sweep, Co K apprehended 13 suspected VC hiding in a bunker at BS 842351. Moving southeast, searching the bank of the promontory, 3 more suspects were detained. UH-1E helicopters supporting the operations by observation, noted approximately 30 VC hiding in the shallow water and swamp area at BS 845340. They were observed under water breathing through bamboo and camouflaged with the moss; they also used sampans for hiding places. The helicopters strafed the VC in and under the water to force them toward shore. After each strafing run some VC returned to shore and were captured by Co K. This process continued until all the VC were either killed or captured. As a result, 23 VC were killed and a total of 30 VC flushed from their concealed positions. The preliminary interrogation of 49 detainees apprehended from the action resulted in identify 8 hamlet guerrillas, 5 hamlet political cadre and 36 civil dependents. All males captured or killed were of military age, well-fed and in excellent physical condition.

(k) On 30 March Co G 2/7 moving to establish nighttime positions at BS 767370 during a search and destroy operation west of NUI DUNG, received a heavy volume of small arms fire from approximately 30 VC in concealed positions at BS 766364. The leading elements of Co G engaged the VC at hand grenade range, killing 4 VC (C) and 5 VC KIA (B). While searching area after the VC broke contact and fled into the foliage, Co G captured one M-1 rifle, one U.S. Carbine, one BAR, cartridge belts, ammunition, miscellaneous items of equipment and numerous documents. Artillery and fixed-wing strikes were directed on likely VC escape routes.

(l) At 301905H March, Co G 2/7, utilizing fixed-wing strikes in support of its movement to nighttime positions following the action described in paragraph (i) above, suffered four KIA and 19 WIA when an attack aircraft, controlled by a TACA, dropped rocket ordnance on its position.

II. On 7 April, with the relief of 3/7's responsibility of the DUC PHO TACR by units of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), the battalion terminated Operation DESOTO. Several significant events occurred in the latest phase of the operation which were as follows:

( ) On 010300H, a reconnaissance unit of 19 men at BS 771395 observed an estimated 12-15 VC probing their position. During the engagement that followed the unit received 16 fragmentation grenades and fire from small arms including at least 3 automatic weapons, 2 of which were located to the NW and one to the NE of their position. With continuous illumination being provided by artillery and Naval Gunfire, the reconnaissance unit turned back the assault with small arms and artillery. A search of the area at first light showed 15 VC KIA (C) and 6 VC KIA (F). It is significant to note that among the enemy weapons captured was a M-16; other weapons were: one M-14, one BAR



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853399 and captured one M-1 rifle and equipment. Co K, providing observation and blocking forces west of NUI CUA discovered a rice cache during a routine search of a masonry structure at BS 842386. The rice was stored in 8 caskets, four 55-gallon drums and gunny sacks. Co F, which later occupied positions on NUI CUA continued search and destroy operations in the hamlets south of NUI CUA and on 5 March engaged an estimated platoon of VC who wore khaki uniforms and helmets and who were armed with 7.62mm rifles. Before the enemy broke contact, elements of Co F killed 2 VC KIA (C) and 7 VC KIA (P) in a trenchline at BS 839384.

(b) At 051400H, a maneuvering fire team of a squad (rein) patrol of Co I surprised a group of VC in a trenchline at BS 881323. The fire team and squad assaulted the VC position killing six VC KIA (C) with 7.62mm and hand grenades before the remaining VC broke contact and fled into brush area.

(c) A two-company sweep of the VINH PHOUC (1) and (2) hamlet complex vicinity BS 8338 resulted in 3 VC KIA (C) and 5 VC KIA (P) on 16 March, elements of Co K sweeping westward at BS 831364 received approximately 300 rounds of small arms fire from an estimated 20 VC in fortified positions. Co K engaged the VC force and pressed the assault through the position killing 1 VC KIA (C), capturing 10 ChiCom grenades, documents and one US Carbine.

(d) At 112845, a squad patrol of Co L flanked a VC sniper position wounding and capturing his M-1 rifle. The VC was a hamlet guerilla from THANH HIEU (1) vicinity BS 847380.

(e) On 14 and 15 March, Co M, Co K and Co F 2/7 participated in an operation in the VINH LAC hamlet complex in grid squares BS 7638 and BS 7639, DUC PHO District, PP units participated. Requested by the District Chief, the operation permitted over 2,000 refugees to recover personal belongings such as foodstuffs and draft animals from their former homes in these contested hamlet areas. 3/7 units established security along a route from the village complex to DUC PHO District headquarters. Security was established around the village complexes to allow the villagers freedom of movement and to deny the gué, rice and cattle to the VC. It became apparent that GVN/US had indeed made a good deal of progress toward gaining the support and confidence of the people in the DUC PHO area as a result of the operation. Toward the end of each day's security mission VC forces began to harass the moving column of refugees, but attempts failed as USMC units engaged the VC forces with both small arms and supporting arms.

(f) On 16 March while conducting S&D operations eastward in the HIEU TAY hamlet complex in Grid Squares 7736, 7737, and 7837, Co F 2/7 came under heavy automatic weapons fire from an undetermined number of VC. Moving east into the hamlet area at BS 761375 with Co K supporting from positions on the high ground to the northwest, Co F received fire from BS 781369. Medical evacuation helicopters received slight battle damage. Co F killed 7 VC KIA (P) in the action. USMC casualties totaled 7 KIA 1 DOW, and 5 WIA (evacuated). Co K moving south into the hamlet at BS 777373 killed one VC KIA (C) and two VC KIA (P) while sweeping the area to the rear of Co F units.

(g) At 20005 March, the 3/7 GP and 1SA at NUI BANG came under attack from 60mm and 82mm mortars and 57mm and 75mm recoilless rifles; incoming rounds totaled between 200 and 250. Previously planned counter-mortar and counter-battery concentrations were fired at observed missile flashes within minutes of the attack. Two guns of Battery 1 received direct hits; the Tactical Fuel Dispensing System, and mogas and aviation gasoline dumps in the 1SA were destroyed by fire. Fired wing strikes and artillery fire were directed on VC firing positions and escape routes after the attack; a deliberate search of areas having been used to locate enemy supporting arms positions was made on 24 March. Thirty-six 75mm M1 canisters and firing positions for both recoilless rifles and 82mm mortars were found. These positions had been thoroughly covered during counter-battery fires.

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mentioned. No set pattern of narrative is established. By the very nature of the enemy encountered on the operation and their reaction to attacks, patrols and searches, the importance and significance of the daily search and destroy operations decreased as the operation progressed, i.e. with few exceptions, initial operations were much more significant than later operations. Details offered in the following narrative, therefore, are more concentrated for early phases of the operation than for latter phases. Subparagraphs are labeled in chronological order. Thus, they generally conform to the relative significance of the actions and events. There were many incidents during Operation DESOTO that were considered relatively insignificant at the time of occurrence and consequently are absent from official records; nothing of significance, however, has been unrecorded.

(1) D-1, 27Jan67. Co L (-) and Battery I (-), 3rd Bn, 11th Marines executed helilift from the QUANG NGAI LSA to NUI DANG to relieve designated ARVN units on position. Aircraft reported receiving sporadic sniper fire. 3rd Bn (-), 7th Marines displaced by motor march to the QUANG NGAI LSA.

(2) D-Day, 28Jan67. Co M, followed by the remainder of Co L and the main body of the battalion including command group and attachments executed helicopter assault to LZ vicinity NUI DANG at 0800H. The helicopter lift was completed at 1135H with the arrival of Co I. All units received sporadic sniper fire from the periphery of the LZ (vic BS 815395). During daylight hours Co L and H&S Co personnel reported receiving sporadic sniper fire from several concealed positions vic of the NUI DANG perimeter. Co M moved north-east from the LZ to secure the objective hamlet of THRUONG SANH and received sporadic but continuous sniper fire from several VC positions. Continuing the attack, Co M maneuvered one platoon and the command group to the west side of the SONG QUAN to positions vicinity BS 820393 (TAN TU (2)) where the unit became engaged with an undetermined number of VC in well-concealed, mutually supporting, fortified bunkers. Using supporting arms extensively, Co M pressed the attack to BS 822394, where heavy volume of enemy fire from the north and northeast including, .50 caliber fire, precluded the evacuation by helicopter of wounded marines from open areas. Co M finally evacuated friendly casualties to a secure LZ under cover of darkness, and repositioned units for a night defense west of the SONG QUAN. Co I reported light sniper contact during the day in its advance to night positions vic VINH BINH (1) (BS 806391). Naval Gunfire, artillery and fixed-wing strikes were directed on the fortified hamlet of TAN TU (2) during the night in preparation for continuation of the attack by Cos M and I on 29 January.

(3) D-1, 29 Jan 67. Co K executed its helilift to NUI DAU to relieve the designated ARVN unit on position. During movement from positions in VINH BINH (1) BS 806391 eastward across the SONG QUAN, Co I continually received sporadic but accurate sniper fire from several concealed VC positions to the north and east. Pressing the attack, Co I seized TAN TU (1) (vic BS 816398), finding the body of one VC KIA (C) enroute. At 0915H, a Provincial Reconnaissance Unit directed attack aircraft on two groups of armed VC moving northward on trail at BS 784340 resulting in 7 VC KIA (C) and 11 VC KIA (P). Co M reconnoitered the southern bank of the SONG QUAN for fording sites during the morning and was advised by its Kit Carson Scout attachment that Co I's approach to TAN TU hamlet would be the least vulnerable to enemy fire. At 1055H Co K's Naval Gunfire Spot Team, observing from an OP on NUI DAU, directed Naval gunfire against 17 armed VC at BS 890324, killing 8 VC KIA (C) and 8 VC KIA (P). Co I continuing the attack eastward, engaged 5 VC snipers, killing one VC KIA (C) at BS 817403. Co M, fording the SONG QUAN at BS 823392, received moderate sniper fire from the southern flank near the HAI MON hamlet complex, BS 831395, and VC positions in the TAN TU (2), BS 820395, hamlet area, but Co M pressed the attack. Searching the west bank of the SONG QUAN, Co M found 2 VC KIA (C) from napalm strikes. During Co M's movement into the objective hamlet, lead elements were continually subjected to VC harassing and sniper fire, usually from long range; and periodically bursts of .50 caliber fire were experienced. Cos M and I completed the search of the hamlet complex and consolidated positions for a night defense at BS 822403.

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(4) D plus 2 30 Jan 67. At 30005 Jan, Co M and Co I occupying positions in SA BINH (BS 822403), received six incoming 60mm mortar rounds from VC positions to the northeast. 81mm, 105mm and NGF, delivered against likely VC positions was immediate and effective, and no further rounds were received. Co M continued its thorough searches and used demolitions to destroy VC fortifications in TAN TU hamlet; in two contacts the company killed one VC KIA (C) and 3 VC KIA (P). At BS 823402 a Co M patrol found a VC land mine foundry, which included 500 pounds of cut shrapnel, 700 pounds of large uncut metal pieces, one 81mm mortar dud, assorted files, mine molds, hammers, tray and cloth-covered tamping sticks. The items were photographed and destroyed. Co I continued the attack to the southeast at 0945H after preparatory fires were delivered against suspected VC locations vic BS 834405 and vic BS 832397. Prep fires included 105mm and 5-inch Naval Gunfire. At 1015H, Co I began encountering continuous heavy sniper fire from the HAI MON hamlet complex vic BS 830395 as the lead elements advanced. Co I directed napalm and 500 pound bombs strikes along with UH-1H suppressive fires against enemy positions located from BS 831398 to 829392. Support also included 81mm and 106mm from Co L's positions on NUI DANG. At 1100H, 51 rounds of 105mm were delivered on VC in a trenchline; the AO on station confirmed 4 VC KIA. Just prior to the fire missions, one UH-1H was forced down at the battalion CP by battle damage. By 1330H, Co I was bogged down in deep rice paddies just west of the HAI MON fortified hamlet, in close contact with an unknown size VC force in concealed positions. The situation remained essentially the same until 1655H when, after the decision was made to reposition Co I westward because of ammunition shortage and impending darkness, the VC took Co I under heavy fire, including .50 caliber fire, from four directions. VC firing positions included BS 803403, BS 831397, BS 828394 and BS 828392. Co I's position was located at BS 825395 and extended northeast. Co M moved to a position to the east of Co I, redistributed ammunition to Co I and supported its repositioning by fire; H&S Co sent out an overland patrol with ammunition resupply for both Cos I and M. At BS 823400, Co I's Bravo Command Group was unable to move due to ammunition shortage, wounded on hand and enemy fire from the north. Fixed-wing attacks with 500 pound bombs and napalm, and 105mm Howitzer artillery missions were directed to cover Co I's repositioning, while Naval Gunfire was delivered against enemy positions on the north bank of the SONG TRA CAU. Due to the wet, muddy terrain, India's displacement was very difficult. Co M secured a casualty collection point and landing zone vic BS 823400. Co I consolidated its casualties at approximately 2000H. Medical evacuation was completed by 2200H. Co M and Co I consolidated positions for the night. Damage assessment of the HAI MON hamlet complex was approximately 60 per cent destruction by 325 rockets and 125 5-inch shells from Naval Gunfire, 485 rounds 105mm HE rounds, 105mm WP rounds and approximately 40 to 50 tons of fixed wing ordnance.

(5) D plus 3 31 January. Co M continued observation of VC movements. In the vicinity of NUI DANG hill complex, VC were taken under fire with small arms, killing one VC KIA (C) and one VC KIA (P); the NGF observation post also engaged VC fortifications in area. Co M continued a deliberate search of the TAN TU hamlet complex and discovered an elevating and traversing mechanism from an M-60 machinegun and a canteen with a "star" imprint. AOs on station directed supporting arms against known and suspected VC locations and killed three VC KIA (P) fleeing from the HAI MON hamlet complex. At 2200H the battalion CP and ISA area came under simultaneous small arms and 60mm mortar rounds from suspected locations vicinity BS 815403 and conducted a heavy probe of the perimeter. The perimeter defense turned back the VC attack, killing two VC (C) and three VC KIA (P); 81mm counter-mortar concentrations and 105mm concentrations were delivered against possible VC exfiltration routes as the VC force broke contact and withdrew. Contact could not be regained. Captured equipment included two Soviet rifles, several grenades and bamboo stachel charges. Evidence indicated that the attack had been led by a sapper-type unit.

(6) 1-7 February. Search and destroy operations in the NUI DANG/DUC PHO area continued with enemy contact varying from light to heavy. Co L conducted an attack on the fortified hamlet complex of AN LAC, vic BS

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826978: Co M 3/5 and Co L conducted a helicopter assault seizing the HAI MON hamlet complex and Hill 26 vic BS 833396. Reconnaissance units continued to report frequent enemy movement of varying size to the west of DUC PHO; artillery was directed against such targets with good results. Frequent sightings by ground and aerial observers were engaged by supporting arms with equally good results.

Co M, occupying positions vic BS 822503, came under a coordinated 60mm mortar and sapper attack at 01005H. This same position received several incoming grenades at 912250H. A search of the area found 2 VC KIA (C) wearing USMC flak jackets, homemade charges, some packed with C-4, and many Chicom and U.S. frag grenades. At 010400H, Co M, sustained one KIA and 11 WIA from two 250 pound bombs, apparently dropped from friendly aircraft of unknown origin.

From 1-3 February, Co L experienced moderate sniper fire while conducting search and destroy operations in the AN LAC complex southeast of NUI DANG. Co L found fortifications and approximately 100 tons of rice stored in several locations throughout the hamlet. Co M 3/5 followed Co L in trace and used demolitions to effectively destroy the bunker system. The rice was bagged and moved by local Vietnamese and helicopters to a storage area in the vicinity of the DUC PHO District Headquarters.

Co K, conducting daily search and destroy operations from positions on NUI DAU, similarly encountered extensive VC bunker systems and fortifications in hamlets to the east, west and north of NUI DAU. Heavy supporting arms were used against these positions, heavily damaging the emplacements and fortifications in THUY THACH (1), BS 864328, and the QUY THIEN hamlet complex, vic BS 854338, BS 8773343, and BS 879339. Co M patrols in the TAN TU hamlet area made daily contact with snipers and killed several VC who tried to flee approaching USMC forces. In one contact, a squad size patrol, inserted during daylight hours on 4 Feb, killed 3 VC KIA (C) just prior to darkness and captured an AK-47 Soviet assault rifle and miscellaneous equipment. Following extensive preparatory fires on Hill 26 and the fortified hamlet of HAI MON, vicinity BS 831395, Co M/3/5 received sporadic .30 caliber machine gun fire and several rounds of 57mm fire from VC positions on NUI CUA vic BS 849391. At approximately the same time, sampans, carrying 25 to 30 armed VC, fled the hamlet north across the SONG TRA CAU. Fixed wing napalm strikes and small arms fire from Co M/3/7 located on hill mass vic BS 822403 accounted for 1 VC KIA (C) and 26 VC KIA (P); air and Naval Gunfire against the NUI CUA positions resulted in 4 VC KIA (C). Co M/3/5 and Co L found an extensive bunker system and fortifications in HAI MON, but had no further contact. Hill 26 at BS 834395 was discovered to be honeycombed with caves and tunnels. Extensive demolitions were used to destroy these complexes. Psywarfare broadcasts and leaflet drops were directed against targets north of the SONG TRA CAU, opposite the HAI MON area.

During 1-7 Feb, AOs and OPs directed supporting arms against targets of opportunity and accounted for 7 VC KIA (C) and 61 VC KIA (P). In addition, reconnaissance observation posts operating on the western periphery of the battalion TAOR, called several fire missions against observed VC movement and accounted for 20 VC KIA (C) and 28 VC KIA (P).

(7) 8-12 February. During the TET truce period, VC forces initiated six separate violations against security patrols in the DUC PHO area. At 081330H, a squad size element of Co M patrolling westward, was taken under semi-automatic weapons fire from an undetermined number of VC in fortified positions at BS 798402. After the VC maneuvered in an attempt to flank the patrol, small arms and supporting arms were directed against the VC forces. When the VC continued to press their advantage, a reaction force from Co M/3/5 assaulted AN TRUONG (2) hamlet after fixed-wing napalm strikes were directed against the VC positions. Under the cover of supporting arms and the Co M/3/5 assault, the squad patrol extracted its casualties. The VC broke contact. Result of action: 2 VC KIA (C), 9 VC KIA (P), 2 USMC KIA, and 2 USMC WIA.

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On 9 Feb, a Co M Squad patrol received light VC sniper fire from the HAI MON hamlet area; the VC broke contact; there were no casualties. On 10 Feb, a similar security patrol was engaged by an estimated 5 to 6 man VC force in HAI MON hamlet. After receiving 50 rounds of small arms fire, the squad broke contact. On 11 Feb, Co K local patrols near NUI DAU twice encountered enemy sniper fire; they returned small arms fire each time and accounted for 1 VC KIA (P). A Co M patrol at BS 830300 came under fire on 11 Feb from 10 VC crossing the SONG TRA CAU. The patrol returned fire and killed 2 VC KIA (P); the remaining 8 VC broke contact and fled into a treeline on the south bank in HAI MON hamlet.

(8) 13-23 February. Search and destroy operations continued after the TML truce with Co M/3/5 and Co K conducting operations east of NUI DAU in conjunction with a beach survey by UDT personnel. Cos I and L conducted search and destroy operations of the AN LAC and AN THUONG hamlet complexes south and southeast of NUI DANG against light to moderate sniper fire. Co M continued to patrol and destroy bunkers and fortifications in the SA BINH area, BS 822403, TAN TU Hamlets and the HAI MON/Hill 26 area against frequent but light contact. On 15 Feb, Co M/3/5 conducted a recon-in-force northward along Highway 1. Heavy VC sniper fire was received from enemy positions in the AN NINH hamlets, vic Grid Squares 7840 and 7941. With Ontos delivering 106mm RL supporting fires, Co M/3/5 pressed the assault to the vicinity of the bridge at BS 793409; the VC broke contact and fled to the west as air strikes interdicted their movement. On 16 Feb, Co M and Co M/3/5 established blocking positions on the south bank of the SONG TRA CAU vic AN THUONG (2), BS 797403 and TAN BINH, vic BS 815401. Cos L and I landed north of the river by helicopter after extensive prep fires. Six of nine CH-46 aircraft received non-serious battle damage from small arms fire near the landing zones at BS 817413 and BS 811413. Results of the helicopter assault: 3 VC KIA (P) and 1 VC KIA (C). Both Co M/3/5 and Co M reported VC fleeing the objective area in a generally westward direction along the trace of the SONG TRA CAU. Targets were engaged in all cases with both small arms and supporting arms and resulted in 9 VC KIA (C) and 30 VC KIA (P). Cos L and I encountered sporadic sniper fire during assaults on THUY TRIEU (1) and AN THUONG (2) hamlets along the north bank of the SONG TRA CAU. Co M/3/5 repositioning to NUI DANG, accounted for 10 VC KIA (P) as a result of air strikes against the AN NINH hamlet area. Cos L and I continued deliberate search and destroy operations westward along the north bank of the SONG TRA CAU to DONG QUAN (2), BS 797416 and TAP AN NAM, BS 800420. During the subsequent sweeps of TAP AN NAM, USMC ground forces and supporting helicopters were subjected to extensive sniper fire from VC positions within the hamlet area. Dense foliage concealed well-constructed spider traps and entrenchments throughout the hamlet area and made it extremely difficult to locate the sniper positions. Nighttime VC activity included frequent grenade probes. The operations in TAP AN NAM extended the battalion's sphere of influence in the DUC PHO area of operations to a point approximately 5,000 meters north of NUI DANG. Significantly, USMC scout/snipers, employed by all units, proved to be an effective countermeasure to long range VC sniper fire. VC who fled friendly patrols were engaged by the scout snipers from pre-planned vantage points. Prior to its administrative displacement to CHU LAI on 23 Feb, Co. M/3/5 conducted a reconnaissance-in-force west of Highway 1 in the vicinity of AN NINH (3), BS 766404, and VINH LAC (3), BS 783396. Extensive supporting arms were directed against VC semi-automatic and automatic weapons positions. Small arms, scout/sniper fire, and 106mm fire, together with air support, effectively suppressed the VC fire. Co L exploited the contact on the southern flank in the vicinity of the junction of the railroad tracks and the steam complex at BS 788386. Results of Co L and Co M/3/5 actions: 6 VC KIA (C). Co M extended its combat patrols to the north side of the SONG TRA CAU to gain firm control over THUY TRIEU (1) when Cos L and I displaced to the vicinity of NUI DANG. In one encounter, a squad patrol accounted for 4 VC KIA (C) and 3 VC KIA (P) in a brief but close contact in THUY TRIEU (1). Co M ambushed successfully interdicted VC crossing the SONG TRA CAU. At 232215, one ambush patrol killed 6 VC KIA (C) and 10 VC KIA (P) in an engagement with approximately 30 VC. Intelligence reports of VC units in the area of operations were exploited with heavy nightly TPQ-10, Naval Gunfire and artillery harassment and interdiction fires. Reports and surveill-

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ences from local intelligence agents in the DUC PHO area indicated supporting arms were very effective against VC sanctuaries and harboring sites. Reconnaissance observations posts continued to observe groups of armed VC using trails throughout the high ground west of DUC PHO. Artillery fire missions directed against these accounted for 16 VC KIA (C) and 25 VC KIA (P) during this period. Naval gunfire and fixed-wing strikes resulting from sightings by observations posts resulted in an additional 9 VC KIA (C) and 39 VC KIA (P).

(9) 24-28 February. Commencing 24 February, the battalion operated initially in conjunction with the Special Landing Force and later, in addition, with the 1st Bn, 5th Marines and participating 2D ARVN Div units. While the SLF conducted search and destroy in the SA BUYEH-NUI DAU area, Co F/2/7, which came under the OPCON of the battalion when it relieved Co M/3/5, and Co K established blocking positions on NUI TRUNG TRAM, vic GS 8133. Beginning 26 February, Co K and Co F/2/7 were joined by Co L in a coordinated battalion(-) search and destroy operation of the HIEN TAY (1), VINH IAC (4) and (5) and THANH LAM (1) and (2) hamlet areas in GS 7736, 7737, 7738, 7838, and 7837. This northeast movement was paralleled by 1/5 which conducted operations to the northwest and north. Sweeping eastward toward Highway 1, 3/7 units accounted for 9 VC KIA (C) and 3 VC KIA (P). While Cos K and L continued a northeasterly movement, Co F/2/7 moved southwest to vicinity BS 781371. Its leading elements came under heavy semiautomatic and automatic weapons fire. Assaulting the enemy force, Co F/2/7, after fixed-wing and artillery strikes against VC positions in the fortified hamlet area at BS 778373, accounted for 1 VC KIA (C).

(10) 1-31 March. As Operation DESOTO continued into March daily search and destroy operations continued while the base camp/LSA area at NUI DANG, and positions on NUI DAU were maintained and improved. A coordinated operation with the Special Landing Force, the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines and participating 2nd ARVN Division units was terminated at 03-1630H March. Throughout this period, contact with hamlet guerillas and elements of Local Forces/Main Force VC continued. During March contacts with smaller, fragmented VC units who fled USMC objective areas were more frequent while contacts with VC who defended hamlets from prepared positions were fewer than in February. By 31 March approximately 75 per cent of the hamlets in the assigned area of responsibility had been covered by ground forces conducting search and destroy operations. Only the southwestern portion of this area west of Grid Line 85 and north of the SONG TRI CAU had not been searched by 3/7 units. Those areas were objectives of the Special Landing Force during February and intelligence did not support conducting priority operations into the southwest and northeast. Most enemy casualties during February resulted from small unit actions. Reconnaissance units operating in the hills to the west, and other ground and aerial observers continued to report frequent enemy movement; whenever possible supporting arms were directed against such targets with good results. Fleeting targets of opportunity based on intelligence largely supplied by reports from the DUC PHO District Chief were selectively engaged with H&I fires, radar controlled aerial bombing (TRQ010), and Arclight strikes. Coordinated combat operations and local civic action with Vietnamese district forces were more frequent as liaison with the district headquarters continued to improve.

(a) On 2 March, Co L and Co F/2/7 executed a helicopter assault to a landing zone on the beach at BS 873057 to begin a thorough search and destroy operation of the coastal hamlets north of NUI DAU and south of NUI CUA (Hill 183). Utilizing airborne and ground psywar broadcasts, the units commenced a 2-company sweep toward NUI CUA; this VC stronghold and observation post was seized on 3 March. While pressing an assault on VC positions at the eastern base of the hill along the seacoast Co L killed three hamlet guerillas at BS 853401 and captured 26 detainees; all were young males of military age who wore black pajamas, and were discovered hiding in natural caves, crevices and among rocks along the waters edge; two MAS-36 rifles, one Mossin-Nagant rifle, 7.62mm ammunition and several ChiCom grenades were captured. While continuing in a deliberate sweep of VC hiding places in and around NUI CUA, Co L killed two more VC at BS

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On 1 April two 155 mm rounds were destroyed by Co G/2/7. On 3 April a platoon patrol from Co L tripped a 250 lb bomb. On 5 April Co G, 2/7 tripped one 105 shell, and one 250 lb bomb; another 250 lb bomb was command detonated. On 5 April Co M destroyed a 155 shell near a VC ambush site.

# 11. Results

## (1) Enemy Personnel.

KIA (Confirmed) - 383  
KIA (Probable) - 716  
WIA (Probable) - 117  
POWS - 9  
Detainees - 213

## (2) Enemy Weapons and Equipment.

(a) Weapons  
1 M-16E1  
1 M-14  
2 BARs  
3 M-1 Garands  
1 AK-47 Soviet Assault Rifle  
4 M-1 Carbines  
2 MAS-36 French Rifles  
2 K-44 Soviet Rifles  
1 K-50 Soviet Rifle  
1 Submachinegun (French)

Many U.S. and ChiCom frag grenades, U.S. WP grenades, magazines, anti-personnel mines, quantities of ammunition, and miscellaneous equipment and weaponry were also captured. In addition, 10 satchel charges were captured.

(b) Equipment  
4 bayonets  
12 cartridge belts  
11 magazine pouches  
3 gas masks  
3 packs  
3 gray uniforms  
3 black uniforms  
1 khaki uniforms  
3 hammocks  
1 whistle  
miscellaneous equipment

## (3) USMC personnel. (3/7 Rein)

KIA - 72  
DOW - 8  
WIA - 573

The friendly casualty totals do not reflect those casualties taken by reconnaissance units or personnel of the 1st MAW. Enemy casualties figures reflect the total number inflicted by ground units, air, naval gunfire and artillery support. All areas struck by fixed wing aircraft were not searched by ground units because of obstacles, the tactical situation and the extensiveness of air utilized.

# 12. Administrative Matters.

a. Supply/Logistics. Preparations for Operation DESOTO began with refitting, redistribution and issue of equipment at a Task Force X-Ray staging area at CHU LAI following the administrative move from the NW DANANG TAOR. Minimum equipment was carried by all hands; other equipment was staged at 3rd Shore Party Bn. On 25 Jan the battalion moved by motor convoy to the QUANG NGAI airfield; on 26 Jan the helilift to NUI DANG began. Requirements for establishment of the DUC PHO LSA, capable of supporting 1,500 troops for 20 days were set. To accomplish this minimum the following controls were implemented:

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(1) All classes of supply and the Bn's organic T/E equipment were first moved by vehicle to the QUANG NGAI airfield, then moved via helicopter to the DUC PHO LSA. Mighty Mites, N<sup>o</sup> gear, and other equipment superfluous to the initial mission were not brought forward from CHU LAI.

(2) The battalion's daily resupply requirements were flown directly from the QUANG NGAI LSA to the mobile rifle companies requesting the resupplies.

(3) Six CH-46 helicopters were utilized daily for building up the DUC PHO LSA and support the relocation of the battalion.

On 8 Feb, Phase II of the DUC PHO LSA buildup began with the arrival of a 20 day block of supplies on LST 1122. During the month of February the resupply of combat essential equipment to rifle companies continued without significant problems. Delivery of organic assets continued and by the end of the month was 95 per cent complete. Logistically Operation DESOTO was unique in that the terrain and tactical situation required that all support be by helicopter: factors in logistic planning therefore were inconsistent at best. Inclement weather restricted flying at times and resulted as a critical planning factor in almost every day of operation. On 21 and 26 March two road reconnaissances were conducted in the NUI DANG area which determined that the construction of a fair-weather road from the coastal beach south of NUI CUA northwest to the NUI DANG CP could be made without significant difficulty. Also of significance during March, the battalion CP/LSA came under mortar and recoilless rifle attack which resulted in the loss of 40,000 gallons of Mogas, 23,000 gallons JP-4, 7,000 gallons Avgas, one complete TAFDS and miscellaneous other items of equipment. When the battalion was notified that an administrative displacement to CHU LAI was imminent in early April, it proved difficult to pack equipment properly for the move because of a lack of mount-out supplies. Range boxes for galley equipment were requisitioned and received in time for the move but most other equipment was moved in makeshift containers. Mount-out supplies have been requisitioned. In spite of the lack of time and equipment, the helicopter lift of personnel was accomplished without serious difficulty. Problems encountered during the retrograde movement of supplies, however, were encountered. The helicopters which were assigned for moving the battalion's equipment at times were not properly briefed on their mission and mismanagement and wrong deliveries of gear developed. During morning hours when flying was best, two helicopters made several sorties but crew changes and refueling during afternoon hours became another problem. The inconsistent transporting of supplies and equipment from DUC PHO lengthened the retrograde movement at least three days. The troop movement from CHU LAI to DANANG on 11 April was accomplished without difficulty using C-130 aircraft. Once loaded aboard the LST 1166 battalion supplies and equipment were moved to DANANG within five days, arriving at the DAI LOC cantonment without significant problems.

b. Maintenance. Maintenance of the battalion's mechanical mules became a problem at DUC PHO because of inadequate and facilities and transportation to rear echelons. Mighty mites were being utilized by Task Force X-Ray and were not brought forward.

c. Treatment of Casualties and Evacuation and Hospitalization

(1) Two separate medical facilities were in operation at the Battalion CP during Operation DESOTO. Supplementing the Battalion Aid Station was a Clearing Platoon of Co D, 1st Medical Battalion. The BAS with two battalion surgeons, and a ward capability for 10 patients and the capability for short term medical therapy. The C&C platoon had three physicians:

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surgeon, an orthopedic surgeon and an anesthesiologist. It had laboratory and X-Ray facilities, and surgery capabilities for most orthopedic cases and selected general surgery cases. The ward capability of C&C was 20 to 30 patients, however, most post-operative patients were evacuated to CHU LAI facilities within 24 hours of surgery for recuperation. Battle casualties in the field were brought to the C&C platoon where initial resuscitation was performed, and where the decision was made relative to the subsequent disposition of each individual casualty. Those cases deemed too serious to be treated at C&C were evacuated to facilities at either CHU LAI or DANANG; others were treated with surgery at C&C and then evacuated to CHU LAI for recuperation. Evacuations from the field consisting of heat casualties and those with gastroenteritis and other complaints requiring medical attention were referred to the BAS where treatment was initiated by the Battalion Surgeons. Routine sick call was handled by the BAS. Minor illnesses were treated at the BAS; more serious illnesses were evacuated to 1st Hospital Co, CHU LAI.

d. Transportation.

(1) Transportation to the DUC PHO/NUI DANG area of operations was by tactical helicopter trooplift from QUANG NGAI airfield. Subsequent travel by personnel and equipment to and from the Bn CP at NUI DANG was also by helicopter-Highway 1 south of MO DUC was not open to traffic. Prior to the initial tactical troop-lift all elements of the battalion, its attachments and direct support units displaced by motor march to the staging area at QUANG NGAI airfield. Upon being relieved of the DUC PHO TAOR by USA units, the battalion with all USMC personnel and equipment displaced administratively by helicopter to QUANG NGAI airfield; from there convoys shuttled the personnel and equipment to a Task Force X-Ray staging area.

e. Communications. During Operation DESOTO, no serious problems with communications developed, however, the following discussion relates to two problems that were encountered: During the initial stages of the operation, difficulties were encountered with frequencies assigned to the battalion. The original battalion tactical frequency was inadvertently assigned as the CHU LAI Defense Command security frequency. During the evening hours much interference was encountered on the assigned radio and radio relay frequencies because of mutual frequencies caused by frequency compatibility, power of radios used, frequencies assigned to the Special Landing Force and the close proximity of the 1st Cavalry Division (Air-mobile) units in the II Corps Tactical Zone. The logistic support for communications was good with the following exceptions: there was no method of accounting for inoperative equipment which mobile rifle companies placed on resupply helicopters; at the time those helicopters were returning LSAs north of DUC PHO. In addition, the DUC PHO LSA was not initially capable of recharging BB-451 batteries with only one battery charger; 5 battery chargers organic to the battalion were, however, placed in operation in the DUC PHO LSA eventually and no further problems were encountered. The accountability for radio equipment ended when resupply from the QUANG NGAI LSA was no longer needed.

f. Medical Evaluation. See paragraph 12c.

13. Special Equipment and Techniques. Many relatively special techniques were developed during Operation DESOTO not common to most operations, but the following were significant:

a. Selective Programming of Radar Controlled Aerial Bombing (TPQ-10). Extensive use of radar controlled bombing was made during Operation DESOTO. Target acquisition and selection was based primarily on 1) reliable intelligence information supplied by the DUC PHO District Chief, and 2) the tactical situation. Viet Cong NSRs, and potential harboring sites were struck by diversified bomb patterns. Together with artillery H&I's it denied the VC his normal sanctuaries and limited his nighttime maneuvering capability. In planning for the daily search and destroy operations consideration was always given to utilizing TPQ-10s prior to, and following, tactical maneuvers by ground troops in certain areas. In addition, the capability was maintained for using TPQ-10 bombing in close air support

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roles when inclement weather would possible limit low altitude flight patterns, and when the terrain was such that close night defensive fires by artillery were not feasible, i.e., steep gradients of reverse slopes. Onecall concentrations plotted similarly to artillery night defensive fires could be called for by the ground commander to the FSCC which, in turn, would interpolate a corrected set of grid coordinates, relay the new information through air channels to higher headquarters. Higher Hq would in turn, make the new correction. This was maintained as a potential source of fire support the tactical situation never developed where this method was utilized, however.

b. Perimeter Defense Techniques. In the event of an all-out attack on the NUI DANG GP, provisions were developed and employed for marking the entire perimeter with a ring of lights for friendly aircraft. 39 barrels of fuel capable of burning for an extended period of time were emplaced among defensive positions. These "fire faucets", if lighted, could distinctively define the defensive perimeter. In addition to the "fire Faucets", flares of emplaced 81mm illumination rounds rigged to ignite by trip wires were also emplaced at selected points in the perimeter defense.

c. PsyWar Broadcasting. On several occasions both ground and airborne psywar broadcast were utilized in conjunction with ground maneuvering elements. Generally the psywar broadcasts were utilized in the following two ways when the situation permitted: 1) Prior to ground attack inhabitants of a hamlet were warned by the broadcasts to congregate at a designated point, and 2) Following an attack and seizure of a previously VC controlled hamlet or terrain feature, the broadcasts would emphasize the adjacent hamlet areas the success of the USMC operation, and urge Viet Cong to lay down their arms to avoid further contact with USMC forces. Further details concerning psywar broadcasts are contained in para 10.

d. Simultaneous Use of Close-in Supporting Arms with a Tactical Troop Lift. During the initial stages of Operation DESOTO, close combat with an entrenched enemy created requirements for the maximum use of supporting arms combined with tactical troop-lifts. In utilizing supportings arms of air, artillery and naval gunfire during a helicopter assault, maximum efforts were made to insure both the safety to assault troops and the helicopters with their crews. In a typical situation, helicopters shuttling troops from the LZ picked up through the approach and retirement lane would be following a course parallel to the G-T Line of the firing artillery battery. Several supporting arms objectives were selected. When helicopters made the physical landing in the objective zone, the supporting arms, i.e., arty and naval gunfire would shift fires to adjacent target areas farther from the zone for safety reasons. Fixed-wing strikes were generally directed immediately prior to arty and NGF fires, and the aircraft kept on station for potential use by the ground commander when the LZ was secured. The helicopter flight leaders, in conference with Bn personnel were thoroughly briefed in procedures, and confidence and rapport between air and ground personnel was apparent. By utilizing this method of support for vertical assaults, preparation fires achieved the maximum effect.

e. Aerial-Delivery of Supplies and Equipment. On five occasions during the operation KC-130 aircraft were utilized to air drop field-fertilizing-timber-material. A total of 140,000 pounds was air-lifted to DUC PHO by this method to facilitate the establishment of the NUI DANG base camp. The loads of 12-14 foot timbers were between 9,000 and 10,000 pounds, but were generally makeshift, non-standard loads. Two problems that caused consistently errant drops were apparent: 1) the makeshift loads, combined with occasional malfunctions of the parachutes, caused drops out of the LSA drop zone, 2) triple extraction loads requiring a greater time-space factor and a larger zone, proved incapable of landing in the small target area, dropped from an air speed of 130 MPH. On one occasion, the loads dropped into the DUC PHO market place causing property damage and serious injury to civilians. In addition to fixed-wing air delivery of supplies, the CH-53 helicopter was utilized to air-lift a platoon of ONTOS. The ONTOS were stripped of their 106mm recoilless

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rifles and the 13,000 pound carriage platforms were delivered by CH-53a; the 106s were later delivered by internal load on CH-46s.

f. LST Delivery of tanks. For the first time since the Korean War, tanks were landed on a beach in a combat situation during Operation DESOTO. Landed near NUI DAU the platoon of tanks with LVTs added to the firepower of establish positions and some maneuvering elements. Appropriate security forces escorted the tanks from the beach to temporary positions on NUI DAU. Later the tanks, from 1st Tank Bn, with the LVTs operated out of a tank park at the southern base of NUI CUA.

g. Helicopter in Direct Support. It became apparent following the first two or three days of the operation that helicopters were needed in direct support with a refueling capability at the DUC PHO LSA. The magnitude of the air logistical requirements, and frequent med-evacuations and local resupplies and equipment from QUANG NGAI to DUC PHO and from the LST support ships to DUC PHO. In addition, two UH-34 medical evacuation and local resupply helos with two UH-1E escort helicopters were assigned. They were used extensively in support of the operation and also facilitated admin and tactical moves of small command groups, and having an immediate AO/TACA always available. The concept of ground control of helicopters was an excellent one. Rapport among the ground commanders, the pilots, helicopter support personnel, and DASC personnel was excellent and no serious problems developed with the UH-34 and UH-1E helicopter support.

#### 14. Commander's Analysis

a. Operation DESOTO was a unique experience for one reinforced infantry battalion. It simultaneously involved the establishment of a new isolated base camp, and the conduct of extensive daily search and destroy operations. Rifle companies were in a mobile status and in contact of varying degrees with the enemy for 70 consecutive days. The battalion had OPCON one additional reinforced rifle company from 31 Jan until the operation terminated. Of the battalion's five rifle companies, only two were in static positions at any one time--those manning positions on NUI DAU and positions in defense of the Bn CP. These units, however, conducted daily night patrols and ambushes and one-day platoon-or-larger size operations in conjunction with other companies. One other position was established and maintained at BS 822403. This position was capable of being manned by one rifle platoon and allowed another company (-) as a mobile force. Rifle companies were rotated through the static positions to provide rest periods and diversification of effort. Operation DESOTO encompassed almost every possible situation that a marine unit might encounter in Viet-Nam. Enemy contacts varied from apprehensions of suspect VC laborers to attacks on fortified positions. Supporting arms ranged from the utilization of 81mm mortars to B52 strikes (Arclight). Contacts developed with both hamlet guerrillas and Main Force soldiers. Most significant was the nature of the enemy at DUC PHO. The DUC PHO area was long under Viet Minh/Viet Cong control and it offered the enemy a sanctuary in the lower I Corps Tactical Zone. It was apparent that the enemy was reluctant to relinquish this control and a pattern of operations developed. In the initial stages of the operation, VC forces were prepared for the USMC occupation. Bunkers were oriented to deliver maximum firepower into likely avenues of approach. While Main Force/NVA reportedly fled to mountain base camps to the west, the hamlet guerrillas attempted to defend the hamlets. It necessitated extensive use of firepower and mobility on 3/7 to seize heavily fortified hamlets. As the operation continued the continuing pressure of firepower and maneuverability forced the VC to abandon the hamlet defense and resort to delaying actions, harassment and occasional attack.

b. During the operation the difficulties of closing with determined VC forces was only exceeded by the difficulties of logistical support. Depending on aircraft to support the operation and the establishment of the NUI DAU base camp was, at best, on a "shoestring" basis. The concept of utilizing an LST and helicopters compromised the basic principle and purpose of the LST. Using helicopters to off-load 2,000 pounds per helicopter from the ship to DUC PHO as an inefficient system. The problem was at least threefold. Inclement weather and winds, the multiple manhandling of equipment and supplies, and the danger of utilizing helicopters with only a 12-foot clearance to the ship's superstructure, for example, caused untimely and inefficient logistical support.

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Though the DUC PHO LSA was established and it did provide adequate support of essentials to units in the field, it did not accommodate the sustained nature of the operation. It provided merely minimal support and produced serious accountability problems of supplies and equipment, shortages of combat essentials and over-abundances of unnecessary items. In sum, the logistical support for the battalion in an isolated status placed burdens on the limited assets of helicopters that unnecessarily affected operations throughout the CHU LAI-QUANG NGAI-MO DUC-DUC PHO area of operations.

c. Along with conducting search and destroy operations in the DUC PHO, AOR, the battalion was assigned a secondary mission of conducting pacification programs. Programs for Civic Action were initiated upon arrival at DUC PHO in late January and by mid-February were actively pursued. Planned Psyops leaflet drops for the initial phases of Operation DESOTO were completed by 15 Feb. They stressed the "Chieu Hoi" program, promised refugee care and were directed at nearby VC controlled hamlets in the AOR. MEDCAP was initiated on 18 Feb, and the initial response of villagers in TRUONG SANH hamlet, PHO TAN village was considered outstanding. DENTCAP was initiated in VINH LAC (2) hamlet, PHO DAI village with similar results. Significantly, during March the battalion conducted operations west of DUC PHO to provide security for refugees evacuating the AN LOI (2) hamlet complex. Approximately 2,000 refugees from DUC PHO District were permitted to return to the contested hamlet areas to recover personal belongings. Many Vietnamese under USMC protection, were also permitted to leave Viet Cong control in that area and return to the refuge of DUC PHO. While at

DUC PHO, close liaison was made with district officials in all aspects of CA, and projects were initiated with the Revolutionary Development Cadre, which included construction of refugee hamlets and other miscellaneous projects, such as stocking fish ponds with rapidly reproducing fish. During March the DUC PHO Joint Coordinating Committee was formed. The committee consisted of representatives of both USMC CA teams and district officials. It was founded to coordinate the projects; it also served as a forum to discuss problem areas and was chaired by the battalion executive officer. By the termination of the operation in April, the major problem areas had become refugee resettlement. Insufficient numbers of new structures were being constructed to house approximately 9,000 refugees generated by USMC activity. Much material was distributed to the civilians during the operation, despite delays at times because of a lack of adequate transportation. Materials distributed included quantities of washable clothing, tin roofing, bags of cement, carpentry and masonry kits, soap, powdered milk, captured rice, oral antiseptics, wheat, corn, cornmeal, and salad oil.

*J. D. Counselman*  
J. D. COUNSELMAN

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TASK ORGANIZATION OF 3RD BN (REIN), 7TH MARINES, DAI LOC District, RVN

Time Zone: H

3rdBn, 7th Marines

H&amp;S Co (-)

LT RICHARDS

Co I (Rein)

CAPT CLARK

3rd Sect, 81mm Plt, H&S Co  
 3rd Sect, 106mm RR Plt, H&S Co  
 Det, Scout Sniper Plt, Hq Co, 7th Mar  
 FO Tm, Btry I, 3rdBn, 11thMar  
 Sect, 1st Plt, Co B, 1st Tank Bn  
 Searchlight Tm, Btry G, 29th Arty Bn (OPCON 11thMar)  
 KC Scouts - (2)

Co K (Rein)

CAPT JONES

2nd Sect, 81mm Plt, H&S Co  
 2nd Sect, 106mm RR Plt, H&S Co  
 Det, Scout Sniper Plt, HqCo, 7thMar  
 Sect, 3rd Plt, Co C, 1st Anti-Tank Bn  
 FO Tm, Btry I, 3rdBn, 11thMar

Co L (Rein)

CAPT PIATT

1st Sect, 81mm Plt, H&S Co  
 1st Sect, 106mm RR Plt, H&S Co  
 HST Tm, Co C, 1st SPBn  
 Engr Tm, Co C, 1st Engr Bn  
 Sect, 1st Plt, Co B, 1st Tank Bn  
 FO Tm, Btry I, 3rdBn, 11thMar  
 FO Tm, 81mm Plt, H&S Co  
 KC Scouts - (2)

Co M (Rein)

CAPT HICKS

FO Tm, 81mm Plt, H&S Co  
 FO Tm, Btry I, 3rdBn, 11thMar

Co I, 3rdBn, 1st Marines

CAPT BYNCH

1st Sect, 81mm Plt, H&S Co, 3rd Bn, 1stMar  
 FO Tm, 81mm Plt, H&S Co, 3rdBn, 11th Mar  
 FO Tm, Btry C, 1stBn, 11thMar  
 FO Tm, Btry C, 1st Engr Bn  
 Engr Tm, Co C, 1st Engr Bn  
 Sect, 1st Plt, Co B, 1st Tank Bn  
 KC Scouts - (2)

Btry I, 3rd Bn, 11th Marines

1st Sect, 81mm Plt, H&S Co, 3rdBn, 1stMar  
 FO Tm, 81mm Plt, H&S Co, 3rdBn, 11thMar  
 FO Tm, Btry C, 1stBn, 11thMar  
 Engr Tm, Co C, 1st Engr Bn  
 Sect, 1st Plt, Co B, 1st Tank Bn  
 KC Scouts - (2)

Co I, 3rdBn, 11th Marines

Co A, 3rd Amtrac Bn  
 Plt

ENCLOSURE (2)