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1st Marine Division (Rein), FMF
FPO, San Francisco, California 96602

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Ser No: 00182-68

14 JUN 1968
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From: Commanding General
To: Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force
Subj: Combat After Action Report, Operation QUICK TRACK
Ref: (a) COMUSMACV Dir 335-8
Encl: (1) Subject Report

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1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is submitted.
2. Operation QUICK TRACK was an intelligence collection operation conducted in western QUANG NAM and QUANG TIN Province from 281200H April 1968 to 091200H May 1968. Participating units were Headquarters, Task Force KELLY, Provisional Reconnaissance Company, Reconnaissance Battalion, and 14th Company Mobile Strike Force. 1st Marine Air Wing, 245th Surveillance Airplane Company and Sub-Unit #1, 1st Radio Battalion provided support for the operation.
3. Special or unique operations of this type need to be closely integrated into the overall scheme of operations within the CORPS area in order to receive the appropriate priority for the limited assets available and to effect the required support and coordination. The difficulties encountered by Task Force KELLY in obtaining helicopter support reflects the day to day experiences of this Division, and is indicative of the need to have special operations integrated into the competition for assets.
4. The recommendation is made, in paragraph 16, that a Force Reconnaissance Company with certain augmentations be placed under the operational control of III MAF. Air support would be derived from 245th Surveillance Aircraft Company and the 1st Marine Air Wing. Inasmuch as current helicopter and visual reconnaissance platforms are in short supply, the creation of additional demands will result in further dilution of the already inadequate support. In short, until additional aircraft assets are available in-country, creation of units which will generate additional demands must be avoided.

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TASK FORCE KELLY
III MARINE AMPHIBIOUS FORCE
C/O FPO, San Francisco, California 96602

6/JFJK/rfp
3840
Ser: 00138-68
16 May 1968

From: Officer-in-Charge, Task Force KELLY
To: Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force
Via: Commanding General, 1st Marine Division (Rein), FMF

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1ST MARINE DIVISION, FMF
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Subj: Combat Operation; After-Action Report

Ref: (a) CG III MAF Op O 401-68 DTG 270926Z Apr68 (S)
(b) CG 1st MarDiv FragO 84-68 DTG 280947Z Apr68 (S)
(c) CG III MAF Comm Inst DTG 280344Z Apr68 (S)
(d) CG 1st MarDiv AdminO 27-68 to FragO 84-68 DTG 291110Z Apr68 (S)

1. Operation QUICK TRACK. An intelligence collection operation targetted against major VC/NVA elements located in western QUANG NAM and QUANG TIN provinces south of the DANANG TAOR. (CONFIDENTIAL)

2. Dates of Operation. Operations commenced 281200H Apr68 and terminated 091200H May68. (CONFIDENTIAL)

3. Location. Western QUANG NAM and QUANG TIN provinces. Neither AC or RZ were assigned. (CONFIDENTIAL)

4. Control and Command Headquarters. CG III MAF from 281200H Apr68 to 021814H May68. CG 1st MarDiv from 021815H May68. (CONFIDENTIAL)

5. Reporting Officer.

Task Force KELLY

Prov Recon Co, 1st Recon Bn, 1st MarDiv

14th Co, Mobile Strike Force (under OpCon)

LtCol J. F. J. KELLY USMC

1stLt Peter BADGER USMC

1stLt Carlos GUITTIERREZ USA

6. Task Organization.

Hqs, Task Force KELLY

Prov Recon Co, 1st Recon Bn, 1st MarDiv (Rein), FMF

14th Co, Mobile Strike Force (under OpCon)

7. Supporting Forces.

1st MarDiv (Admin and Logistics) support rendered considered as excellent.

1st MAW (Helo and Fixed Wing Support) Fixed wing support was timely and excellent; helo support was excellent when available. Air support initially requested to 1st MAW via LL line. Air requests 3 May to 9 May via 1st MarDiv Air Officer.

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245th Surveillance Airplane Company (SAC), 16th Aviation Group.
Request submitted via CG III MAF: support timely and excellent.
Sub-Unit #1, 1st Radio Bn. SI support was excellent. (CONFIDENTIAL)

8. Intelligence. An "all-source" intelligence analysis had indicated that at least two regiments of the 2nd NVA Division and support units had moved southwest from their normal operating areas of south/central QUANG NAM (P) to the Laotian border area of QUANG NAM/QUANG TIN (P). The enemy apparently moved to the highlands area of Base Area 608 to refurbish his equipment and acquire additional personnel prior to the initiation of a major offensive against the DANANG TAOR. Sufficient enemy forces remain in the vicinity of the DANANG TAOR to cover this move and continue pressure against friendly units. The aforementioned estimate proved correct. The 1st VC Regiment was identified as the unit that attacked NGOK TAVOK and KHAM DUC the second week in May. Enemy weapons and equipment captured during these attacks were reported as new. Enemy forces in the vicinity of THUONG DUC and the northern end of the SONG CAL River Valley utilized intense AW/AA fire to cover potential reconnaissance LZ's and initiated rapid counter-reconnaissance sweeps against inserted friendly reconnaissance teams. One reconnaissance team and a small back-up team with a PPS-6 covering the SONG THU BON River Valley reported little enemy activity. It would appear that the SONG CAL River Valley (Route #14) is the major route of advance. The compartment immediately to the west (SONG BOUNG River) will probably also be used to move forces back toward the DANANG TAOR. (Large dust clouds were observed here on 6 May 1968). The 21st NVA Regiment has not been identified in any move at the time of this report. It is logical that this move is in progress, but not yet discovered. One large group of infrared returns in the vicinity of YC 9349 could possibly be associated with this unit. (SECRET/NO FORN)

9. Mission. Locate as soon as possible and plan the destruction (primarily by air delivered ordnance) of major VC/NVA elements (2nd NVA Div) in western QUANG NAM and QUANG TIN Provinces. (SECRET/NO FORN)

10. Concept of Operations.

Phase 1 - Locate major VC/NVA elements presently located immediately east of Base Area 608 by aerial surveillance and available ground reconnaissance assets operating from KHAM DUC (ZC 0008), NGOK TAVOK (YC 9601), and Special Forces camps. To insure surveillance in depth, establish an OP line with a night/electronic surveillance capability behind the aforementioned Special Forces patrol areas, in the three major north-south terrain compartments.

Phase 2 - When any major enemy movement has been discerned, deploy additional ground reconnaissance assets to confirm direction, rate of march, and establish movement times.

Phase 3 - Recommend to CG III MAF killing zones and TOT's in previously cleared strike areas (Arc Light cleared).

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Phase 4 - Circumstances and capabilities permitting, accomplish bomb damage assessment. (SECRET/NO FORN)

11. Execution. The following is a chronology of events extracted from the "Operation QUICK TRACK" Journal:

<u>DATE/TIME GROUP</u>	<u>INCIDENT</u>
271315H Apr68	CG III MAF directed execution of Operation QUICK TRACK.
271930H Apr68	Planning conference convened.
281200H Apr68	Task Force KELLY operational with CP located at Hill 55.
281800H Apr68 (Appx)	Recon Co (Prov) (USMC) and Mobile Strike Force (USSF and VNSF) closed on AN HOA AB for operational training/deployment.
281414Z Apr68	CG III MAF directed all air requirements for support of Task Force KELLY be submitted to G-3 Air (III MAF) rather than direct to 1st MAF (CARSTAIRS) as stated in III MAF Operation Order #401-68.
290802Z Apr68	CG III MAF msg 290802Z Apr68 authorizes direct tasking to 1st MAF with info address to CG III MAF.
301040Z Apr68	Task Force KELLY Frag0 #1 directed clandestine reconnaissance of main routes of ingress to the DANANG TAOR.
301000H Apr68 (Appx)	Weather precluded inserts due inability of fixed wing aircraft to operate. Helos conducted VR.
302330Z Apr68	Task Force Frag0 #2 directed insert of patrols (Rio Grande, Slate Creek, Cayenne).
011120H May68	Inserted Tm #2 (Rio Grande) in the vicinity of YC 998387.
011235H May68	Tm #2 (Rio Grande) reported 2-3 vehicles sounding like tanks and heading north in the vicinity of ZC 017375.
011515H May68	Slate Creek insert postponed due to fixed wing and gunship divert.

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<u>DATE/TIME GROUP</u>	<u>INCIDENT</u>
021120H May68	Inserts postponed due to unavailability of aircraft. Gunships diverted for downed aircraft and Special Forces operation in THUONG DUC area.
020854Z May68	CG III MAF directs change of operational control to CG 1st MarDiv vice CG III MAF.
021530H May68	Insert Slate Creek and Cayenne postponed due to lack of aircraft assets.
021815H May68 ✓	Task Force KELLY OpCon to CG 1st MarDiv.
031100H May68	Rio Grande killed 1 VC KIA confirmed in a point-to-point contact on trail.
030800H May68	Slate Creek and Cayenne insert delayed due to lack of aircraft assets.
031450H May68	Slate Creek (Tm #3) inserted in the vicinity of ZC 201303 under hostile fire with negative friendly casualties. One CH46 returned to Marble Mt as a result of enemy fire.
040800H May68	Cayenne insert aborted due to obstacles (trees) in the HLZ not discernable during VR.
041255H May68	Rio Grande contacted unknown size enemy force 400 meters from patrol base camp (ZC 113971). Reaction force sent from patrol base. Contact terminated resulting in 1 USMC KIA, 1 USMC WIA, and 9 enemy KIA confirmed.
041915H May68	Rio Grande extracted from HLZ vic ZC 005401.
050800H May68 (Appx)	During normal resupply to BLAKENSHIP OP, LYNCH LAW (-) with PPS-6 inserted.
051000H May68 (Appx)	Task Force KELLY moved CP to Hill 327.
051330H May68	Relocation of Task Force KELLY CP completed.
051700H May68	Recon Co (Prov) (USMC) and Mobile Strike Force (USSF and WNSF) moved to 1st Recon Bn CP (Hill 327) completing relocation at 051630H May68.

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<u>DATE/TIME GROUP</u>	<u>INCIDENT</u>
061420H May68	Inserted Ipswich in vicinity ZC 019518.
061315H May68	Helos entering Cayenne primary (YC 932348) and alternate (YC 9942) HLZ's received SA/AW (50 Cal AA) fire in the vicinity of ZC 0039, ZC 0040, and ZC 0041. One VC KIA confirmed by personnel on board helo. One CH46 (Flight Leader) damaged by ground fire near THUONG DUC at 1350H May68. Inserts aborted.
070830H May68	Ipswich (ZC 040515) under attack by 30-40 enemy. Fixed wing and gunships employed resulting in one (1) VC KBA.
071140H May68	Ipswich and Cowpoke received artillery fire close to the patrol. No friendly forces firing at this time.
071115H May68	Ipswich reported one (1) USMC WIANE. Cayenne insert aborted due to helo receiving AW fire damage in the vicinity of THUONG DUC.
071530H May68	Ipswich extracted under fire. Helo received flak hit at 3500 AGL in the vicinity of ZC 147597. HLZ prepped by fixed wing. Riot control agents utilized and delivered in a napalm cannister by A4E fixed wing aircraft.
081200H May68 (Appx)	No aircraft assets available to Task Force KELLY.
091200H May68	Operation QUICK TRACK terminated. All Task Force KELLY elements returned to control of parent organizations.

12. Results.

a. Friendly losses:

1 USMC KIA
1 USMC WIA
1 USMC WIANE

b. Enemy losses:

12 KIA
1 KBA

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c. Bomb damage assessments (BDA):

Areas targetted for airstrikes were not struck prior to the termination of the operation. (CONFIDENTIAL)

13. Administrative Matters. Adequate.14. Special Equipment and Techniques.

a. The integration of VN Strike Force personnel and USMC reconnaissance proved very effective. The only problem area that presented itself was the requirement for US/Australian Advisors to be along with VN personnel. (The VN Strike Force personnel will follow only those they know well and respect.) The normal complement of advisors with a 120 man VNSF company is seven; this reduces the number of small VNSF teams that can be deployed.

b. The overall concept that the Task Force deployed under was in itself unique. The use of selected intelligence assets/agencies programmed against a specific target will usually achieve more success than the "shotgun" approach of using all assets at random to identify the threat against a large area.

15. Commander's Analysis.

The collection of intelligence information using all assets and techniques available to discern "in-country" enemy activity in the areas outside divisional TAOR's and RZ's is a corps responsibility. III MAF does not have the assets under OpCon to the headquarters necessary to fulfill this obligation. The utilization of USSF C&C units and Delta Forces has filled this intelligence gap to a degree; however, both are best described as theatre assets that are not always available when required.

Reaction to a probable course of enemy action required rapid deployment (24 hours) of a III MAF Task Force envisioned as being operational for a period of about 15 days. This rapid deployment to Hill 55 and the arrangements for air transporting a USMC Recon Company and Mobile Strike Force to AN HOA Air Base in addition to replacing part of the I Corps VN Strike Force Reserve by C-130 airlift from DU PHO to DANANG proceeded smoothly. On Hill 55, facilities constructed by, and the cooperation, rendered by the 7th Marines was indicative of a "can do" outfit. At AN HOA Air Base, intergration of VN Strike Force personnel and USMC Recon personnel into 30-35 man reconnaissance teams was built on professional respect and proved very effective. The establishment of a covered teletype line from Sub-Unit #1, 1st Radio Battalion to Hill 55 proved trying, but perserverence on the part of Sub-Unit #1 personnel eventually prevailed. The back-up communication provided by 1st MarDiv on III MAF

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TAC #1 and later 1st MarDiv TAC #1 was completely reliable.

The procurement of air assets from the 1st MAF for reconnaissance overflights and insertions proved difficult due to a shortage of helo assets aggravated by changes in requesting procedures.

The chop of the Task Force to 1st MarDiv eliminated air request problems but placed the Task Force in direct competition for limited 1st MarDiv helo assets at the expense of division requirements. This possibility had been discussed during the planning stage and many statements countering this possibility had been expressed.

The early insert of ground reconnaissance teams prior to the establishment of an enemy counter-reconnaissance screen was not fully realized. Rapid enemy reaction to attempted inserts, poor weather in the HLZ's, limited helo assets and enemy counter-reconnaissance sweeps precluded full fruition of this plan. On one occasion, an insert was aborted because of friendly fire through the approach lanes. (This planning factor was the responsibility of the undersigned who failed to appreciate the necessity for same in light of "Sav-a-Plane" procedures and the fact that the insert was to take place outside the artillery fan in a posted no-fire-zone (NFZ) around the HLZ.

Between 29 April and 5 May, there was growing concern that the enemy might have closed the TAOR from the south and plans were made to insert teams back inside the 1st MarDiv RZ to insure detection of major moves near the mouth of the SONG CAL River Valley. On 5 May, (weather had cleared on 4-5 May), VR reports were first received concerning the area south of NGOK TAVOK and a usually reliable agent reported an element of the 2nd NVA Division near NGOK TAVOK. The QUICK TRACK SitRep #3 for the period ending 062400H May68, stated NGOK TAVOK and KHAM DUC would be early VC/NVA targets. On 7 May 1968, infra-red emissions discerned by the 245th SAC in the DAK MI River Valley, 9 kilometers south-southeast of NGOK TAVOK indicated a major size unit was nearing that Special Forces camp. This information prompted five (5) Quick Run Arc Light requests; three in the aforementioned area near NGOK TAVOK and two further north in the SONG CAL River Valley where reconnaissance and SF teams had discerned major enemy activity. Six TPQ-10 targets were also submitted.

On 8 May, there were many indications that the awaited move of the 2nd NVA Division elements located near Base Area 608 were underway. At 091200H May68, Operation QUICK TRACK was terminated. (SECRET/NO FORN)

16. Recommendations.

That a Force Reconnaissance Company augmented by selected VN Nationals and additional US intelligence personnel be placed under OpCon of III MAF.

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This unit supported by a U. S. Army Surveillance Airplane Company (245th SAC) and 1st MAW VMCJ/Helo assets could perform the necessary intelligence collection functions required by CG III MAF. Such a unit with the necessary command and control elements supported by the III MAF Intelligence Section (G-2) would be a force in readiness capable of fulfilling the deep "all-source" reconnaissance responsibility of III MAF.

(CONFIDENTIAL)

John F. J. Kelly
JOHN F. J. KELLY

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