

TENTATIVE REVIEW OF EVENTS
DECEMBER 1966

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GENERAL

During December, U.S. strength in country increased from 362,000 to nearly 389,000. Breakdown of U.S. strength by service at end December was: Army 244,000; Marine Corps 68,000; Air Force 54,000; Navy 23,000 and Coast Guard 400(+). Other Free World strength increased from 52,000 to nearly 53,000. The three Free World countries most heavily represented were: Republic of Korea (46,000), Australia (4,500) and Republic of the Philippines (2,100). Estimated enemy strength in country remained 280,000.

Known enemy personnel losses (based on partial returns) were over 3,900 killed, over 740 captured and 1,396 military Chieu Hoi returnees. Total Chieu Hoi returnees during December were 2,516 - a new high for the program. Enemy weapons losses were about 1,200 individual weapons and about 66 crew-served weapons.

B-52 crews continued support of ground operations in the Republic and struck in the DMZ and at Mu Gia Pass in North Vietnam.

U.S. strike pilots continued the interdiction of enemy lines of communications in North Vietnam despite poor weather and took advantage of two brief periods of improved weather to strike POL facilities near Phuc Yen and Kip, and transportation facilities near Hanoi.

ENEMY ACTIVITY

At 0128H on 4 December, USAF Air Police with sentry dogs detected enemy groups infiltrating the Tan Son Nhut airbase, and engaged them. The enemy force conducting the attack, estimated at a company, were supported by mortar fire from two positions outside the perimeter. The enemy were detected inside the perimeter. 18 enemy were killed and 6 captured (2 of the captured later died of wounds). Friendly casualties and damage were light. The base was attacked again that evening (4 December) resulting in 10 enemy killed. At noon the next day (5 December) an air police unit found and killed another enemy infiltrator well inside the base. On 6 December and again on 7 December, 62-lb satchel charges were found in an ammunition storage area at Tan Son Nhut. The charges were disarmed by EOD. On 10 December, Viet Cong planted and detonated two charges in the Long Binh ammunition dump 13 miles NE of Saigon. Friendly casualties and damage were light. A third charge was found and disarmed.

On 4 December, Viet Cong detonated an explosive charge on the roof of the Psy Ops Temporary Quarters (former Kinh Do (Capital) Theater) in Saigon. The explosion injured 12 U.S. and caused heavy damage to the building.

From 0700H on 24 December to 0700H on 26 December, the Christmas stand-down was in effect. U.S. and Free World forces logged 81 incidents during that stand-down period, and reported 23 as significant.

The New Year stand-down was in effect from 0700H on 31 December

GROUND OPERATIONS

III MAF:

Operation PRAIRIE was continued in Quang Tri Province. Weather remained poor through the month. Results for the month, reflecting the poor weather, were 42 enemy killed and 5 captured. Marine casualties were light. Cumulative Marine casualties for the operation remained moderate.

Operation CHINOOK was initiated in Thua Thien Province 20 December by the 4th Marines. Weather remained poor in this area also, but the operation produced significant contacts and resulted in 159 enemy killed and 5 captured during the month. Friendly casualties remained light.

I FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

Operation PAUL REVERE IV was continued in Pleiku Province throughout December terminating 31 December. Results for the month were 89 enemy killed and 8 captured. Final results were 977 enemy killed and 90 captured. The operation, which commenced 18 October, was supported by 2,800 tactical air sorties. Friendly casualties were light.

Operation ADAMS was continued in Phu Yen Province by the 1st Bde, 4th Inf Div. Results for the month were 94 enemy killed and 50 captured. Friendly casualties remained light.

Operation GERONIMO I conducted by the 1st Bde, 101st Abn Div in Phu Yen Province terminated 4 December with final results of

Operation BYRD was continued in Binh Thuan Province by elements of the 1st Cav Div (AM). Contact was light. Results for the month were 34 enemy killed and 3 captured. Friendly casualties remained light.

Operation THAYER II was continued in Binh Dinh Province by the 1st Cav Div (AM). The multi-brigade operation produced several significant contacts and resulted in 534 enemy killed and 20 captured during the month. Friendly casualties remained light. On 17 December, an air cavalry battalion (reinforced) heavily engaged an estimated enemy battalion. Additional air cavalry companies were brought in to block the enemy battalion. In the action, 116 enemy were killed and 23 captured. Friendly casualties were moderate. Contact was reestablished the next morning, increasing the enemy losses to 131 enemy killed for the 17-18 December action.

Operation PICKETT was initiated in Kontum Province 9 December by the 1st Bde, 101st Abn Div but encountered only scattered light contact during the month, resulting in 31 enemy killed and 16 wounded. Friendly casualties remained light.

II FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

Operation ALA MOANA was initiated 1 December by the 2d Bde, 25th Inf Div in Hau Nghia Province and produced 67 enemy killed and 2 captured during the month. Friendly casualties remained light as the operation continued into January.

Operation ATLANTA, initiated 20 October by the 11th Armd Cav Regt in Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy Provinces, terminated 8 December with final results of 131 enemy killed and 51 captured. Friendly casualties were light. The principal action occurred at 1640H on 2 December when an enemy battalion attacked a 5-vehicle 11th Armd Cav Regt convoy 48 miles ENE of Saigon. In the ensuing action, 93 enemy were killed and several crew-served weapons captured. Friendly casualties were light.

Operation LANIKAI was continued in Long An Province by elements of the 1st Bde, 25th Inf Div without significant contact but with other indications of good progress. Cumulative results as of 31 December were 55 enemy killed and 9 captured.

AIR OPERATIONS

NORTH VIETNAM

Air action over the north was affected by the NE monsoon weather pattern. Most of the action took place during the first two weeks of the month.

U.S. strike pilots took advantage of two periods of relatively clear weather to strike essential transportation facilities near Hanoi and POL facilities near Phuc Yen and Kep.

USAF pilots struck both the Ha Gia POL facility (12½ miles N of Hanoi) and the Yen Vien RR yard (6 miles NE of Hanoi) three times. Routine interdiction flights were continued. The main concentration of effort was in the western mountain area between

Hanoi and Dien Bien Phu and in the southern Panhandle along routes 7, 15, 101, 102, and 103.

USN pilots struck the Can Thon POL (40 miles NE of Hanoi) on 2 December, and the Van Dien Vehicle Depot (5 miles S of Hanoi), 2-13-14 December. The major interdiction effort was directed toward waterborne logistics craft and the rail-lines between Phu Ly and Thanh Hoa.

USMC pilots concentrated on enemy routes of travel and supply areas for his ground troops in and just north of the DMZ.

MIG encounters and sightings continued to increase and were most pronounced during the Air Force raids on Ha Gia and Yen Vien. Two U.S. and one NVN aircraft were downed in air-to-air combat.

B-52

Nearly half of the 62 raids were in the III MAF area, with the majority in or near the DMZ. The remaining raids were nearly equally divided between I Force and II Force. As the intensity of ground action decreased, B-52s were used less in direct or close support of troops and more against base camps, supply areas and suspected troop concentrations.

NAVAL SURFACE OPERATIONS

MARKET TIME

MARKET TIME operations on the eastern coast of RVN were hampered by wave conditions associated with the NE monsoon period. The number of watercraft detected and searched was down slightly as a result.

A USN Swift Boat on 8 December rescued the two-man crew of a downed USAF B-57 bomber two miles off the coast.

GAME WARDEN

On 11 December in Dinh Tuong Province, USN PERs and a light helicopter fire team killed 15 enemy, destroyed 28 sampans and obtained a secondary explosion in an action 8 miles W of My Tho.

Incidents involving attacks upon PERs increased during the month, indicating that the river patrols are causing enemy concern about movement of his men and supplies on the major waterways of the Delta.

NAVAL GUNFIRE - NORTH

The surveillance of the southern coast of NVN by SEVENTH FLEET ships continued. There were gunfire exchanges on 2 and 23 December, and the USS O'BRIEN was damaged in the latter exchange.

There were fewer sightings of water craft by the patrols, indicating reduced traffic, but there were some periods of high sea. During the two stand-down periods, a significant number of craft were observed traversing the area.

REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT AND CIVIC ACTION

One of the major projects in the civic action program is the joint USAF/VNAF perimeter hamlet project underway at each 7th Air Force base in the Republic. The objective is to improve the social-economic status of the local populace through construction and repair of hamlet structures and facilities, diet supplement, medical and dental examination and treatment, improvement of sanitation, and education and technical training of the local populace to help them attain self-sufficiency in their new status. All efforts are through the VNAF and in conjunction with the provincial officials in order to ensure that the work is complementary to the GVN revolutionary development efforts and the gaining of the local populace support to the GVN.