

MARINE MEDIUM HELICOPTER SQUADRON 265
Marine Aircraft Group 15
9th Marine Amphibious Brigade, FMFPac
FPO, San Francisco, California 96602

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30 August 1968

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From: Commanding Officer
To: Commander, Task Group 79.5

Subj: Combat After Action Report; Operation SWIFT PLAY

Ref: (a) CTG 79.5 OPLAN 120-YR

Encl: / (1) HMM-265 After Action Report; Operation SWIFT PLAY

1. In accordance with the instructions contained in reference (a), enclosure (1) is submitted.


ROY J. EDWARDS

HMM-265 S&C Control No. _____

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HMM-265 - Combat A/R Rpt Opn SWIFT PLAY

23 JULY - 19 AUG 1968

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COMBAT AFTER ACTION REPORT

1. Operation SWIFT PLAY.
2. The inclusive times of HMM-265 participation in Operation SWIFT PLAY were from 230800H July 1968 through 191200H August 1968. The operation was conducted in the Quan Duy Xuyen District of the Quang Nam Province, Republic of Viet Nam.
3. The command headquarters was located aboard the USS TRIPOLI (LPH-10).
4. The task organization was HMM-265, LtCol R. J. EDWARDS USMC, Commanding; augmented by two UH-1E aircraft (gunships) from 1st MAW.
5. Pre-operation intelligence indicated light contact during the landing phase due to the enemy's desire to avoid direct contact with our forces and to inflict maximum casualties while holding his own losses to a low level by utilizing "Hit and Run" tactics. Previous experience had been gained by the squadron in this area in Operations ALLEN BROOKE, MAMA-LUKE THRUST and EAGER YANKEE. This experience was applied during the planning and execution phases of SWIFT PLAY.
6. Basic Missions: Conduct an amphibious operation against VC/NVA forces in Base Area 116/Duy Xuyen Area to find, fix and destroy enemy forces, capture or destroy enemy material and fortifications and to conduct such other operations as agreed with CG III MAF or his designated representative.
7. Execution.
 - a. Operation SWIFT PLAY was initiated by COMSEVENTHFLT 210124Z July 1968. Execution was in accordance with CTG 79.5 220831Z July 1968 Frag Order Number One (1) for Operation SWIFT PLAY and its supporting annexes.
 - b. The following is a chronology of significant events in narrative form:

23 July 1968: D-Day, Operation SWIFT PLAY, was marked by a ten plane launch from the USS TRIPOLI which was positioned five miles east of the Hoi An peninsula. Throughout the morning the CH-46A's transported four companies, the command group and supporting arms into LZ's Chapman and Shepherd. During the afternoon and well into the night, prestaged supplies were flown from the USS VANCOUVER and the USS TRIPOLI into the

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field. The squadron accumulated 92.8 hours this day, flying 917 troops and 40,200 pounds of equipment in 230 sorties..

24-25 July 1968: Routine resupply and medevac missions were flown by the squadron in support of Operation SWIFT PLAY.

26 July 1968: HMM-265's assets were divided for the first time since the inception of Operation EAGER YANKEE. Six aircraft were fragged to support the 1stMAW at Marble Mountain while five remained with the SLF in continued support of Operation SWIFT PLAY.

27 July 1968: Flying in support of Operation SWIFT PLAY and 1stMAW, HMM-265 amassed a total of 109 sorties during 48.8 flight hours.

28 July 1968: A single CH-46A made a hard landing at Hill 55 after losing an engine upon lift-off with an external load. A CH-53 lifted the damaged aircraft to Marble Mountain. Cause of the accident was investigated and found to be fuel contamination.

29-31 July 1968: HMM-265 flew a reduced number of flight hours pending continued investigation of a series of engine failures caused by fuel contamination.

1 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 117 sorties for 30 missions and 52.6 flight hours. One squadron aircraft had an engine failure upon take-off from the USS TRIPOLI. The pilot landed back aboard the TRIPOLI with the aircraft receiving only "Echo" damage. No personnel were injured.

2 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 155 sorties for 31 missions and 33.0 flight hours in support of the SLF and 1st MAW. Small arms fire was received during the day but no hits were sustained.

3 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 131 sorties for 24 missions and 35.7 flight hours in support of SLF and 1st MAW. A normal working day.

4 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 103 sorties for 15 missions and 28.4 flight hours in support of the SLF and 1st MAW. A normal working day.

5 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 168 sorties for 29 missions and 55.0 flight hours. One HMM-265 aircraft received small arms fire resulting in battle damage and was forced to land at Hill 65. A Maintenance Team was lifted to the downed aircraft which was subsequently repaired in the field and returned to LPH-10.

6 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 176 sorties for 13 missions and 52.9 flight hours in support of the SLF and 1st MAW.

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No enemy fire was received.

7 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 226 sorties for 31 missions and 38.1 flight hours in support of the SLF and 1st MAW. It was a routine day.

8-13 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 1098 sorties for 131 missions and 317.3 flight hours in support of the SLF and 1st MAW. During this period of time, enemy small arms fire was received at various times; however there were no hits.

14 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 139 sorties for 19 missions and 30.7 flight hours in support of the SLF and 1st MAW. One squadron aircraft received "Charlie" damage in a taxi accident at AN HOA resulting in minor injuries to the co-pilot of the aircraft.

15 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 139 sorties for 19 missions and 72.6 flight hours in support of the SLF and 1st MAW. EP-3, the aircraft which was in the taxi accident at AN HOA from the previous day, was dropped as it was being lifted externally from AN HOA to Marble Mountain, receiving "Alfa" damage. It was subsequently destroyed by a demolition team at the request of the squadron commander.

16 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 204 sorties for 31 missions and 70.8 flight hours in support of SLF and 1st MAW. No fire incidents were reported.

17 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 55 sorties for 15 missions and 31.4 flight hours in support of SLF and 1st MAW. No fire incidents were reported. EP-5 suffered engine power loss and was left at Frosty Gold CP overnight.

18 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 126 sorties for 10 missions and 52.7 flight hours in support of SLF and 1st MAW. EP-5 was repaired in the field and flown to Marble Mountain Air Facility. During the recovery one WIA casualty was sustained due to small arms fire.

19 August 1968: HMM-265 flew a total of 137 sorties for 29 missions and 43.2 flight hours in support of SLF and 1st MAW. The squadron was chopped ashore to First Marine Aircraft Wing for OPCON at 1200H completing its participation in Operation SWIFT PLAY. No fire incidents were reported.

c. HMM-265 Casualties:

- (1) Captain Frank J. GOLLATZ 091508/7562 received head injuries

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in an aircraft accident 20 miles south of Danang at the AN HOA Airfield on 14 August 1968. Hospitalized. Condition is good. Medical evacuation is still pending.

(2) Crew Chief Sergeant Richard A. EVANS 2111087/6242 received .30 cal. and shrapnel wounds 10 miles south of Danang in the Quang Nam Province on 18 August 1968. Hospitalized. Condition is good. Hospitalized at NSA, Danang for approximately 2 days and medevaced to USNH GUAM.

d. Intelligence/Counter-Intelligence

<u>A/C Fired On</u>	<u>Incidents</u>	<u>A/C Hit</u>	<u>No. Hits</u>	<u>Sorties</u>	<u>Hours</u>
17	17	8	13	3889	1215.8

<u>Altitude</u>	<u>A/C Hit</u>	<u>No. Hits</u>	<u>A/C Lost</u>
0-499	1	01	1 **
500-999	0	04	0
1000-1499	3	47	0
1500-2000	4	5	0

** EP-3 - Lost in an accident while being lifted externally from AN HOA to MMAF on 18 August 1968.

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8. Summary of Statistics:

a. Operation SWIFT PLAY (23Jul68-19Aug68)

DATE	SORTIES	PASSENGERS	CARGO (LBS)	MEDEVACS	FLT HOURS
23 Jul	230	917	40,200	2	92.8
24 Jul	74	230	43,200	8	26.5
25 Jul	116	65	53,800	18	29.7
26 Jul	70	80	2,000	4	25.4
27 Jul	109	139	29,400	12	48.8
28 Jul	129	226	24,400	21	28.3
29 Jul	16	14	600	0	9.8
30 Jul	70	179	10,600	6	26.9
31 Jul	28	19	1,000	0	13.2
1 Aug	117	213	58,000	0	52.6
2 Aug	155	217	36,800	4	33.0
3 Aug	131	262	39,400	15	35.7
4 Aug	103	199	21,600	2	28.4
5 Aug	168	254	40,200	30	55.0
6 Aug	176	209	57,400	50	52.9
7 Aug	226	222	132,600	5	38.1
8 Aug	139	258	40,000	6	41.3
9 Aug	240	472	80,200	7	65.4
10 Aug	179	339	59,000	1	52.2
11 Aug	159	294	62,200	23	69.6
12 Aug	179	450	119,600	14	47.9
13 Aug	202	279	77,400	4	40.9
14 Aug	139	224	16,400	9	30.7
15 Aug	212	375	72,600	11	72.6
16 Aug	204	301	133,200	1	70.8
17 Aug	55	108	15,000	3	31.4
18 Aug	126	257	85,000	3	52.7
19 Aug	137	313	32,400	7	43.2
TOTAL	3,889	7,115	1,381,800	268	1215.8

b. Total Airlift Cargo and Passengers - 3,042,975 lbs

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Enclosure (1)

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9. Commander's Analysis

a. SWIFT PLAY was the second of two combat amphibious operations by ARG "B" and SLF "B" employing BLT 2/7 and HMM-265 in the attack role. The initiation of SWIFT PLAY was unique in that it began only twenty-one hours after the termination of EAGER YANKEE. This turn around involved expeditious helicopter extraction of BLT 2/7 from PHU LOC District of Thua Thien Province to the USS TRIPOLI, sailing the TRIPOLI at night from Thua Thien to off shore Quang Nam Province and then helicopter lifting BLT 2/7 into Duy Xuyen District. The maneuver elements of BLT 2/7 were helicopter transported from the USS TRIPOLI and landed ashore in less than two hours by ten CH-46A helicopters. The swiftness of this landing attested to a well planned and coordinated maneuver.

b. Once the battalion was firmly established ashore and its control turned over to an in-country regiment, the squadron was directed to additionally support the requirements of the First Marine Aircraft Wing with all available helicopters over and above the requirements of the SLF. This action called for maximum effort each day.

c. A problem of fuel contamination arose which caused the crash of one helicopter and temporarily grounded 17 helicopters. Availability dropped to only three aircraft but normal availability was regained as the contaminating substance was removed from the aircraft fuel systems. The contaminating substance was determined to be dust which had been ingested into the fuel tanks of the helicopters via the vent tube while operating from the sandy beach areas of Vinh Loc during Operation EAGER YANKEE, where many dusty landings were encountered. Normal maintenance procedures did not reveal the presence of this dust in the fuel system.

d. Helicopter Support Teams continued to improve in both Landing Zone preparations and in communications, however additional training is needed for "around-the-clock" operations to include night lighting of helicopter touch down points within landing zones.

e. Routine food, water and ammunition resupply caused the biggest single problem because some BLT units did not order their daily resupply in time for daylight deliveries. Therefore, routine requests usually changed into emergency requests and necessitated hazardous night helicopter deliveries into landing zones.

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a. The same careful and through preplanning conducted between SLF, BLT and HMM squadrons for the assault phase should be extended to the planning of resupply, medevac and personnel transportation after the landing in order to indentify priority systems and to make maximum use of assets while economizing whenever possible. With limited parts availability and high maintenance man hours per flight hour, helicopters must be effeciently employed.

b. The CH-46A fuel system is vented to the atmosphere. As fuel is used by the jet engine air is drawn into the tanks in an equal volume. At present, there is no filter used to clean vent air of dust particles. The contamination experienced by HMM-265 will possibly be experienced again by other CH-46 squadrons if the Vinh Loc or similar dusty areas are encountered. An appropriate fuel tank vent filter is considered an urgent requirement.

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