

22 Nov 1976

Subj: Vietnam 1965

Comments from:

JCS Hickman

1. Noted.
2. Personalized response  
required/~~not required~~.
3. 2d comment edition to be/  
~~not to be~~ provided.

Col Hart

Mr. Shaw

LtCol Rogers

Mr. Shulimson

V.R.  
5

MIS



THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

10 November 1976

Brigadier General E. H. Simmons,  
U. S. Marine Corps (Ret.)  
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums  
Department of the Navy  
Headquarters United States Marine Corps  
Washington, D. C. 20380

Dear General Simmons:

1. In accordance with your request of 15 October, this Division has reviewed the draft manuscript of the projected volume, U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1965: The Landing and the Buildup. The narrative is a lucid, balanced and accurate presentation of Marine Corps participation in the Vietnam War for the period covered. The tone of the narrative is objective, and with respect to the subject under consideration, the coverage is comprehensive and at a suitable level. The suggestions for revision that follow are mainly for the purpose of adding desirable background information to those sections that treat national policy decisions.

a. Page 1B, last par. and page 2, first par: Some mention should be made of President Kennedy's reasons for the decisions that he made in late 1961 and early 1962. Unless this is done the reader could get the impression that the US commitment to the RVN was accidental rather than a deliberate act of national policy. There is a need to trace more precisely the development of the US commitment in this early and very important period. For example, something of the following sort could be inserted after page 1B and before page 2:

In October 1961 President Kennedy sent a mission of experts, headed by General Maxwell D. Taylor, to Vietnam to determine what actions could be taken to prevent the takeover of South Vietnam by the Communists. As a result of General Taylor's recommendations, President Kennedy directed a series of actions, military and political, to strengthen the government of the RVN. These actions included furnishing the RVN substantial amounts of military equipment, as well as US military advisors and support units. The US commitment to the RVN was thus greatly increased.

b. Page 3, par. 2: The sentence beginning "Despite this political instability and a deteriorating war situation" should be revised to show that the United States increased its support because of these factors, not despite them. It would be well to point out some of the enemy actions at this time in order to explain the escalation that occurred in 1964. It might be wise to reconsider the statement that MACV consisted of over "20,000 advisors." (See also page 8.) Not all the US personnel in Vietnam at this time were there as "advisors." Many were technicians, pilots, supply, and administrative personnel (those assigned to SHUFLY and its reinforcing Marine rifle company were surely not advisors.) The same comment would apply to the statement at the top of page 2 that 12,000 US advisors were in Vietnam.

c. Page 5: President Johnson, on the basis of recommendations by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ordered air strikes against NVN in retaliation for attacks on US destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf. This was a major escalation in the war, the first occasion on which US planes bombed north of the 17th Parallel. Therefore to say that "as a result of NVN torpedo boat attacks . . . PacCom conducted retaliatory air strikes against North Vietnam and activated the 9th MEB" produces an anomalous effect by conferring upon the MEB activation the status of a major escalation. The following background might be used to support a statement of important developments at this time:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended on 4 August that, in retaliation for the Tonkin Gulf attack, US planes carry out bombing attacks against several NVN patrol boat bases and associated POL storage. The President approved these attacks. The retaliatory operation was mounted on the morning of 5 August by US carrier aircraft. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also directed CINCPAC and other commanders to begin a comprehensive series of air, sea, and ground force deployments and movement alerts drawn from CINCPAC plans. These were intended to discourage enemy reaction and to improve US readiness for immediate operations against NVN if necessary.

d. Page 5, penultimate line: Striking out the phrase "In addition" will greatly improve this sentence. Actually the abrupt change of thought warrants a new paragraph provided an additional sentence or two can be developed to embellish it.

e. Page 9, last sentence: This sentence has a strange ring and should be re-worded.

f. Page 11: The significance of the VC attack on Pleiku would be more apparent if additional information were provided, i.e.:

Early on 7 February 1965, the VC laid down a mortar barrage on the US advisor's compound and the airfield at Pleiku, killing nine US military personnel, wounding 128 others, and damaging or destroying 22 US aircraft.

The background of the US reprisal could also be expanded to advantage along the following lines:

At the urging of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and with the concurrence of the US Ambassador to the RVN, President Johnson approved a plan for retaliatory action against North Vietnam. In carrying out this plan, US planes struck military targets within the NVN on 7 and 8 February.

Addressing the nation on 7 February, the President announced the withdrawal of US dependents from Vietnam and warned that the United States might continue to take expanded actions in Vietnam.

The VC did not halt their attacks on US installations, and on 10 February bombed and destroyed an enlisted billet in the coastal city of Qui Nhon, killing 23 US soldiers and wounding 22 others. The Joint Chiefs of Staff again urged strong retaliation. On 11 February, US planes launched the heaviest attacks to date against NVN with more than 100 US carrier aircraft striking military targets in NVN.

Note:

The following documents will provide additional background on measures taken as a result of the VC attacks: Msg, JCS 4760 to CINCPAC and CINCSRIKE, 070455Z Feb 65; Msg, JCS 4762 to CINCPAC, 071341Z Feb 65; Msg, JCS 4766 to CINCPAC, 071707Z Feb 65; CINCPAC Command History, 1965, Vol II, p. 451.

g. pages 14-15: The main background of ROLLING THUNDER would be of interest to the reader. This could be provided by adding something along the following lines:

In early February President Johnson had sent to Vietnam a survey party headed by Mr. McGeorge Bundy. Bundy was instructed to talk with Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland and specifically to investigate the feasibility of air attacks on NVN

and the probable value of such attacks in deterring the VC aggression. Bundy, who returned to the United States just after the Pleiku attack, included in his long report a recommendation that the United States launch sustained reprisals using air and naval forces against NVN.

At the direction of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff prepared a program of reprisal actions to be taken against NVN/VC provocations. On 11 February they forwarded this program to the Secretary of Defense. In addition to air strikes against selected targets in NVN they proposed naval bombardment, covert operations, intelligence patrols and cross border operations into Laos. On 13 February President Johnson approved a program of measured and limited air actions against selected military targets in NVN. This program was to be known by the nickname ROLLING THUNDER. Owing to a combination of bad weather and political problems, the first ROLLING THUNDER strike was not flown against NVN until 2 March 1965.

h. Page 15-17: The story of the decision to commit Marine forces to protect US bases would be enhanced if the center section on p. 17 that explains the political instability and consequent weakness of the GVN were presented earlier. General Westmoreland's concern over the safety of his installations would then be more understandable. Too, it would be of interest to the reader to know of Ambassador Taylor's reluctance to see US troops introduced. (See Pentagon Papers, Book IV, for Taylor message of 22 Feb 65.) In connection with JCS recommendations affecting Marine units and their deployment, suggest looking at JCSM-121-65 to SecDef, 18 Feb 65, and JCSM-130-65, to SecDef, 24 Feb 65. For Presidential decision on deployment of Marine units to RVN see Msg, JCS 0736-65 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, 27 Feb 65.

i. Pages 43 and 44: It is not clear from the text whether General Krulak made his objections at the time the deployment to Phu Bai was being considered. Suggest clarification.

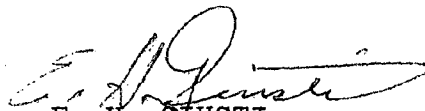
j. Page 44: The 1 April meeting mentioned here is extremely important. Suggest looking at NSAM 328, 6 Apr 65 (available in Pentagon Papers) for a complete run-down on decisions made by President Johnson at this meeting.

k. Pages 54-56: The fire fight of 22 April 1965 was the first combat encounter of the RVN war between United States troops and enemy forces. Recommend emphasizing this even more.

l. Page 92, first par.: It would be desirable to expand a bit on General Westmoreland's 7 June message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Among the significant things he said was that regular NVN Army units had entered South Vietnam. In addition he sketched an alarming picture of increasing enemy capabilities and declining ARVN capabilities. This would tend to lend credence to his call for more US forces. See Msg, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC and JCS, 070335Z Jun 65.

m. Pages 291-292: Naval gunfire operations did not begin until 25 October because of delays in acquiring approval in Washington.

Finally, I would like to say that those of us who reviewed the volume enjoyed it, and consider it an excellent contribution to the already high accomplishments of Marine Corps History.



E. H. GIUSTI  
Chief, Historical Division  
Joint Secretariat

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314



REPLY TO  
ATTN OF: AF/CHO

2 February 1977

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Fact Sheets

TO: Brig Gen E. H. Simmons, USMC  
Director, Marine Corps History and Museums  
HQ U.S. Marine Corps (Code HD)  
Washington, D. C. 20380

Dear Ed:

1. In responding to your request for unclassified information, we have prepared short fact sheets as follows:

a. Subject: North Vietnamese infiltration. Information is taken from DIA Bulletin 135-65, 14 Jul 65 (S), and from RAND study by Weiner, Brom, and Koon, Infiltration of Personnel from North Vietnam, 1959-67 (Rand Memo RM-5760-PR), (S).

b. Subject: NVN Air Force in 1965. Information is taken from USAF Management Summary, Vietnam (dates in 1965); these are based on data from DIA Bulletins.

c. Subject: Expenditure of Ordnance. Information is taken from Msg 25992 (TS), COMUSMACV J-3 to 2nd Air Div and CIF-77, 26/0035Z Jul 65, and from History (S), 2nd Air Div, Jan-Jun 64, p 39.

2. We feel the information in the fact sheets is unclassified, and have obtained clearance for open publication of the fact sheets from Office of Information, Secretary of the Air Force, and from OASD-PA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John W. Huston", is written above the typed name.

JOHN W. HUSTON, Maj Gen, USAF  
Chief, Office of Air Force History

Atch: 3 fact sheets a/s

Office of AF History  
Jan 77

FACT SHEET

NORTH VIETNAMESE INFILTRATION

-- Intelligence staffs during 1964-65 appear to have made high estimates of NVA infiltration; these were later corrected when collecting and reporting techniques were improved.

-- NVA infiltration through 1964 was modest. In June 1965, U.S. officers estimated that infiltration for 1964 was about 8,285, with barely 60 percent confirmed.

-- General Westmoreland eventually placed NVA infiltration for 1965 at about 26,000, including eight North Vietnamese regiments. In addition, Westmoreland claimed 35,000 NVA-VC killed and 6,000 captured during 1965 (See Westmoreland-Sharp Report on the War in Vietnam through 30 June 1968, p. 100).

-- An estimate that nine NVA divisions had infiltrated into South Vietnam by the end of 1965 appears to have been overstated.



Office of AF History  
Jan 1977

FACT SHEET

NVN AIR FORCE IN 1965

-- As of March 1965, NVNAF had 35 MIG-15's and -17's; in April, 41; in early May, 63. All were based at Phuc Yen airfield near Hanoi.

-- The first three IL-28 Beagle bombers arrived at Phuc Yen in early May 1965, and totalled 8 by early June 1965.

-- By October 1965, there were still only 63 MIG-15's and MIG-17's, and eight IL-28's, all at Phuc Yen.

-- Throughout 1965 there were only three jet-capable airfields in North Vietnam.

Office of AF History  
Jan 77

FACT SHEET

Expenditure of Ordnance

-- During 1964-65, MACV rules

- (1) severely curtailed a pilot's choice of alternative targets.
- (2) established certain free-drop zones, and
- (3) required "safe" setting for emergency jettisoning.

-- Many aircraft were required to jettison all ordnance in designated jettison areas before landing for safety reasons; ordnance was not used indiscriminately.

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DECLASSIFIED

17 Nov 1976

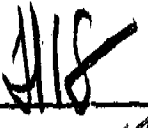
Subj: Vietnam 1965

Comments from:

CMH

1. Noted.
2. Personalized response  
~~required/not~~ required.
3. 2d comment edition to be/  
~~not to be~~ provided.
4. (Over)

Col Hart 

Mr. Shaw 

LtCol Rogers 

Mr. Shulimson                     

DECLASSIFIED



DAMH-HD

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
THE CHIEF OF MILITARY HISTORY AND THE CENTER OF  
MILITARY HISTORY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314

15 NOV 1976

Brigadier General E. H. Simmons  
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums  
Department of the Navy  
Headquarters United States Marine Corps  
Washington, D.C. 20380

Dear Ed:

We have reviewed the draft of U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1965: The Landing and the Buildup and have found it to be accurate and well written. It will undoubtedly become a valuable reference for Army historians as well as the public.

Our comments are inclosed, and I hope they will be useful to you.

With all good wishes, I remain,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "James L. Collins, Jr.", written over a vertical line.

JAMES L. COLLINS, JR.  
Brigadier General, USA  
Chief of Military History

1 Incl  
As stated



Comments

P 11. Footnote describing Hawk missile. The Hawk was originally designed to counter low flying aircraft. Its ability to defend against short-range missiles and rockets may have been designed into the system at a later date. Recommend this footnote be reworded for clarity.

P 35,37. Suggest substituting "used" for "utilized" in these two instances and elsewhere in the manuscript where appropriate.

P 38. Footnote defining TAOR. The reference should be applicable to the period 1965 instead of 1966. If an earlier reference is not available, then suggest a note explaining that the 1966 definition of TAOR was applicable in 1965.

P 41. Mid page, change "enables" to "enable."

P 43. The reasons for COMUSMACV's wanting a Marine battalion at Phu Bai included more than protection for the 8th Radio Relay Unit. According to AMEMB SAIGON 1801452 Mar 65, General Westmoreland also desired the BLT for defense of the airstrip, in that he intended to eventually move helicopters from Da Nang to Phu Bai to reduce airfield congestion at Da Nang. MACV J3 8250, 170747Z Mar 65, presently unavailable at CMH, may well be a better source for this COMUSMACV view. See also p 125, A

Soldier Reports. Recommend inclusion of General Westmoreland's views in the discussion concerning the dispatch of the Marine battalion to Phu Bai.

P 77. Last paragraph. Both the 1965 MACV Command History (pp 104-107) and the Vietnam Studies monograph, Logistic Support, (pp 9-11) provide a more balanced view of the "assumption" of port operations and supply responsibility by the CG, IV MAF. Under the MACV plan, approved by the Secretary of Defense, a Da Nang Support Command (one of several such commands subordinate to the Cam Ranh Bay Depot) was to be established under the logistics command. Eventually the logistics command was to provide common item support for all US Forces in Vietnam. However, CINCPAC interceded and at his direction the Naval Component Commander (CG, III MAF) was given the responsibility for common user items of supply for all US Forces from Chu Lai north (April 1965) and later for the operation of all ports, beaches, and depots in I Corps (July 1965).

P. 93. Recommend substituting the following for the last paragraph and footnote concerning the 1st Cavalry Division:

"In planning to counter the expected Communist offensive in the Highlands, General Westmoreland sought mobile forces that could be moved by aircraft from one trouble spot to another. Ideal for this purpose was the Army's 11th Air Assault Division (Test), a skeletal helicopter

division undergoing final testing and evaluation at Fort Benning, Georgia in the spring of 1965. The decision to activate the test division as part of the Army force structure and to subsequently deploy it to Vietnam required the reorganizing, retraining, and re-equipping of the division in a period of 90 days. Activated as the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) on 1 July 1965, the division was composed of the men and equipment of the air assault division and the 2nd Infantry Division, plus aviators procured from Army units worldwide." \*

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\*As reorganized for deployment to Vietnam, the division's combat units consisted of eight infantry battalions organized into three brigades, an air cavalry squadron, an aerial artillery battalion, three helicopter battalions and three 105 howitzer battalions. The division had over 15,000 men, 1600 vehicles, and 434 organic aircraft.

On 1 July the 1st Cavalry Division (less personnel and equipment) was transferred from Korea to Fort Benning and reorganized using the men and equipment of the 11th Air Assault (Test) and 2nd Infantry Divisions. Concurrently, on 1 July the air assault division was inactivated and the 2nd Infantry Division was transferred to Korea (less personnel and equipment) where it was reorganized as a standard infantry division.

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P 116. Recommend additional coverage of Westmoreland's concern for noncombatant casualties as he was very much interested both before and



after the incident described. Reference: MACV Directive 525.3, 7 Sep 65, Combat Operations, Minimizing Non-Combat Battle Casualties and references listed therein. See also letter, COMUSMACV to General Walt, 14 August 1965, subject not listed but with text concerning this subject.

P 166. F FORCE V SITREP 051800H-061800H states that OPCON of 2/7 Marines remains with "F FORCE V" until 0712004 Nov 65. Recommend clarification in manuscript.

P 183. Why was Henderson relieved? If it was simply routine, the text should be reworded since one can infer that it was because of high casualties.

P 197. Suggest use of "General Westmoreland" instead of "Westmoreland."

P 205. That portion of the paragraph relating to footnote 7 actually occurred chronologically prior to the information relating to footnote 6. Recommend recasting in proper chronological order. Reference 1965 MACV Command History, pp 97-98.

P 271. Recommend deletion of "3d Brigade" in the footnote or expansion of the footnote to include actions of the 1st and 2d Brigade.

References: 1965 MACV Command History, pp 168-170; Vietnam Studies monograph, Airmobility 1961-1971, DA, Wash D.C. 1973, pp 73-83.

FOOTNOTES: Out of order and incomplete, e.g., Chapters 3, 10, and 11.

APPENDIX II: Pages numbered incorrectly, e.g., p 465 followed by pp 456, 457.