

MASS-3

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MARINE AIR SUPPORT SQUADRON 3
Marine Air Control Group 18
1st Marine Aircraft Wing
FPO San Francisco, California 96602

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From: Commanding Officer
To: Commanding Officer, Marine Air Control Group 18
Subj: Command Chronology (U)
Ref: (a) WgO 5750.1G
(b) GruO 5750.1

Encl: (1) Command Chronology, MASS 3, 1 - 29 February 1968

1. In accordance with references (a) and (b), the MASS 3 command chronology for February 1968 is submitted as enclosure (1).
2. This letter becomes unclassified upon removal of enclosure (1).

G. B. Townsend Jr.
G.B. TOWNSEND, Jr.
By Direction

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COMMAND CHRONOLOGY (U)
MARINE AIR SUPPORT SQUADRON 3
1 - 29 February 1968
Chu Lai, RVN

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PART II - SIGNIFICANT HIGHLIGHTS

1. (3) The squadron continued to operate air support control facilities at Chu Lai, Da Nang and Khe Sanh in support of free world forces. The Sanh was the center of interest and activity during the month where the ASRT and DASC had been emplaced in January. Prior to 5 February the weather was generally good at Khe Sanh and the DASC usually had available up to seven FAC's; both airborne and ground. A routine soon developed as operations continued. During daylight hours three Air Force and two Marine TAC (A) were usually on the scene and were kept supplied with fixed wing aircraft using both A/F and Marine sources. In addition an A/F ABCCC was always available working directly with the DASC. The ABCCC was utilized for unusual or complicated situations and resulted in excellent coordination. Early in the month the communication section that had been attached from 1st MAF installed a switchboard which primarily served the DASC but also tied all wing units at Khe Sanh together. Wire laying parties were kept busy as the numerous incoming artillery, rocket and mortar rounds continued to knock out wire circuits.

Due to the continually increasing enemy pressure, defenses about the DASC, which is situated just 75 meters behind the perimeter, were planned and developed. Increased sandbagging, wire and fighting holes were included.

On the night of 6 February, the hills (861, 881S) came under ground attack. A Spooky aircraft, TPQ-10 strikes and artillery were used to repulse the enemy. Immediately thereafter an attack on Lang Vei, just prior to midnight, commenced and by 0300 the outpost had been over run. The NVA used armor for the first time (PT-76 amphibious tanks). Later in the week the hills again came under ground attacks which were repulsed employing all available supporting arms.

During the early part of the month the DASC worked directly with the Air Force ABCCC. The ABCCC frequently passed targets to the DASC which had been detected by A/F recon planes employing various sensor systems. The time from detection to reporting to the DASC was usually about 15 minutes. These targets were considered very valid and Air Force flights of four to eight aircraft were passed to the DASC by the ABCCC for ASRT control. As February advanced the 26th Marines began to generate some 40 - 50 high priority targets of their own, and soon there were more targets than the ASRT could handle. After a conference with the Fire Support Coordinator it was decided that 26th Marines' targets would have priority and that only urgent targets passed by the ABCCC would come before the 26th's targets. This appeared to straighten out the difficulty and no further problems in this respect occurred.

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The ASRT routine at night called for two Marine flights and three Air Force flights for a total of five each hour. In the event of a ground attack, all ABOCC assets would be made available. On 18 February, in a 24 hour period, ASRT B controlled 99 missions involving over 275 aircraft. 486 tons of ordnance were delivered on 105 targets for a new MASS 3 record. At the peak of activity, the ASRT was controlling six to seven flights per hour.

During the month the ASRT antenna radome received fragmentation damage on three occasions. However, the set was knocked off the air only once when a 122 mm rocket landed about 7 meters away. The set was operational 20 minutes later.

On 21 February a mortar round landing near the ASRT damaged the MASS 3 M-35 2½ ton truck and the PU-344 generator powering the ASRT. A quick repair was made to the generator radiator and the ASRT was operating 30 minutes later. The truck required more extensive repairs however, and at the end of the month was still deadlined.

Three MASS 3 personnel were wounded by mortar/rocket fragments during the month. In each case the wounds were not serious but all three were evacuated.

The period 4 - 25 Feb was marked by low ceilings, continuous fog and overcast. A/F C-130 aircraft started making paradrops of supplies. These drops were not always successful due to the weather and some supplies were not being recovered. The A/F then asked for ASRT assistance and on 20 February the ASRT controlled 14 paradrop missions which were successful. In addition the ASRT provided GCA assistance to two C-123's bringing them to an uneventful landing. The only disadvantage in the operation was that the ASRT was diverted from its primary mission for a period of four hours. During the next few days the GCA was repaired and the weather slightly improved so that the ASRT was not required to provide this service for the remainder of the month.

As the month progressed it began to be suspected that CAS strikes using 250 lb. bombs and napalm were not being as effective as desired. The ARVN ranger Bn. commander was contacted and he pointed out a particular enemy bunker area about 900 meters out that had received TPQ-10 strikes with little effect. TADC was then asked to provide bombs of at least 750 lb. or heavier with delay fuzes set at .025 sec. A TPQ drop was made on the bunker target, and the ARVN listening post, which was sent out immediately after, reported excellent results and that we had finally begun to crack or cave in these bunkers. TADC was then requested to schedule all daytime TPQ aircraft with bombs of 750 lb. or more and armed with delay fuzes. By the end of the month all TPQ drops were requested with this ordnance. Most TPQ targets in the Khe Sanh area are well dug in and bunkered artillery, rocket and mortar positions and the larger bombs with delay

ENCLOSURE (1)

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fuzes should greatly increase the effectiveness of TPQ strikes.

The control of helicopters presented a difficult problem. Upon the arrival of the DASC the 26th Marines had a direct unit support package of two UH-1H, two OH-46, and two UH-34 aircraft, the primary mission being resupply and medevac for the hill positions. The 26th Marines ALO was coordinating these missions but the increasing tempo of operations and increased enemy fire had begun to reduce effectiveness of control due to limited communication facilities and personnel. Accordingly the DASC asked for and assumed helicopter control responsibility. The Huey gunships had begun to lose effectiveness in the fire suppression role as enemy activity increased. Helicopters landing on the hill positions were receiving mortar, automatic and small arms fire. In addition entry and exit routes were covered by .50 cal. MG fire. The DASC therefore assigned airborne FAC's and fixed wing aircraft to assist in fire suppression and with this aid the first successful resupply of hill 881 S in six days was accomplished.

Meanwhile, the NVA had moved in close to the perimeter and airfield operations became increasingly hazardous. Losses of helicopters staying overnight at Khe Sanh began to increase and the practice was abandoned. Refueling, loading and unloading of both fixed wing and helicopter aircraft came under fire. A fire suppression plan was developed by 1st MAW and the DASC assisted in coordination of fixed wing, helicopter and TAC(A) aircraft. Upon execution it appears that the threat is somewhat diminished. It is noted that the most effective fire suppressor employed appears to be chemical smoke.

On 25 February the DASC bunker withstood a direct hit from a 122 mm point detonating rocket. This event encouraged a further increase in layers of sandbags and other material on the bunker.

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PART III - SIGNIFICANT EVENTS1. (C) Air operations. Air support operations are summarized below:DASC

	<u>Chu Lai</u>	<u>Da Nang</u>	<u>Khe Sanh</u>
Fixed-wing missions controlled			
USMC	450	747	632
A/F	0	0	154
Navy	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>65</u>
Sub Total	450	747	851

Fixed-wing missions total: 2048

Helo missions controlled

Helo	84	755	38
Med-Evac	<u>0</u>	<u>583</u>	<u>21</u>
Sub Total	84	1338	59

Helo missions total: 1481

ASRT

	<u>ALFA</u>	<u>BRAVO</u>	<u>CHARLIE</u>
Number of missions			
USMC	375	1117	344
A/F	0	615	0
Navy	<u>0</u>	<u>390</u>	<u>0</u>
Sub Total	375	2122	344

ASRT missions total: 2841

Sorties

USMC	401	1429	354
A/F	0	1029	0
Navy	<u>2</u>	<u>1028</u>	<u>0</u>
Sub Total	403	3486	354

ASRT sorties total: 4243

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	<u>ALFA</u>	<u>BRAVO</u>	<u>CHARLIE</u>
Targets hit			
USMC	793	1191	657
A/F	0	648	0
Navy	<u>0</u>	<u>123</u>	<u>0</u>
Sub Total	793	2262	657

ASRT targets hit total: 3712

Ordnance delivered (tons)

USMC	836.49	4457.77	767.13
A/F	0	2227.91	0
Navy	<u>0</u>	<u>1565.10</u>	<u>0</u>
Sub Total	836.49	8251.10	767.13

ASRT total ordnance delivered: 9854.72

2. (C) VIP Visits. The Khe Sanh detachment was visited by Air Force General MCMYER and 1st MAW CG Maj. General ANDERSON during February.

3. (U) Civic action. During February MASS 3 MEDCAP treated 145 adults and 471 children. Three individuals were taken to 1st Hospital Co. for further treatment. On 7 Feb. the MEDCAP began operation in the recently completed Trung Toan dispensary. MASS 3 CAO met with the Ky Ha village chief and the Trung Toan hamlet chief to discuss the construction of a public shower. On 12 Feb. the children of Trung Toan hamlet were given a party and on 24 Feb. 35 children were invited to the MASS 3 recreation building for movies, games and refreshments.

C. S. TOWNSEND, Jr.

By direction

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