

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 CMO ltr Ser 009D323/232095 of
21 Feb 1979

[Signature] 11/2/97

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRETDATA 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 VMCF-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

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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: 15,823

5-7 Jun--H&MS-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
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 10 Jul--HQ, MAG-11, landed Da Nang
 10 Jul--VMFA-542 landed Da Nang
 10 Jul--NMCB-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

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
 15-16 Aug--3/9 (Rein) arrived Da Nang
 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
 (-), 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

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 | | |
| | Avsailable | VMA-211 | 221 |

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

5. 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 |
| <u>Total..</u> | <u>7,604</u> |

| (b) Helicopter: | <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 |
| <u>Total</u> | <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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NAVHC HQ 335g-CMC (REV. 11-63)

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MILITARY SECY TO CMC

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DC/S (R&D)

DC/S (AIR)

SECY OF GEN STAFF

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G-2

G-3

G-4

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ACTION:

(For additional remarks attach plain paper)

ROUTING - Use numbers to show order of routing

OPERATION CODE

X - ORIGINATOR OR OFFICE
AFFIXING ROUTING SHEET

F - FOR CONCURRENCE

A - FOR APPROPRIATE ACTION

G - FOR INFORMATION

B - FOR COMPLIANCE

N - RETURN TO

C - PREPARE REPLY FOR SIGNATURE

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A03D32-jeb

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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 (CP-09B94) FONECON to Historical
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(b) OPNAV memo for DistList Op-09A2/rle
Ser 319P09 of 1 Jul 1965
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(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:

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- 17-18 Feb--Co C, 7th Engineer Bn, landed Da Nang
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- 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
CD 17,567
- 5-7 Jun--H&MS-12 and MABS-12 arrived Chu Lai
- 10-16 Jun--VMA-225 and VMA-311 arrived Chu Lai

ENCLOSURE (1)

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12 Jun--HMM-161 arrived Phu Bai
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 30 Jun--Total USMC strength in RVN: 19,530
 (D) 19,397
 6-12 Jul--HQBN (-), 3d MarDiv, arrived Da Nang
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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?

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| | (-) (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

| (b) Helicopter: | <u>Sorties</u> | <u>Pax</u> | <u>Hours</u> |
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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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(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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0003A26565

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

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

Ref: (a) Cdr WELLS (Op-09294) COMSEC to Historical
Branch, G-2 Division of 3 Sep 1965
(b) OPNAV memo for DistList Op-09A2/rle
Ser 319209 of 1 Jul 1965
(c) SEC ltr to CNO (Op-09294) A030-job of
9 Jul 1965

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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 VMCFJ-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--HMS-12 and MADS-12 arrived Chu Lai
10-16 Jun--VMA-225 and VMA-311 arrived Chu Lai

ENCLOSURE (1)

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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--HQCO, 9th Marines, landed Da Nang
 10 Jul--HQ, MAG-11, landed Da Nang
 10 Jul--VMFA-542 landed Da Nang
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 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) 27,819
 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
 15-16 Aug--3/9 (Rein) arrived Da Nang
 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
 (-), 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?

| <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 |

ENCLOSURE (1)

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| <u>DATE</u> | <u>UNIT</u> | <u>STRENGTH</u> |
|-------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Sep | EastPacMab/1stMarDiv | |
| | (-) (Rein) | 9,328 |
| 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
 F-4....2,715
 EF-10B...663
 RF-8A.....58
Total..7,604

| (b) Helicopter: | <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 | 46,652 | 111,657 | 16,625 |

(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)

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

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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 ~~3 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 *23 Sep 1965*

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

1. In response to the ^{five} ~~five~~ questions asked in reference (a) ~~and~~,
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).

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*SECRET**Insert after 1.*

Add:

2. ~~11~~

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 (8)).

SECRET

TOP SECRETDATA 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).

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

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ENCLOSURE (1)

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(Source: Marine Corps Command Center Chronology
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ENCLOSURE (1)
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ENCLOSURE (1)
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Delete paragraph (g), page 4; replace with the following:

(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. CGFMFPac reported 12 September that captured enemy documents revealed ~~reported~~ 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).)

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