

**TOP SECRET***Submitted  
28 Sep 65*A03D32-jeb  
0003A26565

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps  
 To: Chief of Naval Operations (Op-09B94)

Subj: Data on USMC operations in the Republic of Vietnam  
 for OPNAV Operational Histories

Ref: (a) Cdr WELLS (Op-09B94) FONECON to Historical  
 Branch, G-3 Division of 23 Sep 1965  
 (b) OPNAV memo for DistList Op-09A2/rle  
 Ser 319P09 of 1 Jul 1965  
 (c) CMC ltr to CNO (Op-09B94) A03D-jeb of  
 9 Jul 1965

Encl: (1) Data on USMC operations in RVN (TS)

1. In response to the six questions asked in reference (a), and in accordance with references (b) and (c), information regarding U. S. Marine Corps operations in the Republic of Vietnam is submitted as enclosure (1).
2. This letter is declassified upon removal of enclosure (1).

Declassified by the Director of  
 Marine Corps History and Museums  
 in accordance with the provisions  
 of CNO ltr Ser 009D523/232095 of  
 21 Feb 1979

*[Handwritten signature]*

1/29/7

**TOP SECRET**

~~TOP SECRET~~DATA ON USMC OPERATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

1. Question: How many Marines were in RVN prior to the Pleiku incident of February 1965?

Answer: 693 (as of 31 January 1965).

(Source: Marine Corps Command Center Chronology of III MAF Buildup in RVN (TS)).

2. Question: What Marine Corps units were part of Task Groups 76.5 and 76.7 on 7 February 1965?

Answer: TG 76.5 had the Marine Special Landing Force, consisting of BLT 1/9 and HMM-162, embarked; TG 76.7 had BLT 3/9, with a strength of 1,323 personnel, embarked.

(Source: Marine Corps Command Center Backup File (S)).

3. Question: What were the major increases in Marine units and strengths from the Pleiku incident through 31 August?

Answer: 8-16 Feb--1st LAAM Bn (-) landed Da Nang  
17-18 Feb--Co C, 7th Engineer Bn, landed Da Nang  
28 Feb--Total USMC strength in RVN: 1,248

8-14 Mar--9th MEB elements landed Da Nang  
(1/3, 3/9, Brig Arty Grp, Brig Log Spt Grp, HMM-162, NMCB-3)

31 Mar--Total USMC strength in RVN: 5,140

10-16 Apr--More 9th MEB elements landed Da Nang  
(VMFA-531, HQCO, 3d Marines, 2/3 VMCI-1 (-)).

13-15 Apr--3/4 (Rein) landed Phu Bai  
30 Apr--Total USMC strength in RVN: 8,878

3 May--VMO-2 (-) arrived Da Nang  
6 May--HQ, III MAF and HQ, 3d MarDiv (Fwd)  
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7 May--HQCO, 4th Marines, 1/4, 2/4, and 3/12  
(-) (Rein) and NMCB-10 landed Chu Lai

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7 May--3d Recon Bn arrived Da Nang  
 11-12 May--3/3 arrived Chu Lai  
 15-16 May--Elements of MAG-12, MASS-2, and  
 HQ, 30th Naval Const Regt arrived  
 Chu Lai  
 31 May--Total USMC strength in RVN: 15,828

5-7 Jun--H6MS-12 and MABS-12 arrived Chu Lai  
 10-16 Jun--VMA-225 and VMA-311 arrived Chu Lai  
 12 Jun--HMM-161 arrived Phu Bai  
 21-23 Jun--VMA-214 arrived Chu Lai  
 23-25 Jun--3d Serv Bn (-), 3d MT Bn (-), and  
 3d Med Bn (-) arrived Da Nang and  
 Chu Lai  
 30 Jun--Total USMC strength in RVN: 19,530

6-12 Jul--HQBN (-), 3d MarDiv, arrived Da Nang  
 6-8 Jul--BLT 2/7 landed Qui Nhon  
 6-8 Jul--BLT 2/9 landed Da Nang  
 6-8 Jul--HQCO, 9th Marines, landed Da Nang  
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 Phu Bai, and Chu Lai  
 12-17 Jul--3d Tank Bn (-), 3d AT Bn (-), 3d  
 Engr Bn (-), 3d Shore Party Bn (-),  
 1st Autrac Bn (-), 9th MT Bn (-)  
 arrived Da Nang  
 31 Jul--Total USMC strength in RVN: 27,317

7-13 Aug--Co A, 7th Engr Bn arrived Da Nang  
 14-15 Aug--HQ, RLT-7, 1/7 (Rein), 3/11 (-)  
 (Rein) arrived Chu Lai  
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 15-16 Aug--Det 3d FSR arrived Da Nang  
 20 Aug--Det, HQBN, 3d MarDiv arrived Da Nang  
 23-25 Aug--7th Engr Bn (-) and 1st Bridge Co  
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 23 Aug--Rear elements of RLT-7 arrived Chu Lai  
 28-29 Aug--1/1 arrived Da Nang  
 31 Aug--1/3 departed Da Nang  
 31 Aug--Total USMC strength in RVN: 34,046

ENCLOSURE (1)

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(Source: Marine Corps Command Center Chronology of III MAF Buildup in RVN (TS)).

4. Question: What increases subsequent to 31 August 1965 are planned?

<u>Answer:</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>STRENGTH</u>
	1 Sep	MAG-36	1,699
	1 Sep	BLT 3/7	1,600
	When	VMF(AW)-312	206
	Facilities Available	VMA-211	221

(Source: Status of Force report 1Sep65 (S)).

5. Question: Give a sortie summary for air operations through August.

<u>Answer: (a) Fixed-wing:</u>	A-4....4,168
	F-4....2,715
	EF-10B...663
	RF-8A....58
	<u>Total..7,604</u>

<u>(b) Helicopter:</u>	<u>Sorties</u>	<u>Pax</u>	<u>Hours</u>
June	10,980	37,493	5,603
July	18,772	41,975	5,431
August	16,900	32,189	5,591
Total	<u>46,652</u>	<u>111,657</u>	<u>16,625</u>

(Source: Weekly Summaries of Air Operations (S)).

6. Question: Give an analysis of Operation STARLITE.

Answer: (a) The operation was conceived on the initiative of the III MAF. It was an offensive/striking force operation, not a reaction to VC initiative.

(b) The operation was based on good intelligence, gained from U. S. Military, Vietnamese military, and Vietnamese civilian sources. The information supplied by local

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villagers as a result of the USMC civic action program played a significant part in the success of the operation.

(c) The operation was executed with great dispatch and excellent security, resulting in the achievement of total surprise.

(d) The operation was the first major joint/combined operation in which USMC, USN, USA, USAF and RVNAF forces participated and in which amphibious, helicopter-lifted, and ground assault forces were employed simultaneously. In addition, naval gunfire, artillery, close air support, armed helicopters, and fixed-wing transport aircraft were all utilized in an effective and coordinated effort around the clock.

(e) The amphibious/maritime nature of the operation was manifest throughout. The sea provided access to the enemy and served as an anvil against which the Marines hammered enemy elements.

(f) There were indications that the VC in the Da Nang and Chu Lai areas were preparing for offensive action. Operation STARLITE upset their plans/schedule.

(g) USMC casualties totalled 51 killed and 203 wounded; 75-80 percent of the wounds were minor or superficial. On 24 August, when the operation ended, enemy casualties were: 614 killed (by body count), 9 captured, and 42 suspects captured (4 of these wounded). An undetermined number of enemy were sealed in caves, tunnels, and fortified positions as the Van Tuong village complex was overrun. Several sampans loaded with VC fleeing the battle area were sunk by naval gunfire, but no count of these enemy dead was available. CG, FMFPac reported 12 September that captured enemy documents revealed that 1,430 Viet Cong, including a major general, were killed in the operation. This intelligence was evaluated as reliable and this figure is now used as official.

(Sources: AdminO FMFPac 200815Z Aug65 (S); III MAF Special SitReps, Operation STARLITE (S); MACV 250340Z Aug65 (S); FMFPac SitRep #166, 120824Z Sep65 (S)).

ENCLOSURE (1)

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## HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS ROUTING SHEET

HAYMC HQ 335g-CMC (REV. 11-68)

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0003A26565

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## Q-3 DIVISION

ACoFS, G-3 (AO3)

Asst G-3

Admin &amp; Fisc Br (AO3A)

Service Plans Br (AO3B)

Operations Br (AO3H)

Operations Sect

Combat Rgmts Sect

Prog &amp; Org Sect

Training Branch (AO3C)

General Trng Sect

Schools Trng Sect

Planning &amp; Prog Sect

Marksmanship Br (AO3M)

X 9/22 J.C.

Historical Br (AO3D)

Admin Sect

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A - FOR APPROPRIATE ACTION

H - RETURN TO

B - FOR COMPLIANCE

I -

C - PREPARE REPLY FOR SIGNATURE

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(c) CMC ltr to CNO (Op-09B94) A03D-jeb of  
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     3d Med Bn (-) arrived Da Nang and  
     Chu Lai  
 30 Jun--Total USMC strength in RVN: 19,530  
     (D 19,397)  
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(Source: Marine Corps Command Center Chronology  
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3. Question: What increases subsequent to 31 August 1965  
are planned?

<u>Answer:</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>STRENGTH</u>
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	1 Sep	BLT 3/7	1,600

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DATE	UNIT	STRENGTH
Sep	EastPacMab/1stMarDiv (-) (Rein)	8,328
15 Sep	2d LAAM Bn	534
15 Sep	Det 1st FSR	860
When	VMF(AW)-312	206
Facilities	VMA-211	221
Available		

(Source: Status of Force report 1Sep65 (S)).

4. Question: Give a sortie summary for air operations through August.

Answer: (a) Fixed-wing: A-4....4,168  
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Total..7,604

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Answer: (a) The operation was conceived on the initiative of the III MAF. It was an offensive/striking force operation, not a reaction to VC initiative.

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(c) The operation was executed with great dispatch and excellent security, resulting in the achievement of total surprise.

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(e) The amphibious/maritime nature of the operation was manifest throughout. The sea provided access to the enemy and served as an anvil against which the Marines hammered enemy elements.

(f) There were indications that the VC in the Da Nang and Chu Lai areas were preparing for offensive action. Operation STARLITE upset their plans/schedule.

(g) USMC casualties totalled 51 killed and 203 wounded of which 97 required evacuation; other wounds were superficial or minor. The Viet Cong lost 614 killed (by body count), 9 captured, 42 suspects captured (4 of these wounded), and 109 assorted weapons captured. An undetermined number of enemy were sealed in caves, tunnels, and fortified positions as the Van Tuong village complex was overrun. Several sampans loaded with VC fleeing the battle area were sunk by naval gunfire, but no count of these enemy dead is available.

(Sources: AdminO FMFPac 200815Z Aug65 (S); III MAF Special SitReps, Operation STARLITE (S); MACV 250340Z Aug65 (S).

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From: Commandant of the Marine Corps  
To: Chief of Naval Operations (Op-09294)

Subj: Data on USMC operations in the Republic of Vietnam  
for CPNIV Operational Histories

Ref: (a) Cdr WELLS (Op-09294) ROMECON to Historical  
Branch, G-2 Division of 3 Sep 1965  
(b) CPNIV memo for DistList Op-09294/rle  
Ser 319209 of 1 Jul 1965  
(c) RME Itr to CNO (Op-09294) A03932-job of  
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Encl: (1) Data on USMC operations in RVN (TS)

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(Source: Marine Corps Command Center Chronology  
 of III MAF Buildup in RVN (TS)).

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Answer:

DATE	UNIT	STRENGTH
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(c) The operation was executed with great dispatch and excellent security, resulting in the achievement of total surprise.

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**TOP SECRET**DATA ON USMC OPERATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

1. Question: How many Marines were in RVN prior to the Pleiku incident of February 1965?

Answer: 693 (as of 31 January 1965).

(Source: Marine Corps Command Center Chronology of III MAF Buildup in RVN (TS).

2. Question: What were the major increases in Marine units and strengths from the Pleiku incident through 31 August?

Answer: 8-16 Feb--1st LAAM Bn (-) landed Da Nang  
17-18 Feb--Co C, 7th Engineer Bn, landed Da Nang  
28 Feb--Total USMC strength in RVN: 1,248

8-14 Mar--9th MEB elements landed Da Nang  
(1/3, 3/9, Brig Arty Grp, Brig Log Spt Grp, HMM-162, NMCB-3)  
31 Mar--Total USMC strength in RVN: 5,140

10-16 Apr--More 9th MEB elements landed Da Nang  
(VMFA-531, HQCO, 3d Marines, 2/3 VMCJ-1 (-)).

13-15 Apr--3/4 (Rein) landed Phu Bai  
30 Apr--Total USMC strength in RVN: 8,878

3 May--VMO-2 (-) arrived Da Nang  
6 May--HQ, III MAF and HQ, 3d MarDiv (Fwd) arrived Da Nang  
7 May--HQCO, 4th Marines, 1/4, 2/4, and 3/12 (-) (Rein) and NMCB-10 landed Chu Lai  
7 May--3d Recon Bn arrived Da Nang  
15-16 May--Elements of MAG-12, MASS-2, and HQ, 30th Naval Const Regt arrived Chu Lai  
31 May--Total USMC strength in RVN: 15,828

5-7 Jun--HOMS-12 and MADS-12 arrived Chu Lai  
10-16 Jun--VMA-225 and VMA-311 arrived Chu Lai

ENCLOSURE (1)

**TOP SECRET**

**JP SECRET**

12 Jun--HMM-161 arrived Phu Bai  
 21-23 Jun--VMA-214 arrived Chu Lai  
 23-25 Jun--3d Serv Bn (-), 3d MT Bn (-), and  
 3d Med Bn (-) arrived Da Nang and  
 Chu Lai  
 30 Jun--Total USMC strength in RVN: 19,530  
 (D 19,397)  
 6-12 Jul--HQBN (-), 3d MarDiv, arrived Da Nang  
 6-8 Jul--BLT 2/7 landed Qui Nhon  
 6-8 Jul--BLT 2/9 landed Da Nang  
 6-8 Jul--HQCC, 9th Marines, landed Da Nang  
 10 Jul--HQ, MAG-11, landed Da Nang  
 10 Jul--VMFA-542 landed Da Nang  
 10 Jul--NMCE-9 landed Da Nang  
 12-18 Jul--12th Marines (-) arrived Da Nang,  
 Phu Bai, and Chu Lai  
 12-17 Jul--3d Tank Bn (-), 3d AT Bn (-), 3d  
 Engr. Bn (-), 3d Shore Party Bn (-),  
 1st Amtrac Bn (-), 9th MT Bn (-)  
 arrived Da Nang.  
 31 Jul--Total USMC strength in RVN: 27,317  
 (D 27,814)  
 7-13 Aug--Co A, 7th Engr. Bn arrived Da Nang  
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 20 Aug--Det, HQBN, 3d MarDiv arrived Da Nang  
 23-25 Aug--7th Engr. Bn (-) and 1st Bridge Co  
 (-), arrived Da Nang  
 23 Aug--Rear elements of RLT-7 arrived Chu Lai  
 28-29 Aug--1/1 arrived Da Nang  
 31 Aug--1/3 departed Da Nang  
 31 Aug--Total USMC strength in RVN: 34,046.

(Source: Marine Corps Command Center Chronology  
of III MAF Buildup in RVN (TS)).

3. Question: What increases subsequent to 31 August 1965  
are planned?

Answer:

DATE	UNIT	STRENGTH
1 Sep	MAG-36	1,699
1 Sep	BLT 3/7	1,600

ENCLOSURE (1)

**TOP SECRET**

**TOP SECRET**

DATE	UNIT	STRENGTH
Sep	East Pac Nab/1st Mar Div (-) (Rein)	3,328
15 Sep	2d LAAW Bn	534
15 Sep	Det 1st FSR	260
When	VMF(AW)-312	206
Facilities	VMA-211	221
Available		

(Source: Status of Force report 1 Sep 65 (S)).

4. Question: Give a sortie summary for air operations through August.

Answer: (a) Fixed-wing: A-4....4,168  
F-4....2,715  
EF-10B...663  
RF-8A....58  
  
Total..7,604

(b) Helicopter:	Sorties	Fax	Hours
June	10,980	37,493	5,603
July	18,772	41,975	5,431
August	16,900	32,189	5,591
Total	46,652	111,657	15,625

(Source: Weekly Summaries of Air Operations (S)).

5. Question: Give an analysis of Operation STARLITE.

Answer: (a) The operation was conceived on the initiative of the III MAF. It was an offensive/striking force operation, not a reaction to VC initiative.

(b) The operation was based on good intelligence, gained from U. S. military, Vietnamese military, and Vietnamese civilian sources. The information supplied by local villagers as a result of the USMC civic action program played a significant part in the success of the operation.

ENCLOSURE (1)

**TOP SECRET**

**TOP SECRET**

(c) The operation was executed with great dispatch and excellent security, resulting in the achievement of total surprise.

(d) The operation was the first major joint/combined operation in which USMC, USN, USA, USAF and RVNAF forces participated and in which amphibious, helicopter-lifted, and ground assault forces were employed simultaneously. In addition, naval gunfire, artillery, close air support, armed helicopters, and fixed-wing transport aircraft were all utilized in an effective and coordinated effort around the clock.

(e) The amphibious/maritime nature of the operation was manifest throughout. The sea provided access to the enemy and served as an anvil against which the Marines hammered enemy elements.

(f) There were indications that the VC in the Da Nang and Chu Lai areas were preparing for offensive action. Operation STARLITE upset their plans/schedule.

(g) USMC casualties totalled 51 killed and 203 wounded of which 97 required evacuation; other wounds were superficial or minor. The Viet Cong lost 614 killed (by body count), 9 captured, 42 suspects captured (4 of these wounded), and 109 assorted weapons captured. An undetermined number of enemy were sealed in caves, tunnels, and fortified positions as the Van Tuong village complex was overrun. Several sampans loaded with VC fleeing the battle area were sunk by naval gunfire, but no count of these enemy dead is available.

(Sources: AdminG FMFPac 200315Z Aug65 (S); III MAF Special SitReps, Operation STARLITE (S); MACV 250340Z Aug65 (S).

**TOP SECRET**

**TOP SECRET**

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20380

IN REPLY REFER TO

A03D32-jeb  
0003A26565

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps  
To: Chief of Naval Operations (Op-09B94)

Subj: Data on USMC operations in the Republic of Vietnam  
for OPNAV Operational Histories

Ref: (a) Cdr WELLS (OP-09B94) FONECON to Historical  
Branch, G-3 Division of ~~31 Sep 1965~~ ~~23 Sep 1965~~  
(b) OPNAV memo for DistList Op-09A2/rle  
Ser 319P09 of 1 Jul 1965  
(c) CMC ltr to CNO (Op-09B94) A03D-jeb of  
9 Jul 1965

Encl: (1) Data on USMC operations in RVN (TS)

1. In response to the ~~five~~ questions asked in reference (a) ~~etc.~~,  
and in accordance with references (b) and (c), information  
regarding U. S. Marine Corps operations in the Republic of  
Vietnam is submitted as enclosure (1).

2. This letter is declassified upon removal of enclosure (1).

**TOP SECRET**

~~SECRET~~*Insert after 1.*

Add:

*2.* ~~1.~~ Question: What Marine Corps units were part of Task Groups 76.5 and 76.7 on 7 February 1965?

Answer: TG 76.5 had the Marine Special Landing Force, consisting of BLT 1/9 and HMM-162, embarked; TG 76.7 had BLT 3/9, with a strength of 1,323 personnel, embarked.

(Source: Marine Corps Command Center Backup File (S)).

~~SECRET~~

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Insert 2

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ENCLOSURE (1)

**TOP SECRET**

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(Source: Marine Corps Command Center Chronology  
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ENCLOSURE (1)  
~~TOP SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Delete paragraph (g), page 4; replace with the following:

(g) USMC casualties totalled 51 killed and 203 wounded; 75-80 percent of the wounded were minor or superficial. On 24 August, when the operation ended, enemy casualties were: 614 killed (by body count), 9 and captured, 142 suspects captured (4 of these wounded). An undetermined number of enemy were sealed in caves, tunnels, and fortified positions as the Van Tuong village complex was overrun. Several sampans loaded with VC fleeing the battle area were sunk by naval gunfire, but no count of these enemy dead was available. CGFMF Pac reported 12 September that captured enemy documents revealed that 1,430 Viet Cong, including a major general, were killed in the operation. This intelligence was evaluated as reliable and this figure is now used as official.

(Sources: Admin0 FMFPac 200815Z Aug65 (S); III MAF Special SitReps, Operation STARLITE (S); MACV 250340Z Aug65 (S); FMFPac SitRep #166, 120824Z Sep65 (S).)

~~SECRET~~

**TOP SECRET**

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