

HEADQUARTERS  
9th Marines  
3d Marine Division (-)(Rein), FMF  
FPO San Francisco 96602

3/JRP/ckm  
5000

8 JAN 1976

From: Commanding Officer  
To: Commandant of the Marine Corps, (Code HD), Headquarters  
Marine Corps, Washington, D. C. 20380  
Via: (1) Commanding General, 3d Marine Division, (SC-3)  
(2) Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific

Subj: Koh Tang/Mayaguez Historical Report

Encl: (1) CO, 2/9 ltr 6/RWA/dlm 5000 of 9 Dec 1975

1. The subject report, contained in enclosure (1), is forwarded for inclusion in the historical files maintained at Headquarters, Marine Corps.

*William Weise*  
WILLIAM WEISE

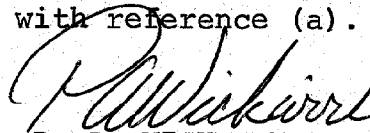
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
3d Marine Division (-) (Rein), FMF  
FPO San Francisco 96602

3P/LMH/sc  
5750  
7 Jan 1976

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on CO, 9th Mar ltr 3/JRP/ckm 5000 of  
2 Jan 1976

From: Commanding General  
To: Commandant of the Marine Corps, (Code HD),  
Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D.C. 20380  
Via: Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific  
Subj: Koh Tang/Mayaquez Historical Report  
Ref: (a) MCO 5750.1D

1. Forwarded in accordance with reference (a).

  
P. A. WICKWIRE  
By direction



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
HEADQUARTERS, FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC  
FPO, SAN FRANCISCO 96610

IN REPLY REFER TO:

30/RWM/mko

5750

23 Jan 1976

SECOND ENDORSEMENT on CO 9th Mar 3d MarDiv (-) (Rein) FMF  
ltr 3/JRP/ckm 5000 of 2 Jan 76

From: Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific  
To: Commandant of the Marine Corps (Code HD)

Subj: Koh Tang/Mayaguez Historical Report

1. Forwarded.

H. J. REDFIELD III  
Deputy Chief of Staff

*2/19*  
*Koh Tang/Mayaguez*  
*Historical Report*

*9 Dec 1975*

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
2nd Battalion, 9th Marines  
3d Marine Division(-)(Rein), FMF  
FPO San Francisco 96602

6/RWA/dlm  
5000  
9 Dec 1975

From: Commanding Officer  
To: Commanding Officer, 9th Marine Regiment

Subj: Koh Tang/Mayaguez Historical Report

Encl: (1) Koh Tang Assault/Operation Mayaguez Report

1. Enclosure (1) is a report summarizing this organization's activities in the subject operation.

2. It is provided for inclusion in the historical records of the Regiment and records/files at higher headquarters as deemed appropriate.

  
R. W. AUSTIN

COPY \_\_\_ OF \_\_\_ COPIES

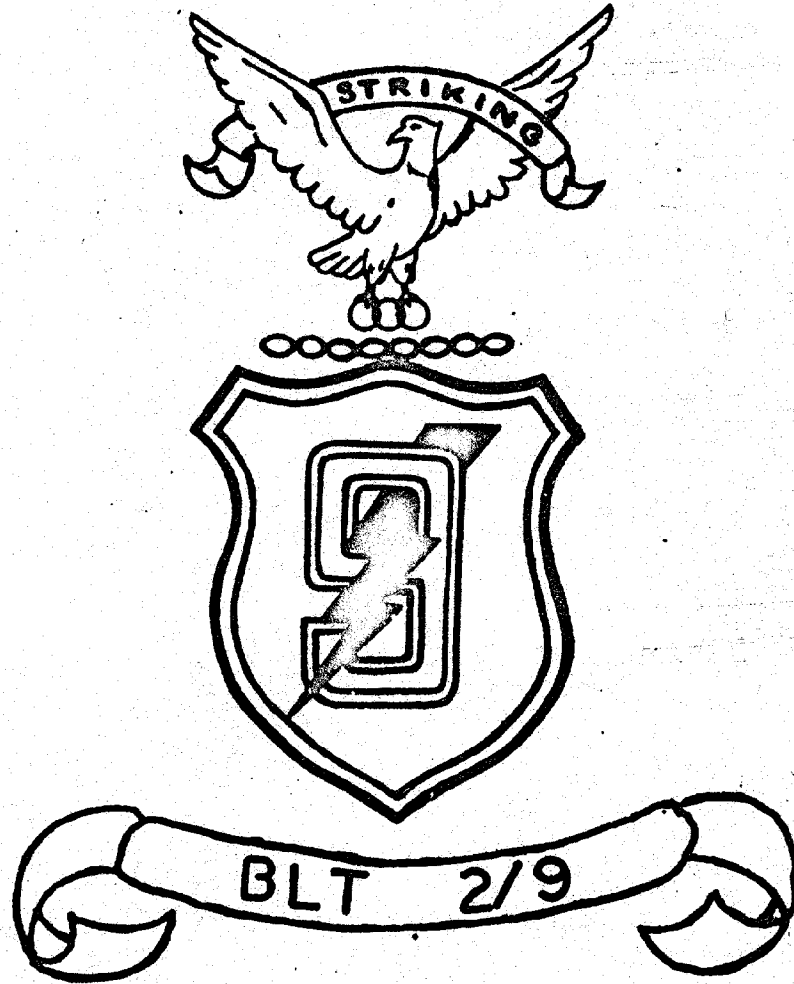


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## I NARRATIVE SUMMARY

## KOH TANG ASSAULT/OPERATION MAYAGUEZ

1. General Description. On 14 May 1975, Battalion Landing Team 2/9 moved to U-Tapao Air Force Base and on the morning of 15 May, conducted an heliborne assault on Koh Tang, Cambodia as part of the operation to recover the SS MAYAGUEZ and its crew. The assault forces were extracted from the island the same evening with the last lift being completed at approximately 2100.

2. Warning Order and Movement to Thailand. At 2030 on 13 May 1975 Lieutenant Colonel T. C. BUDD, G-3 Section, 3rd MarDiv, telephoned Lieutenant Colonel R. W. AUSTIN, Commanding Officer 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines and passed the message that 2/9 was to move to Kadena Air Force Base as quickly as possible for air transportation to U-Tapao. Each of the 2/9 rifle companies was at that time in the central training area (CTA) of Okinawa. They were immediately recalled to Camp Schwab where troops quickly packed the prescribed load and boarded trucks for movement to Kadena. The first rifle company arrived at Kadena at approximately 0200, 14 May, the others following closely behind. Units to be attached to 2/9 to form BLT 2/9 proceeded independently to Kadena, I/3/12 arriving first shortly after midnight. At 0615 the first aircraft (USAF C-141's) departed Kadena for U-Tapao.

Upon arrival at U-Tapao the BLT was billeted in 2 large empty hangars adjacent to the airstrip. The final elements of the BLT closed U-Tapao in mid afternoon 14 May.

3. Formulation of the Plan. Shortly after arrival at U-Tapao Commanding Officer, BLT 2/9 met with Colonel JOHNSON (III MAF G-3) who had been designated as CTG 79.9, GSF Commander. He explained that the mission was to "seize, occupy and defend Koh Tang" where it was felt the Mayaguez crew might be held at that time. Also present in the CP during the day were various USAF officers, although it was unclear to 2/9 as to exactly who they were or what their relationship to CTG 79.9 was.

In mid through late afternoon (14 May), Lieutenant Colonel R. W. AUSTIN (CO BLT 2/9), Major J. B. HENDRICKS (S-3, BLT 2/9), Captain J. H. DAVIS (CO, CoG, BLT 2/9) and two aviators from the 2/9 S-3 section conducted an aerial recon of Koh Tang in a USA U-21 twin engine aircraft. Orders were that the recon would be restricted to a minimum altitude of 6000 feet. They made the approximately 150 mile trip and found an island approximately 5 miles long, heavily foliated everywhere but a cleared cut on the northern finger. On both the east and west sides of this cut there were what appeared to be boat harbors and it seemed obvious that these harbors were the center of any activity on the island. They also saw the SS MAYAGUEZ approximately 1 mile north of the island, apparently dead in the water. One small boat, perhaps a fishing vessel perhaps a gunboat, was moving toward the eastern beach. There was no other movement observed on the island but at 6000 feet it was difficult to see much more than the general configuration of the island.

Upon return to U-Tapao, a meeting was held at which the final plan was formulated. Present were the CO, Company Commanders and staff officers of 2/9, Colonel JOHNSON and Lt Colonel John HOPKINS (III MAF and 79.9), Major Ray PORTER (XO BLT 1/4) and several USAF officers, including a Brigadier General whose exact role was unknown to 2/9 personnel.

The overall task of 79.9 included seizure of the ship, but that portion of the operation was to be done by BLT 1/4 elements. At this meeting it was decided that seizure of the ship and landing on the island should be simultaneous, (i.e. land on the island first and run the risk of the ship being sunk; land on the ship first and run the risk of the crew and captors fleeing to the island). Therefore eight helicopters (CH and HH-53) were allocated to the island assault, 3 to the ship seizure. 0542 (first light) 15 May was designated as touch-down time, requiring a lift off of approximately 0330.

Because of the inherent danger if the crew was on the island, it was decided (by 79.9 or higher Headquarters) that no prep fires would be employed. At a later meeting when later photography was being analyzed, a possible modification to that was discussed (see below).

After this general plan was developed Captain DAVIS, Major HENDRICKS and Lieutenant Colonel AUSTIN questioned two Cambodian military men (one a Navy LT Commander) who supposedly had recent knowledge of Koh Tang and its inhabitants. They theorized that there were 20 - 30 irregular troops on the island, probably lightly armed. No other intelligence was available to 2/9 at that time. There were no maps but CO 2/9 was given 1 copy of an aerial photo which showed little more than the general shape of the island.

In the early evening, 2/9 was given the helo loads- 20 troops in the HH-53's, 27 in the CH-53's. There were also available then some additional aerial photos; to the USMC personnel they showed no additional info but USAF personnel were discussing what they thought were possible AAA positions.

CO 2/9 was told that these possible positions were to be evaluated on scene at first light and hit by CAS strikes if deemed appropriate.

Later that evening, the CO and S-3 issued the BLT 2/9 frag order: CoG as lead company, reinforced by 1 section of 81mm mortars; a small BLT command group and some specialists (linguists, doctor, EOD, HST, etc were included since it seemed logical that if the Mayaguez crew was found on the island, the assault force should be prepared to free/assist/treat them) would also be in the first wave. CoE would follow in the second wave. I/3/12 was to be on call but their use was not anticipated. Critical factors in the plan were helo availability (8) and round trip flying time (approximately 4 hours). Total capacity for the first wave was 175.

Of the eight helicopters, two were to land in the western landing zone, on the west side of the aforementioned cut on the north end of the island; the other six were to land in the eastern landing zone, on the other side of the cut, in the vicinity of what appeared to be the main harbor.

Concurrent with the development and issuance of the frag order, troops were being briefed, ammunition broken-out and issued and other preparations made. The frag directed helo-teams to proceed to the runway at 0230, and be prepared to load at 0300 for a 0330 lift-off.

4. Movement to the Objective. As planned, troops were staged at the assigned helos and ready to load at 0300. Manifests were checked and re-checked at approx 0400 (reason for delay unknown but assumed to be related to final high-level "go") and lift off executed at 0415.

During the 1 hour and 45 minute ride to the objective, USAF crews test fired the helo machine guns and personal weapons.

The BLT Command Group (CO, S-3, ALO, radio operators, and certain specialists) were in the eighth helicopter of the assault wave. As this



helicopter approached the island in the early morning light they could see a tall column of black smoke rising from the eastern landing zone. First thoughts were that the suspected AAA positions had been hit by CAS. However a few seconds later the AF crewman relayed to the CO a message from the pilot that the first two helos were downed burning in the eastern landing zone.

5. Landing and Subsequent Operations. The first two helicopters attempting to land in the eastern landing zone encountered heavy fire. One was hit by what is believed to have been a rocket propelled grenade. It exploded and fell the last 25 meters into the surf off the beach. Ten Marines and two Navy corpsmen were killed as the helicopter exploded and/or as they attempted to exit the burning helicopter. Heavy enemy fire was directed at the downed helicopter as the survivors swam to sea. The second helicopter had the tail rotor shot off but made a safe landing and its heliteam (20) quickly exited into an adjacent treeline.

After these casualties on the eastern side, the remaining helos were diverted to the western landing zone; 3 landed and disembarked their heliteams despite heavy fire; one was shot out of the zone despite repeated landing attempts (eventually landing at 0900); one took such extensive damage attempting to land that it was forced to abort and return to the mainland still loaded; the final helo, containing the BLT command group and the 81's, landed in an unscheduled landing zone some 1200-1500 meters south of the western landing zone. The exact reason the pilot chose an alternate zone is unknown.

One of the helos, shortly after landing its heliteam, crashed at sea due to the extensive damage received while in the landing zone.

It was immediately obvious to all on the ground that the small groups, each taking fire, must be linked-up. First attempts to push south from the main landing zone met heavy resistance. Therefore, under cover CAS and 81mm mortars the command group started north.

Details of the day's activities and sketches of the various locations etc., are included in **Appendix A to this section (Navy Times interview of the CO, BLT 2/9)**. Significant is that the entire day can be subdivided into three phases.

Phase 1 - Helo assault, securing of landing zone and link-up: 0600-1230

Phase 2 - Consolidation, expansion of perimeter, CAS and NGF, preparation of night positions: 1230-1800

Phase 3 - Extraction: 1800-2100

6. Extraction. Throughout the late afternoon, there were indications that extraction plans were being developed at higher levels. CO 2/9 was not informed exactly as to what was being discussed but he was asked at various times if: (a) Small boats from the USN ships are feasible? (Answer: yes, if available) (b) Could the extraction be done entirely from the eastern side? (No, not without a massive assault across the island) (c) Could a helicopter extraction be done at night (Yes, although difficult, it was going to be difficult and heavily opposed whenever it was done).

No word was ever received on what was finally decided, or when it was going to be done. Plans were made to execute either helicopter or boat

extraction. In addition, resupply requests were submitted and defensive preparations for the night were made.

A provision established by CO BLT 2/9 for any extraction plan was that once started it would be continued until finished. It was unacceptable to leave a reduced force on the island overnight or for any period longer than absolutely required.

At approximately 1800 one helicopter appeared on station and, under control of a OV-10A, commenced and, after two attempts and some magnificent supporting fires by the OV-10, completed the extraction of the small group on the eastern side. Shortly thereafter, several additional helos appeared on the horizon and it was obvious that a helo extraction of the main force was on.

Immediate orders to execute the helo extraction were passed: extract the wounded, certain specialists and designated less-essential members of the command group and 81's first, followed sequentially by designated elements of the two rifle companies as the perimeter was incrementally reduced, eventually the last elements of the command group and finally the last elements of the companies.

When the first helicopter approached the zone, which was being marked by Marines with flashlights since by this time it was completely dark, it was met by a heavy volume of enemy fire. The helo responded with heavy fire from its "mini-gun" in the tail. This fire was unfortunately directed into the landing zone and across the entire front, miraculously and narrowly missing the Marines. A heavy fire fight, with exchange of grenades, erupted along the entire front. Heavy fire, essentially the FPF stabilized the situation such that the helo could land at the waters edge in boot-top surf. Although the first and succeeding helicopters took numerous hits, they flew in and out of the landing zone without further casualties. The perimeter was reduced incrementally as planned and by 2100 all Marines had been extracted to the USS CORAL SEA, USS WILSON, and USS HOLT.

7. Post-Operation Activities. Immediately after the extraction from the island was completed, those elements of BLT 2/9, remaining in Thailand were ordered back to Okinawa, departing by air early in the morning of 16 May. The USS CORAL SEA, WILSON and HOLT proceeded to Subic Bay, Philippines, disembarked the members of BLT 2/9 who spent one night at the MAU Camp and then returned to Okinawa on 21 May.

On the night of 15 May, as the extraction helicopters landed aboard the ships, musters were taken and messages originated between ships and to 79.9 and 2/9 (then thought still to be in Thailand) to account for all personnel. CO BLT 2/9 aboard the USS CORAL SEA, did not have knowledge of who had been on the helicopters that had not reached or not landed on the island, nor was it known exactly who had been embarked in the helo downed on the eastern side, since the manifests were all held by the XO, 2/9 who was first in Thailand and then back on Okinawa.

After continuing efforts for approximately a day and a half it was confirmed (as almost immediately feared) that three Marines of Company E were missing. Much has been written in the investigation of what happened to them and it is inappropriate to comment further here. They are still (as of 15 October 1975) classified as MIA.

Aboard each of the ships on the night of 15 May, wounded and injured Marines were evaluated and treated. Casualty Reports were submitted over

the next few days. Final casualty totals were as follows:

13 KIA (11 USMC, 2 USN)

43 WIA (41 USMC, 2 USN)

3 MIA (3 USMC)

8. Post-Operation Analysis of Enemy Strength. Based on the entire activity of the day, interviews with various key personnel, and personal observations the following estimation of enemy forces and weapons encountered has been constructed:

- a. 150 personnel
- b. LMG's, M-16's and AK-47's
- c. 3 60mm Mortars
- d. 1 90mm recoilless rifle
- e. RPG's
- f. Hand grenades

9. Problem Areas and Lessons Learned.

A. Reconnaissance of the island was insufficient to allow proper evaluation of possible enemy positions, strengths, etc. Visual recon at 6000 feet with virtually no low level photography is inadequate.

B. Intelligence about the island and possible enemy forces that was available to the BLT was almost non-existent and that which was available was grossly inaccurate. However, several days later an intelligence report with DTG 2 days before the operation was received. It listed the enemy force as 150-300 with mortars and other infantry weapons- nearly exactly what it is now felt was encountered.

C. Lack of prep fires made landing of large helos in "hot" zones a very costly undertaking.

D. Lack of AH-1's to escort the assault helos and/or to provide close suppressive fires contributed to the helo losses and landing difficulties.

E. Four hours between helo waves is grossly excessive and made build-up ashore unacceptably slow.

F. There were no direct radio communications between CO BLT 2/9 and CTG 79.9, i.e. during the operation LT Colonel AUSTIN and Colonel JOHNSON could not talk to each other. CO BLT 2/9 talked with the ABCCC who was relaying messages out and in; but it was never clear where the word was going to or coming from.

G. The ABCCC seemed unfamiliar with USMC radio procedures. On the Battalion TAC NET were ABCCC, fixed wing aircraft, airborne FAC's, NGF ships and helicopters often talking with each other- contributing to confusion and difficult communications for the ground forces.

H. Not all ordnance delivery was cleared with the CO BLT 2/9. The most glaring example was the use of a 15,000 pound bomb-dropped in mid-afternoon with absolutely no prior notice to or clearance from 2/9.

DECLASSIFIED

IV ACTUAL LANDING SITES

DENSE FOILAGE

HUT

CUT  
AWAY  
AREA

DENSE FOILAGE

GRASSY AREA

HUT

DAMAGED  
TR

K 21  
K 32  
JG 42

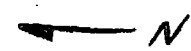
K 22

JG 43

K 23

K 31

K 31	22 PAX
K 23	20 PAX
K 21	20 PAX
K 32	15 PAX
JG 42	27 PAX
K 22	20 PAX
JG 43	29 PAX



DECLASSIFIED

II TASK ORGANIZATION

BLT 2/9 (Airlift Contingency Battalion Landing Team) LtCol AUSTIN

Raiding Force

Raiding Force Headquarters LtCol AUSTIN  
 Det H&S Co 2/9 (Ops, ALO, Comm and FSCC)  
 Det ITF  
 Det (DOD) 3d FSR  
 Det Headquarters Plat I <sup>GRV</sup> Bn 3/12 (NGF & FSCC)  
 Det 81mm Mtr Plat (FDC & 1 sec guns)  
 Det (HST) 3d SP Bn

Company G Capt DAVIS  
 Det Comm Plat  
 FO Team, 81mm Mtr Plat  
 Det Med Plat

Battalion Landing Team (-)

Company E Capt STAHL  
 Det Comm Plat  
 FO Team 81mm Mtr Plat  
 Det Med Plat  
 Sec 81mm Mtr Plat  
 Det (HST) 3d SP Bn  
 Det 3d Engr Bn  
 Det HQ Bn (PAO)  
 Det, 3d MP Bn  
 FAC

Company F Capt McCARTY  
 Det Comm Plat  
 Det Med Plat  
 Det, 3d Engr Bn  
 FO Tm, 81mm Mtr Plat  
 FO Tm, I Btry 3/12

Company H Capt GUTTER

I Btry 3d Bn 12th Marines (-) Capt NENSLIN

2d Flat B Company 3d Engr Bn Lt KOTHEIMER

81mm Mtr Plat (-) Lt McHENAMIN

106 RR Platoon Lt MORGAN

H&S Co (-)

Lt WELKER

Bravo Command Group

Maj MORAN

Det H&S Co

Det Comm Plat

Det HQ Plat I Btry3/12

Det Med Plat

III HELICOPTER ASSIGNMENTWAVE 1

<u>AIRCRAFT NO</u>	<u>CALL SIGN</u>	<u>NO PAX</u>	<u>SENIOR MARINE</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
926	Knife 21	20	2dLt McDANIEL	Landed 0630 Western LZ
928	Knife 22	20	Capt DAVIS	Damaged Aborted Landing. Returned to Thailand
627	Knife 23	20	2dLt CICERE	Shot Down 0600 Eastern LZ
925	Knife 31	22	1stLt TONKIN	Shot Down and Burned 0600 Eastern LZ
932	Knife 32	15	SSgt BURNETT	Landed 0605 Western LZ
795	Jolly Green 41	27	2dLt ZALES	Landed 0930 Western LZ
785	Jolly Green 42	27	1stLt KEITH	Landed 0610 Western LZ
792	Jolly Green 43	29	LtCol AUSTIN	Landed 0615 1500m South of Western LZ
			<u>WAVE 2</u>	
794	Jolly Green 13	28	Capt STAHL	Landed 1230 Western LZ
793	Jolly Green 12	26	2dLt DAVIS	Landed 1230 Western LZ
364	Jolly Green 11	27	SSgt HALE	Landed 1230 Western LZ
Unknown	Unknown	27	1stLt MARTINOLI	Damaged Aborted Landing Returned to Thailand
Unknown	Unknown	20	Capt DAVIS	Landed 1230 Western LZ

V PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF KOH TANG

**TERRAIN:** The terrain of Koh Tang is flat with several ravines running east to west. A large grassy area was utilized as the western landing zone. The grass in the zone was approximately knee deep. Rock shoals jutted out into the ocean on the northern and southern boundaries of the LZ. The beach was approximately 20 meters in depth.

**VEGETATION:** The vegetation of the island is predominately dense jungle-like double canopy intermingled with vines and thorn bushes. Small trails were found running throughout the area mainly in an east-west direction. A cut approximately 50 meters in width ranged across the island from east to west. This cut consisted of fallen trees and bushes. It was obvious this cut had been improved within recent weeks as axes and saws were found on the edges of it.

**MAN-MADE STRUCTURES:** One large hut was located on the eastern side and several small huts were found on the western side with one centered in the LZ. The hut in the LZ was a straw roof open pavillion estimated to house approximately 10 persons. Clothes, books, currency and bags of rice were found in this hut. Next to the hut was what appeared to be an ammo storage bunker. Inside this bunker was found 1 case of 60mm mortar rounds and several cases of M79 rounds. This bunker was constructed of logs and baked clay. Prepared fighting positions were found ranging along the western shore also of the same construction.

**WEATHER:** Early morning was hazy, clearing by 0900. The temperature was in the 90's at midday with high humidity. The sun set at approximately 1730. There was no moonlight in the evening, providing almost total blackout conditions.



VII LIST OF KILLED/MISSING IN ACTIONKILLED IN ACTION

LCPL Aston L. LONEY  
PFC Lynn BLESSING  
PFC James R. MAXWELL  
PFC Walter BOYD  
PFC Kelton R. TURNER  
PFC Daniel A. BENEDETT  
PFC James J. JACQUES  
PFC Antonio R. SANDOVAL  
PFC Richard W. RIVENBURGH  
LCPL Gregory COPEHAVER  
LCPL Andres GARCIA  
HM Ronald J. MANNING  
HM2 Bernard GAUSE JR

MISSING IN ACTION

PFC Gary L. HALL  
PFC Joseph N. HARGROVE  
PVT Danny G. MARSHALL

## VIII AWARDS SUMMARY

The following awards were recommended for individual actions on  
KOH TANG ISLAND

SILVER STAR

MAJ J. B. HENDRICKS	Bn S-3	H&S Co
1stLT J. D. KEITH	Co ExecO	Co G
2dLT J. McDANIEL 5th	Plt Cmdr	Co G

BRONZE STAR

CAPT J. H. DAVIS	Co Cmdr	Co G
CAPT H. E. STAHL	Co Cmdr	Co E
1stLt T. L. TONKIN	FAC	H&S Co
2dLT R. H. ZALES	Plt Cmdr	Co G
2dLT H. R. CICERE	Plt Cmdr	Co G
2dLT D. J. HOFFMAN	Plt Cmdr	Co G
2dLT J. W. DAVIS	Plt Cmdr	Co E
2dLT R. E. KING	Plt Cmdr	Co E
2dLT J. J. McLEMAMIN	Mortar Plt Cmdr	H&S Co
1stSGT L. L. FUNK	1stSGT	Co G
GySGT L. A. McNEMAR	Co GySGT	Co G
SSGT F. T. TUIELE	Plt SGT	Co G
SSGT S. BELJAL	Plt SGT	Co G
LCPL G. C. LUTZ	MG Squad Leader	Co G
LCPL L. J. BLANSON	Rifleman	H&S Co

BRONZE STAR (POSTHUMOUSLY)

LCPL A. N. LONEY	Squad Leader	Co G
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NAVY COMMENDATION

LT (USN) J. R. WILCOX	Bn Surgeon	H&S Co
SSGT C. D. WRIGHT	Plt SGT	Co E
SSGT C. H. HALE	Plt SGT	Co E
SSGT R. E. PRUITT	Plt SGT	Co G
SGT C. C. ANDERSON	Plt Guide	Co E
SGT H. S. H. ALD	Radio Operator	H&S Co
CPL G. H. TANAYA	Squad Leader	Co G
CPL R. RODRIQUEZ	Plt Guide	Co G
HM3 M. A. HAUCK	Corpman	Co G
LCPL R. L. SHELDON	Mortarman	H&S Co
LCPL L. BARNETT	Squad Leader	Co G
LCPL K. Y. CHIEF	Squad Leader	Co G
LCPL M. RIVERA	Squad Leader	Co G
PFC J. BENJAMIN	Grenadier	Co G
PFC A. HOPKINS	Grenadier	Co G
PFC R. A. FRAZEE	Radio Operator	Co G
PFC T. W. TREBIL	Rifleman	Co G

NAVY ACHIEVEMENT

2dLT W. L. SMITH	Plt Cmdr	Co E
SGT V. G. SALLIDAS	Plt Guide	Co G
SGT J. N. WIATT	Plt SGT	Co G
HM1 G CONNORS	Medical Chief	H&S Co
LCPL K LEWIS	Rifleman	Co E
LCPL R. J. WILLIAMS	Fire Team Leader	Co E
LCPL D. A. VALENTINE	Rifleman	Co G
LCPL D. C. TAYLOR	Machine Gunner	Co G
LCPL C. A. GEISELGRETH	Radio Operator	Co G
PFC F RIOS	Grenadier	Co E
PFC J BEARD	Rifleman	Co E
PFC S. R. HANSON	Fire Team Leader	Co E
PFC L. L. GALLAGHER	Rifleman	Co E
PFC T. G. LAMBERT	Fire Team Leader	Co E
PFC G. W. WAGERS	Radio Operator	Co G
HM D. J. FOLEY	Corpman	Co G
PFC B. L. FULLER	Rifleman	Co G
PFC R. D. DOCHWIAK	Rifleman	Co G
PFC M. S. COOPER	Rifleman	Co G
PFC R. GARCIA	Rifleman	Co G
PFC W. A. AKELLY	Asst Machine Gunner	Co G
PFC J. K. PENDERSON	Automatic Rifleman	Co G
PFC B. D. CRISP	Rifleman	Co G
PFC M. D. HEMMEN	Rifleman	Co G
PFC M. G. DICK	Rifleman	Co G
PFC J. H. WEMITT	Rifleman	Co G
PFC G. O. HAGEN	Rifleman	Co G
PFC A. E. BAILEY	Rifleman	Co G
PFC C. D. SPINKS	Automatic Rifleman	Co G
PFC E. G. CAMPBELL	Radio Operator	Co G
PFC W. J. OVERTON	Squad Leader	Co G
PFC D. R. GIBBS	Rifleman	Co G
PFC A. L. LOPEZ	Automatic Rifleman	Co G
PFC R. J. TOMBLEY	Rifleman	Co G
HM W. G. KARR	Corpman	Co G
PVT S. G. HAUN	Rifleman	Co E
PVT J. E. CARTER	Rifleman	Co G
PVT J. M. KENN	Rifleman	Co E
PVT C OLIVER	Rifleman	Co G
PVT M. E. GARRET	Rifleman	Co G

PURPLE HEART

LCPL G COPEHHAVER	(POSTHUMOUSLY)
LCPL A. L. LONEY	(POSTHUMOUSLY)
LCPL A. GARCIA	(POSTHUMOUSLY)
PFC L BLESSING	(POSTHUMOUSLY)
PFC J. R. MAXWELL	(POSTHUMOUSLY)
PFC W. BOYD	(POSTHUMOUSLY)

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
2nd Battalion, 9th Marines  
3d Marine Division(-)(Rein), FMF  
FPO San Francisco 96602

6/RWA/dlm  
5000  
9 Dec 1975

From: Commanding Officer  
To: Commanding Officer, 9th Marine Regiment

Subj: Koh Tang/Mayaguez Historical Report (u)

Encl: (1) Koh Tang Assault/Operation Mayaguez Report

1. Enclosure (1) is a report summarizing this organization's activities in the subject operation.

2. It is provided for inclusion in the historical records of the Regiment and records/files at higher headquarters as deemed appropriate.

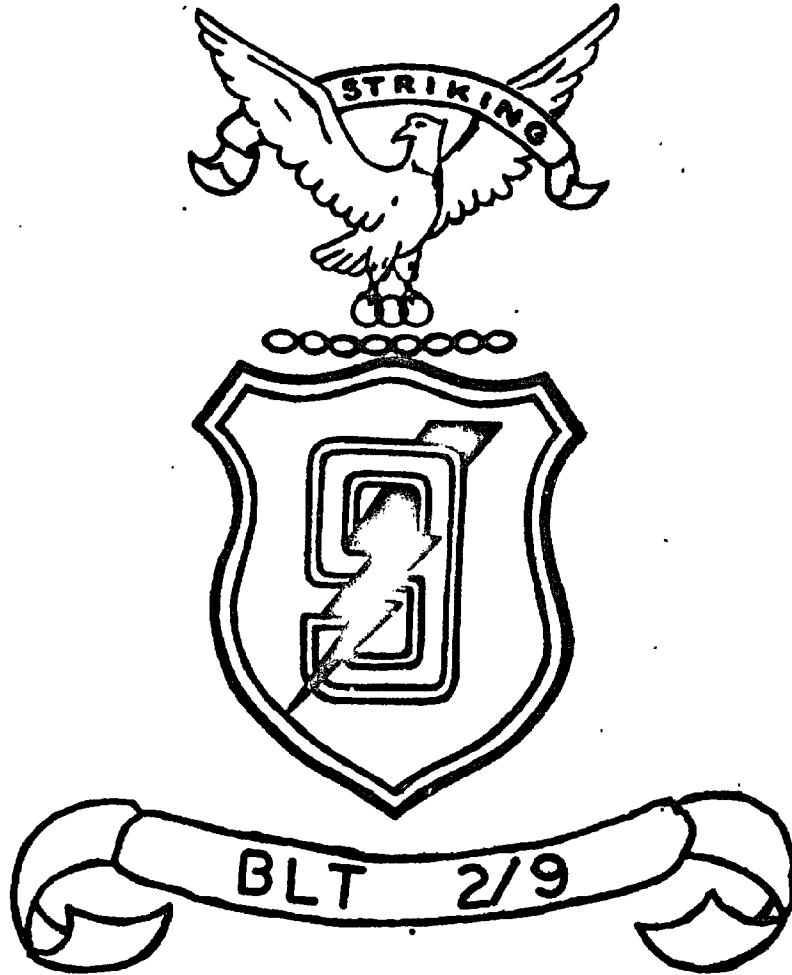
*R. W. Austin*  
R. W. AUSTIN

*2/9 Koh Tang / Mayaguez Hist. Rpt*

*Dec 75*

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## I NARRATIVE SUMMARY

## KOH TANG ASSAULT/OPERATION MAYAGUEZ

1. General Description. On 14 May 1975, Battalion Landing Team 2/9 moved to U-Tapao Air Force Base and on the morning of 15 May, conducted an heliborne assault on Koh Tang, Cambodia as part of the operation to recover the SS MAYAGUEZ and its crew. The assault forces were extracted from the island the same evening with the last lift being completed at approximately 2100.

2. Warning Order and Movement to Thailand. At 2030 on 13 May 1975 Lieutenant Colonel T. C. BUDD, G-3 Section, 3rd MarDiv, telephoned Lieutenant Colonel R. W. AUSTIN, Commanding Officer 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines and passed the message that 2/9 was to move to Kadena Air Force Base as quickly as possible for air transportation to U-Tapao. Each of the 2/9 rifle companies was at that time in the central training area (CTA) of Okinawa. They were immediately recalled to Camp Schwab where troops quickly packed the prescribed load and boarded trucks for movement to Kadena. The first rifle company arrived at Kadena at approximately 0200, 14 May, the others following closely behind. Units to be attached to 2/9 to form BLT 2/9 proceeded independently to Kadena, I/3/12 arriving first shortly after midnight. At 0615 the first aircraft (USAF C-141's) departed Kadena for U-Tapao.

Upon arrival at U-Tapao the BLT was billeted in 2 large empty hangars adjacent to the airstrip. The final elements of the BLT closed U-Tapao in mid afternoon 14 May.

3. Formulation of the Plan. Shortly after arrival at U-Tapao Commanding Officer, BLT 2/9 met with Colonel JOHNSON (III MAF G-3) who had been designated as CTG 79.9, GSF Commander. He explained that the mission was to "seize, occupy and defend Koh Tang" where it was felt the Mayaguez crew might be held at that time. Also present in the CP during the day were various USAF officers, although it was unclear to 2/9 as to exactly who they were or what their relationship to CTG 79.9 was.

In mid through late afternoon (14 May), Lieutenant Colonel R. W. AUSTIN (CO BLT 2/9), Major J. B. HENDRICKS (S-3, BLT 2/9), Captain J. H. DAVIS (CO, CoG, BLT 2/9) and two aviators from the 2/9 S-3 section conducted an aerial recon of Koh Tang in a USA U-21 twin engine aircraft. Orders were that the recon would be restricted to a minimum altitude of 6000 feet. They made the approximately 150 mile trip and found an island approximately 5 miles long, heavily foliated everywhere but a cleared cut on the northern finger. On both the east and west sides of this cut there were what appeared to be boat harbors and it seemed obvious that these harbors were the center of any activity on the island. They also saw the SS MAYAGUEZ approximately 1 mile north of the island, apparently dead in the water. One small boat, perhaps a fishing vessel perhaps a gunboat, was moving toward the eastern beach. There was no other movement observed on the island but at 6000 feet it was difficult to see much more than the general configuration of the island.

Upon return to U-Tapao, a meeting was held at which the final plan was formulated. Present were the CO, Company Commanders and staff officers of 2/9, Colonel JOHNSON and Lt Colonel John HOPKINS (III MAF and 79.9), Major Ray PORTER (XO BLT 1/4) and several USAF officers, including a Brigadier General whose exact role was unknown to 2/9 personnel.

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The overall task of 79.9 included seizure of the ship, but that portion of the operation was to be done by BLT 1/4 elements. At this meeting it was decided that seizure of the ship and landing on the island should be simultaneous, (i.e. land on the island first and run the risk of the ship being sunk; land on the ship first and run the risk of the crew and captors fleeing to the island). Therefore eight helicopters (CH and HH-53) were allocated to the island assault, 3 to the ship seizure. 0542 (first light) 15 May was designated as touch-down time, requiring a lift off of approximately 0330.

Because of the inherent danger if the crew was on the island, it was decided (by 79.9 or higher Headquarters) that no prep fires would be employed. At a later meeting when later photography was being analyzed, a possible modification to that was discussed (see below).

After this general plan was developed Captain DAVIS, Major HENDRICKS and Lieutenant Colonel AUSTIN questioned two Cambodian military men (one a Navy LT Commander) who supposedly had recent knowledge of Koh Tang and its inhabitants. They theorized that there were 20 - 30 irregular troops on the island, probably lightly armed. No other intelligence was available to 2/9 at that time. There were no maps but CO 2/9 was given 1 copy of an aerial photo which showed little more than the general shape of the island.

In the early evening, 2/9 was given the helo loads- 20 troops in the HH-53's, 27 in the CH-53's. There were also available then some additional aerial photos; to the USMC personnel they showed no additional info but USAF personnel were discussing what they thought were possible AAA positions.

CO 2/9 was told that these possible positions were to be evaluated on scene at first light and hit by CAS strikes if deemed appropriate.

Later that evening, the CO and S-3 issued the BLT 2/9 frag order: CoG as lead company, reinforced by 1 section of 81mm mortars; a small BLT command group and some specialists (linguists, doctor, EOD, HST, etc) were included since it seemed logical that if the Mayaguez crew was found on the island, the assault force should be prepared to free/assist/treat them) would also be in the first wave. CoE would follow in the second wave. I/3/12 was to be on call but their use was not anticipated. Critical factors in the plan were helo availability (8) and round trip flying time (approximately 4 hours). Total capacity for the first wave was 175.

Of the eight helicopters, two were to land in the western landing zone, on the west side of the aforementioned cut on the north end of the island; the other six were to land in the eastern landing zone, on the other side of the cut, in the vicinity of what appeared to be the main harbor.

Concurrent with the development and issuance of the frag order, troops were being briefed, ammunition broken-out and issued and other preparations made. The frag directed helo-teams to precede to the runway at 0230, and be prepared to load at 0300 for a 0330 lift-off.

4. Movement to the Objective. As planned, troops were staged at the assigned helos and ready to load at 0300. Manifests were checked and re-checked at approx 0400 (reason for delay unknown but assumed to be related to final high-level "go") and lift off executed at 0415.

During the 1 hour and 45 minute ride to the objective, USAF crews test fired the helo machine guns and personal weapons.

The BLT Command Group (CO, S-3, ALO, radio operators, and certain specialists) were in the eighth helicopter of the assault wave. As this

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helicopter approached the island in the early morning light they could see a tall column of black smoke rising from the eastern landing zone. First thoughts were that the suspected AAA positions had been hit by CAS. However a few seconds later the AF crewman relayed to the CO a message from the pilot that the first two helos were downed burning in the eastern landing zone.

5. Landing and Subsequent Operations. The first two helicopters attempting to land in the eastern landing zone encountered heavy fire. One was hit by what is believed to have been a rocket propelled grenade. It exploded and fell the last 25 meters into the surf off the beach. Ten Marines and two Navy corpsmen were killed as the helicopter exploded and/or as they attempted to exit the burning helicopter. Heavy enemy fire was directed at the downed helicopter as the survivors swam to sea. The second helicopter had the tail rotor shot off but made a safe landing and its heliteam (20) quickly exited into an adjacent treeline.

After these casualties on the eastern side, the remaining helos were diverted to the western landing zone; 3 landed and disembarked their heliteams despite heavy fire; one was shot out of the zone despite repeated landing attempts (eventually landing at 0900); one took such extensive damage attempting to land that it was forced to abort and return to the mainland still loaded; the final helo, containing the BLT command group and the 81's, landed in an unscheduled landing zone some 1200-1500 meters south of the western landing zone. The exact reason the pilot chose an alternate zone is unknown.

One of the helos, shortly after landing its heliteam, crashed at sea due to the extensive damage received while in the landing zone.

It was immediately obvious to all on the ground that the small groups, each taking fire, must be linked-up. First attempts to push south from the main landing zone met heavy resistance. Therefore, under cover CAS and 81mm mortars the command group started north.

Details of the day's activities and sketches of the various locations etc., are included in Appendix A to this section (Navy Times interview of the CO, BLT 2/9). Significant is that the entire day can be subdivided into three phases.

Phase 1 - Helo assault, securing of landing zone and link-up: 0600-1230

Phase 2 - Consolidation, expansion of perimeter, CAS and NGF, preparation of night positions: 1230-1800

Phase 3 - Extraction: 1800-2100

6. Extraction. Throughout the late afternoon, there were indications that extraction plans were being developed at higher levels. CO 2/9 was not informed exactly as to what was being discussed but he was asked at various times if: (a) Small boats from the USN ships are feasible? (Answer: yes, if available) (b) Could the extraction be done entirely from the eastern side? (No, not without a massive assault across the island) (c) Could a helicopter extraction be done at night (Yes, although difficult, it was going to be difficult and heavily opposed whenever it was done).

No word was ever received on what was finally decided, or when it was going to be done. Plans were made to execute either helicopter or boat

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extraction. In addition, resupply request were submitted and defensive preparations for the night were made.

A provision established by CO BLT 2/9 for any extraction plan was that once started it would be continued until finished. It was unacceptable to leave a reduced force on the island overnight or for any period longer than absolutely required.

At approximately 1800 one helicopter appeared on station and, under control of a OV-10A, commenced and, after two attempts and some magnificent supporting fires by the OV-10, completed the extraction of the small group on the eastern side. Shortly thereafter, several additional helos appeared on the horizon and it was obvious that a helo extraction of the main force was on.

Immediate orders to execute the helo extraction were passed: extract the wounded, certain specialists and designated less-essential members of the command group and 81's first, followed sequentially by designated elements of the two rifle companies as the perimeter was incrementally reduced, eventually the last elements of the command group and finally the last elements of the companies.

When the first helicopter approached the zone, which was being marked by Marines with flashlights since by this time it was completely dark, it was met by a heavy volume of enemy fire. The helo responded with heavy fire from its "mini-gun" in the tail. This fire was unfortunately directed into the landing zone and across the entire front, miraculously and narrowly missing the Marines. A heavy fire fight, with exchange of grenades, erupted along the entire front. Heavy fire, essentially the FPF stabilized the situation such that the helo could land at the waters edge in boot-top surf. Although the first and succeeding helicopters took numerous hits, they flew in and out of the landing zone without further casualties. The perimeter was reduced incrementally as planned and by 2100 all Marines had been extracted to the USS CORAL SEA, USS WILSON, and USS HOLT.

7. Post-Operation Activities. Immediately after the extraction from the island was completed, those elements of BLT 2/9, remaining in Thailand were ordered back to Okinawa, departing by air early in the morning of 16 May. The USS CORAL SEA, WILSON and HOLT proceeded to Subic Bay, Philippines, disembarked the members of BLT 2/9 who spent one night at the MAU Camp and then returned to Okinawa on 21 May.

On the night of 15 May, as the extraction helicopters landed aboard the ships, musters were taken and messages originated between ships and to 79.9 and 2/9 (then thought still to be in Thailand) to account for all personnel. CO BLT 2/9 aboard the USS CORAL SEA, did not have knowledge of who had been on the helicopters that had not reached or not landed on the island, nor was it known exactly who had been embarked in the helo downed on the eastern side, since the manifests were all held by the XO, 2/9 who was first in Thailand and then back on Okinawa.

After continuing efforts for approximately a day and a half it was confirmed (as almost immediately feared) that three Marines of Company E were missing. Much has been written in the investigation of what happened to them and it is inappropriate to comment further here. They are still (as of 15 October 1975) classified as MIA.

Aboard each of the ships on the night of 15 May, wounded and injured Marines were evaluated and treated. Casualty Reports were submitted over

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the next few days. Final casualty totals were as follows:

13 KIA (11 USMC, 2 USN)

43 WIA (41 USMC, 2 USN)

3 MIA (3 USMC)

8. Post-Operation Analysis of Enemy Strength. Based on the entire activity of the day, interviews with various key personnel, and personal observations the following estimation of enemy forces and weapons encountered has been constructed:

- a. 150 personnel
- b. M16's, M-16's and AK-47's
- c. 3 60mm Mortars
- d. 1 90mm recoilless rifle
- e. RPG's
- f. Hand grenades

9. Problem Areas and Lessons Learned.

A. Reconnaissance of the island was insufficient to allow proper evaluation of possible enemy positions, strengths, etc. Visual recon at 6000 feet with virtually no low level photography is inadequate.

B. Intelligence about the island and possible enemy forces that was available to the BLT was almost non-existent and that which was available was grossly inaccurate. However, several days later an intelligence report with DTG 2 days before the operation was received. It listed the enemy force as 150-300 with mortars and other infantry weapons- nearly exactly what it is now felt was encountered.

C. Lack of prep fires made landing of large helos in "hot" zones a very costly undertaking.

D. Lack of AH-1's to escort the assault helos and/or to provide close suppressive fires contributed to the helo losses and landing difficulties.

E. Four hours between helo waves is grossly excessive and made build-up ashore unacceptably slow.

F. There were no direct radio communications between CO BLT 2/9 and CTG 79.9, i.e. during the operation LT Colonel AUSTIN and Colonel JOHNSON could not talk to each other. CO BLT 2/9 talked with the ABCCC who was relaying messages out and in; but it was never clear where the word was going to or coming from.

G. The ABCCC seemed unfamiliar with USMC radio procedures. On the Battalion TAC NET were ABCCC, fixed wing aircraft, airborne FAC's, NGF ships and helicopters often talking with each other- contributing to confusion and difficult communications for the ground forces.

H. Not all ordnance delivery was cleared with the CO BLT 2/9. The most glaring example was the use of a 15,000 pound bomb-dropped in mid-afternoon with absolutely no prior notice to or clearance from 2/9.

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II TASK ORGANIZATION

BLT 2/9 (Airlift Contingency Battalion Landing Team) LtCol AUSTIN

Raiding ForceRaiding Force Headquarters

LtCol AUSTIN

Det HES Co 2/9 (Ops, ALO, Comm and FSCC)

Det ITT

Det (EOD) 3d FSR

Det Headquarters Plat I <sup>GRV</sup> Bn 3/12 (NGF & FSCC)

Det 81mm Mtr Plat (FDC &amp; 1 sec guns)

Det (HST) 3d SP Bn

Company G

Capt DAVIS

Det Comm Plat

FO Team, 81mm Mtr Plat

Det Med Plat

Battalion Landing Team (-)Company E

Capt STAHL

Det Comm Plat

FO Team 81mm Mtr Plat

Det Med Plat

Sec 81mm Mtr Plat

Det (HST) 3d SP Bn

Det 3d Engr Bn

Det HQ Bn (PAO)

Det, 3d MP Bn

FAC

Company F

Capt McCARTY

Det Comm Plat

Det Med Plat

Det, 3d Engr Bn

FO Tm, 81mm Mtr Plat

FO Tm, I Btry 3/12

Company H

Capt GUTTER

I Btry 3d Bn 12th Marines (-)

Capt NENSLIN

2d Plat B Company 3d Engr Bn

Lt KOTHEIMER

81mm Mtr Plat (-)

Lt McMENAMIN

106 RR Platoon

Lt MORGAN

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H&S Co (-)

Lt WELKER

Bravo Command Group

Maj MORAN

Det H&S Co

Det Comm Plat

Det HQ Plat I Btry3/12

Det Med Plat

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# FIRING LINE: Assault on Koh Tang

(Continued From Page 15)

Our perimeter was reduced from the rear first, then by incremental reductions in size until there were only 26 men in a tight perimeter at the water's edge for the L.S. helo. At 9 p.m., the extraction to the Coral Sea, Wilson and Holt was completed.

**Q: Were there more problems getting your men out than inserting them?**

A: Both phases were accomplished under extremely intense fire. The extraction was made at night without illumination and, as I said, under heavy fire. There were problems at both times. Considering the extreme circumstances, the extraction was accomplished almost exactly as planned.

**Q: Did you encounter any heavy weapons opposition?**

A: I believe at least one of the helicopters was shot down by a rocket-propelled grenade. We captured a 60mm mortar, damaged a second and received fire from at least one more. We also captured a 90mm recoilless rifle.

**Q: How long were you in combat before you learned that the Mayaguez crewmen had been returned?**

A: Elements of Cos. E and G landed at 12:30 p.m., in the second wave. At that time, roughly 6 1/2 hours after the initial assault, I was informed by Capt. Mike Stahl, CO of Co. E, that the crew had been picked up.

**Q: What did you do then?**

A: Although I wasn't told officially, it seemed that the continued buildup ashore and complete seizure of the island was no longer my mission. However, since I knew it would be at least four hours before any more troops could be inserted, even if directed, and since we were in close contact with the enemy, I did what I would have done no matter what the status of the crew had been. We consolidated our position, secured the LZ and called supporting arms on the enemy as our forces maneuvered.

**Q: Regarding the KIA and three MIAs left on the island: Were they all hit in the**

same action or at different times and places?

A: No comment on the circumstances.

**Q: Why was it not possible to extract their remains?**

A: Normal Corps combat procedures were used to plan for the extraction of KIAs. Very unfortunately, at night under heavy enemy fire in an LZ in boottop surf, with extreme pressure on every man, the extraction of remains, though initiated, was not completed. Also very unfortunately, once it was discovered the extraction of remains had not been completed, it was too late. There obviously was no going back.

# The Assault On Koh Tang

Three Marines still are officially considered missing in action three months after one of the most dramatic and, at the time, controversial applications of American power in decades. Freeing the container ship *Mayaguez* and her crewmen after an illegal seizure by Cambodian naval forces necessitated quick and intense cooperation between the U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marines. Here, in a "Firing Line" interview delayed because it was conducted by mail, Marine Lt. Col. Randall Austin tells of one phase of the rescue, the assault on Koh Tang island. Austin commanded the Marines on Koh Tang.

Navy Times Associate Editor Mel Jones conducted the interview. Maps were drawn by staff artist Garnett Sullivan from sketches provided by Lt. Col. Austin.

**Q:** How much notice did your battalion have before it was lifted off Okinawa?

**A:** We were alerted at 8:30 p.m. on May 13. Our first elements arrived at Kadena AFB at about two in the morning. The airlift started at approximately 6 a.m., May 14.

**Q:** Was your unit the 3d Division's ready battalion?

**A:** I think after the preceding (Vietnam withdrawal) the entire division was ready. My battalion had received several previous alerts for those operations and had been designated as one of the division's air contingency battalions during the entire period.

**Q:** Marine helicopter crews are trained in the complexities of landing troops in combat zones. But your assault company was lifted in by relatively untrained Air Force crews. Did your Marines and the Air Force crews have an opportunity for "dry runs" before H-Hour?

**A:** I think that demands an accurate response. While it's true that the 2d Bn., 9th Marines (2-9) and the helicopter crews had not trained together, the Air Force crews had been extensively trained, including during the evacuations in Southeast Asia.

The individual performances, courage and heroism of the Air Force crews were positive factors in the success of the mission. Their exploits have earned nothing but praise from the Marines of 2-9.

**Q:** Why did you choose Co. G for the assault?

**A:** I consider any of the companies capable of accomplishing any mission assigned them. I do not care to comment on why I selected Co. G as the lead company.

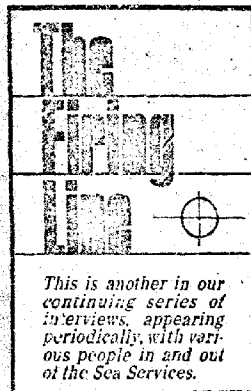
**Q:** With what or whom was the company reinforced?

**A:** The initial wave consisted of most of Co. G, plus a small battalion command group, one section of 81mm mortars and some special attachments like shore party, explosive ordnance, linguists, etc.

**Q:** The *Mayaguez* boarding party was not part of your unit but did you have anything to do with the planning or execution of the boarding?

**A:** The boarding was carried out by elements of Battalion Landing Team 14. Maj. Ray Porter, the battalion XO, commanded the boarding party. He and I had a common superior and consequently worked together on the allocation of helicopters, timing of the landings, etc. I didn't participate in the detailed planning for the 1-4 portion of the operation, nor did Maj. Porter participate in the 2-9 portion.

**Q:** Once in Thailand, what sort of tactical briefing did you get and how long before H-Hour?



**A:** Immediately on arrival I was briefed on the situation and mission. I conducted an aerial reconnaissance on the afternoon of May 14. Unfortunately, we were limited to a minimum altitude of 8000 feet and could not see the necessary detail.

After the recon. I received another briefing on the helicopters available and intelligence information and was then issued the exact instructions on times, size of hero teams, etc.

**Q:** When did you brief Co. G?

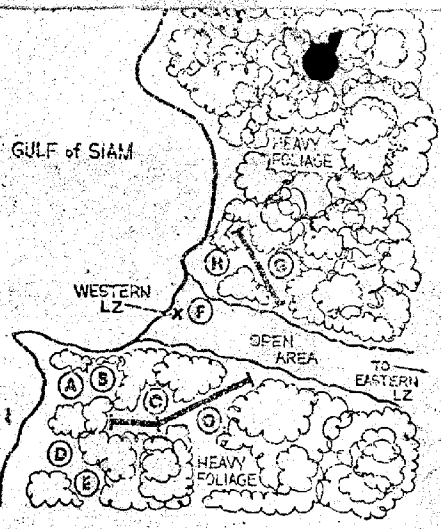
**A:** My staff and all of the company commanders participated in the briefing, discussed above. Capt. James H. Davis, the Co. G commander, went on the recon with me. The frag order was given that evening and the helicopters lifted off at 4:15 the next morning.

**Q:** Using the map sketches, will you designate which of your platoons were lifted into which landing zones?

**A:** At 6 a.m., two helicopters were shot down on the eastern beach. Survivors of one helicopter were picked up at sea by the *Wilson*. Twelve members of 2-9 were killed on the helicopter. The other nine were rescued by the *Wilson*. The other nine were rescued by the *Wilson*. The other nine were rescued by the *Wilson*.

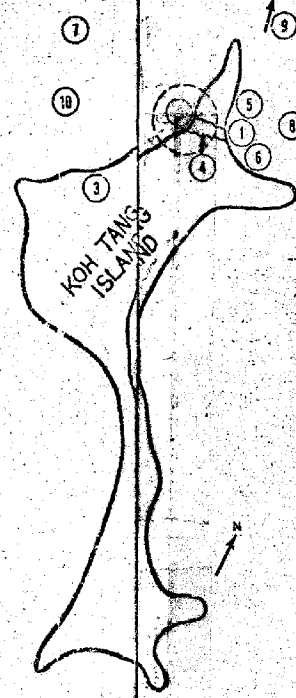
At about the same time, three helicopters landed in the western LZ. This group was led by 1st Lt. James B. Keith, XO of Co. G. The helicopter carrying Capt. Davis, the CO, was unable to land. It received numerous hits and limped back but the team boarded another helicopter and returned to Koh Tang in the second wave.

One additional helicopter stayed on station, making several attempts to land. It finally departed 22 pops at 7 a.m. One of the helicopters crashed on the way out of the western LZ. The last helicopter of the first wave



The map at left is an overall view of Koh Tang, showing (1) the eastern beach landing zone, (2) western beach LZ, (3) landing site of the command group and 81mm mortars, (4) a cleared area between beaches, (5 through 7) downed helicopters, (8) guided missile destroyer *Henry B. Wilson* providing gunfire, (9) direction of *Mayaguez*, about one mile north and (10) position of the destroyer escort *Harold E. Holt* after *Mayaguez* crewmen had been rescued.

Above is an enlargement of the circled area at left, showing where most of the action ashore took place. The letters denote points of enemy resistance and are specified in the interview. In general, initial contact was made at points A, B, F and H. When Marines in the western LZ and the command group (number 3 at left) tried to link up, heavy fire was met at points B, C, D and E. While the Marines were being extracted, intense enemy fire came from the enemy lines designated G.



with us so a point fire team was formed and a series of enemy bunkers and fighting holes were taken one at a time as the group moved north. The mortars were set at an intermediate position and used to support the linkup.

At about 12:30 p.m. the forces were merged. Final resistance was encountered at points D and F, where the then-fleeing enemy made one desperate attempt to prevent our joining of forces. The 90mm recoilless rifle was captured at point A.

At almost the exact time the linkup was accomplished, the second wave arrived with 100 additional troops from Cos. E and G.

**Q:** What happened then?

**A:** The positions were consolidated and the perimeter expanded to approximately 250-300 meters from the beach. Throughout the afternoon there were continuous air strikes and, on the eastern side, there also was naval gunfire support. An Air Force OV-10A on station was extremely effective in directing those air strikes and in originating the extraction efforts.

**Q:** How did you get out?

**A:** Extraction commenced just at dark on the eastern side of the island for the 20 people there and it continued after dark on the western side. Throughout this phase there was a heavy exchange of fire along the lines marked G — small arms, machine guns and grenades.

(See Firing Line, Page 33)