

Ser: 03A15266
1 June 1966

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COMMAND CHRONOLOGY
HMM-364
USS PRINCETON (LPH-5)
1 May 1966 - 31 May 1966

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Enclosure (2)

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Ser: 03A15266

1 June 1966

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~1. PART ONE: ORGANIZATIONAL DATA

a. Commander & Staff

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------------------|------------|
| (1) Commanding Officer | - - - - - | LtCol D. A. SCHERVELLE | |
| (2) Executive Officer | - - - - - | Major M. J. NEIDMAN | |
| (3) S-1 | - - - - - | Major W. E. CABLE | |
| (4) S-2 | - - - - - | 1ST LT G. M. ANDRES | |
| (5) S-3 | - - - - - | MAJOR H. M. MICHELS | |
| (6) S-4 | - - - - - | Major J. E. KUTCHMAREK | 1-13 May |
| | | Capt. H. M. BARTEL | 1/1-31 May |
| (7) Maintenance Officer | - - - - - | Capt. R. F. GLEASON | |
| (8) Safety Officer | - - - - - | Capt. C. D. RIORDAN | |

b. TASK ORGANIZATION

- (1) 1 May 1966 - 31 May 1966, MAG-13, 9th MAB CTU 79.5.3
 (a) Location- USS PRINCETON

c. Average Strength for Reporting Period

- | | | |
|---------------|-----|-------------------------|
| (1) Officers- | 52 | (48NA - 3AG - - 1 Navy) |
| (2) Enlisted- | 170 | (167 Marine - - 3 Navy) |

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Enclosure (2)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~Ser: 03A15266
1 June 1966~~CONFIDENTIAL~~2. PART TWO: NARRATIVE SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT HIGHLIGHTS FROM 1 May 1966 to 31 May 1966.

MAP REF: AGC NB 48-16

1 May: With Operation Osage in the final phase the squadron flew a total of fourteen missions. Eight of these missions were flown to resupply all of the battalion's companies. Five administrative and liaison flights were made.

On two Med-Evac missions seven fatally wounded U.S. Marines were withdrawn from the objective area and flown to the U.S. Navy Hospital ship, the USS REPOSE, which was located in Da Nang Harbor. Sixteen wounded Marines were also evacuated and flown to the USS PRINCETON for preliminary medical treatment, they were further transferred by helicopter to the USS REPOSE.

The largest tactical lift of the day took 3.2 hours to complete and involved 4 aircraft. Eighty two Marines were retracted from AU065175 and flown to the USS PRINCETON.

During the morning the supply ship USS SACRAMENTO rendezvoused with the Amphibious Task Group Supplies for the USS ALAMO as well as the USS PRINCETON were flown to the PRINCETON by two USS SACRAMENTO CH-46 helicopters, From the flight deck of the PRINCETON

five HMM-364 aircraft transported 58,322 lbs of stores to the USS ALAMO LSD-33, in a ship to ship resupply effort. The total flight time for the day was 31.7.

2 May: Operation Osage drew to a close as twelve squadron aircraft effected a 410 man Marine helicopter retraction of company B + C from coordinates AU802050 and Z0178065. Simultaneously the remaining Marines ashore were withdrawn over White beach by amphibious landing craft.

While the heliborne retraction was in progress sniper fire was received in the pick-up zone at coordinates AU828061 and AU828054. The pick-up zone was promptly changed to a more secure area. Meanwhile Major Micheels who had been assigned as tactical air controller airborne for the period of the retraction directed close air support strikes on the target. F8U and F4B aircraft from MAG-11 stationed at Da Nang air base participated in dropping several Napalm bombs. They also delivered 20 millimeter cannon on the suspected target area. While marking their target Major Micheels aircraft received small arms fire but sustained no hits.

During the final phase of the beach withdrawal the Tactical Air Controller Airborne directed further air strikes on a ridge line overlooking White beach at coordinates ZD175059. This action was undertaken as a precautionary move to discourage further harassment.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Enclosure (2)

Ser: 03A15266
1 June 1966

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

3 May: With all the Squadron aircraft aboard and during the early morning hours the USS PRINCETON departed the waters off the coast of Hue Th. Bai where she had remained during Operation "OSAGE". The ship proceeded south along the coast of Vietnam and by day light was at anchor off the coast near the Chu Lai Marine base.

4 - 8 May: Flew various administration and liaison flights from the USS Princeton which remained off the coast of South Vietnam in the vicinity of the Chu Lai Marine complex. During this time the 1st Battalion 5th Marines was off loaded and remained at Chu Lai.

9 May: On 9 May at 0300 hours the Princeton departed for White Beach Okinawa for the purpose of embarking a new Battalion Landing Team, the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment.

10 May: No flights were flown during 10 May.

11 May: While the ship was under way, at 1430 hours 20 squadron aircraft took off from the Princeton and flew 67 miles to MCAF Futema, Okinawa. Before departing on course the squadron leader LtCol. D. A. SOMERVILLE conducted a formation fly-over the ship. During the stay at Okinawa, inclement weather produced by the southwest monsoon period necessitated a severe curtailment of flying operations.

12 May: One aircraft which succeeded in getting airborne was forced to make an unscheduled landing in the vicinity of Kadena Air Force Base.

13 May: The squadron re-embarked the aircraft aboard the Princeton.

14 May: The 3rd Battalion 5th Marines had completed loading aboard Amphibious Group 3.

Departure for Subic Bay in the Philippines Islands occurred on this date.

15-20 May: Amphibious Group Three exercised storm evasion procedures. Tropical storm IRMA had turned into a typhoon which eventually passed over Mindoro Island and adversely influenced the weather over a large area including Manila and Subic Bay.

21-22 May: Amphibious Group 3 arrived in Subic Bay but the after effects of typhoon IRMA continued to bring heavy rains and prevented any flying operations on this day.

23 May: Elements of the 3rd battalion 5th Marines conducted a combined assault across Green Beach in Subic Bay with a simultaneous vertical envelopment at landing zone Swan at coordinates SS99640.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
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Enclosure (2)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~Ser: 03A15266
1 June 1966

The operation was conducted in rehearsal for operation Hilltop V. At 0800 ten squadron aircraft took off from the USS Princeton and landed 245 troops of L and M companies at LZ Swan at 0815. The entire lift took one hour and twelve minutes. A complete tactical retraction was conducted shortly thereafter to the USS Princeton.

24 May: At exactly 1300 hours in the afternoon the USS Princeton together with Amphibious Group 3 departed Subic Bay; its destination was a position off the coast of Mindoro Island in the vicinity of the city of San Jose; its mission, to conduct training exercise "Operation Hilltop V."

25 May: At H Hour, 0800 hours, Operation Hilltop V commenced when K and I rifle companies of the 3rd battalion 5th Marines made an assault across Red Beach. At 0810 heliborne troops comprised of L and M rifle companies commenced a vertical envelopment when they landed at coordinates TP931747 which was designated landing zone Sparrow.

A total of 611 troops and 3650 pounds of cargo were lifted into the landing zone in two hours and eighteen minutes by sixteen helicopters.

Low visibility and heavy rains curtailed flight operations in the afternoon, however the squadron accumulated 51.4 hours, carried 17,955 pounds of cargo along with 611 troops and 73 passengers.

26 May: Two aircraft performed the following missions: A lift of 2200 pounds of cargo from the LPH-5 to landing zone Sparrow; a lift of 2200 pounds of cargo from the LPH-5 to coordinates TP899751; and an air search for four disoriented Marines in the vicinity of TP932762, two of the Marines were found by the search aircraft.

Two aircraft lifted 3000 pounds of cargo and fifteen troops from the LPH-5 to coordinates TP930762 (I company).

Three aircraft lifted thirty observers and civilian dignitaries from San Jose to the LPH-5 and later returned them to San Jose. One of the aircraft lifted 200 pounds of cargo from the LPH-5 to coordinates TP934762 (I company) and returned to the ship with five operational casualties. (non-combat illness) from TP930760 and 932765.

Two aircraft lifted 1360 pounds of cargo and twenty-three passengers from the LPH-5 to coordinates TP935720 (L company).

Six aircraft lifted 186 troops of the provisional rifle company from the San Jose airstrip to coordinates TP933762 (LZ Cardinal).

Two aircraft lifted 1945 pounds of cargo from the LPH-5 to coordinates TP960750 and TP984790 in support of M company. The aircraft returned to the ship with a simulated Marine KIA from coordinates TP984790.

Two aircraft lifted 1350 pounds of cargo from the LPH-5 to coordinates TP900760 (K company) and two passengers from TP934762 to TP933762 (I company)

Two aircraft lifted a simulated Cholera patient from Red Beach to the LPH-5 and three passengers from coordinates TP934762 (3/5 CP) to the following locations: TP901769, TP942717, and TP960750, (K, I, M companies).

27 May: One aircraft made a night med-evac of Marine WIA from coordinates TP960750 to the LPH-5. Excellent vectering by the HDC and a fine job of lighting of the zone, added greatly to the success of the mission.

Eight aircraft were utilized to retract the heli-lifted units from LZ's Falcon and Cardinal. Six aircraft began the tactical withdrawal of

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Enclosure(2)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~Ser: 003A15266
1 June 1966

supporting units from LZ Cardinal at 0910H. At 1010 two aircraft joined the flight to lift the HOWTARS. At the completion of Cardinal lift, the flight began the withdrawal of M company from LZ Falcon (This was a very smooth, swift evolution). At 1230 a TAO aircraft picked up CO 3/5 to provide command control of the final phases of the retraction. At 1235 the retraction of L company from LZ Cardinal commenced. The lift was completed at about 1350.

One aircraft lifted 200 pounds of cargo and four passengers from the LPH-5 to San Jose and later returned the passengers to the LPH-5.

28 May: All squadron aircraft departed the USS Princeton at 0630 and flew to NAS Cubi Point.

Four aircraft flew an administrative flight to Manila.

29 May: The LPH-5 was still in port.

Several aircraft stood by all day to make runs to Manila and Baguio.

30 May: 12 aircraft stood by all day. 2 aircraft flew an administration/passenger hop to Baguio. 2 aircraft flew an administrative run to Manila and returned.

31 May: 8 aircraft stood by for a personnel/admin run to Baguio and Manila, however only 2 aircraft actually were utilized on each run.

Three squadron aircraft also flew training hops in the local area which included instrument work, rough area landing practice and auto-rotations.

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Enclosure (2)

MARINE MEDIUM HELICOPTER SQUADRON 364
Marine Aircraft Group 13
9th Marine Amphibious Brigade
FPO San Francisco, 96601

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3120
Ser: 003B15266
1 June 1966

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From: Commanding Officer
To: Commander, Task Group 79.5

Subj: After Action Report, Operation "HILLTOP-V"

Ref: CTG 79.5 OP Order 330-66

Encl: (1) Narrative Summary-Operation "Hilltop-V"
(2) Operational Problems-Operation "Hilltop-V"
(3) Statistical Summary-Operation "Hilltop-V"

1. In accordance with reference (a) enclosures (1), (2), and (3) are submitted.

H. N. MICHELS
H. N. MICHELS
By direction

AMM-364

2/26, 1966

23-27 May 66

DECLASSIFIED BY 3 YEAR INTERVALS;
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS
DOD DIR 5230.10

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TAB-D

~~SECRET~~Ser: 003B15266
1 June 1966NARRATIVE SUMMARY - Operation "HILLTOP-V"

23 May: In preparation for Operation "Hilltop" V, a rehearsal troop lift of L and M companies was conducted at Subic Bay and twelve Squadron aircraft lifted 390 troops from the LPH-5 to coordinates SS996404. Upon completion of the insertion, a retraction of the troops was accomplished. The squadron provided a TAC(A) aircraft and one aircraft for SAR both the initial lift and the retraction.

25 May: Operation "Hilltop" V commenced when sixteen aircraft lifted L and M companies and a command group (611 troops and 3659 pounds of cargo) from the LPH-5 to TP933745 (LZ Sparrow) five miles North of the city of San Jose, Mindoro, Republic of the Philippines. Two additional aircraft were utilized for TAC(A) and SAR purposes. During a resupply of the Force recon aggressor troops, the same two aircraft lifted 335 pounds of cargo to coordinates TP878678 and TP934754.

One aircraft lifted 1000 pounds of cargo from the LPH-5 to landing zone Sparrow and eight passengers from LPH-5 to Red Beach (TP860680).

Four aircraft lifted twenty-six Filipino officer observers from LZ Sparrow to the LPH-5 and later returned them to the San Jose airstrip.

Two aircraft lifted thirteen passengers from the LPH-5 to landing zone Sparrow and later returned them to the LPH-5.

Two aircraft lifted 3000 pounds of cargo from landing zone Sparrow to coordinates TP944793 in support of L company and 900 pounds of cargo and three passengers from Red Beach to the LPH-5.

Four aircraft performed the following missions: A lift of 1800 pounds of cargo from the LPH-5 to coordinates TP919765 in support of L company; a lift of 1800 pounds of cargo from the LPH-5 to TP960750 (M company); and a lift of 3605 pounds of cargo from the LPH-5 to Red Beach.

26 May: Two aircraft performed the following missions: A lift of 2200 pounds of cargo from the LPH-5 to landing zone Sparrow; a lift of 2200 pounds of cargo from the LPH-5 to coordinates TP899751; and an air search for four disoriented Marines in the vicinity of TP932762. Two of the Marines were found by the search aircraft.

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Ser: 003815266
1 June 1966

Two aircraft lifted a simulated Cholera patient from Red Beach to the LPH-5 and three passengers from coordinates TP934762 (3/5 CP) to the following locations: TP901769, TP942717, and TP960750, (K, I, M companies).

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Eight aircraft were utilized to retract the heli-lifted units from LZ's Falcon and Cardinal. Six aircraft began the tactical withdrawal of supporting units from LZ Cardinal at 0910H. At 1010 two aircraft joined the flight to lift the HOWTARS. At the completion of Cardinal lift, the flight began the withdrawal of M company from LZ Falcon (this was a very smooth, swift evolution). At 1230 a TAO aircraft picked up CO 3/5 to provide command control of the final phases of the retraction. At 1235 the retraction of L company from LZ Cardinal commenced. The lift was completed at about 1350.

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Enclosure (1)

~~SECRET~~Ser: 003BL5266
1 June 1966*OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS - Operation "Hilltop"-V

1. Item: Ground - Air Communications

Comments: a. Two assigned company tactical FM frequencies were out of the FM frequency spectrum of the equipment installed in the UH-34D (the highest FM frequency available is 51.9 Meg.).

b. There was a considerable amount of difficulty with air - ground communications. Stations were either not on the air, not on pre-briefed frequency or unable to communicate due to failures in equipment.

Recommendations: a. That considerable attention be devoted to solution of the problem of disparity between the PRC-10 and the radio equipment installed in the UH-34D.

b. That firm prebriefed frequencies be utilized to insure radio control of helicopters assigned missions with ground units.

c. That the Battalion ALO/FAC act as controller/coordinator of resupply, med-evacs and administrative helicopters, when possible, to insure positive control. The Battalion ALO/FAC can "hand" the flight off to the company concerned for terminal control. This system would permit screening by Battalion of all support missions and would provide reliable PRC-41 (UHF) and PRC-10 (FM) radio availability. In addition the Battalion can immediately unscramble confused frags, incorrect coordinates, etc. This system has proven quite effective in combat.

2. Item: Landing Zone Selection, Marking and Control of Helicopters.

Comment: Landing zone selection varied from outstanding to poor. In some cases, terrain and winds created an insoluble situation for selection of a zone. Over-zealour HST teams created some confusion early in the operation with strange arrays of panels, interminable radio checks and ~~some~~ over control by HST members. It was necessary to abandon combat techniques due to low clouds, visibility and lack of radio control and/or marking of zones by smoke or mirrors. Pilots were required to search for zones at 500 feet above the ground or less. This could not be done safely in combat.

During the night med-evacuation on D+2, the HST team and radio operators of M company performed in an excellent manner to light the zone and control the inbound helicopter. In general, HST/landing zone control during the retraction was excellent. In most cases the aircraft required minimum ground time to load troops and equipment.

Recommendation: a. That the use of smoke grenades be permitted in future operations to achieve desired realism and permit helicopters to operate at the optimum altitudes (2000' - 3000') for combat operations.

b. That positive radio contact be made a prerequisite for helicopter support operations.

c. That helicopter landing zones be kept clear of troops, gear and indigenous personnel for the sake of safety.

~~SECRET~~
Enclosure (2)

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UNCLASSIFIED

Ser: 003B15266
1 June 1966

3. Item: The TAC/LOG and Resupply Missions.

Comment: a. During the operation there were several occasions of the following:

1. Wrong loads
2. Incorrect or inaccurate coordinates of ground unit to be resupplied.
3. No information regarding callsign and/or radio frequency of unit to be resupplied.
4. Duplication of frags in that on arrival at destination, pilot was informed that the unit had previously been resupplied.

Recommendation: a. That a Battalion S-3 representative be made available to TAC/LOG to keep pace of the movement ashore to preclude grossly incorrect coordinates and briefings from reaching HDC or Ready Room.

b. That a chit be used on the flight deck to confirm the following:

1. Unit to be resupplied
2. Call sign
3. Radio frequency
4. Location
5. Composition of load
6. Remarks (unit on the move, etc.)

c. That several resupply requirements be pooled to insure best effective and efficient use of resupply aircraft.

d. That TAC/LOG reconfirm long standing requests to determine if the requirement still exists and to confirm unit's location.

e. That the policy of "no contact (radio and visual) no resupply" be adopted during routine missions during operations of this sort.

4. Item: Helicopter Requests

Comment: a. During the operation, there were numerous "pop up" helicopter requests for priority ASAP missions which in reality could have been pre-scheduled.

b. Several attempts were made by TAC/LOG flight deck personnel, landing zone control (consequence Sparrow) and ground unit personnel to dispatch helicopters hither and yon on "missions of convenience".

Recommendation: a. That maximum lead time be given routine helicopter mission request (ideal - 90 minutes) to permit thoughtful consideration and planning of each mission.

b. That personnel be reindoctrinated as to the operation of the helicopter control/request system with emphasis on the Battalion as the clearing/requesting agency. TAC/LOG of the procuring/coordinating unit and HDC of this controlling agency.

5. Item: Unrealism.

Comment: The following are items that were found to be unrealistic during the play of the problem in regards to helicopter operations:

a. The use of the UH-34D as a TAC(A) or TAO aircraft.

b. The initial helicopter strike troop lifts under low ceilings into an unprepared zone (simulated Naval gunfire was requested in the absence of CAS cover for beach prep but denied by SACC).

~~SECRET~~
Enclosure (2)

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UNCLASSIFIED

Ser: 003B15266
1 June 1966

c. Though helicopter control points and routes were established, they were not used after the initial assault wave. There were no restrictive fire plans, no warnings of simulated firing or SAV-A-Plane pronouncements.

d. Routine resupply and admin missions were run without radio control (out of necessity) and under adverse weather conditions, perhaps creating false impressions of helicopter capabilities and vulnerability in combat. The many courier and purely administrative missions flown would be infeasible in combat.

e. There were instances of prolonged delays in the landing zones while ground unit personnel briefed the pilots or attempted to straighten out a confused situation. In combat the "sitting duck" helicopter assisted the Viet Cong more than the friendlies.

Recommendation: a. That every effort be made to inject realism into future Hilltop operations for the good of all participants.

b. That all the elements of the amphibious team/system be employed as extensively as possible during practice exercises perhaps by greater use of simulated fires, concentrations and enemy anti-aircraft fires.

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Enclosure (2)

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Ser: 003B15266
 1 June 1966

STATISTICAL SUMMARY - Operation "Hilltop" V

<u>DATE</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>SORTIES</u>	<u>TROOPS</u>	<u>CARGO</u>	<u>MED-EVACS</u>
23	17.3	116	390		
25	54.0	304	634	17,080	1
26	32.6	183	187	16,405	12
<u>27</u>	<u>38.0</u>	<u>241</u>	<u>748</u>	<u>6,000</u>	<u>1</u>
TOTALS:	141.9	844	1,883	39,485	14

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 Enclosure (3)