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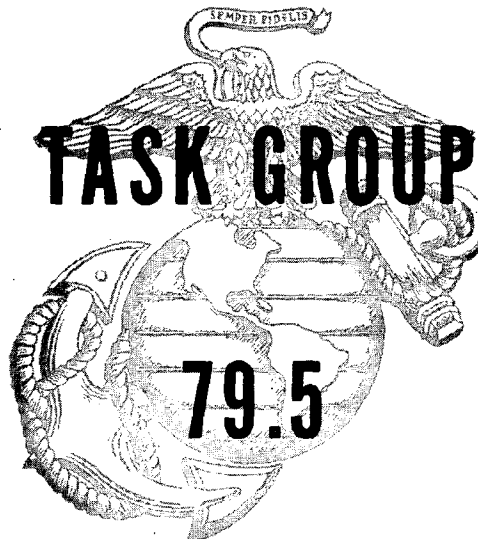
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10 FEB 1969

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HQ  
(TG 79.5)

# COMMANDER SPECIAL LANDING FORCE BRAVO

**BOLD MARINER/RUSSELL BEACH****AFTER ACTION REPORT  
24 JAN TO 9 FEB 1969****PART II**

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AND DECLASSIFICATION

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TG 79.5  
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HEADQUARTERS  
Task Group Seventy Nine Point Five (TG 79.5)  
FPO San Francisco 96602

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10 February 1969

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From: Commander  
To: Commander, Task Force Seven Nine

Subj: Combat After Action Report, Operation BOLD MARINER/RUSSELL BEACH  
Part II.

Ref: (a) CTG 79.5 Oplan 120-yr  
(b) CTF Seven Nine Msg 220226Z Jan 69

Encl: (1) SLF-Bravo After Action Report, Operation BOLD MARINER/RUSSELL BEACH  
*silid* { (2) BLT 3/26 After Action Report, Operation BOLD MARINER/RUSSELL BEACH  
*ref* (3) HMM-164 After Action Report, Operation BOLD MARINER/RUSSELL BEACH

1. In accordance with references (a) and (b) enclosure (1) is submitted herewith together with enclosures (2) and (3) which amplify enclosure (1).

*R. R. Wilson*  
R. R. WILSON

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COMBAT AFTER ACTION REPORT (Operation BOLD MARINER/RUSSELL BEACH) Part II  
(Period Commencing 241200H Jan 1969).

## Appendix (a) Operations Overlay

1. Type of Operation. Combat Search and Destroy operation within a cordon.
2. Inclusive dates and Location of the Operation. Operation BOLD MARINER/RUSSELL BEACH was conducted from 241200<sup>00</sup> January through 091800H February 1969 in the QUANG BINH SON/QUANG SON TINH Districts of QUANG NGAI Province RVN.
3. Command Headquarters. Task Group 79.5 (Special Landing Force Bravo) Embarked in the USS TRIPOLI (LPH-10).
4. Task Organization

Task Group 79.5 (Special Landing Force Bravo) Battalion Landing Team 3/26 HMM-164	Colonel R. R. WILSON LtCol J.W.P. ROBERTSON LtCol R. T. TRUNDY
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5. Mission. Commencing with assumption as CLF for Operation BOLD MARINER/RUSSELL BEACH CTG 79.5 provided logistical, personnel and medevac support for elements of the Landing Force chopped ashore, in order that BLT 3/26 could continue operations in conjunction with TF COOKSEY to find, fix and destroy enemy forces and fortifications and screen out VC/VCS/VCI in support of the Accelerated Pacification Campaign. On order be prepared to conduct such other operations as may be directed.
6. Execution

a. Part II of Operation BOLD MARINER was conducted in accordance with NWIP-22 (b). On 241200H January 1969 BLT 3/26 was chopped OPCON to CG III MAF for simultaneous chop to CG AMERICAL DIVISION/CG TF COOKSEY by CTF Seven Six Msg 240302Z Jan 69. HMM-164 and the Landing Force Reserve (India Company (REINF) ) were chopped OPCON to CTG 79.5 (Special Landing Force Bravo) by CTF Seven Nine Msg 231124Z Jan 69. CTF Seven Nine Msg 231124Z Jan 69 assigned Task Force 79.5 the mission for Part II of Operation BOLD MARINER as set forth in paragraph 5. Maximum use of all supporting arms was utilized throughout the operation including naval gunfire, fixed wing aircraft and the artillery batteries organic to BLT 3/26. Supporting arms control and coordination was passed to TF COOKSEY concurrent with the OPCON chop of BLT 3/26. Psychological warfare techniques were employed to separate VC/VCS/VCI during the

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conduct of the operation. Rice and other food caches captured were turned over to QUANG NGAI Province Headquarters who in turn, passed the captured food to the Combined Holding Interrogation Center (CHIC) located at BS 672-735 to help feed the detainees at that center. Prepared leaflets were dropped over the operating area urging the population to come forth to the cordon prior to launching assault elements on the search and destroy phase of the operation.

b. Concept. Part II of Operation BOLD MARINER was a combat search and destroy operation conducted with Task Force COOKSEY of the AMERICAL Division. The code name for this phase of the operation was BOLD MARINER/RUSSELL BEACH. The senior Commander was Brigadier General COOKSEY U.S. Army. The mission assigned to BLT 3/26 as set forth by Task Force COOKSEY was to continue to constrict the cordon and conduct search and destroy operations and to destroy all bunkers and other fortifications discovered. All food caches captured were to be flown to CHIC and turned over to GVN personnel for use in feeding the detainees at that location.

#### c. Operations

(1) On 24 Jan CTG 79.5 assumed OPCON of HMM-164 and India Company 3/26 effective at 1200H. CTF 76 passed OPCON of BLT 3/26 to III MAF for a simultaneous chop to CG AMERICAL Division/CG TF COOKSEY as of 241200H Jan 69. During the period 241200H Jan 69 to 091800H Feb 69 while BLT 3/26 was under OPCON of CG TF COOKSEY, SLF-Bravo remained in support of Operation BOLD MARINER/RUSSELL BEACH and provided on call logistics, personnel and medevac support to the BLT ashore.

(2) HMM-164 helicopters were used extensively during Phase II primarily for daily resupply of BLT 3/26 and for displacement of the BLT CP from the vic of Hill 110 to the White Beach BSA (BS 758866). The rifle companies of BLT 3/26 in the assault continued to constrict the cordon daily; they conducted detailed searches of all tunnel complexes which were found, and destroyed same. All documents, weapons and other materials of an intelligence nature that were found were turned over to the G-2 of Task Force COOKSEY. When the cordon progressed to PL Charlie BLT 3/26 physically tied in with elements of Task Force COOKSEY and launched the final assault on the Batangan Peninsula. Movement was slow as numerous tunnel complexes were discovered and mines and booby traps were emplaced throughout the area.

(3) Amphibious Withdrawal. CTG 79.5 with concurrence of CTF COOKSEY, directed that the Amphibious Withdrawal commence 050730H Feb. On 5 Feb two rifle companies were helilifted from designated LZ's to reembark aboard ARG shipping and combat support units of the BLT along with 24 APC's and 9 tanks of TF COOKSEY commenced withdrawal over White Beach to reembark aboard ARG Bravo shipping. The withdrawal of combat support units by surface landing craft of CTG 76.5 was delayed considerably due to marginal weather which created difficult wind and surf

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conditions, existence of a sandbar which may have been built up even more by the sea and surf conditions, and availability of only a limited number of landing craft as a result of mechanical difficulties experienced by several craft. The retrograde of all elements of BLT 3/26 was completed 091800H Feb. The APC's and tanks of TF COOKSEY were offloaded at CHU LAI. The last two units of BLT 3/26 to retrograde from White Beach were two rifle companies, one rifle company was retrograded by helicopter and one rifle company withdrew by LVT's.

#### d. Fire Support Coordination

(1) On 241200H January 1969 the control and coordination of supporting arms for Operation BOLD MARINER/RUSSELL BEACH passed from Commander Amphibious Task Force, Supporting Arms Coordination Center aboard the USS ELDORADO (LCC-11) to Task Force COOKSEY, Fire Support Coordination Center located at Fire Support Base Bayonet vicinity of BT 545025, southwest of CHU LAI. Passage of control was without incident.

(2) Coordination of supporting arms within the area of operations was in accordance with current amphibious doctrine, NWIP-22 (a), III MAF directives, pertinent Army and Air Force publications and FMFM 7-1. At no time during the entire course of the operation did a coordination problem arise that could not be adjudicated by the Fire Support Representative/Liaison Officer of TG 79.5 located at the Tactical Operations Center of Task Force COOKSEY.

#### 7. Intelligence

a. Enemy Situation. Cape Batangan and the immediately adjacent area of BINH SON (D) QUANG NGAI (P) had traditionally been an enemy controlled area with Viet Cong Local Force units enjoying freedom of movement hampered only by occasional friendly forays into the area. The area had been used as a base by the P 31 Local Force Company and 48th Local Force Battalion, while the 38th Local Force Battalion and 95th Local Force Sapper Company operated to the south and west of the AO, respectively. In addition some 200 village and hamlet guerrillas were suspected to have been within the initial cordon zone, along with members of a well organized Viet Cong infrastructure. When Part II of Operation BOLD MARINER began there had been no positive confirmation of any particular enemy unit within the contracted cordon, although it was suspected that elements of at least one battalion were trapped on the cape itself.

b. Enemy Adoption of Capabilities. The enemy was expected to evade friendly forces by hiding in the cave and tunnel complexes reported to be in the area and to harass friendly units with sniping fire and installation of surprise firing devices (the setting of booby traps) and mines. It was also assumed that he might attempt to withdraw from the area of operations to (altogether) avoid contact with friendly troops.

#### c. Terrain and Weather

(1) The beach area of the AO was firm sand backed by sand dunes sparsely covered with coniferous growth and broken occasionally by culti-

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vated areas and individual or small clusters of houses. The terrain of Cape Batangan within the BLT's cordon was higher than the adjacent lowland paddy lands and was covered by dry fields defined by dikes and hedgerows. The farm land fell off in rocky cliffs near the shoreline of the cape. Because of the wet weather the earth was muddy but did not significantly hinder foot traffic.

(2) The weather from 24 to 31 January was mostly fair to partly cloudy. That from 1 February until the close of the operation it was mostly cloudy with frequent rain showers and wind speeds to 20 knots. During this period of the operation the temperatures varied from a low of 67° at night to a daytime high of 87°.

d. Enemy Tactics. With the exception of three minor mortar attacks and an antiaircraft fire incident, enemy fire upon friendly units in the AO was insignificant. However, friendly units observed and took under fire groups of enemy soldiers of up to fifty men in size who were moving in the vicinity of the cordon, usually during hours of darkness. Extensive, sturdily constructed tunnel complexes and many family bunkers were found and destroyed. Both civilians and enemy soldiers hid in these to avoid detection by friendly troops. As expected, the enemy had set many mines and booby traps throughout the area along friendly routes of advance, in dikes, in shrub lines, and in bunkers and tunnels, these devices accounting for most of the enemy-inflicted friendly casualties, except for sniper fire, and one of the minor mortar attacks causing two friendly casualties. Typical of the booby traps and mines found or detonated were homemade devices consisting of tin cans and C-4, U.S. manufactured bounding mines, and booby-trapped artillery rounds.

e. Intelligence Support. Three scout dog teams, one interrogation-translation subteam, and one counter intelligence subteam were provided by III MAF. AMERICAL DIVISION provided four interpreters, and a platoon of National Police Field Forces was obtained from the Combined Holding and Interrogation Center (CHIC). Armed Propaganda Teams were available on call from CHIC, however, they were not used. A Navy Beach Jumper Unit loudspeaker team from TG 76.5 provided psyops support.

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Enemy Casualties

VC KIA 32  
VC POW 15  
Detainees 2654

Weapons Captured

2 - M-1 Carbine  
2 - M-2 Carbine  
2 - SKS  
1 - K-44  
1 - LAAW

Equipment Captured

5 - Carbine magazines  
5 - BAR magazines  
Misc small arms rds  
6 - homemade bombs  
2 - Bounding mines  
2 - mines  
1 - E-Tool  
Misc 782 gear  
Misc medical supplies  
1 Sewing Machine  
Pots and Pans  
1 Transistor radio

Food Captured

Rice - 1550 pounds  
Corn - 1200 pounds  
Salt - 240 pounds

## 8. Communications

a. On 24 January 1969, Task Group 79.5 assumed Commander Landing Force and became communication coordinator and controller for BLT 3/26. Requirements had been laid on by Task Force 79 to maintain communications with Task Force 79 and Task Group 79.4. This was accomplished on existing circuits and imposed no problems except radio relay due to non-availability of additional workable radio relay equipment.

b. A new COI was printed and distributed and went into effect on Chop plus 12 hours. Coordination was conducted between Task Force COOKSEY and Task Group 79.5 which resulted in a better understanding and utilization of existing circuits.

c. The distance between the LPH and BLT ashore was reduced resulting in better communications and quicker helo support aid. This assisted in establishing a firm, reliable communication link, not only to the BLT but also to Task Force COOKSEY. The Task Force COOKSEY TAC Net was a covered VHF requirement with a separation between units of up to 25 miles.

d. On Chop + 1, BLT 3/26 moved radio circuits into a command LVT-C thereby establishing a stable radio central and utilizing stable amtrac power for all circuits.

e. At 1200, 8 February, TG 79.5 secured SLF TAC net and assumed net control on BLT TAC net due to change of BLT command post to LPH-10.



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9. Commander's Analysis

Aspects of this operation which are considered worthy of comment and analysis include; the initial establishment of the cordon; movement in closing the cordon once it was established; dealing with civilian detainees and prisoners and maximizing the value of intelligence gleaned from them; and the difficulties encountered during the withdrawal.

a. Resistance to the landing was not expected and plans called for placing assault waves on the cordon line spaced out at intervals of 250 to 300 meters between heliteams. This enabled the cordon to be established in BLT 3/26's zone extremely rapidly, and in fact the cordon was in place within a period of two (2) hours. The same cannot be said about the cordon on either flank of BLT 3/26 however, and the delay in setting the cordon on the southern flank especially may have resulted in a failure to trap all possible enemy forces within the cordon. Speedy and complete establishment of a cordon is considered to be essential to success of this type of operation.

b. Once established, the cordon closed slowly and predictably. Slow closing was necessary for careful and thorough searching of an area. However, it also provided time to the enemy forces to emplace mines and booby traps, and as time passed the scheme of maneuver was to become obvious to the enemy. Deliberate and methodical closing of a cordon and search of an area must be weighed against the advantages which accrue to the defenders in such a situation, and not be permitted to unnecessarily restrict a unit from applying combat power in probes against known or suspected enemy concentrations within a cordon.

c. Of the many hundreds of detainees and somewhat fewer prisoners processed by BLT 3/26, a few provided information of military value. This usually was extracted by interrogators at CHIC, rather than at the BLT level. Some pieces of information held forth promise of pointing out locations of mines and tunnel complexes in the area. Although several areas were suspected to be mined and booby-trapped their exact locations were not known. Therefore any detainee who said that he knew the location of mines, booby traps or tunnels should have been retained at Bn level to point them out, on the ground, without delay. In addition it may be possible to detect the location of mines and booby traps by keeping some detainees with front line units, as they move forward, by observing where they walk, how they react, etc. It is fairly well established that indigenous personnel in an area know where the mines and booby traps are placed. Use of detainees in the manner described could result in fewer friendly casualties.

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d. The withdrawal was fraught with difficulties due largely to severe weather conditions making boat operations extremely difficult if not hazardous. The limited number of boats available in ARG shipping was further reduced by mechanical failures. In addition, a commitment to move TF COOKSEY tanks and APC's in amphibious shipping was entered into by CATF. This task required the efforts of ARG Bravo for a period of approximately four (4) days. When combined with conditions of sea and surf which greatly reduced the speed of surface operations this effort on behalf of US Army forces delayed the withdrawal of BLT 3/26 by approximately two (2) days. Under the circumstances this delay caused unnecessary hardship to two rifle companies which had to land twenty-four hours after being withdrawn, instead of having had a suitable period of time to rehab. Under different circumstances the delay occasioned by the lift of Army forces could have had far more serious and far-reaching affects. It goes without saying that any commitment which affects CATF's capability to support the Landing Force must be thoroughly analyzed by Alcon. In addition mechanical condition of landing craft must be carefully monitored in the face of an almost total reliance on helicopters if our ability to conduct a surface lift is to be maintained in fact as well as in name.

