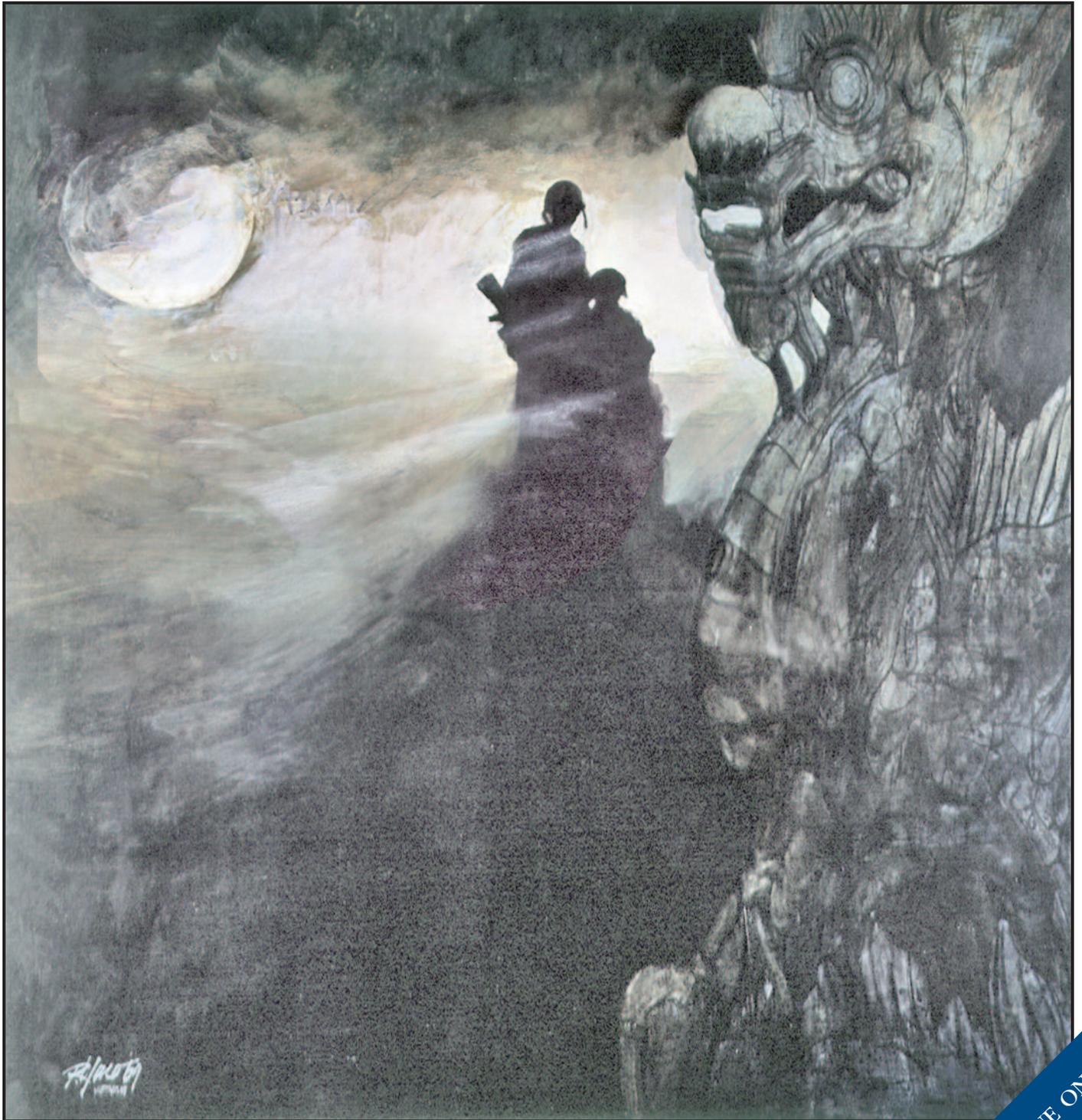


# FORTITUDINE

BULLETIN OF THE MARINE CORPS HISTORICAL PROGRAM

HISTORICAL BULLETIN VOLUME 33, NUMBER 1

2008



CURRENT STATE OF THE MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION...THE VIETNAMESE MARINE CORPS-VNMC  
THE FIRST AND LONGEST POWs OF WWIL...OLD FRIENDS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA...MARINES IN SOUTH AFRICA  
U.S. M14 SERVICE RIFLE...OPERATION "END OF RAINBOW"...BEHIND THE VIETNAM STORY

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Mr. Greg A. Macheak

### Marine Corps History Division

3079 Moreell Avenue  
Quantico, Virginia 22134  
Telephone (703) 432-4877  
<http://www.history.usmc.mil>  
[history.division@usmc.mil](mailto:history.division@usmc.mil)

# FORTITUDINE

*Motto of the United States Marine Corps in the 1812 era*

Historical Bulletin Vol. 33, No. 1

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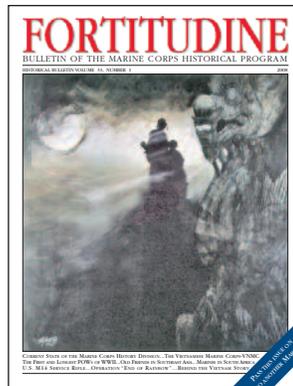
*"We can only know who we are by being certain of  
who we have been."*

Gen Leonard F. Chapman, Jr.  
24th Commandant of the Marine Corps

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## ABOUT THE COVER



**Cover Illustration:** Sgt Richard L. Yaco, USMC's 28" x 38" acrylic painting shows moonlit Marines on ghostly patrol passing a dragon sculpture at the beginning of the 1968 Tet Offensive in I Corps by Communist forces.

This bulletin of the Marine Corps historical program is published for Marines, at the rate of one copy for every nine on active duty, to provide education and training in the uses of military and Marine Corps history. Other interested readers may purchase single copies or four-issue subscriptions from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office. The appropriate order form appears in this issue.

## The Current State of the Marine Corps History Division



*Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer*

As a still relatively “new” director with just over a year of service in my current position, it seems the time for me to give our readers a “state of HD” update. And in fact, much change and considerable production has occurred within the division in the past 12 months that may interest our outside audiences.

First and foremost, after a hiatus of over two years, we were able to resurrect our popular historical news bulletin, *Fortitudine*. We do not want this lapse of coverage to happen again and have taken steps to ensure that a new edition is produced each and every quarter. Moreover, the new *Fortitudine* is intended to be more “history-centric.” What I mean by this is that from now on we will place more emphasis upon Marine Corps heritage and history stories than ever before. This means more vignettes about the past significant accomplishments of Marines in “every clime and place” and less information on the mundane details of division operations. It also means that we not only include information on the distant past, but also not forget to cover the activities of today’s Marines who, as we all know, are making history every day. I also would like to take this opportunity to invite anyone out there who would like to contribute to this body of work to submit their writing to our editor for possible inclusion in a future edition of *Fortitudine*. We hope that over time we will create a diverse body of historical vignettes for our reading audience to enjoy. For example, our past three editions have included stories on the grand opening of the new National Museum of the Marine Corps, profiles of Marine Medal of Honor recipients, the USS *Arizona* Marine detachment at Pearl Harbor, and even a short story on the genesis of the term *Fortitudine*. So as you can tell, we intend to cover a very broad

range of historically relevant topics.

Another major milestone was accomplished when the History Division completed a near total revision of the Marine Corps Order (MCO P5750.1G dated 1992) on the Marine Corps Historical Program. The revised order was long overdue and necessary so that our current program more accurately reflects the new arrangement of the History Division and particularly the new National Museum of the Marine Corps. Included in the order is important reference information for field commands on subjects such as the Marine Corps commemorative naming program, the frequency and disposition of command chronologies, personal papers, artifacts, combat art, and general operating instructions for the History Division, the National Museum of the Marine Corps, and the Library of the Marine Corps.

During the past year, the History Division has greatly increased its publication schedule. The following publications were disseminated in 2007: *The U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2003* (anthology); *Small Unit Actions* (battle study); and *With the First Marine Division: No Greater Friend, No Worse Enemy* (occasional paper). The Field History Branch historians returned from Iraq with a significant amount of historically relevant material and produced at least five articles for *Leatherneck* magazine and the *Marine Corps Gazette*. A pathbreaking article, “Good News from Al Anbar,” published in the February *Marine Corps Gazette* by field historian, Lieutenant Colonel Kurt Wheeler, documented the turn around in this particularly insurgent-prone province long before the story reached the mainstream media in the United States. One of our writers edited a more traditional history of the *U.S. Marines in the Korean War, 1950–1953* while another produced a

“best of” anthology on *Irregular Warfare* (from the Philippine Insurrection to the present day). Other division historians continued to flesh out our Global War on Terrorism series with *Baghdad, Basrah, and Beyond* (monograph) and battle studies on *Najaf* and *Task Force Tarawa*. We also anticipate the publication of another battle study titled, *U.S. Marines in Battle: Khaffi*. This study will form part of an all encompassing history of the Marine Corps in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Renowned historian and retired Marine lieutenant colonel, Dr. Ken Estes will soon be completing a two-year effort to document Marine activity in Operation Iraqi Freedom II and the History Division hopes to publish his work by the fall of 2008. I have also directed that we begin work on a developmental history of the Marine Corps from 1972 to include all the technological and doctrinal changes that have taken place within the Corps since that time up to the present day. We also began planning for the 100th anniversary of Marine aviation and will publish what we hope will be the definitive history on this subject in 2012.

This particular issue of *Fortitudine* is dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the height of Marine Corps involvement in Vietnam (1968). And believe it or not, we are beginning to make plans to produce a 50th anniversary commemorative series on the Vietnam conflict in just a few years. This has been quite a busy year and we will be just as active in 2008 and beyond. Historical production and our work product are definitely up, and we will likely hire a few more civilian historians to assist us in this effort in the coming years. It is a good time to be in History Division. □1775□

## Marines in Vietnam, 1968

by Robert V. Aquilina

Assistant Head, Reference Branch

As noted by the late Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons in his foreword to Dr. Jack Shulimson's *U.S. Marines In Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968*, the title of this impressive—and massive—history accurately reflects the defining year of the Vietnam War. This was the year of the Tet Offensive, Khe Sanh and Hue City—names which became all too familiar to Americans in daily hometown newspapers and television broadcasts. Ironically, although by the end of the year, enemy initiated attacks had fallen to their lowest levels in two years, the war without an end continued. In commemoration of the 40th anniversary of these momentous events, *Fortitudine* has reprinted the “Chronology of Significant Events, January–December 1968,” which appears as Appendix B of Dr. Shulimson's history of Marine Corps operations in Vietnam during that “defining” year of 1968. The photographs which accompany the chronological entries were themselves selected from among the many hundreds of prints appearing in Dr. Shulimson's book.

**1 January** - Allied and communist forces in Vietnam begin the new year with a ceasefire. The allies report 63 violations of the truce.

**1 January** - The Marine Corps troop level in Vietnam reaches 81,249. The III Marine Amphibious Force, which is responsible for I CTZ, begins the year with a total strength of 114,158 troops, composed of 76,616 Marines divided among the 1st Marine Division, the 3d Marine Division, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, and Force Logistic Command; 3,538 Navy personnel; and 36,816 Army personnel, including the Americal Division and one brigade of the 1st Air Cavalry Division, and 88 Air Force personnel.

**3 January** - The 5th Marines concludes Operation Auburn south of Da Nang (28 Dec 67–3 Jan 68). The operation



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A190802

*Marines are seen stacking empty 105mm casings at Khe Sanh, indicative of the artillery support provided for the base. In the background, partially obscured by clouds, is Hill 950.*

results in 37 reported enemy casualties with 24 Marines killed and 62 wounded.

**11 January** - As part of Operation Checkers, in an effort to rotate units of the 1st Marine Division north to relieve the 3d Marine Division, Task Force X-Ray headquarters is activated at Phu Bai. Task Force X-Ray subsequently relieved the 3d Marine Division headquarters at Phu Bai, which moved to Dong Ha in Quang Tri Province.

**16 January** - The 2d Battalion, 26th Marines reinforces the Marine base at Khe Sanh.

**16 January** - A North Vietnamese representative states that North Vietnam will not begin peace talks until the United States halts bombing of the North.

**20 January** - Operation Lancaster I (1 Nov 67– 20 Jan 68), a 3d Marines operation to safeguard Route 9 between Cam Lo and Ca Lu, ends with a reported 46 enemy casualties and 27 Marines killed and 141 wounded.

**20 January** - The 1st Marines concludes Operation Osceola I (20 Oct 67–20 Jan 68) in the Quang Tri City region. The operation resulted in a

reported 76 enemy casualties with 17 Marines killed and 199 wounded.

**20 January** - The 4th Marines concludes Operation Neosho I (1 Nov 67–20 Jan 68) north west of Hue. The operation resulted in 77 reported enemy casualties with 12 Marines killed and 100 wounded.

**20 January** - A Marine patrol participating in Operation Scotland makes contact with a heavy concentration of North Vietnamese troops around Hill 881 South near Khe Sanh. The ensuing battle signaled the beginning of the siege of Khe Sanh.

**21 January** - The 1st Air Cavalry Division is placed under the operational control of III MAF commander, Marine Lieutenant General Robert E. Cushman, Jr.

**21 January** - The 4th Marines begin Operation Lancaster II in the same area as Operation Lancaster I.

**21 January** - The 3d Marines begin Operation Osceola II in the same area as Osceola I.

**21 January** - General Westmoreland, Commander USMACV, orders a temporary halt to work on the “McNamara Line,” the barrier and antiinfiltration system south of the Demilitarized Zone.

- 21 January** - The NVA begins the bombardment of the base at Khe Sanh and the Marine outposts in the surrounding hills. This rocket, mortar, and artillery barrage will continue for the next 77 days.
- 22 January** - The 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, reinforces the garrison at Khe Sanh.
- 22 January** - The 1st Air Cavalry Division begins Operation Jeb Stuart in the northern part of I CTZ.
- 23 January** - The USS *Pueblo* (AGER 2), an American intelligence ship, is seized off the coast of Korea by the North Koreans.
- 23 January** - Special Landing Force Bravo consisting of BLT 3/1 and HMM-165 begins Operation Badger Catch near the Cua Viet River.
- 26 January** - Operation Badger Catch is renamed Operation Saline. The Marines in Badger Catch continue to work in conjunction with Operation Napoleon, a similar effort by the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion to keep the Cua Viet River supply line open.
- 27 January** - The seven-day communist ceasefire for the Tet holiday begins.
- 29 January** - The allied ceasefire for the Tet holiday begins in all of South Vietnam except I CTZ.
- 30 January** - Enemy troops launch the beginning of their Tet offensive in I Corps, attacking Da Nang and several cities south of the base.
- 31 January** - The NVA opens its Tet offensive throughout South Vietnam with attacks against 39 provincial capitals and major cities including Saigon and Hue.
- 31 January** - VC troops fail in an attempt to seize the U.S. Embassy in Saigon after breaching the compound.
- 31 January** - General Leonard F. Chapman becomes the 24th Commandant of the Marine Corps, upon the retirement of the former Commandant, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr.
- 31 January** - 1st Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division launches a counter-offensive air assault into the city of Quang Tri.
- 31 January** - Operation Kentucky in "Leatherneck Square," south of the DMZ, resulted in 353 reported enemy casualties.
- 31 January** - The Americal Division continues Operation Wheeler/Wallowa south of Da Nang.
- 1 February** - The 1st Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division, together with ARVN forces, successfully defend the city of Quang Tri. The enemy sustained 900 reported casualties and 100 captured.
- 1 February** - Richard M. Nixon announces his candidacy for president.
- 1 February** - Units of the 1st and 5th Marines begin Operation Hue City to drive the NVA out of the city.
- 5 February** - Marines from the 26th Marines at Khe Sanh repel a battalion-sized attack killing a reported 109 NVA soldiers with 7 Marines killed and 15 wounded.
- 7 February** - NVA units overrun the Special Forces base at Lang Vei, west of Khe Sanh.
- 7 February** - Elements of the 3d Marines, 5th Marines, and the Americal Division engage the 2d NVA Division in fighting around Da Nang.
- 9 February** - III MAF units succeed in throwing back the 2d NVA Division offensive at Da Nang.
- 9 February** - MACV Forward, under General Creighton B. Abrams, Deputy Commander USMACV, is established in I CTZ at Phu Bai.
- 13 February** - The headquarters and combat elements of the 101st Airborne Division arrive in I CTZ.
- 16 February** - Operation Osceola II ends. This operation resulted in 21 reported enemy casualties with 2 Marines killed and 74 wounded.
- 23 February** - NVA troops fire more than 1,300 shells into the Marine garrison at Khe Sanh. This barrage marks the heaviest shelling of the entire siege.
- 24 February** - American and South Vietnamese troops capture the Citadel in Hue.
- 25 February** - American forces declare the city of Hue secure.
- 29 February** - Operation Saline is combined with Operation Napoleon.
- 29 February** - The 27th Marines arrives in Da Nang from the U.S. as part of the reinforcements approved by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The President made extensive reductions to original recommendations of MACV and the JCS.
- 29 February** - Operation Kentucky results in 398 reported enemy casualties with 90 Marines killed and 277 wounded.
- 1 March** - Clark Clifford replaces Robert S. McNamara as Secretary of Defense.
- 2 March** - Operation Hue City ends successfully as the 1st and 5th Marines defeat the NVA assault in Hue. The operation resulted in 1,943 enemy casualties with 142 Marines killed and 1,005 wounded.
- 10 March** - MACV Forward is deactivated.
- 10 March** - Provisional Corps Vietnam is created. This command, led by Lieutenant General William B. Rosson, USA, controls the 3d Marine Division, the 1st Air Cavalry Division, and the 101st Airborne Division and is subordinate to Lieutenant General Cushman, commander of III MAF.
- 12 March** - Senator Eugene McCarthy makes a substantial showing in the New Hampshire primary, winning 40 percent of the vote, with President Johnson winning 49 percent.
- 16 March** - Troops from the Americal Division massacre more than 100 civilians, mostly women and children, in the village of My Lai.
- 21 March** - As part of the Single Management System, the Seventh Air Force assumes responsibility for coordinating and controlling all fixed-wing aircraft missions, including those of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.
- 31 March** - Operation Scotland (1 Nov 67-31 Mar 68) near Khe Sanh ends. The operation, which included the defense of the besieged garrison of Khe Sanh, resulted in a reported 1,631 enemy casualties with 204 Marines killed and 1,622 wounded in action.
- 31 March** - The 1st Cavalry Division



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A371377

*In heavy house-to-house fighting in the Citadel, a Company C, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines machine gunner, with his assistant close by, fires his M60 machine gun on its tripod at an enemy position. Both Marines are laden with bandoliers of ammunition for their weapon.*

concludes Operation Jeb Stuart. This operation resulted in a reported 3,268 enemy casualties with 284 Army personnel killed and 1,717 wounded.

**31 March** - President Johnson announces a partial halt in the bombing of North Vietnam and that he will send an additional 13,500 troops to South Vietnam. In a surprise move, the President declares that he will not run for re-election due to the war in Vietnam and public unrest at home.

**31 March** - Operation Kentucky results in a reported 413 enemy casualties with 38 Marines killed and 217 wounded.

**1 April** - The 1st Air Cavalry Division together with units from the 1st Marines and the ARVN, begins Operation Pegasus from the Marine base of Ca Lu to relieve the Marine garrison at Khe Sanh.

**9 April** - U. S. troops retake the Special Forces Camp at Lang Vei, southwest of Khe Sanh.

**15 April** - Operation Pegasus ends with the relief and resupply of Khe Sanh. The operation resulted in 1,044 reported enemy casualties, with 51 Marines killed and 459 wounded. The

1st Air Cavalry Division suffered 41 personnel killed and 208 wounded.

**15 April** - With the relief of Khe Sanh and the end of Operation Pegasus, Operation Scotland II, a continuation of Marine Corps action around the base at Khe Sanh begins.

**19 April** - Elements of the 1st Air Cavalry Division, the 101st Airborne Division, and several ARVN units begin Operation Delaware/Lam Son 216. This operation takes place in the A Chau Valley and is designed as a spoiling assault to disrupt enemy preparations for another attack on Hue.

**30 April** - NVA units are engaged in the village of Dai Do by BLT 2/4. Heavy fighting in this area continues until 3 May.

**30 April-17 May** - Marine, Army, and ARVN units succeed in thwarting a possible enemy assault on Dong Ha. The NVA suffered a reported 1,547 casualties while the allies sustained casualties of nearly 300 dead and 1,000 wounded.

**4 May** - The 7th Marines begin Operation Allen Brook, an operation designed to disrupt the growing

enemy presence south of Da Nang.

**5 May** - Signalling the second major offensive of the year, enemy troops launch 119 rocket and mortar attacks on towns and cities throughout South Vietnam.

**13 May** - Peace talks among North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the United States begin in Paris.

**17 May** - Operation Delaware/Lam Son 216 ends with a reported 735 enemy casualties with 142 Army personnel killed and 731 wounded.

**17 May** - 1st Air Cavalry Division begins Operation Jeb Stuart III along the border of Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces.

**18 May** - Battalions from the 1st Marine Division begin Operation Mameluke Thrust in the central regions of Quang Nam Province.

**20 May** - Major General Raymond G. Davis replaces Major General Rathvon McC. Tompkins as Commanding General, 3d Marine Division.

**22 May** - The Marine Corps makes its first use of the North American OV-10A Bronco as an observation and counterinsurgency aircraft.

**26 May** - Major General Rathvon McC. Tompkins becomes deputy commander of III MAF, replacing Major General William J. Van Ryzin.

**27 May** - Peace talks between the United States and North Vietnam break down in Paris.

**27 May** - Operation Kentucky results in a reported 817 enemy casualties with 134 Marines killed and 611 wounded.

**27 May** - Marine Corps force levels in Vietnam reach 89,000.

**1 June** - Lieutenant General Henry W. Buse, Jr., replaces Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak as the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific.

**5 June** - Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated.

**26 June** - Major General Carl A. Youngdale relieves Major General Donn J. Robertson as commander of the 1st Marine Division.

**27 June** - Marine troops begin to dismantle and withdraw from their static

defense base at Khe Sanh.

**1 July** - General Creighton Abrams relieves General William Westmoreland as Commander USMACV.

**1 July** - Operation Thor begins in the eastern part of the DMZ. Planes from the Air Force, the Navy, and the Marine Corps, as well as artillery from Army and Marine artillery batteries in the DMZ sector and naval gunfire from cruisers and destroyers off the coast pound enemy artillery installations in the DMZ.

**7 July** - Operation Thor ends.

**25 July** - The 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), USA, arrives in I CTZ and is placed under the operational control of III MAF.

**15 August** - Provisional Corps Vietnam is deactivated and replaced by XXIV Corps.

**23 August** - Operation Allen Brook ends. This operation resulted in 1,017 reported enemy casualties with 172 Marines killed and 1,124 wounded.

**23 August** - Enemy troops mount their third major offensive by firing on 27

*Navy doctors and corpsmen from Company C ("Charlie Med"), 3d Medical Battalion, wearing helmets and flak jackets, conduct an emergency operation on a wounded helicopter pilot at the Khe Sanh dispensary. Most wounded were evacuated out of Khe Sanh as soon as possible.*

Photo from the David Douglas Duncan Collection



different allied installations and cities including Hue, Da Nang Air Base, and Quang Tri City. The major thrust of this effort is the city of Da Nang. The communists fall far short of their objective due to resistance of U.S. Army, Marine Corps, and South Vietnamese troops.

**24 August** - The Democratic Party Convention begins in Chicago. Vietnam War protesters clash violently with police for the next four days.

**29 September** - The USS *New Jersey* (BB 62) arrives off the coast of the DMZ. The arrival of this battleship greatly increases the Navy's firepower and power projection in the eastern DMZ.

**29 September** - Engagements from Operation Kentucky result in 305 reported enemy casualties with 1 Marine killed and 8 wounded.

**6 October** - 7th Marines begin Operation Maui Peak, an effort to relieve the Special Forces base at Thuong Duc in Quang Nam Province.

**19 October** - Operation Maui Peak ends, resulting in 202 reported enemy

casualties with 28 Marines killed and 143 wounded.

**23 October** - Operation Mameluke Thrust ends, resulting in 2,728 reported enemy casualties with 269 Marines killed and 1,730 wounded.

**23 October** - The 5th Marines begins Operation Henderson Hill in Quang Nam Province as a continuation of Operation Mameluke Thrust.

**28 October** - The 1st Air Cavalry Division begins to move from I CTZ to III CTZ.

**31 October** - President Johnson announces a complete halt in the bombing and naval bombardment of North Vietnam.

**1 November** - North Vietnamese officials announce that they will meet in Paris with representatives from the United States, South Vietnam, and the National Liberation Front to begin peace talks.

**1 November** - South Vietnamese units, aided by squads and platoons of American troops, begin the Accelerated Pacification (Le Loi) Campaign in order to regain the trust and control of South Vietnamese villages lost due to the major enemy offensives of the year.

**2 November** - South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu states that his nation will not negotiate in Paris if the communist National Liberation Front is given equal status with the other participants.

**3 November** - Operation Jeb Stuart III ends. This operation resulted in 2,016 reported enemy casualties with 212 Army personnel killed and 1,512 wounded.

**5 November** - Richard Nixon wins the presidential election by narrowly defeating Hubert Humphrey.

**11 November** - The Americal Division ends Operation Wheeler/Wallowa after 14 months in the Nui Loc Son Valley. This operation resulted in a reported 10,020 enemy casualties with 683 Army personnel killed and 3,597 wounded.

**20 November** - The 1st Marines begin Operation Meade River, nine miles south of Da Nang, in support of the



Courtesy of LtCol Ralph J. Salvati, USMC (Ret).

*LtCol Ernest C. Cheatham, in forefront of the picture, directs a target for a Marine Ontos equipped with six 106mm recoilless rifles, along Le Loi Street. The Perfume River can be seen in the background as well as the Citadel across the river.*

South Vietnamese Accelerated Pacification Campaign.

**23 November** - Operation Lancaster II ends. This operation resulted in a reported 1,800 enemy casualties with 359 Marines killed and 2,101 wounded.

**26 November** - President Johnson states that the peace talks will include the United States, South Vietnam, and a communist delegation which consists of representatives from North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front.

**6 December** - Operation Henderson Hill ends. This action resulted in a reported 700 enemy casualties and 35 Marines killed and 273 wounded.

**9 December** - Operation Napoleon/

Saline ends, resulting in a reported 3,495 enemy casualties with 353 Marines killed and 1,959 wounded.

**9 December** - Operation Meade River ends with 841 reported enemy casualties with 107 Marines killed and 522 wounded.

**21 December** - Major General Carl A. Youngdale relieves Major General Rathvon McC. Tompkins as Deputy Commanding General, III MAF. Major General Ormond R. Simpson relieves Major General Youngdale as Commanding General, 1st Marine Division.

**29 December** - Camp Carroll, the artillery base that supported the garrison at Khe Sanh, is deactivated.

**29 December** - Allied troops in Vietnam announce that they will not honor any holiday truces.

**29 December** - III MAF ends the year with operational control of the 1st Marine Division, the 3d Marine Division, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, the Marine Force Logistic Command, the 101st Airborne Division, the Americal Division, and the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), USA.

**29 December** - The year closes with 31,691 reported enemy casualties at the hands of Marine units in III MAF. The cost of the year's fighting to the Marine Corps was 4,618 Marines killed and 29,320 wounded. □1775□

# The Vietnamese Marine Corps-VNMC (THUY QUAN LUC CHIEN-TQLC)

by Charles D. Melson  
Chief Historian

The period following World War II saw a number of associated Marine Corps founded in the Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand. They had been formed, with the help of foreign military aid, to fight the various conflicts to contain communist expansion in the region. Also present at various times were other Marines from the Netherlands, France, and Great Britain. The beginnings of the Cold War witnessed this proliferation of amphibious forces in Asia, in part because of the reputation the U.S. Marines had earned in the cross Pacific drive against Japan and in other post-war confrontations.

Three Corps fought together in Vietnam from 1965 through 1973. Each of these Corps were similar formations, but with its own history and traditions: the United States Marines, the Vietnamese Marines, and the Korean Marines. Common to each was a reputation for toughness on themselves and any enemy; strong unit pride and loyalty; and a privileged place within the defense structure of their respective countries. This is the story of one of them.

When the French departed Indochina in 1954, they left behind the fledgling armed forces of the Vietnamese Republic. Included were the riverine forces of the navy and an assortment of army commandos that had provided the troops for them. These had formed the river assault divisions (Dinassauts) that Dr. Bernard B. Fall observed as “one of a few worthwhile contributions” to military tactics of The First Indochina War (1945–1954). The commandos were formed into two battalions and grouped at Nha Trang when the separation of Vietnam into north and south was completed. After the Geneva Agreement that arranged the with-

drawal of France from Indochina and the partition of Vietnam into north and south pending elections, the Americans moved to help the government of South Vietnam against the communist bloc-supported People’s Republic of Vietnam.

On 1 October 1954, the mixed commando units were designated as the Marine Infantry of the Vietnamese Navy. In April 1956, it became known as the Vietnamese Marine Corps of the Navy consisting of a Marine Group of two landing battalions. In 1961, the Vietnamese Marines became part of the South Vietnamese armed forces general reserve. Expansion resulted from successful employment against dissidents and bandits, which led to the formation of a 5,000-man Marine

brigade in 1962. Vietnamese Marine Corps influence increased in part with the role it played in complex national politics that saw Marines involved in coups in 1960, 1963, and 1964. This continual balancing of power was reflected in assignment of forces, commanders, and the direction of the war.

The formation of its own training and replacement centers allowed the Marines to keep up to strength without relying on the army for manpower. Both officers and men attended schools in the United States at Quantico, Virginia, where a generation of Vietnamese and Americans met and served together. One Marine commandant, General Le Nguyen Khang, observed that his men were proud “to

*A U.S. Navy diesel submarine is used for amphibious training of Vietnamese Marines in the early 1960s. Here a boat team climbs from the deck to a waiting inflatable small boat while the American crewman pass down the paddles. The small arms and equipment were the same as those used by U.S. Marines at the time.*

Department of Defense (USMC) photo A410919



be associated in spirit and deed with the select group of professional military men of many nations who call themselves Marines.”

Of the total of 565,350 South Vietnamese in the armed forces in 1965, more than 6,500 were Marines. This figure expanded to more than 15,000 men in 1973. Total casualty figures are not available, but in the heavy 1972 fighting, some 2,455 Marines were killed in action and another 7,840 men were wounded during the same period. In 1965, the Vietnamese Marine Brigade was organized into a Corps headquarters, two task force headquarters (“A” and “B”), five infantry battalions, an artillery battalion, and supporting units of engineers, motor transport, military police, medical, and reconnaissance. Headquarters were located in Saigon with outlying facilities at Song Than, Thu Duc, and Vung Tau. A colonel, who was dual-hatted as a service and the brigade commander, commanded it. By this time, Vietnamese Marines were separated from the Vietnamese Navy and answerable to the high command of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. Present was a 28-man advisory unit from the U.S. Marine Corps. American field advisors were down to the battalion level.

By 1966, the Marines formed another battalion and realigned supporting units to become a more balanced combined arms force. It was still lacking in armor, aircraft, and logistic support. In 1968, a Marine division was formed of two brigades. In 1970, there were three brigades, nine infantry battalions, and three artillery battalions. Supporting units continued to be formed through the following year, reaching a peak of 939 officers and 14,290 men at the time the Americans withdrew. To face the military crisis in 1975, three additional battalions and a fourth brigade were formed in time for the South Vietnamese defeat.

An examination of some of the corporeal aspects of the Vietnamese Marines is useful before considering their performance. This is the “soldier’s load” in more than just material because it reflects the corporate tradi-



Insignia courtesy of the author.

*Vietnamese Marine Corps brigade insignia worn on the shoulder of the “tiger stripe” utility uniform. While the eagle, globe, and anchor are similar to the U.S. Marine emblem, the scarlet and gold star and silhouette showed both North and South Vietnam. The shield was in black, the color of a “death volunteer.”*

tion or myth. Specific designations and numbers, used to identify clothing and equipment, were complicated by different languages, although in most cases, names were just the translation of the equivalent terms for, at first French, and then American items. There were also different designations for the same item: a generic term used by the Marines, the supply term used to catalog the item, and the manufacturer’s jargon. Generic nomenclature is used with the vernacular terms used by Marines to find a balance between regulation and reality for the decade covered.

The Vietnamese Marines used naval rank insignia with army rank titles. Eight enlisted grades existed and seven officer grades were used through brigadier general. The rank structure reflected French influence, beginning with private, private first class, corporal, chief-corporal, sergeant, chief sergeant, adjutant, and chief-adjutant. Officers were the more conventional candidate through second lieutenant, first lieutenant, captain, major, lieutenant colonel, and

colonel. Silver braid on black was worn instead of the naval gold. Officers and enlisted men both wore their rank on shoulder boards. In the field, this was simplified to wearing a single shoulder board on the front of the shirt. This resulted in a miniature version that could be fastened on a shirt or pocket button. By the end of the period, miniature rank insignia embroidered in black on green cloth was worn on the collar or headgear in the fashion of the Americans. All three types of rank badge were in use throughout the war. On occasion, Vietnamese army pin-on rank was worn during joint operations.

Distinctive organizational emblems evolved with the service over time and defy documentation. The earliest emblems included Vietnamese navy badges worn on caps and berets. These were in metal and embroidered forms. The emblems were gold for officers and silver for enlisted men. The distinct Marine Infantry badge had a much longer service life. It displayed crossed anchors surrounded by a plain circle. It was in both metal and embroidered variations. The embroidered beret badge used dark blue and then green backing. The officers’ embroidered version had a wreath of rice stalks around crossed anchors central design; the enlisted version had only the crossed anchors.

In 1959, a new service device was adapted with an eagle, globe, and anchor motif. It closely followed the American Marine emblem, but evolved to incorporate traditional Vietnamese features. According to an official document, these included an anchor through a globe for the Marines’ naval character, a five pointed red star with Vietnam in the center indicating combat spirit and the five parts of the world, and an eagle spreading its wings represented unyielding martial spirit. A black background stood for bravery in difficult situations—the color of a “death volunteer.” This design eventually formed the basis for cap, beret, unit, and service insignia. Again, there were both officer and enlisted versions. The metal cap and beret badges were gold and silver for officers and brass for

enlisted. The embroidered beret badge was backed in green and then later in red.

While initial field uniforms were unmarked similar to the American Marines, major variations of service and unit insignia developed. One Marine advisor recalled that in 1967 he wore the brigade shoulder patch, a service emblem on his pocket, and the colored battalion nametape. First used was a full color service emblem on a black shield worn on the upper left sleeve indicating the Marine group or brigade. Later a full color service emblem on a green circle was worn on the right breast pocket as a corps insignia at about the time additional brigades were formed. Finally, a full color emblem on a green shield was worn on the upper left sleeve to indicate the Marine division, replacing the previous brigade emblem. The emblem on the left sleeve was in line with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam practice. Cloth emblems worn on the combat uniform were generally of a high quality woven (Bevo) manufacture. Printed variations were for general service issue.

Battalion insignia developed at the same time from colored name tags worn over the right breast pocket that were based on colors used to assemble units after amphibious or riverine landings. Noted in use were the following colors: division or brigade headquarters units were green with white letters, (the 1st Battalion in blue with white letters, 2d Battalion in purple with black letters, 3d Battalion in olive with white letters, 4th Battalion in red with black letters, 5th Battalion in maroon [black?] with gold letters, 6th Battalion in green with black letters, 7th Battalion in orange, 8th Battalion in blue with red letters, and 9th Battalion in brown with green letters). The artillery battalions used white and red combinations while the amphibious support battalion used green with gold or red letters. American advisors added a tape over the left breast pocket that had "U.S. Marines" in black on green, while their name tapes on the right were in white on green.

Eventually distinct battalion patches

were worn on the upper right sleeve. The infantry battalions had a series of nicknames and slogans that were reflected on their battalion insignia: 1st Battalion's "Wild Bird," 2d Battalion's "Crazy Buffalo," 3d Battalion's "Sea Wolf," 4th Battalion's "Killer Shark," 5th Battalion's "Black Dragon," 6th Battalion's "Sacred Bird," 7th Battalion's "Black Tiger," 8th Battalion's "Sea Eagle," and 9th Battalion's "Mighty Tiger." For the artillery units, this was the 1st Battalion's "Lightning Fire," 2d Battalion's "Sacred Arrow," and 3d Battalion's "Sacred Bow." Support and service battalions followed this example as well.

Uniforms were used on ceremonial occasion with the addition of white gloves, white duty belts, colored neck scarves, white parade shoulder cords, medals, ribbons, fourrageres, and white bootlaces. Four classes of unit awards existed and were indicated by

fourrageres worn on the left shoulder in red (gallantry), green (merit), yellow (national), and combination of all three colors for nine previous citations. The Marine band had its own distinct variation on this theme that included a tailored uniform worn outside the trousers.

Like the other Marines, the Vietnamese had a series of uniforms that reflected climate and occasion: service dress with coat and tie, khaki dress, and combat dress that became its characteristic uniform as the war went on. A black navy beret and badge of the Marine Infantry were worn at first, but by 1965, standard headgear was a green beret with Marine Infantry badge. Also worn was a utility cover or rain hat in sea-wave camouflage pattern. The M1 helmet was used with either a net or American pattern cloth camouflage cover. The first combat uniform worn

*A Vietnamese Marine Corps honor guard presents arms to visiting Marine Corps Commandant Leonard F. Chapman in 1968. The green beret, insignia, and unit awards were worn on special occasion. The influence of the French colonial period is apparent.*

Department of Defense photo



was the olive green shirt and trousers used by the army. This remained in use as basic training and fatigue clothing well after the adoption of the camouflage uniform, more from economy than sentiment. The “sea-wave” pattern uniform, or “tiger stripes,” was adopted in 1956 as a distinctive combat uniform. The four-color cloth was imported and manufactured into uniforms in South Vietnam. There were also examples of the army camouflage leaf pattern being used. This allowed for considerable variations in style and quality. In general, it consisted of a shirt with two covered chest pockets, trousers with two thigh and two seat pockets. Pen and cigarette pockets were popular modifications on the shirt sleeves and trouser legs. A black web belt with solid face brass buckle was issued. The American Marine open face buckle was popular as well. Footwear ranged from local Bata canvas jungle boots, to full leather boots, to the American tropical combat boot.

The Marines that went to war in 1965 should have reflected knowledge of the “soldiers load,” a subject that was examined critically by S.L.A. Marshall and the U.S. Marine Corps Schools early in the 1950s. In practice, considerations of culture, supply, and circumstance were shown to have been just as important factors in determining what was carried into battle. Individual combat equipment varied greatly over the period, from a mixture of French and American surplus to the standardized issue of M56 load carrying equipment from the U.S. Military Advisory Command Vietnam (MACV) beginning in 1965. This included the replacement of M44 and M45 combat and cargo packs with the theater designed semi-rigid indigenous rucksack, the “ARVN pack.” A distinctive Vietnamese field item was the individual hammock made from parachute nylon and suspension lines. In 1965, the Vietnamese were armed with American .30-caliber small arms that had been in existence since World War II: M1 rifles, M1 carbines, M1911 pistols, M1A1 submachine guns, and M1918 Browning automatic rifles. This required the use of webbing and accessories to carry the ammunition

and magazines for these weapons. This was followed by outfitting with M16s and newer small arms by MACV at the same time as the other South Vietnamese forces. The Marines were a priority for this outfitting along with the airborne units of the national reserve.

Another characteristic Vietnamese field item was the ever-present aluminum squad cooking pot. The cooking pot was an essential item in the way the Vietnamese fed in the field. The Marines carried five days of rations of rice, dried salted fish, and canned sardines. What was not issued had to be acquired locally. A typical meal consisted of five types of food: one salted, one fried or roasted, vegetable soup, green vegetables, and rice. A fermented sauce, nuoc-mam, was served as a spice and source of protein. Problems also resulted if the tactical situation prevented meals from being obtained and prepared. If circumstances did not allow resupply or preparation, then the Marines would go hungry. This included any American advisors that were present, most of whom lost weight with the Vietnamese in the field.

By 1960, the date on Vietnam’s Campaign Medal, a state of armed conflict existed between the two Vietnams and their allies in the Second Indochina War (1960–1975). This was a civil war that had international connotations between several world powers and their clients. It was a confrontation that displayed a full spectrum of violence, from individual terrorist acts and guerrilla fighting to conventional land combat, with extensive sea and air components. Enemy forces ranged from National Liberation Front guerrillas in South Vietnam of varying quality and quantity, to the regulars of the People’s Army of Vietnam, who were infiltrated into South Vietnam along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They also defended North Vietnam with forces that were more conventional.

The Southeast Asia Theater of Operations was divided into North Vietnam, South Vietnam, the Tonkin Gulf littoral, and the inland frontiers of Laos and Cambodia. The country of South Vietnam consisted of political provinces grouped together into mili-

tary regions or tactical zones numbered from I through IV, from north to the south. The country was divided geographically from east to west into a coastal plain, a piedmont region, and the central highlands.

As part of the national reserve, the Vietnamese Marines found themselves from the 17th Parallel in the north to the islands of the extreme south. When assigned to a specific corps area, the Marines would serve under Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) general officers, and the corps commanders. Prior to 1965, most operations were by single battalions in III and IV corps. A variety of counterinsurgency operations were engaged in, to include search and destroy, search and clear, helicopter and riverine assault, and security tasks. Characteristic employment was in response to critical situations requiring rapid movement with short notice

After 1965, the Marines deployed more to the II and I Corps areas as the war progressed away from the Delta and capital regions. Multiple battalion operations became the norm through the use of task force headquarters. Two battalions under Task Force “A” concluded a series of operations over a four-month period that resulted in 444 communists killed and another 150 taken prisoner. This included a notable engagement in April 1965 near An Thai, Binh Dinh Province, which resulted in the 2d Infantry Battalion earning a U.S. Presidential Unit Citation for a successful defense against a superior communist force.

From 1966 through 1967, the Marines spent more time in I Corps and conducted operations in conjunction with the Americans in this critical locale. It was observed that Marines were in the field 75 percent of the time, then the highest figure obtained by South Vietnamese forces. During the 1968 Tet Offensive, the Marines fought in both Saigon and Hue to defeat the communist attempt at a general uprising. During this year, the Vietnamese Marines maintained a casualty to kill ratio of one to seven.

In March 1969, the 5th Infantry Battalion earned a U.S. Naval Unit

Citation for action in III Corps, near Bien Hoa. This resulted in 73 communists killed, 20 taken prisoner, and captured weapons. The Marines took part in the aggressive South Vietnamese external operations that coincided with the American departure: Cambodia in 1970 and Laos in 1971. The Laotian incursion was the first time a division command post took the field to control maneuver brigades.

By 1971, at least two Marine brigades remained in I Corps facing the demilitarized zone and the North Vietnamese, filling the vacuum left when the Americans moved from this region. During the Spring Offensive in 1972, the Vietnamese Marines were

fully employed for the defense of the north and at first were used piecemeal under control of the 3d ARVN Division. The Marine Division established itself as a major fighting force in the month-long battle to recapture Quang Tri City; in the process, they killed an estimated 17,819 North Vietnamese soldiers, took 156 prisoners, and captured more than 5,000 weapons and vehicles. At the beginning of 1973, the Marine Division was regarded by the South Vietnamese as an "outstanding unit" of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces.

The Vietnamese Marines remained committed to the defense of the demilitarized zone through 1974. First ordered to protect Hue and Da Nang

from the communist attack in spring 1975, the Marines were hastily withdrawn with the collapse of the South Vietnamese in the northern provinces. Five battalion commanders and some 40 company commanders were killed during the fighting. The division reorganized and deployed its remaining forces at Long Binh for the final battle for Saigon. There it stayed through the subsequent fighting at the end of April 1975. At that point, the Vietnamese Marine Corps ceased to exist except in memory and history. For the Vietnamese, the conflict was the end of a 30-year civil war in which the Vietnamese Marine Corps played a part until the bitter end.

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## *Library of the Marine Corps*

# Lessons for Today's Warfighters

*by Dr. Jim Ginther  
Archival Team Leader*

Perhaps no past conflict in which the Marine Corps has engaged has more pertinent lessons for the current warfighters in today's conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan than the Vietnam War. And yet it remains one of the least-well documented. While making every effort to acquire documentation on the Marine Corps experience in Vietnam, there is still much to be done.

In the past few years, the Archives and Special Collections branch of the Library of the Marine Corps has added collections of personal papers to its holdings which contribute greatly to our understanding of the Marine Corps role in this conflict. The wartime letters of General John Chaisson, who served at the Military Advisory Command Vietnam during the conflict, provide a unique insider's perspective on the workings of that organization. The papers of Brigadier General Richard Carey provide much needed insight into the Marines' role in Operation Frequent Wind, the evacuation of Saigon. Finally, the collected papers of many members of the 1st Amphibious Tractor Battalion tell one of the Marine Corps' finest stories of the time-honored tradition of overcoming all hardship to complete the mission, reinforcing that fundamental understanding

that no matter what job is assigned, every Marine is a rifleman. Despite these great contributions to our understanding of the war, the branch is still actively seeking to add to its holdings, and encourages all Marine veterans holding materials documenting their experiences in Vietnam to contact the branch so that these materials can be preserved for future generations of warfighters.

The branch is also doing its part to make more readily available the Corps' official records of the conflict. Recently, the branch transferred nearly

1,000 boxes of command chronologies and related records to the Modern Military Records Branch of the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

This included the transfer of electronic copies of all these records, which the branch is working with NARA to make available as soon as possible. The project has opened an unprecedented level of cooperation between the facilities which we hope will continue to serve the Corps, veterans, and researchers into the future.

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*Members of Company G, 2d Battalion, 4th Marines return from Saigon to USS Vancouver on 30 April. They had reinforced security at the Embassy during Operation Frequent Wind.*



# The First and Longest POWs of WWII: North China Marine Embassy Guards - Part I

by Rob Taglianetti  
*Oral Historian*

The barracks was surrendered and the colors were hauled down for the last time. It was without doubt one of the saddest moments in the history of the Corps—a Marine detachment surrendering to the enemy without a fight. Even the Japanese were astounded, but there was nothing else for the commanding officer to do—all the arms and ammunition were already at the docks at Chinwangtao. The North China Marine Embassy Guards at Peiping (Peking) and Tientsin had shipped their supplies out only two days prior in anticipation of leaving China on 10 December 1941. While Pearl Harbor was being attacked, across the International Date Line and throughout that dark and snowy night, these Marine Embassy Guards were quietly being surrounded by a force they would not be able to repel their way through the morning of 8 December 1941. On that day, 189 Marines and 14 sailors became the first United States military prisoners of World War II. Those who survived and had not escaped, were held longer than any other in the war—almost four years.

Although war with Japan loomed on the horizon in 1941, prospects for a peaceful solution were not given up. As the political talks, negotiations, and pressure was applied, Japanese occupying troops and Marines Embassy Guards were not getting along. As things became increasingly worse, the Marines curtailed their travel, their tour of duty was eventually cut from 30 to 24 months, and the embassy guard force was reduced by half. In October of 1941, Peiping Marine Embassy Guard Private First Class Douglas A. Bunn was shot in the leg while on post by an unknown assailant. To most Marines, though, life went on as usual and any major events were separated by enough time to conceal the obviousness of it all in

today's hindsight. Meanwhile, United States and Japanese negotiations were failing and the decision was finally made to withdraw all Marines and United States personnel from China.

In November of 1941, one year after all government dependants were ordered out, the 4th Marine Regiment was ordered out of China. All Marine Embassy Guards kept their posts, however, until they and the Embassy staff could close down operations, including packing, shipping, and destroying any items that could not be taken. While the Marines ensured the safety of the remaining diplomats, their own departure preparations remained. The soonest they would be ready to board ship was 10 December. It could be coincidence that the Japanese launched their attack on the United States just two days before the Marines were scheduled to leave, but all this Embassy activity was undoubtedly observed by the Japanese authorities. The Japanese had watched the 4th Marine Regiment safely leave China and redeploy to the Philippines. They could foresee and probably chaffed at the thought that these Marines would cost many Japanese casualties in defending those islands when the Japanese would soon launch an attack there. A group of two hundred Marines would make a fine show of force, they may have thought. They could parade them around Northern China to convince the Chinese to give up resistance. They could study these men and learn their mannerisms, capabilities, use them in labor camps, and perhaps trade them for Japanese prisoners one day.

The Japanese knew about the heroic nature of Marines in defending themselves. In fact, they had examples at these very same locations in China just 41 years prior. Private Daniel (Dan) J. Daly was awarded the Medal of Honor fighting in the Boxer

Rebellion in Peiping (Peking). First Lieutenant Smedley D. Butler had been decorated as well for his part in that conflict near Tientsin. These legends and their fellow Marines had been victorious despite being repeatedly surrounded by a vastly larger enemy. The Japanese knew they would be up against a group of heroic men who would fight to the death against all odds. They had to carefully plan this capture and timing would be critical. They had to catch the Marines offguard.

Whether or not Japan's timing of their attack on the United States had anything to do with timing their capture of 200 Marines in China, the local Japanese authorities knew that both Tientsin and Peiping had just shipped out their entire supply of ammunition and machine guns, and the Japanese timing could not have been better. On 8 December, 7 December in the United States, Marines at all three locations were surrounded and taken prisoner. The Peiping Marines on guard that morning were ordered not to resist as word spread that the Japanese, throughout the night, had somehow managed to get mortars and machine guns placed up on the two-story high Tartar Wall, which surrounded the compound, and on the 10-story Chien-Men Tower. Private First Class Chester M. Biggs later wrote that Japanese troops surrounded the Peking Embassy as far as the eye could see. It says a lot about the Marines that the Japanese waited until the Marines had shipped out all of their armament and then felt they needed so many troops to convince the Marines not to resist. That morning news came in, by radio, that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor.

The Japanese authorities demanded to speak with the commanding officer to discuss the immediate surrender of

the compound. Colonel William W. Ashurst, the Peking detachment commanding officer, went over to the Japanese Embassy that morning and learned that the discussion would not be about the terms the surrender would be under, for that had been determined to be unconditional, but on how and at what time it would take place. Both Colonel Ashurst and Major Luther A. Brown, commanding officer of the Tientsin detachment, received assurances from the Japanese authorities that if they surrendered and did not attempt any escape, they and their Marines would be repatriated, under the Boxer Protocol, along with all the others in the diplomatic community.

The time for a formal surrender of the Peiping compound was set for 1300 that day. As the flag was lowered, the bugler sounded out his last notes and then broke the bugle over his knee and threw the pieces down to the ground. The arms were stacked, eyes welled up, hearts sank for the moment, but the Marines kept their chin up and returned to their barracks where they were confined until further notice. There is and was no cause for shame. Marines are trained to respect authority and follow orders. They were not only ordered but obliged to remain, until all preparations for departure were made, and the last civilian left the Embassy and was safe on board ship. They obeyed no matter what the cost, and they sacrificed their freedom for the next four years to see that those diplomats were safeguarded until the last moment.

The story of these Marines for the first month of captivity took place among two groups in two locations, including 140 men held at the Peiping compound and 63 in Tientsin that included the Chinwangtao detachment. On 10 December, after the Japanese had seized all arms, military gear, radio equipment, and any items which could be used as weapons, Private First Class Matthew H. Stohlman recorded in his journal what most affected him just two days after their capture. "Our greatest loss today was that of three radios. One from our barracks, one from the officer's quarters, and one from the hospital



Marine Corps Photo Collection

*Col William W. Ashurst and Cpl Arthur C. Davison (carrying white flag) arrive at the Japanese Legation in Peiping, China to discuss the Marines' surrender.*

corpsmen's quarters. Now we are completely cut off from the outside world." Surprisingly, most Marines were simply enjoying the diversion and attention they were getting and were taking this short war with a playful and jolly mood. A wedding was held in Tientsin between Sergeant Alan A. Sydow and his British girlfriend (visiting hours were Wednesday and Saturday from 1400 to 1600). Some thought it was going to be a short adventure that they could chuckle about some day.

On the first Christmas of their captivity both detachments were still held at their respective compounds. Spirits were still high because most men held out hope for repatriation, and the security was still relatively relaxed. Care packages were allowed in, and both detachments saved up rations to put on a good spread. On 23 December in Peiping, the men were allowed, under guard, to attend midnight Mass at the Chapel of the Hospice de Saint Michael, across from the compound. Protestant services were held in the mess hall. Their Japanese captors donated a Christmas tree, and on Christmas Eve they sang carols. After Christmas dinner, most of the men were sick from gorging. In Tientsin, where it seemed that the Japanese authorities were a bit more

relaxed, the men held some of the wildest parties many of them had ever attended. At their Christmas dinner, the Japanese authorities gave each man one bottle of beer, which they used while proposing a satirical toast to the victory of the United States. Private First Class Stohlman recorded the irony in his journal. "The fact that we were drinking a toast with Japanese beer in a Japanese concentration [camp] to the victory of the United States gave quite a bit of significance to the dinner".

On 10 January 1942, all Peiping Marines were moved down to Tientsin where all of them remained until they were transferred to their first prisoner of war camp on 1 February 1942. While in this holding pattern at the Tientsin compound, food and space quickly became scarce, and some Marines began to see what might be ahead. While optimism prevailed, the older Marines took note of the Japanese capture of Wake and Guam and saw what it would really take to free them. They started setting realistic liberation dates—like 1945. □1775□

#### TO BE CONTINUED

*Note: Rob Taglianetti is an oral historian at the Marine Corps History Division who recently conducted video oral histories with six of the last seventeen surviving North China Marine POWs.*

## Old Friends in Southeast Asia: U.S. Marines in Thailand

by Maj Valerie Jackson  
Editor and Field Historian

It started in 1821 when the first American ship steamed into Bangkok harbor. Unlike many of its Asian neighbors, Thailand—or Siam as it was known then—welcomed foreign visitors to its shores. Missionaries and traders maintained a regular presence in the kingdom, culminating with U.S. diplomat Edmund Roberts negotiating the 1833 Treaty of Amity and Commerce in Bangkok. The cordial relationship between the two countries continued to exist and flourish throughout the 19th century. So much so that King Mongkut, made famous by Hollywood's *The King and I*, offered President Abraham Lincoln war elephants to aid the Union in its fight against the Confederacy. The President politely declined, saying that the American climate would be too harsh for the very useful and intimidating pachyderms. As typical of his leadership, President Lincoln, considering the long-term effects on the entire nation, made a wise choice.

The next century proved to be more defining for the two nations militarily. In the two world wars, Thailand participated on a minor scale in the first, while in the second maintained even relations with the United States, despite its occupation by Japanese troops. In 1950, the Thais signed the Thai-U.S. Military Assistance Agreement, opening the door for a potential presence of U.S. troops in the kingdom. For the Marine Corps, the first large scale involvement with the Thai military came in October of 1956 when Marines of the 9th Marine Regiment, along with Royal Thai Marines, stormed ashore on the beach of Had Chao Samran in front of 25,000 spectators as part of Operation Team-Work. Then on the eve of the Vietnam War in 1961, President John F. Kennedy ordered 5,000 Marines to the northern Thai region of Udorn to counter communist expansion in



Department of Defense Photo (Marine Corps) A422894

*In a photo by SSgt Dub Allen, an F-4J of VMFA-232 readies for a combat mission at Nam Phong airbase in Thailand on 12 October 1972.*

neighboring Laos. More than a decade later in 1972, Task Force Delta, consisting of McDonnell Douglas F4 Phantom squadrons of Marine Fighter Attack Squadrons 232, 115, and 212, operated out of the Royal Thai Air Force Base in Nam Phong. Due to mounting pressure from her neighbors, however, the kingdom asked that all U.S. forces be withdrawn as soon as possible. By 1976, U.S. troops were gone.

After the tumult in Asia in the 1970s, the United States and Thailand once again resumed regular military cooperation exercises with the first running in 1982 of the now three-decade-old exercise, Cobra Gold. With forces from the III Marine Expeditionary Force and the Navy's Seventh Fleet as the main players, the

exercise sought to create a common understanding and interoperability between the two countries' militaries to be able to respond to future contingencies in the area. By 1983, however, Thailand's neighbor Vietnam labeled the exercise a "serious act of provocation" against the communist nations on the borders, namely Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Hanoi went so far as to accuse the United States of attempting to reintroduce a troop presence in Southeast Asia. Cobra Gold '84 drew the attention of the Soviets, as U.S. Navy personnel reported Russian ships offshore monitoring the activities. By 1985, the exercise had expanded to include all services of both countries. Commanding officer of the Royal Thai Marine Corps' 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, Commander Terdsak Promsiri, noted

after training with Marine Reservists from 3d Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company that “they’re presence here has been valuable to us,” and “we’ve learned a lot from them and we work very well together.”

By the 1990s, Cobra Gold continued to be the mainstay of joint U.S.-Thai military cooperation. A reduced military budget in America stressed the importance of relying on sister services within the U.S. armed forces and also U.S. allies. In Thailand, expansion to humanitarian assistance projects, such as medical and dental support and construction of schools and orphanages for local Thais helped to foster a spirit of appreciation for U.S. involvement in the area. The largest to date Cobra Gold in 1994 drew praise from the Commanding General, III Marine Expeditionary Force, Major General Donald R. Gardner. “We’ve. . . achieved our goal of deploying to Thailand, conducting a huge exercise and enhancing our friendships with the Thais at the same time,” he noted. Events in Somalia

scaled back the amphibious demonstration that year, with the withdrawal of the USS *Pelelieu* and her amphibious ready group. In 1995, Operation CARAT (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training) began as an annual series of bilateral maritime and aviation exercises between the United States and six Southeast Asia nations. Today, U.S. Marines continue to participate in this very fruitful exercise.

With the turn of the century, events in both Thailand and the United States stressed the individual nations in different ways. While the U.S. armed forces began wide scale military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq after the attacks of 11 September 2001, responsibilities in Southeast Asia were not abandoned. Exercises in Thailand continued, although sometimes scaled back in size due to operational commitments. The December 2004 tsunami relief, orchestrated by Marines out of Utopao Naval Base, “saved thousands of lives,” according to Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, Mr. Alexander A. Arvizu.

After proving the merits of decades

of interoperability exercises in the country, the 37th running of Cobra Gold in 2007 focused on peace operations. Again, Mr. Arvizu remarked that the exercise now has a true multilateral nature that enhances the U.S.’s ability to respond to peace enforcement and peacekeeping missions in the area with the help of several nations. Lieutenant General John F. Goodman, Commanding General, Marine Forces Pacific, noted that the United States must maintain “freedom of action” in Southeast Asia, and the continuation of these exercises plays a large role in accomplishing that goal.

With America’s mission in Southwest Asia turned to fighting a counterinsurgency, the Thai military is taking valuable lessons from exercises with the U.S. Marines and directly implementing them in their struggle with insurgents in the south of their country. In the Pattani region bordering Malaysia, separatist groups, labeled by the Thais as possible former communists, Muslim jihadists, and bandits, have claimed the lives of more than 2,300 people since 2004. The Thai armed forces use the U.S. Marines’ lessons learned from combating similar groups in Iraq and Afghanistan by forcefully applying them to the region of their country that is vital to peace in Southeast Asia.

Since that first ship sailed into Bangkok harbor more than 180 years ago, the United States and Thailand have maintained a friendly and unique relationship. The Thai people, known for their flexibility and affability, have embraced the American military. Through the direct support and friendship of the United States Marine Corps, Thailand has grown into a solid, life-long partner for the U.S. in Asia. □1775□

*LtCdr Pilan Amsanang, Royal Thai Marine Corps, was the field exercise operations officer for Cobra Gold 2007. A graduate of U.S. Marine Corps Expeditionary Warfare School, he has done 10 previous Cobra Golds and serves as an example of how the exercise has evolved into a truly integrated training opportunity for the American and Thai armed forces.*

Photo by Maj Valerie A. Jackson



*The author conducted historical coverage of Cobra Gold 2007 for the History Division and is indebted to Maj Stephen C. “Beavis” Cohn and Col James E. Reilly for their assistance in gaining access to U.S. Marines and regional partners throughout the exercise.*

## Marines in South Africa

by Charles D. Melson  
Chief Historian

In August 2007, the 33d Congress of the International Commission of Military History was held in Cape Town, South Africa—a first for the country and sub-continent. Congress members highlighted the continued interest in an area of persistent importance in the post-Cold War era. President George W. Bush reinforced this importance by announcing this year the formation of a U.S. Africa Command by 2008.

As Chief Historian, I had the opportunity to attend the Congress along with several other academic and service military historians. While impressed with the quality of the presentations and of the historic sites and battlefields visited, I wondered whether or not there had ever been a Marine presence in southern Africa. When I returned to the States, I did some digging.

United States Marines have been in South Africa as part of the American Embassy staff, with various deployments of the U.S. Navy, and as participants in diplomatic and contingency efforts, reflecting the strategic location of the Cape of Good Hope. A lesser known connection with South Africa was General Thomas Holcomb, Commandant of the Marine Corps, who served as U.S. Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary to the Republic of South Africa.

When Ambassador Holcomb arrived in Pretoria in 1944, in the midst of World War II, his concerns were global as well as regional. As a military man and Service chief, he viewed his diplomatic mission in broad terms. His goals were to establish friendly relations, to advise on developments that would affect the United States, to protect and promote American business, and to provide the U.S. Government's views. Recognizing the size of the region, he used a Douglas DC3, flown and maintained by a U.S. Marine detachment, to fly



Courtesy of Brig D.F.S. Fourie  
*South African Corps of Marines cap badge included Protea flower with a naval anchor and flaming artillery shell. These symbolized the coast artillery and anti-aircraft defense mission of the Corps.*

*Members of the South African Navy's Marine Brigade dig in for a base defense exercise.*

Courtesy of the South African National Museum of Military History



known for their band and “dress blues.” The goal of the service chief was to train the Marines “to the same standards as those of the Royal Marines and the United States Marine Corps.” The development and deployment of ship mounted surface-to-surface missiles during the Cold War, however, made the South African Marines outdated and an “unwarranted expense.” As a result, existing personnel were transferred to the army and navy.

Like all good ideas, the concept of Marines was revisited during the period of South Africa’s Border War from 1966 to 1989. During the conflict, the South African Army and Air Force took pride of place and budget. Any landing operations were conducted by the Army and Special Forces as the Navy only had submarines, minesweepers, patrol gunboats, frigates, and support ships. As the conflict expanded down the west and east coasts, the nationalist and communist threats offered exposed flanks. When the need for increased naval participation was recognized, it was felt that an amphibious force could be used for both base security and amphibious operations. In 1979, the South African Navy decided to establish a Marine Brigade. With somewhere near 1,000 men, it was more like a reinforced battalion landing team. Augmentation from the South African Army was planned to bring the brigade to full strength. At the time, the South African Navy had thir-

*Delta Class landing boats are used to bring South African Marines ashore during a landing exercise.*

Courtesy of the South African National Museum of Military History



Department of Defense Photo  
*Gen Thomas Holcomb, Commandant of the Marine Corps and Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa.*

ty ships, manned by some 4,500 officers and men (including about 1,500 national servicemen) and another 10,000 reservists. While predominantly white, roughly 20 percent of the navy was black or Asian. Of the Marine Brigade, the majority were regular or national servicemen, with 15 to 30 percent being reservists.

According to the South African Defense Force, “the duties of the marines are an amalgam of sailors and soldiers, they are trained as both, and consequently their training is tough and comprehensive.” Basic naval training was at Saldanah Naval Base, followed by a light infantry course at Eikesboshock. The South African Navy

Marine Brigade had little time for garrison and ceremonial duties. From 1981, companies were rotated through the operational area in South West Africa where the Marines were used primarily in riverine or mounted counterinsurgency efforts, based at first at Oshakati, then Wenela Base, Caprivi. Marines also manned the harbor protection units and were coxswains for landing craft. Marines were also based at Richard’s Bay, Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth, Simons Town, Table Bay, Saldanah Bay, and Walvis Bay. In 1989, the Navy conducted an amphibious demonstration at Walvis Bay with South African Marines and paratroopers. That action demonstrated the ability of the South Africans to block Soviet or Cuban support to rebel groups from the sea.

Despite these contributions, the Marines were again eliminated in a 1990 cost-cutting effort. As recently as 2005, the question of the need for Marines was revisited as part of a “crisis response capability” for South Africa and its expanded navy. Maybe the past will be prologue again, and the usefulness of a dedicated amphibious force will be recognized. With the South African Navy being recognized as the principle source of peacekeeping and humanitarian deployments, the logic for its own land force is obvious. □1775□

### Contact Information

The International Commission of Military History (ICMH) consists of 44 national commissions. The U.S. Commission of Military History (USCMH) sends delegates to the annual meetings. American historians also take part in the organization’s leadership council, military archives and bibliography committees, and in the scientific program. The 2008 Congress will be held in Trieste, Italy. For membership information, dues, and announcements, visit the U.S. Commission’s website at <http://uscmh.acdis.uius.edu> or contact the USCMH Secretary-General at P.O. Box 523431, Springfield, Virginia 22152.

## Iron and Wood: The U.S. M14 Service Rifle

by Alfred V. Houde, Jr.  
Curator of Ordnance

The battle-proven success of the M1 Garand rifle during World War II assured that its successor would be of a similar design. As early as 1944, work began to improve the much-loved rifle. Desired changes to the M1 included lighter weight, a full-automatic capability, and a detachable large-capacity magazine. After many trials and experimental models, the U.S. Government accepted the M14 Rifle into service in May 1957.

The M14 replaced four different weapons: the M1 Garand, the M1/M2 carbine, the Browning Automatic Rifle and the M3A1 .45-caliber sub-machine gun. Additionally, the rifle was chambered for a new cartridge identified as 7.62 mm NATO. The M14, along with the M60 machine gun, would fulfill all of the infantry's small arms requirements with the same caliber ammunition. This new cartridge was .5 inch shorter in overall length than the .30-06 or M2 .30-caliber cartridge used in the M1 Garand. Ballistically it measures up almost identically.

The M14 sported all of the desired changes and modifications. It was slightly lighter in weight. It was capable of selective-fire; that is it could be fired in either a semi-automatic or fully automatic mode. And it utilized a detachable box-type magazine, which held 20 rounds of ammunition. This was a great improvement in fire power over the eight-round clip utilized in the M1 Garand. Four companies manufactured the new service rifle: Springfield Armory in Massachusetts; Harrington and Richardson Arms Company of Worcester, Massachusetts; Olin-Mathieson Chemical Corporation (Winchester) of New Haven, Connecticut; and Thompson-Ramo-Wooldridge, Incorporated, Cleveland, Ohio.

Vietnam was the true test of combat worthiness for this new rifle. The first Marine Corps units to land in Vietnam in March 1965 carried M14s. Like its predecessor, the M1 Garand, the M14

proved reliable and hard-hitting under the worst of jungle and mountain conditions. Although the M14 was popular with Marines, the 5.56 mm M16A1 eventually replaced it as the standard combat rifle of the U.S. military. Studies revealed that a scaled-down lighter rifle capable of full automatic fire would be more portable during modern close combat operations. Also, a lighter caliber round meant that more ammunition could be carried by the individual combatant. Many M14 rifles were destroyed or transferred to friendly nations, but a number of them remained in service with the U.S. Armed Forces, most notably on competitive Marine Corps rifle teams and in the fleet with the U.S. Navy. The author remembers the M14 being in ships and Naval Station armories through 1998.

During the 1990s, the Marine Corps reinstated a concept effectively used in both World War II and Korea. In the earlier wars, a Marine squad's table of organization and equipment included a sniper rifle and a "designated marksman." The designated marksman was a Marine who possessed exceptional shooting skills and engaged and

*Cast figure of a Marine dog handler armed with an M14 and his dog, working near a hut as part of the "In the Air, on Land and Sea: The War in Vietnam," exhibits, National Museum of the Marine Corps.*

Photograph by Robert Sullivan.



destroyed enemy targets outside the ranges normally used by an infantryman. His special training, although not as intense as sniper school, focused more on developing and enhancing long-range shooting skills.

These specially designated Marines used the M14 for this role, and the weapon has performed well as the Designated Marksman Rifle. Built by skilled Marine Corps armorers at the Precision Weapons Shop at Quantico, Virginia, these weapons are assembled from a specially tuned match rifle. Armorers fit them with a Harris bipod, competition fiberglass stock, and a Unertl or Leupold 10 power optical sight. Additional accessories may include firearms suppressors and night vision optical sights for special operations.

The M14's attraction was not restricted to military use as evidenced by a commercially produced semi-automatic only version of the rifle, which gained popularity with many target shooters and sportsmen, who quickly recognized its strength, accuracy, and dependability. However, the U.S. M14 was designed first and foremost as a combat service rifle. Its fame and reputation earned first on the battlefields of Vietnam, continues now during the Global War on Terrorism.

In honor of this popular rifle, the National Museum of the Marine Corps exhibits two different M14 rifles in the Vietnam War gallery. The first is in the "Weapons of War" case, and the second rifle is slung across the shoulder of the Marine dog handler cast figure in the Quang Nam village scene, as seen in the photograph.

Retired—then resurrected—the M14 continues to serve our fighting men and women. Although features, configuration, and materials of construction have changed somewhat since its initial introduction, this weapon of iron and wood, with a lineage to the great arms designer John Garand and the M1, is still shooting and serving. □1775□

# Codename: “Operation End of the Rainbow” A Multi-Resources Battle Study Exercise

by Rachel S. Kingcade and Patricia Lane  
Breckinridge Library

**Phase I:** Establish the Breckinridge Academic Library, one of the branches of The Library of the Marine Corps, as a collection of Vietnam resources to meet multiple study needs.

As a researcher, student, Marine, or history buff, you may need to find information on any number of topics concerning Vietnam. Perhaps you have been tasked to find information on any of the following: What was Operation Dewey Canyon? Why was it significant? What are FSBs? Who was General Ray Davis? Are there division command chronologies for Operation Dewey Canyon? What was the Combined Action Program?

**Zone of Action:** The library collection, both online and in print, including microform, bound periodicals, and official histories.

**Conditions:** Prime. The library provides multiple study alcoves, more than 50 internet terminals, WiFi, and reference assistance on location, by phone (703) 784-4411, or email: <GRCreference@grc.usmcu.edu>

**Phase II:** Ascertain the nature of the collection through a search using prime weapons issued: the online library catalog and the online databases. Codename: Operation End of the Rainbow.

**Phase III Part 1: Searching.** The first search focuses on library materials in the library catalog using general keyword terms including: Vietnam, Marine, chronology, microform, Dewey, Davis, and Combined Action Program. Results include: *Records of the U.S. Marine Corps in the Vietnam War*, *Confidential U.S. State Department Files on Vietnam*, *The Vietnam Battle Chronology* by David Burns Sigler and *U.S. Marines in Vietnam* series by the Marine Corps History and Museums Division.

**Phase III Part 2: Searching.** The second search focuses on resources found in the library databases accessed from the library homepage, [www.mcu.usmc.mil/MCRCweb/library.htm](http://www.mcu.usmc.mil/MCRCweb/library.htm). We chose the

database *Proquest*, found under the category “Military & Security.” Under an advanced search, using the keywords Dewey Canyon, Marine, and Davis, we strike gold finding the following articles: “Operation Dewey Canyon,” by Major General Robert H. Barrow, *Marine Corps Gazette* (Nov 1981), “Dewey Canyon: All Weather Classic,” by First Lieutenant Gordon M. Davis, *USMC, Marine Corps Gazette* (Jul 1969), and “Operation Dewey Canyon,” by Marc Bernstein, Vietnam (Aug 2007).

## The Operation Closes: Evaluation of Operation End of the Rainbow

In the first part of Phase III, we garnered several good print and microform sources that help explain some of the Phase I questions. Not familiar with Operation Dewey Canyon? An excellent place to begin would be *The Vietnam Battle Chronology* by David Burns Sigler found in the catalog search. Consulting the index for Dewey Canyon, we found a listing on page 87 that has the official chronology for Operation Dewey Canyon beginning on the date 22 January through 19 March 1969. The entry includes a listing of Fire Support Bases (FSB), the purpose of Dewey Canyon, the division commander, Major General Raymond Davis, Marine Corps units involved, and a day by day listing of engagements within the operation.

In *U.S. Marines in Vietnam* series, we found a thorough description of Combined Action Program. The book describes a CAP as a, “15-man rifle squad with squad leader, M79 grenadier, Navy Corpsman, and three rifle teams of four men each, working with a Popular Forces 35-man platoon to defend a village or a group of hamlets.” Why is this so significant? Given the role of military advisors within the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, CAP provides a historical example of this role, its six basic missions, and how effective it may or may not have been.

In the records of the *U.S. Marine Corps in the Vietnam War*, we discovered the hidden gems Command Histories/Chronologies of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific Command (FMFPAC) 1964–1973, III Marine Amphibious Force Command (III MAF) 1964–1971, and the Division Command Histories/Chronologies, 1965–1971, which include references to Operation Dewey Canyon. These highly important sources detail the actions by Marines often written very close to the events themselves.

In the second part of Phase III, our *Proust* database search, we struck pay dirt with three excellent articles detailing who General Ray Davis was, what made Operation Dewey Canyon significant, the role of FSBs within the operation, the contention surrounding this mission as a foray into Laos, and what made this so important to the Marine Corps. As an added bonus, these articles can be emailed directly to the searcher.

## Lessons Learned

The Breckinridge Branch of Library of the Marine Corps provides a collection of resources on Vietnam, including research assistance by the reference staff if you are struggling to find information on your topic. “Operation End of the Rainbow” proved successful in using two prime weapons in the library’s arsenal: the online library catalog and the online library databases. In both searches we were able to obtain a selection of specific information on Operation Dewey Canyon. Within the books and microfilm we located, we found detailed reports of events as they occurred, explanations of acronyms, supporting documents, narratives by Marines involved in specific combat missions, detailed timelines of events, and organizational data often listing persons of interest. The main lesson learned? One should never underestimate the level of sources provided by The Library of the Marine Corps. □1775□

## Passing of Noted Marine Aviator

by Robert V. Aquilina

Assistant Head, Reference Branch

Lieutenant General Duane A. Wills, a highly decorated combat veteran from the Vietnam War, died 21 May 2007 in Tucson, Arizona, at the age of 68. The Independence, Missouri, native was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps following his 1961 graduation from the University of California at Los Angeles. He then completed The Basic School, Quantico, Virginia, and was ordered to flight training at Pensacola, Florida, in January, 1962. He was designated a Naval Aviator in July 1963.

Upon graduation from flight school, he was assigned to Marine Fighter Squadron 212, at Marine Corps Air Station, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, and served with the squadron until August 1966. From May to December 1965, he served on board the USS *Oriskany* off the coast of Vietnam, when his squadron served as part of the carrier's air wing. He was promoted to captain in November 1965. In August 1966, he was assigned to Naval Air Station Kingsville, Texas, where he served as a flight instructor from September 1966 to July 1968. After conversion training to the F-4, he was promoted to major and ordered to Vietnam in November 1968, where he served with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 542 and Marine Aircraft Group 11. He flew 600 combat missions and more than 7,000 mishap-free flight hours in both fixed-and rotary-wing aircraft. During this period, he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross with gold star; the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V"; 45 Air Medals; and the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V."

General Wills held a variety of assignments following his graduation in June 1973 from the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, which included tours of duty as the personnel officer of 2d Marine Aircraft Wing, Marine Corps Air Station,



Department of Defense Photo  
*LtGen Duane A. Wills*

Cherry Point; operations officer, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 115; logistics officer of Marine Aircraft Group 15; and executive officer of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314. He later served as Commanding Officer, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 235 and Commanding Officer, Marine Aircraft Group 24.

In July 1984, he assumed command of the 31st Marine Amphibious Unit in the Western Pacific, and commanded that unit until its colors were retired in April 1985. He later was assigned duty as the Chief of Staff, Fleet Marine Force Pacific. He was promoted to brigadier general in 1987, and later commanded the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and served as Deputy Commander, III Marine Expeditionary Force on Okinawa, Japan. General Wills' last assignment was Deputy Chief of Aviation, Headquarters, Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps History Division was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of a member of its extended family with the 2 August 2007 death of Major Christopher M.

Kennedy. A 1994 graduate of the Naval Academy, he accepted a commission as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps. Upon completion of The Basic School, he continued his military education at flight school, earning his "Wings of Gold," and a post as Navigator and Electronic Counter-Measures Officer for EA-6B Prowlers. He later returned to his beloved Naval Academy, where he served as a professor of history and Academy drill team commander. He later was mobilized and deployed during 2003 to Iraq as a field historian, documenting Marine Corps activities and operations. While in that capacity, he also served as the principal author of the History Division's *U.S. Marines In Iraq, 2003: Anthology and Annotated Bibliography*. His tour in Iraq was followed by a deployment to Haiti, and from August 2005–December 2006, he served with Marine Forces Europe in Stuttgart, Germany, as a logistics operation officer, where he led efforts for the cross-national military training exercise African Lion, and was honored by the Moroccan government for his efforts. □1775□

*Then Capt Christopher M. Kennedy*



## Behind the Vietnam Story

by Charles D. Melson  
Chief Historian

*Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965.* By Mark Moyar. Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 2006, ISBN-13; 978-0-521-86911-9, 512 pp., \$32.00.

When the Marine Corps began to examine its role in the Vietnam War, it started with a volume covering the period from 1954 until 1964, the so-called “advisory and combat assistance” era. Published in 1977, it would have benefited from the background provided by this definitive examination of how the United States began its involvement in one of the major conflicts of the Cold War. Since then, the story of Vietnam has been dominated by journalists despite the efforts of more serious researchers. Mark Moyar is one of the latter, who proclaims he is a revisionist in the effort to document the reasons the conflict was entered and justified (the author self-defines his position in reaction to an orthodox school that was critical of American efforts). His case is made by extensive research and access to previously unavailable or under utilized sources. This is reflected in some 83 pages of notes.

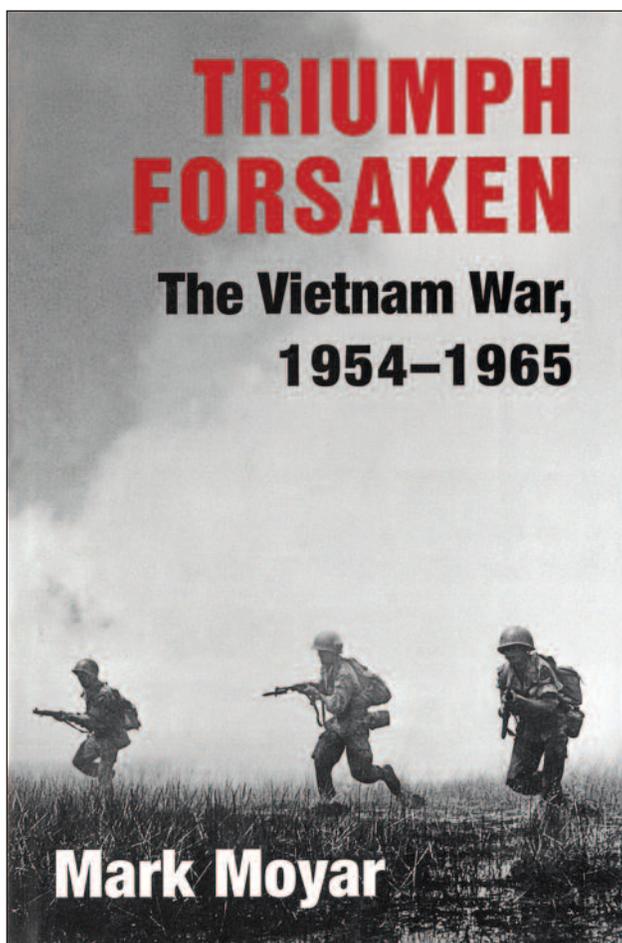
Moyar argues that much of what is orthodox about the history of the Vietnam War was not true. In this he has provided a detailed assessment of Diem and his regime. He claims both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations failed to recognize the significance of North Vietnamese supply lines through Laos and Cambodia and the need to disrupt the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Moyar comes down harshly on President Lyndon Baines Johnson and his administra-

tion for not standing against the communists more strongly and swiftly. Related to this was the possible invasion of communist North Vietnam, based upon Moyar’s belief that the domino theory was legitimate. Inaccurate press coverage undercut

how best to maintain Vietnamese independence in a civil war as an American ally in the struggle against communism in Southeast Asia. There were several aggressive strategic options available that would have enabled South Vietnam to resist aggression from North Vietnam without large-scale American military involvement. With President John F. Kennedy’s death, President Johnson chose not to act on these options due to what the author found was inadequate intelligence and false assumptions about the nature of the Vietnamese regime and Cold War context. Along with these pivotal events, others were reconsidered: the 1960–1961 National Liberation Front (*Viet Cong*) insurgency, the 1963 Buddhist protest movement, the 1964 battle of Ap Bac and the role of American military advisors.

Dr. Mark Moyar was educated at Harvard and Cambridge Universities and taught at Cambridge, Ohio State, and Texas A&M. At present, he is a professor at the Marine Corps University at Quantico, Virginia. His story is a complex and well-written account that sets the bar high for scholarship. It is essential reading for anyone wanting a fresh understanding of one of America’s longest and misunderstood conflicts. The juncture between policy intent and reality is well illustrated and of usefulness in light of present foreign affairs. Hopefully, a future volume will cover the decade of American direct involvement and fighting between 1965 and 1975.

Mr. Melson is the author of *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The War that Would Not End.* □1775□



the Diem regime and prevented expanded American support that might have worked short of large-scale troop deployments. While not directly related to the current conflict in Iraq, there are important similarities as well as differences in the two conflicts.

Central to this account is the coup and assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963. This event was preceded and followed by a running debate on

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