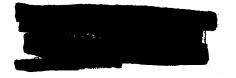
HEADQUARTERS
Marine Aircraft Group 12
1st Marine Aircraft Wing
Fleet Marine Force, Pacific
FPO San Francisco 96601



3:JLS:ajw 5750 14 January 1966

From: Commanding Officer

To: Commanding General, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (Attn: G-3)

Subj: Command Chronology

Ref: (a) WgO 5750.1B

Encl: (1) Command Chronology for the month of December 1965

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is submitted.

2. This letter is down graded to UNCLASSIFIED upon the removal of enclosure (1).

REX WILSON

Acting



COPY NO / OF 3 COPIES





## MARINE AIRCRAFT

GROUP 12

CHU LAI REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

COMMAND CHRONOLOGY

1 DECEMBER 1965 - 31 DECEMBER 1965

MAG-12 SACA	COPY#
67-66	9





ORGANIZATIONAL DATA SHEET

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 12





COMMANDING OFFICER AND STAFF:

## COMMANDING OFFICER

COLONEL Leslie E. BROWN

## EXECUTIVE OFFICER

LIEUTENANT COLONEL Rex WILSON

## ADJUTANT

CAPTAIN ROY L. CRANE

S-1

MAJOR Speed F. SHEA

Ş-2

CAPTAIN Earl E. BROWN
1 December - 6 December 1965

CAPTAIN John A. ROOKE
7 December - 31 December 1965

S-3

LIEUTENANT COLONEL William J. WEBSTER

S-4

LIEUTENANT COLONEL Bernard J. STENDER

## MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 211

#### COMMANDING OFFICER

MAJOR William E. GARMAN

1 December - 27 December 1965

LIEUTENANT COLONEL John W. KIRKLAND 28 December - 31 December 1965

## EXECUTIVE OFFICER

MAJOR Richard E. HAWES, Jr.

1





 $S_{-J_{i}}$ 

CAPTAIN Brow P. L. MILLER

8.2

SECOND LIBUTENANT John S. BOARDMAN

 $S_{m-1}$ 

MAJOR John J. McCARTHY

S-L

CAPTAIN Robert W. CASPOLE

MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 214

COMMANDING OFFICER

LIEUTENANT COLONEL Keith O'KEEFE

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

MAJOR Jerome T. HAGEN

S-1

FIRST LIEUTENANT Hugh MITCHELL

S-2

CAPTAIN Clarence F. CRICLER

S**-3** 

MAJOR Charles A. CAREY

S-4

CAPTAIN Darrell E. BAKER

MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 223

15 - 31 December 1965

COMMANDING OFFICER

LIEUTENANT COLONEL Alexander WILSON

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

MAJOR George M. LAWRENCE, Jr.





5-1

CAPTAIN Gambes Ma LIVELY

8...

FIRST LAPSUEEMANN Gary E. SNYDER

9...3

MAJOR Arthur R. ANDERSON

S-L

GAPMAIN Donald F. CROWE

MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 224

COMMANDING OFFICER

LIEUTEMANT COLONEL Thomas E. MULVIHILL

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

MAJR George W. WARD

S-<u>1</u>

CAPTAIN Edward H. LONEY

3-2

FIRST LIEUTENANT Barry A. RUDACILLE

S-3

MAJOR Hugh N. LEVIN

S-4

CAPTAIN Michael J. RIPLEY

MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 311

1 - 14 December 1965

COMMANDING OFFICER

LIEUTENANT COLONEL Jack W. HARRIS

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

MAJOR Arthur S. OHLGREN

3





5-1

CAPTAIN Donald C. WATKINS

S-2

CAPTAIN Donald M. STONE

S-3

MAJOR Donald L. ROWE

S-4

CAPTAIN George C. PSAROS

## MARINE AIR BASE SQUADRON 12

COMMANDING OFFICER

MAJOR Jack W. PARCHEN

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

MAJOR Robert L. TALBERT

BASE SERVICE OFFICER

MAJOR Arthur A. NELBACH

BASE OPERATIONS OFFICER

MAJOR John C. ARCHBOLD

## HEADQUARTERS AND MAINTENANCE SQUADRON 12

#### COMMANDING OFFICER

LIEUTENANT COLONEL John W. KIRKLAND 1 December - 27 December 1965

> MAJOR William E. GARMAN 28 December - 31 December 1965

> > EXECUTIVE OFFICER

CAPTAIN Richard L. THOMPSON

MAINTENANCE OFFICER

MAJOR Julius B. PIERCE

4





## ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

## FIRST LIEUTENANT James D. DAVENPORT

# (C) 2. MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 12, CHU LAI AIRFIELD, RVN., 1-31 December 1965

## 3. AVERAGE MONTHLY STRENGTH:

,	USMC Officers	USMC Enlisted	USN Officers	USN Enlisted
VMA-211	30	178	1	2
4WV-577	27	179	1	0
VMA-223	29	<b>17</b> 9	1	2
VMA-224	26	183	1	0
MABS-12	25	571	3	20
H&MS-12	42	379	0	0
TOTAL MAG-12	179	1669	7	24

## (U)4. IMPORTANT VISITORS TO THE COMMAND:

Lieutenant General Victor H. KRULAK	7 Dec 65
Vice Admiral G. R. Donahoe	9 Dec 65
Mr. BALDWIN, Under Secretary of the Navy	10 Dec 65
Senator Henry M. JACKSON (D-WASH.)	11 Dec 65
Mr. Hugh O'BRIAN	12 Dec 65
Rear Admiral Paul E. HARTMAN, COMFAIRWESTPAC	16 Dec 65
Mr. Claude CALLEGARY, National Commander, Disabled War Veterans	17 Dec 65
Congressman Joseph Y. RESNICK (N.Y.)	20 Dec 65
Brigadier General ENGLISH	23 Dec 65
Rear Admiral James W. KELLEY, Chief of Chaplins	24 Dec 65
Cardinal SPELLMAN	25 Dec 65
Bob HOPE Show	29 Dec 65





NARRATIVE SUMMARY





- (C) December was another month when changing weather conditions curtailed flight operations. Periods of heavy rain and/or excessive crosswinds held the Group's Ah's on the ground for three (3) complete days with another five (5) days limited to night TPQ-10 missions being launched.
- (S) Operation "HARVEST MOON", 8-19 December, was the only major operation MAG-12 was involved in during the month. "HARVEST MOON" was supported by 339 sorties with an ordnance expenditure of 196,9 tons. (See Appendix I, After Action Report.) (S)
- (C) On 15 December, the first rotation of an entire squadron from Chu Lai to Iwakuni was accomplished. VMA-223 simultaneously arrived at Chu Lai while VMA-311 launched for Iwakuni. This was the first of the out-of-country squadron rotations. The changeover went very smoothly, with no disruption of daily flight operations. VMA-223 kept the tradition of combat sorties the first day at Chu Lai, by launching their first aircraft only a few hours after their arrival.
- (S) During Operation "HARVEST MOON", VMA-224 set several new records within MAG-12. The squadron launched 25 scrambles and delivered a total of 40 tons of ordnance in a single day. They also tied the record for number of sorties launched in a single day with a total of 36.
- (C) With the advent of Tropical Huts at Chu Lai, there has been a definite improvement in living and working spaces. Construction of the first hut commenced on 20 December with a total of six (6) being completed by 1 January. Additional huts are under construction at this time.
  - (C) In the early evening of 29 December, MAG-12 lost its first Marine Aviator as a result of enemy fire. First Lieutenant Thomas F. ELDRIDGE, VMA-211, was hit by ground fire while making a napalm drop approximately 35NM south of Chu Lai. Lieutenant ELDRIDGE attempted to return to Chu Lai, however, the aircraft crashed 15NM south of the runway. There was no evidence that he survived the crash. The Air Force controller submitted a recommendation for a Navy Cross (See Appendix II). (U)
- (C) The entire month of December represented a typical example of the Crachin weather in Vietnam. Light to heavy rains and light to almost gale force winds, with heavy cloud layer from 500-8000 feet, were common occurrences at Chu Lai. With an almost daily appearance of one of these atmospheric conditions, and often all three at once, construction, maintenance and the normal running of the airfield required a major effort on the part of personnel involved. This weather, combined with the second month of operation from only 4000 feet of good runway, and the almost daily change of taxiway and useable runway sections, again proved that MAG-12 personnel have the "can do" spirit that counts when it is needed. Despite the weather, working conditions and daily changes, the necessary work was done, improvements were made, and the daily routine of both air and ground operations were successfully accomplished.





SIGNIFICANT EVENTS





- (c) 1. PERSONNEL, the reassignment of pursonnel between the attack squadrons continued in December to 50% completion of its final goal. The final phase will be complete by the middle of January. At this time, the squadrons can concentrate on welding a firm, hard unit, without the constant interruption of reorganization. As of this time the reassignment program has progressed very smoothly with a minimum loss of efficiency among squadrons.
- (C) 2. AWARDS. The following awards were recommended by MAG-12 and forwarded on to higher authority:

SILVER STAR	l
DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS	1
NAVY/MARINE CORPS MEDAL	4
BRONZE STAR	2
AIR MEDAL	66
NAVY COMMENDATION MEDAL	7

The following awards were received and presented to MAG-12 personnel:

SECRE	$\Gamma\Lambda R\mathbf{Y}$	OF	NAVY	ACHEIVEMENT	$\Lambda W \Lambda R D$		1
NAVY (	COMME	ND/	MOITA	MEDAL			1

- 3. CASUALTIES. The only casualty of the month was First Lieutenant Thomas F. ELDRIDGE, the first Marine Aviator from MAG-12 to lose his life to enemy fire in Vietnam. On the evening of 29 December, Lieutenant ELDRIDGE flying as the section leader on a helo escort mission, was called upon to place napalm on a trio of .50 caliber automatic weapons which were laying intense fire on the helicopters. Flying through the automatic weapons fire, he hit his target but in so doing received numerous hits on his aircraft and through his legs. The attack occurred approximately 35 miles south of Chu Lai, however Lieutenant ELDRIDGE managed to bring his aircraft to within 13 miles of the airfield before he crashed. There was nothing to indicate that he ejected prior to impact. Time of impact was 1833H. Captain LOGGINS, Forward Air Controller, Advisory Team 2, Quang Ngai, forwarded a proposed citation for the Navy Gross for Lieutenant ELDRIDGE. (See Appendix II.) (U)
- (C)4. CIVIC ACTION. Captain TICH, ARVN, the local Province Chief was contacted by the Group Civil Affairs Officer relative to the desirability of MAG-12 sponsoring a high school in the local area. All parties were enthusiastically for such a project and the Group is forging ahead with initial plans.

#### (C)5. INTELLIGENCE/COUNTERINTELLIGENCE

a. On 5 December, the first instance of mortars being used against helicopters was revealed during the debrief of a helicopter escort mission. Three (3) airburst rounds were observed in the vicinity of the helicopters, however, no hits were made. The burst was dog-bone shaped, approximately 10 feet wide and black in color (believed to be 60mm). Also in the early part of December, the first reported use of .50 caliber machine guns against our aircraft was





use of these weapons was noted.

- (C) b. The 7th Counterintelligence Team, under the command of Captain Grant Lo YENERALL, was extremely active in the local area due to reported buildup of Viet Cong concentrations. Twenty-four (24) captives were interrogated, eight (8) were forwarded to DaNang, six (6) to Quang Ngai, seven (7) were released and three (3) are still being interrogated.
- (S) 6. AIR OPERATIONS. (See After Action Report on Operation "HARVEST MOON", Appendix I.)
- (C) MAG-12 squadrons expended the following ordnance:

Bembs	4 , 207
Rockets	609 Aero &D, LAU3 and LAU 10
Napalm	304 tanks
20M	46.165 rounds
JATO	

The MOREST unit trapped 567 Ah aircraft. In addition to the two (2) MOREST units, the planning and surveying for installation of the CE-1 Mod 3 catapult was completed. When the northern half of the runway is torn up to lay a new base, it is planned that the catapult will be installed between the 1000 and 6000 foot marks of runway 32. With the completion of this installation, much of the danger of crosswind takeoff will be alleviated.

MATCU 67 conducted 6,848 air operations and 469 GCA's. The CPN-4 and TPN-8 radar were both flight checked as satisfactory for full certification.

### 7. LOGISTICS

- (C) a. Ordnance received totaled 1,975 long tons of Class V(A) munitions, by LST and 24 tons by air.
- (C) b. For the third month, Air Freight again increased the volume of traffic.

Fassengers	9.677
Mail	731.582 tons
Gargo	1.643.198 tons
Logistics flights	

(C) c. MAG-12 messes served 48% "A" rations and 52% "B" rations during the month.

#### 8. MOTOR TRANSPORT

(C) a. The Cerlist vehicles continue to be a problem. Even with the invaluable assistance rendered by the FMFPac team who visited in November, there are still thirteen (13) Cerlists deadlined. Only two (2) starters were received in December, bringing two (2) vehicles out of deadline.





(C) b. The receipt of 20 M3dAl jeeps on 27 December lowered the transportation problem to the level of haring almost acceptable.

## 9. ENGINEERING

- (C) a. From 1 to 10 December, construction of the Officers Mess/Lounge continued with the addition of the patio (See Appendix III and IV). The completed building measures 16 X 96 feet, with a 16 X 32 foot patio at the north end and a 16 X 48 foot galley and serving area abutting to the west. A pot cleaning shed and elevated water tank were included in the construction. A tropical but was constructed to the north for stewards quarters. Interior decoration of the Mess/Lounge includes straw mat shutters, louvered partitions, and asserted wood carvings. Tables and cupboards were built and installed in the galley. On 9 December, final clean up of the Mess area and assembly of tables and chairs for the Lounge/Patio was completed. A grand opening was held on 10 December with Charcoal broiled steaks as the entree. On 18 December, the Officers Mess/Lounge was renovated by installing straw matting on the inside Lower walls to keep out rain and wind.
- (C) b. Chu hai Chapel-by-the-Sea was completed on the night of 23 December 1965. This fact, however, requires an explanation of background events. From May 1965, when Marine Aircraft Group 12 landed at Chu Lai, through December 1965, religious services were held in a "Chapel" consisting of one inadequate CF tent. In October 1965, negotiations were conducted with a local Vietnamese contractor to build a Chapel, of native design, consisting of bamboo and thatch materials. Planning with the Vietnamese culminated in a contract to construct a Chapel to be completed by 25 November 1965. Mr. BINH, the Vietnamese contractor, began assembling material preparatory to commencing construction work when he unexpectedly ran afoul of local Popular Forces and political activity, and was forced to suspend operations. Renewed negotiations and efforts to obtain clearance for Vietnamese workers finally and conclutely collapsed on 13 December 1965. At that time the decision was made to "Dowled a Chapel by Christmas." The morale boosting effect of having a Chapel in which Christmas services could be conducted, was deemed critical enough to throw all available MAG-12 resources into the project; additional emphasia was provided by the scheduled visit to Chu Lai on 24 December of Rear Admiral James KELLEY, Chief of Chaplains. Gunnery Sergeant WRIGHT took complete and sole direction of the project. Starting with only a pencil sketch of the desired floor plan, he designed and planned the building from the ground up to use only the very limited lumber stocks and materials on hand, A crew of willing but largely unskilled combat engineers were set to work on a coordinated night and day program. With one crew cutting and fabricating in the carpenter shop at night and the other crew constructing and erecting during the day, the work progressed on schedule despite monsoon winds and rain. The 64 X 28 foot building was roofed with sheet tin and a covered porch was added. A straw mat ceiling and straw mat shutters were included in addition to a matted sacristy and Sacred Heart Chapel near the alter area. MABS-12 welders and metalsmiths fabricated unique and very attractive interior fixtures; a seven foot cross and a slab, modernistic



were fabricated from 100mm recoill is rifle shell casings and welded chain; and holy water founts were made from 90mm run casings. The striking building, which is easily the best and most attractive of any structure in Chu Lai was completed in only eleven (11) days. It was enthusiastically praised by Admiral KELLEY at the dedication services on 24 December. Overflowing crowds of Marine personnel, Navy personnel, and civilian construction workers throughout the Chu Lai Enclave participated in Protestant candle light services and Catholic Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, and Mass on Christmas morning. (See Appendix V, VI, VII, and VIII.)

(C) c. An analysis of the value of the tropical hut designed and fabricated by MAG-13 will be included in the January Command Chronology. At this time one modification has been very apparent, either shutters or louvers will have to be added. These huts were not designed with Chu Lai's horizontal rain in mind.

#### 10. MAINTENANCE

(c) a. The current shortage of J-52 engines, due to combustion liners unawaitability, is increasing the number of AOCP's. At this time it is not known when these combustion liners will become available.

## 11. BASE DEVELOPMENT/MILITARY CONSTRUCTION

- (C) a. After seven (7) months of congested traffic, confusion, and long delays in off-loading, an area for unloading C-130's is being constructed. Since the opening of Chu Lai Airfield, this has been a continual problem. With the taxiway being the only available parking area, traffic had to be routed around that section of the taxiway the C-130's were utilizing. The new freight ramp will be in the shape of a five fingered "E", thus providing five sources of entry and exit onto the parallel taxiway. With Chu Lai being dependent in large measure on air re-supply, this freight area will answer one of the biggest problems here. The area is now 75% complete.
- (c) b. The taxiway to the south end of the runway was widened 12 feet. Since the taxiways are now 48 feet in width, two (2) A4's can pass with sufficient clearance. With five (5) feet of clearance from main gear to taxiway edge, there will be a four (4) foot wing tip to wing tip clearance.





# SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

•	After Action Report "HARVEST MOON" (S)
APPENDIX II	Navy Cross Citation, Case of 1stLt. ELDRIDGE (U)
VAPPENDIX III	View of Officers Mess looking West (U)
VAPPENDIX IV	View of Officers Mess looking East (U)
	Northwest corner of Chapel (U)
APPENDIX VI	View of Chapel looking West (U)
VAPPENDIX VII	
VAPPENDIX VIII	Chapel Altar (U)



# HEADQUARTERS Marine Aircraft Group 12 1st Marine Aircraft Wing Fleet Marine Force, Pacific FPO San Francisco 96601



3:GLR:ajw 3700 Ser: 003A35965 25 December 1965

From: Commanding Officer

To: Commanding General, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing

Subj: Operation HARVEST MOON, After Action, report of

#### PART I: GENERAL NARRATIVE

- A. During the operation, MAG-12 was composed of four (4) Marine Attack Squadrons; however, one (1) squadron was relatively ineffective due to rotation out of country and the transfer of aircraft. Essentially then, the Group supported Operation HARVEST MOON with three (3) squadrons.
- B. MAG-12 began its participation in HARVEST MOON on 8 December. From this date to end of the operation, the Group effort was limited only by weather and control facilities, which will be discussed later. The squadrons flew a great variety of missions such as helicopter escort, landing zone preparation, close air support, radar controlled bombing (TPQ-10) and interdiction. During the entire period, the Group maintained an eight (8) aircraft alert with varied ordnance loads from 0630 to 1830 and a night ground alert of five (5) aircraft. The ground alert was utilized to its maximum throughout the operation. This alert was maintained while the squadrons continued to fly their normal scheduled missions both for HARVEST MOON and other commitments.
- C. It should be noted that this Group was not included in the planning phases or briefings which immediately preceded the operation. This was a major handicap in that the pilots could not be adequately briefed and were unaware of the friendly force disposition and scheme of maneuver.
- D. During the major portion of the entire operation, the weather was such that conventional deliveries could not be used. In many instances aircraft were operating in weather conditions which were below any reasonable standards. There were several close calls where fixed wing and helicopters were on converging courses and neither had maneuver room due to weather. Standards can be lowered in an emergency for mandatory targets; however, to fly in these conditions as a matter of routine, with the generally borderline air control which existed, is flirting with serious consequences. As the operation was drawing to a close, the weather deteriorated to the point that aircraft could not launch.



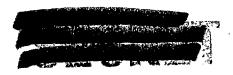


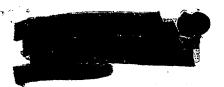
#### PART II: CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF EVENTS

- A. In the initial phases of the operation on the first day, MAG-12 participated primarily with it's ground alert aircraft. The Group was called upon to display it's flexibility and rapid reaction to the changing situation from this first day.
- B. The tempo of the operation picked up considerably on the second day and this continued throughout the operation. On this day the squadrons flew 56 sorties in support of HARVEST MOON. The weather conditions and the control facility difficulties are already well known.
- C. On the third day of the operation a total of 32 sorties were launched, however, many flights were unable to deliver their ordnance in the target area due to poor coordination and control. This resulted in a waste of ordnance because much of it had to be dumped at sea prior to landing. As the day progressed, control and coordination improved somewhat.
- D. During the next three (3) days, the squadrons continued to operate in the target area with improving control and coordination and deteriorating weather. The all weather capability to support an operation such as this was utilized to a great extent. Both night and day TPQ-10 sorties were flown and the results were good.
- E. By the seventh day, most of the ground forces had been landed and the Group's aircraft flew support missions, Airborne controllers were utilized almost exclusively to mark the targets. The control and coordination continued to improve. The weather, however, was very marginal during the entire day and 21 TPQ-10 sorties were launched to support the operation.
- F. The Group was committed to an airborne alert on the eighth day which resulted in a great deal of wasted effort and ordnance due to lack of co-ordination. During the course of the evening, the weather deteriorated to the point that the Group could not launch aircraft. This condition existed throughout the next two days of the operation.
- G. On the final day of HARVEST MODN, the squadrons flew 34 sorties. Most of these were devoted to covering the helicopters as they withdrew troops. Six (6) sorties were flown as a convoy escort for the ARVN. As operation HARVEST MOON drew to a close, Marine Aircraft Group 12 had compiled an enviable record as will be shown in parts III and IV.

#### PART III: ORDNANCE EXPENDITURES AND PERFORMANCE

- A. No difficulties were noted in the performance of ordnance material or equipment. Very few duds were recorded and the effectiveness of the ordnance delivered on target is borne out by the results indicated in Part IV.
- B. The enemy's effectiveness against our aircraft was fortunately not at all good. A great many of our aircraft were fired on by the enemy with weapons ranging up to 50 caliber automatics. However, as is





shown by the figure in part IV, this fire was ineffective.

C. The ordnance expended during operation HARVEST MOON was as follows: 72 MK-79, 47 MK-77, 66 MK-81, 432 MK-81 (SE), 2649 FFAR, 72 ZUNI, 4 AERO 7E, 158 ANM-57, 93 ANM-64, 4 MK-82 (SE), and 14,766 rounds of 20MM. The total ordnance dropped was 196.9 tons.

## PART IV: DAMAGE TO ENEMY AND OUR AIRCRAFT

- A. The confirmed damage assessment for this operation was: 7 Mortar positions destroyed, 2 damaged; 2 50 cal. MG positions destroyed; 7 Gun Emplacements destroyed; 2 trenches destroyed, 3 damaged; 28 huts destroyed, 2 damaged; 27 KBA's (possible), 2 WBA's (possible); 1 Secondary Explosion; 17 structures destroyed, 5 damaged; 6 automatic weapons positions destroyed, 1 saturated; 7 huts left burning; 2 Sampans damaged; and 1 tunnel destroyed.
- B. Our damage consisted of three (3) aircraft being hit by enemy ground fire.

#### PART V: PERSONNEL PERFORMANCE AND CASUALTIES

- A. The performance of every officer and man in MAG-12 was exemplary. Ordnance loads were frequently changed at the last minute; pilots were diverted from their primary mission to attack targets in the operation area; and line crews and maintenance crews worked long hours to keep the Group's aircraft flying. The pilots attacked targets more often than not in the face of visible hostile fire and under marginal weather conditions, with no thought for personal safety, only thinking of the mission to be accomplished.
- B. There were no casualties attributable to enemy action during operation HARVEST MOON.

#### PART VI: COMMENT ON DOCTRINE AND OPERATION PROCEDURES

- A. MAG-12 operated throughout HARVEST MOON with practically no coordination with supported organizations except that which was accomplished in the air over the target area.
- B. There was a complete lack of information on the disposition of friendly forces during the entire operation. It was not uncommon to find that the airborne controller was unable to ascertain the location of friendly troops in the immediate vicinity of the target. Moreover, ground FAC's apparently were not used, but they should have been.
- C. The airborne alert was utilized for one (1) day during the operation. Due to marginal weather and an apparent lack of coordination, many of these sorties returned with their ordnance or were forced to dump it at sea. The low ceiling, in effect, put a great many aircraft of all types in an extremely confined space. No orbit points had been established or were any altitudes assigned.





#### PART VII: RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. PART I, paragraph C; It is essential and doctrine that the Group be included in the planning of an operation such as this, no matter how limited the planning may be. It is imperative that Group representatives be present at planning conferences and/or briefings.
- B. PART VI, paragraph B; More information must be made available to all echelons of command and this information must be kept current.
- C. PART VI, paragraph C; When the airborne alert is utilized necessarily valuable assets are dissipated. If utilized, coordination and control must be positive. Orbit points must be established and altitude blocks assigned. A briefing by the controller as to other aircraft in the area would of course help.
- D. PARTI, paragraph D; Definite weather criteria should be established. Desirable weather information in the area of operation should be available to the pilot at the briefing.
- E. In sum, the foregoing is a plea to get back to the doctrine and to establish sensible weather criteria.

L. E. BROWN



File: Eldridge, Thomas M. Service No: 085797
Date: 31 December 1965

FROM: Captain Aaron B. Loggins, Forward Air Controller, Advisory Team 2, Quang Ngai RVN.

TO: Secretary of the Navy (Navy Department Board of Decorations and Medals)

(1) Commander, MAG-12

(2) Commandant of the Marine Corps

(3) Chief of Naval Operations.

SUBJ: Navy Cross, Recommendation for Case of 1stLt Thomas M. ELDRIDGE, 085797, U. S. Marine Corps

REF: (a) SECNAVINST P1650.1C (Navy and Marine Corps Awards Manual) of 16 August 1963.

ENCL: (1) Proposed Citation.

- 1. In accordance with reference (a), it is recommended that lstLt Thomas M. ELDRIDGE, 085797, USMC, attached to and serving with MAG-12, be awarded a Navy Cross (posthumously) for heroism.
- 2. On 29 December 1965, Minh Long, RVN, district headquarters was attacked by a superior Viet Cong Force. Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force aircraft had participated in a continous air attack for several hours. As darkness approached a flight of helicopters attempted a resupply mission to an outpost near the headquarters. As the helicopters approached three 50 cal. machine guns opened fire on them. Due to the very poor weather condition in the target area, the Forward Air Controller (USAF) advised Oxwood 02-1 flight, in which 1stLt ELDRIDGE was number three man, that they should return home. The flight leader elected to remain in the area in the event the "choppers" needed cover. The severity of the fire received by the forward air controller aircraft and the "choppers" caused the forward air controller to request flight Oxwood O2-1, a flight of USMC A4 aircraft, to come into the target area and attempt to subdue the heavy ground fire. Darkness was approaching and the weather was marginal. The forward air controller was unable to mark the target but described it to the fighter aircraft and in the growing darkness Oxwood O2-1 flight picked up the target by the muzzle flashes of the 50 cal. machine guns firing at them. Number three man in the flight carried Napalm and was requested to drop it on the guns. With complete disregard for his personal safety 1stLt ELDRIDGE made a bomb pass at the target, releasing one can of Napalm on the target. Upon passing over the target he was shot in the leg and attempted to return to Chu Lai and land. His aircraft crashed eight miles short of Chu Lai. 1stLt ELDRIDGES extraordinary heroism in the face of extreme danger due to poor weather, darkness and heavy enemy ground fire cost him his life. His superior airmanship, selfless devotion to duty, bravery and prompt action prevented the destruction of unarmed USMC helicopters and aided the Vietnamese force in defense of their position. 1stLt ELDRIDGE's actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Military Service and reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Marine Corps.

APPENDIX II





- 3. The facts as contained in the proposed citation are personally known to me.
- 4. The award is for direct participation in combat operations.

AARON B. LOGGINS Captain, USAF Forward Air Controller



The President of the United States take pride in presenting the Navy Cross to:

1stLt Thomas M. ELDRIDGE, U. S. Marine Corps

For service set forth in the following:

#### PROPOSED CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism in action while a member of Oxwood O2-1 flight involving an opposing force in the Republic of Vietnam on 29 December 1965. As an aircraft commander, 1stLt ELDRIDGE distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism, while demonstrating professional skill and decisive leadership along with extreme bravery. During marginal weather conditions and after darkness had fallen, 1stLt ELDRIDGE attacked a target containing three 50 cal. machine gun positions. He identified the target by the muzzle flashes of the enemy guns. During his pass to drop Napalm he was wounded in the leg with a 50 cal. shell. He attempted to return his aircraft to Chu Lai airfield thirty miles north of the target. His aircraft crashed eight miles short of the runway. lstLt ELDRIDGE's complete disregard for his personal safety, attempting to cover unarmed helicopters under extremely dangerous combat condition during the hours of darkness cost him his life. 1stLt ELDRIDGE's bravery, outstanding courage, and willing self-sacrifice for his fellow pilots reflected great glory upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Marine Corps.



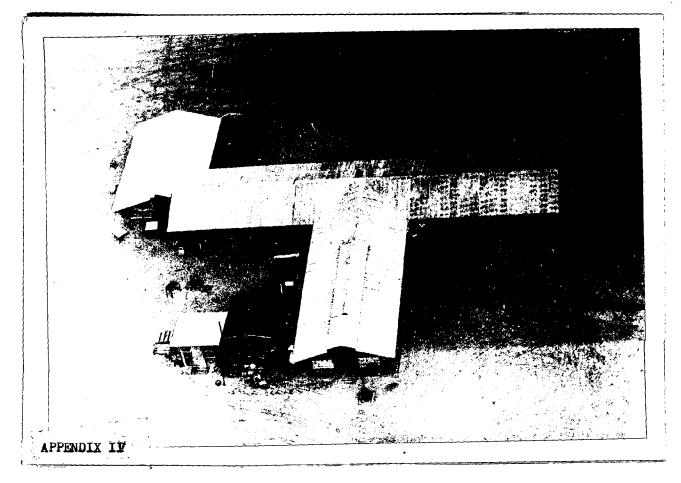
OFFICIAL FROTC R. D. Doznar CHU LAI VIETNAM MABS-12 MAG-12 1ST MAW # OTOHH

-1:1

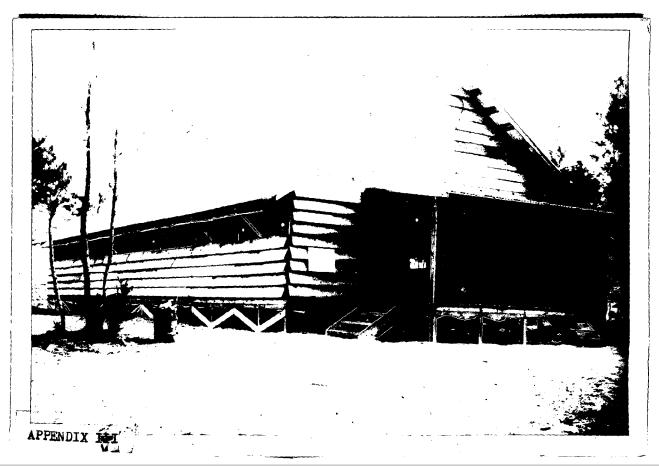
DEC. 24.1965

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