

# MARINE CORPS HISTORY

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 2

WINTER 2018



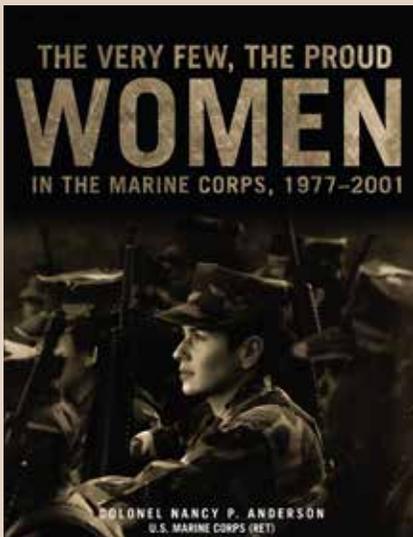
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# STORY TO TELL

*Marine Corps History* is accepting article and book review submissions for 2019.

*Marine Corps History* publishes twice a year, and the editors are currently looking for new articles and book reviews on all topics within the long history of the Corps: Civil War, Spanish-American War, Banana Wars, WWI, WWII, Korea, Cold War, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and women and minorities in the military. We are particularly interested in masters and PhD students who are ready to venture into scholarly publishing. Articles must be at least 4,000 words, footnoted according to *Chicago Manual of Style*, and focus on some aspect of the Corps either directly or indirectly, including foreign marines and joint operations.

For more information about submission guidelines or history books available for review, please contact the managing editor at [stephani.miller@usmcu.edu](mailto:stephani.miller@usmcu.edu).



## THE VERY FEW, THE PROUD

*Women in the Marine Corps,*  
1977–2001

Colonel Nancy P. Anderson, USMC (Ret)

*The Very Few, the Proud* documents a generation of changes to accession and assignment policies pertaining to women seeking to serve in the U.S. Marine Corps between 1977 and 2001. This history intentionally ends at the threshold of the Global War on Terrorism—the gateway to current history. Anderson’s research follows the changes in social and gender distinctions, definitions of combat and combat support, and the belief—by voters, legislators, and military leadership—in the value of using the best person to fill a military billet regardless of gender. *The Very Few, the Proud* draws upon hundreds of personal accounts of women who served during the period, personal archives of Marine Corps leaders, and journalistic accounts of the treatment of women in and by the U.S. military.

8.5 x 11 | 280 pp | August 2018

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**Cover art:** *Guardian Angel Guns*, by Maj A. Michael Leahy, oil on linen. As Sikorsky UH-34 helicopters of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 363 drop off members of a 1st Marine Division reconnaissance team, a Bell UH-1E Iroquois gunship from Marine Observation Squadron 2 darts overhead, looking for enemy troops halfway up the mountain slopes. Maj Leahy was a port machine gunner on a UH-34. *Art Collection, National Museum of the Marine Corps*

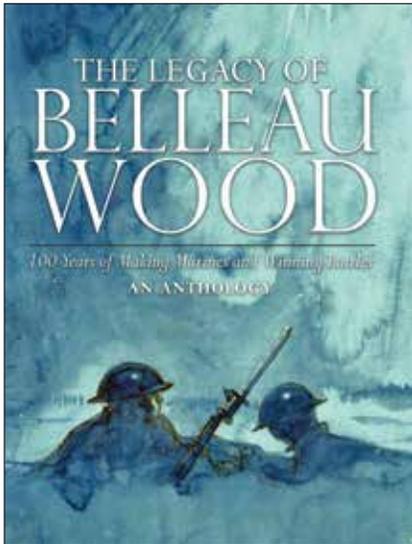
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## NOW AVAILABLE



The Legacy of Belleau Wood  
*100 Years of Making Marines  
 and Winning Battles*  
 AN ANTHOLOGY

*The Legacy of Belleau Wood: 100 Years of Making Marines and Winning Battles* examines the Marine Corps during the last century, doing two things it does best: making Marines out of civilians and winning battles in defense of the United States. This anthology of articles demonstrates how Marines continue to follow in the footsteps of their Great War forebears, who fought the wars at hand while planning for the wars to come, refining and innovating tactics and organization so that the Corps remained relevant and effective in a rapidly changing technological environment.

8.5 x 11 | 368 pp | May 2018

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## Scholarly Debate

*Marine Corps History* is a peer-reviewed, scholarly publication, and in that tradition we recognize that the articles published here are not the official or final word on any topic, merely the beginning of a conversation. If you think an author missed the target or failed to deliver, please join the debate by submitting an article for consideration. Email the managing editor at [stephani.miller@usmcu.edu](mailto:stephani.miller@usmcu.edu) for deadlines and author guidelines.

# DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

*Paul J. Weber*

As this foreword was being composed, the 75th anniversary of the 2d Marine Division (2d MarDiv) storming ashore on Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, in the Gilbert Islands was at hand. Fittingly, History Division sent a team to Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, North Carolina, to give a presentation about the fight for the Tarawa Atoll to a large group from the current ranks of 2d MarDiv on 20 November, the anniversary of the first day of that monumental battle.

Overall, 2018 has been a busy year for History Division with many such presentations delivered around the country. Two historians visited I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) to give presentations to primarily first-term enlisted Marines at Marine Corps Air Stations Yuma and Miramar, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, and Ma-

rine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. The team spoke to more than 6,000 Marines about the basic history of the Corps, dispelling some of the myths and legends that have grown larger over the years. Recruiting Station St. Louis, Missouri, invited a historian to give a presentation about the World War I Marines who enlisted out of St. Louis and the impact they had on the community and the Marine Corps.

Other projects of interest encompass a narrow swath of our history: first, a continuing effort to definitively identify the flag raisers in Joe Rosenthal's iconic photograph of the event on Iwo Jima; and second, as an outreach effort, History Division sent a historian to Marine Forces Southern Command to discuss the Guadalcanal campaign.

Throughout 2018, the division commemorated the centennial of World War I's end with numerous projects and published products, including articles in *Marine Corps History* and three books: *The Bravest Deeds of Men: A Field Guide for the Battle of Belleau Wood* by Colonel William T. Anderson, USMCR (Ret); *Reducing the Saint-Mihiel Salient, September 1918* by Colonel Walter G. Ford (Ret); and *The Legacy of Belleau Wood: 100 Years of Making Marines and Winning Battles, an Anthology*, edited by Paul Westermeyer and Dr. Breanne Robertson.

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*Originally from Portland, OR, Paul Weber enlisted in the Marine Corps on 9 November 1982, reporting to San Diego, CA, for recruit training on 2 February 1983 and attending military occupational specialty (MOS) school at Fort Bliss, TX, as a Hawk pulse acquisition radar repairman. Selected for Officer Candidates School (OCS) in the summer of 1984, he attended OCS and The Basic School in 1985, eventually ending up in air defense. Weber earned a master's degree in U.S. history while the Marine officer instructor at Miami University and retired in January 2006. He reported to History Division as the deputy director in February 2010 and is currently the acting director.*

The division-wide commemoration of the World War I centennial hit a high note with a three-day symposium featuring an eclectic group of speakers, ranging from academics to amateur historians. Then in November, several historians gave presentations at a Marine Corps Heritage Foundation-hosted conference covering the Vietnam War with a focus on 1968.

History Division also published books on several other topics this year. Colonel Nancy P. Anderson's (Ret) *The Very Few, The Proud: Women in the Marine Corps, 1977-2001* marked another centennial with its publication—that of women's acceptance for duty into the Marine Corps in 1918—and was launched at the Women Marines Association's biennial convention, held this year in Arlington, Virginia. The division also released *Death in the Imperial City: U.S. Marines in the Battle for Hue, 31 January to 2 March 1968* by Colonel Richard D. Camp (Ret).

Planning is already underway to mark yet another 100th anniversary: the founding of the Marine Corps History Division. Major General Commandant George Barnett established the division on 8 September 1919. The division's first director was Major Edwin N. McClellan, who had just completed a seven-month-long collection trip through the battlefields and support areas in France and Great Britain earlier that year to gather "historical data pertaining to activities of Marines during the operations in Europe." He was well suited to both jobs and got History Division off to a great start. McClellan authored more than 100 articles and other pieces over the years, and is widely credited with the idea of celebrating the Marine Corps' birthday with a suitable event each year. McClellan left History Division in 1925 for other Marine Corps duties, but returned for another two-year stint as director in 1931. He retired from active service in 1936.

History Division will celebrate its centennial with a reception in early September 2019, and we hope to gather as many alumni and family as possible to mark the event. It also will be commemorated in the pages of *Marine Corps History's* Summer 2019 edition with several articles about the history of the division.

The new year also brings the 75th anniversary of the Allied invasion of Northern Europe in Normandy, France, marking the beginning of the end for German hegemony on the continent. A team of Marine Corps historians submitted a paper for the Normandy 75 International Conference (sponsored by Britain's University of Portsmouth Business School) covering topics including Marine Corps support of the landings, Office of Strategic Services operations, and several alternative scenarios. While Normandy was primarily an Army affair, there were Marines on General Dwight D. Eisenhower's planning staff, and the four battleships and three heavy cruisers would have included Marine detachments aboard, as well. The team's proposal was accepted and they will be attending the conference in July 2019 to deliver their findings.

At the end of 2018, the Corps bids a fond farewell to Ms. Lin Ezell, the founding director of the National Museum of the Marine Corps located in Quantico, Virginia. Ezell came on board in the summer of 2005 and guided the museum through its initial construction and fitting out, securing its accreditation, and the second-phase construction now nearing completion. Prior to her time with the Corps, Ezell worked with the Smithsonian Institution for 21 years and with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for 10 years before that. We wish her the best in her retirement. Fair winds and following seas.

In this issue of *Marine Corps History*, you will find an article detailing the assault on Hill 142 during the opening battle of Belleau Wood in 1918 (fitting in the centennial year of World War I's end) and two articles discussing the Vietnam War, one on the origins and early evolution of the Combined Action Program and one discussing the Corps' role in contingency plans for Indochina and South Vietnam prior to the start of the conflict. In addition, you will find a piece from History Division's Historical Reference Branch on the World War I service of Marines from Cayuga County, New York, and one from the Archives Branch on the recently donated Frederick Vogel Collection, as well as a number of fascinating book reviews, and

three pieces marking the recent passing of Marines.

If you have not seen an article on an aspect of Marine Corps history that interests you, we encourage you to begin the research process and consider writing a piece to submit to *Marine Corps History* magazine. The editors are always eager to publish new and unique research into the Corps' history to deepen the pool of knowledge and scholarly discussion. The deep-

er the pool, the more interesting and engaging this publication will be.

Semper Fidelis,  
Paul J. Weber  
Deputy Director  
Marine Corps History Division  
and Gray Research Center

• 1775 •

# “How Will the Americans Behave in a Pitched Battle?”

THE 1ST BATTALION, 5TH REGIMENT,  
AND THE CAPTURE OF HILL 142, 6 JUNE 1918

By Major Gary Cozzens, USMCR (Dec)<sup>1</sup>

At 0345 on 6 June 1918, First Sergeant Daniel A. Hunter assumed his position in front of the Marines from 67th Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment. A portly veteran with graying hair and more than 20 years of service, Hunter was a legend in the Corps. As he strode in front of his company, he looked left and right to ensure that the ranks were properly aligned. When he heard a whistle blow signifying the attack, Hunter raised his cane above his head and brought it down in a sweeping motion, pointing toward the company's objective more than 1,000 yards distant: Hill 142, held by German forces. The company moved forward in what was the opening battle of Belleau Wood, a month-long action that has become a defining moment in Marine Corps history.<sup>2</sup>

While there had been other local actions involving the offensive by American forces, most notably

the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Division stopping the German attack at Cantigny at the end of May, this assault by the 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, though local in nature, would set the tone and example for the 4th Brigade for the remainder of the war. It would also be the first sustained effort by the Marine Corps to provide committed forces to an extended land campaign; until then, Marines had only been used in amphibious actions. It brought the Corps into the high-intensity, high-casualty realm of modern war. No longer was the Corps merely the Navy's police force. Finally, the assault would inspire confidence in French forces, credibility inside the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), and respect among the German military and establish a reputation for the Marine Corps that is still recognized to this day.

As the untried Americans entered the war, the Germans wondered, “How would the Americans behave in a pitched battle?”<sup>3</sup> An undated order from the German 28th Division to its soldiers, captured on 8 June, read:

Should the Americans to our front even temporarily gain the upper hand, it would leave a most unfavorable effect for us as regards the morale of the Allies and the duration of the war. In the fighting that now confronts us, we are not concerned about

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<sup>1</sup> The quote in this piece's title is from LtCol Ernst Otto, German Army (Ret), “The Battles for the Possession of Belleau Woods, June 1918,” *Proceedings* (U.S. Naval Institute Press) 54, no. 11 (November 1928): 941. Maj Gary Wayne Cozzens, USMCR, passed away on 31 July 2018. Major assistance for this article was provided by the late George B. Clark, Col Walt Ford (Ret), LtCol Pete Owen (Ret), and Angela Anderson. For more about Cozzens, see p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Elton E. Mackin, *Suddenly We Didn't Want to Die: Memoirs of a World War I Marine* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1993), 17; Dick Camp, *The Devil Dogs at Belleau Wood: U.S. Marines in World War I* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2008), 75; and George B. Clark, *Devil Dogs: Fighting Marines of World War I* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1999), 102. Clark's *Devil Dogs* is considered by many to be the best single-volume history of the Marines in World War I.

<sup>3</sup> Otto, “The Battles for the Possession of Belleau Woods, June 1918,” 941.

the occupation or non-occupation of this or that important wood or village; but rather as to the question as to whether Anglo-American propaganda, that the American Army is equal to or even superior to the Germans, will be successful.<sup>4</sup>

This article seeks to trace the actions of the 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, on 6 June 1918 as a limited attack at the beginning of the epic battle in the game preserve of Belleau Wood. It also seeks to highlight the individual roles played by some of the veteran Marines—the “old breed”—of the battalion and their impact on new Marines. In the year between America’s entry into the war and the fight for Belleau Wood, the ethos instilled by veteran Marines into the young volunteers early in their training paid off as the veterans became casualties and the new Marines continued to carry the fight to the Germans.

## Over There

When John W. Thomason Jr. penned his definitive work on the 4th Brigade in World War I, *Fix Bayonets*, he wrote of

a number of diverse people who ran curiously to type, with drilled shoulders and a bone-deep sunburn, and a tolerant scorn of nearly everything on earth. Their speech was flavored with navy words. . . . Rifles were high and holy things to them, and they knew five-inch broadside guns. They were the Leathernecks, the Old Timers: collected from ship’s guards and shore stations all over the earth to form the 4th Brigade of Marines, the two rifle regiments, detached from the navy by order of the President for service with the American Expeditionary Forces. They were the old breed of American regular, regarding the service as their home and war as an occupation; and they transmitted their temper and character and view-point to the high-hearted volunteer

mass which filled the ranks of the Marine Brigade.<sup>5</sup>

The 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, was formed at Quantico, Virginia, during the last two weeks of May 1917 under the command of Major Julius S. Turrill. At least two members of the battalion already wore the Medal of Honor: Captain Roswell Winans (then a first sergeant) for actions in the Dominican Republic on 3 July 1916, and Marine Gunner Henry L. Hulbert for actions during the Philippine-American War (also referred to as the Philippine insurrection) on 1 April 1899.<sup>6</sup> The battalion moved by train from Quantico to Long Island, where it boarded the USS *DeKalb* (ID 3010) and sailed for France on 14 June 1917, arriving on 26 June at Saint-Nazaire, where it disembarked on 27 June. The battalion spent the winter of 1917–18 training in the Breuvannes area of France. On 17 March 1918, the battalion deployed to the Verdun area, where it participated in minor actions against the Germans. Its first attack occurred on the night of 17 April, for which Second Lieutenant Max D. Gilfillan and Sergeant Louis Cukela were awarded the Croix de Guerre

<sup>5</sup> Capt John W. Thomason Jr., *Fix Bayonets!* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1926), x–xiii. This book is considered by many to be the finest fictional book written about the Marines in World War I. Though classified as fiction, it is thinly veiled fiction and, in many cases, Thomason uses actual names of the Marines of the 49th Company. The first chapter, “Battle-Sight,” is the story of the attack on Hill 142. Thomason was not an original member of the 49th Company that began the assault on 6 June. Research by the late George B. Clark indicates that Thomason arrived with replacement troops on 7 June. See John W. Thomason Jr., *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry in World War I*, ed. George B. Clark (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006); and John W. Thomason Jr., “Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry, June 1–July 10, 1918,” unpublished manuscript, 1928, Personal Papers, 1918–1950, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, 223n807. The former is perhaps the most accurate book written about the battle of Belleau Wood, yet it was not published until 2006. Thomason wrote the report in the 1920s, but quit in frustration after several of the high-ranking officers involved in the battle tried to sanitize his account.

<sup>6</sup> Hulbert was later killed in action at Blanc Mont on 4 October 1918.

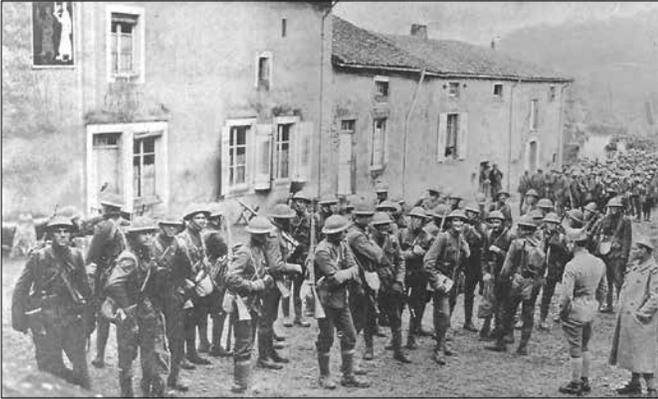
<sup>4</sup> David C. Homsher, “Securing the Flanks,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 90, no. 11 (November 2006): 82.

**Table 1.** 4th Brigade Table of Organization, 6 June 1918

Brigade Headquarters (BGen James G. Harbord, U.S. Army)	
<b>5th Regiment</b> (Col Wendell C. Neville)	
8th Machine Gun Company (Capt John H. Fay)	
Headquarters Company	
Supply Company	
1st Battalion (Maj Julius S. Turrill)	17th Company (Capt Roswell Winans) 49th Company (Capt George W. Hamilton) 66th Company (1stLt Walter T. H. Galliford) 67th Company (1stLt Orlando C. Crowther [KIA])
2d Battalion (Maj Frederic M. Wise)	18th Company 43d Company 51st Company 55th Company
3d Battalion (Maj Benjamin S. Berry [WIA]; later Maj Maurice E. Shearer)	16th Company 20th Company 45th Company 47th Company
<b>6th Regiment</b> (Col Albertus W. Catlin)	
73d Machine Gun Company	
Headquarters Company	
Supply Company	
1st Battalion (Maj Maurice E. Shearer; later Maj John Arthur Hughes)	74th Company 75th Company 76th Company 95th Company
2d Battalion (Maj Thomas Holcomb)	78th Company 79th Company 80th Company 96th Company
3d Battalion (Maj Berton W. Sibley)	82d Company 83d Company 84th Company 97th Company
6th Machine Gun Battalion (Maj Edward B. Cole)	15th Company (Capt Matthew H. Kingman) 23d Company (Capt George H. Osterhout Jr.) 77th Company (Capt Louis R. de Roode) 81st Company (Capt Augustus B. Hale)

Note: KIA=killed in action; and WIA=wounded in action.

Source: Adapted from Maj Edwin N. McClellan, *The United States Marine Corps in the World War*, rev. 3d ed. (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2014), 33.



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo  
Marines of the 5th and 6th Regiments, 4th Brigade, arrive at the front, June 1918.

for their actions.<sup>7</sup> In this action, the battalion suffered its first casualty when Corporal John L. Kuhn was killed. Kuhn and Privates George C. Brooks and Walter Klamm received citations for their actions.<sup>8</sup>

In late May, the Germans launched the Chemin de Dames offensive toward Paris and the 4th Brigade was transferred to the Château Thierry sector about 72.4 kilometers (km) east of the capital city. The second of June found the 2d Infantry Division, of which the 4th Brigade was a part, occupying a 4.8-km gap in the French lines south of Belleau Wood, beginning at Lucy-le-Bocage and extending westward. Holding the right flank of the 4th Brigade's line was 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment. While there, the 17th and 66th Companies, along with some elements of the 5th Regiment's 8th Machine Gun Company, would be deployed to support the 2d Battalion, 5th Regiment, at Les Mares Farm. On 2 June, when the Americans reorganized their defensive positions, the remainder of the 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, were withdrawn and became a brigade reserve located at Bois de Veully near Marigny. That respite would last until the early morning hours of 6 June. The battalion was on the verge of making the most extensive attack in the history of the

<sup>7</sup> Cukela later received the Medal of Honor for actions at Soissons on 18 July 1918.

<sup>8</sup> George B. Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I: Battalion Histories Based on Official Documents* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015), 26–28, 32.



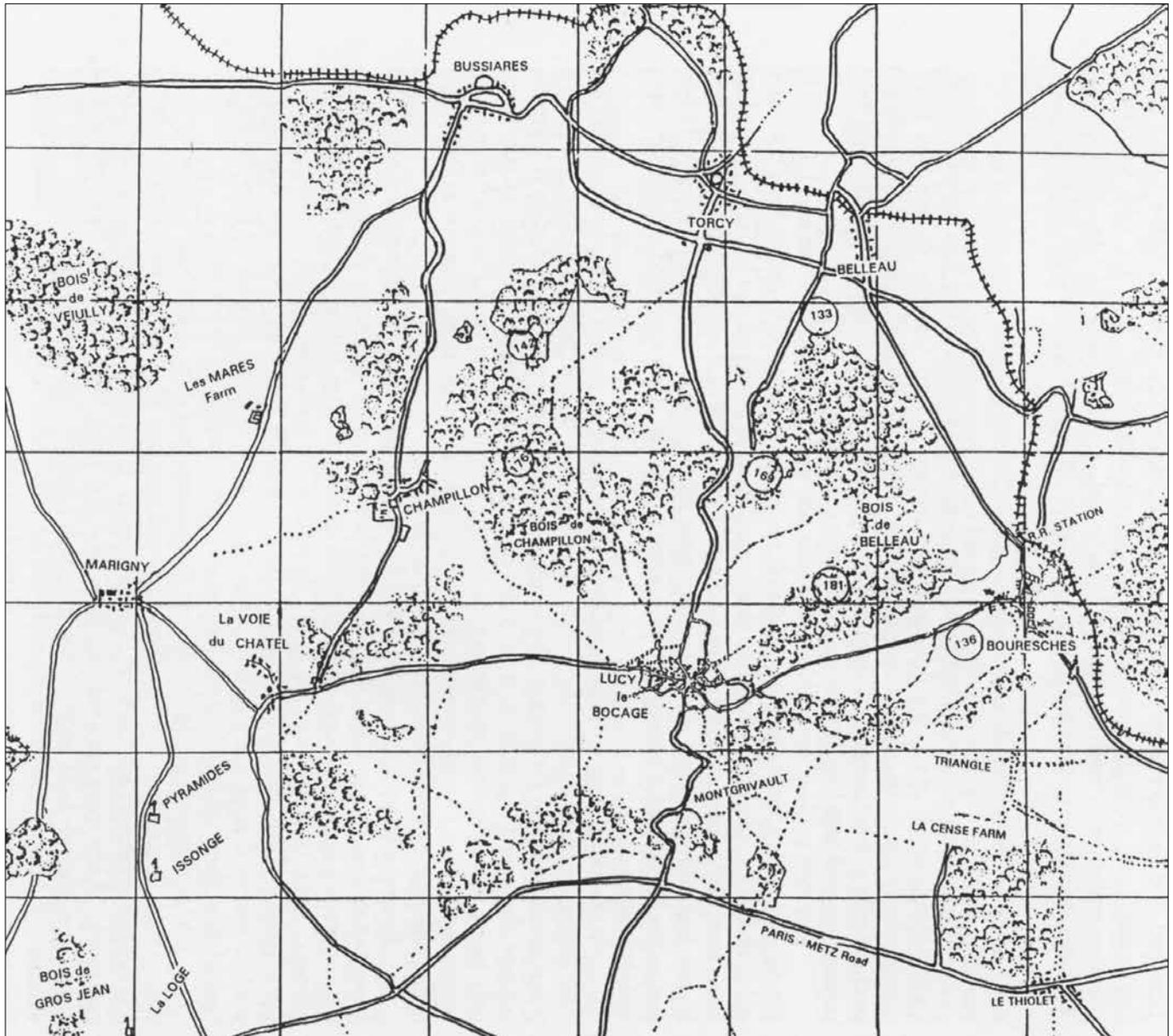
Art Collection of the National Museum of the Marine Corps  
A Marine Corps officer in the field during World War I. This is how Capt Hamilton and 1stLt Crowther likely would have looked on 6 June. In this era, Marine officers and senior noncommissioned officers carried canes. *Company Commander*, John W. Thomason Jr. Ink on paper.

Marine Corps to date; it numbered 22 officers and 953 enlisted—a total of 975 men.<sup>9</sup>

## The Objective

Alternating woods and wheat fields covered the entire

<sup>9</sup> Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 30–32.



John W. Thomason Jr., "Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry, 1 June-10 July 1918," unpublished manuscript, 1928, Personal Papers, 1918-1950, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

**Map 1.** Belleau Wood area, June 1918, showing Hill 142 in the upper portion.

region. In late spring, the woods were green and the wheat in the fields was thigh-high and beginning to ripen and turn gold. Red poppies grew throughout the wheat fields and other open areas. Numerous boulders were interspersed throughout the woods, providing natural defense for the German machine gunners who had fortified their positions.

The north-facing position the Marines oc-

cupied on Hill 176 was in heavy timber. About 300 meters to the north was another belt of woods, thick with underbrush. Between Hill 176 and Hill 142 lay 300 meters of wheat fields that the Marines would have to cross before reaching their objective. Dense woods covered both sides of the hill. Beyond, the hill sloped down gently to the north with more wheat. Tall pines and hardwood grew on the nose of the hill. A long,



Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division  
Maj Julius S. Turrill, commanding officer, 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment,  
shown here photographed as a captain.

curving valley of wheat with tree-lined streams continued to the north.<sup>10</sup>

Lying just north of the 1st Battalion's position on the forward slope of Hill 176, Hill 142 was a 2-km-long tree-covered ridge running roughly north-south with ravines on either side (see map 1). "Hill" was a misnomer; the name was more of an American designation for a series of connected low-lying hills. Contemporary local maps identified it as "Position 142" with brooks running through ravines to either side of Hill 142, but this too was misleading as there was no water in the "brooks." One brook sprung at Champillon and passed north along the west side of Hill 142, while the other sprung at Bois de Champillon, passing along the

east side of Hill 142.<sup>11</sup> The east and north sides of the hill were especially steep and covered with boulders and underbrush, making it ideal for defense. To the north of Hill 142 was the town of Torcy, held by the Germans.<sup>12</sup>

## The German Defenders

The German Chemin de Dames offensive began on 27 May 1918 between Soissons and Rheims. The Germans quickly overran the French and were temporarily halted at the Marne River by fresh American troops, in some places only 72.4 km from Paris. The Germans spent the day of 4 June strengthening their positions around Bouresches. Initially facing the 5th Regiment was the 460th Infantry Regiment, while opposite the 6th Regiment was the 461st Infantry Regiment, both of the 237th Division, one of four divisions making up the German IV Reserve Corps. The 197th Division had its 237th Infantry Regiment on the left flank on Hill 142 with two battalions in line and one in support. The 28th Infantry Division was in reserve and would be available to support the regiments of the 237th Infantry Division if needed. On 5 June, the IV Reserve Corps issued orders that all offensive operations were to be suspended.<sup>13</sup>

This disposition of German forces would prove extremely fortunate for Major Turrill's battalion, as there was confusion between the 460th Infantry Regiment and the 237th Infantry Regiment as to which stream was the division boundary. In a fortuitous twist of fate for the Marines, Hill 142 appeared to have been the boundary between the 127th and 237th Divisions. As a result, the Germans had a difficult time coordinating their defenses.<sup>14</sup> The table of organization for German units specified 850 men per battalion, three battalions of 2,550 men to a regiment, and three regiments

<sup>10</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry in World War I*, 81–82.

<sup>11</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry in World War I*, 74.

<sup>12</sup> Homsher, "Securing the Flanks," 88.

<sup>13</sup> Otto, "The Battles for the Possession of Belleau Woods, June 1918," 943; and Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry in World War I*, 89–90.

<sup>14</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry in World War I*, 74.

comprising an infantry brigade of 7,650 soldiers.<sup>15</sup>

Defending Hill 142 were four companies of the *460th Infantry Regiment*, heavily supported by Maxim machine guns.<sup>16</sup> Then-first lieutenant Thomason, himself a member of the 1st Battalion's 49th Company, described the defenders: "A company of German infantry and a machine gun platoon lay in the three-cornered clump of trees on the forward slopes of Hill 142, in the sector northwest of Chateau-Thierry. . . . By the white piping on their uniforms, they were Prussians, and by the ugly, confident look on them, with a touch of Berlin swank, they were Prussians of a very good division; and there were no better soldiers in the world."<sup>17</sup>

At 274.3 meters from where the Marines were to cross the line of departure, across an open wheat field, the *9th Company* of the *460th Regiment* occupied the first woods extending from the ravine on the east. Beyond that, a heavy machine gun detachment from the *273d Regiment* was positioned in a low, thick copse in woods to the west of the Champillon ravine. In underbrush and tall pines to the left was the *10th Company, 462d Regiment*. To the east in a square patch of woods were the *10th* and *11th Companies, 460th Regiment*, and the *12th Company* in reserve north of them.<sup>18</sup>

## Orders to Attack

At approximately 2225 on the night of 5 June 1918, the 4th Brigade issued Brigade Order No. 1 for the next morning's attack, directing the 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, supported by the 8th Machine Gun Company (Captain John H. Fay) and 23d Machine Gun Company (Captain George H. Osterhout Jr.), to seize Hill 142, with the attack to commence at sunrise (0345) on a frontage of 800 meters.<sup>19</sup> It was after midnight when Colonel Wendell C. Neville, commanding officer of the 5th Regiment, arrived at the 1st Battalion's command post, located in the basement of the powerhouse in Marigny to issue the order to Turrill.<sup>20</sup> In part, that order read

1. The enemy holds the general line Bouresches-Bois de Belleau-Torcy-Bussiares-Gandeelu-Chezy-on-Orxios. The French 167 D.I. [Division Infantry] is on the left of this Brigade and attacks June 6th in the direction of the Bussiares Wood.
2. The Brigade will attack on the right of the French 167 D.I. Objective from the Little Square Wood 400 Meters S.E. of Calvaire to the brook crossing 174.0-263.4.<sup>21</sup>

(a) The attack between the brook of Champillon (inclusive), Hill 142, and the brook which flows from 1 kilometer N.E. of Champillon, inclusive will be made by the 1st Bn., 5th [Regi-

<sup>15</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry in World War I*, 76.

<sup>16</sup> Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 102. The self-powered, water-cooled machine gun was designed by American inventor Hiram S. Maxim in 1884; it fired at a rate of up to 600 rounds per minute. In 1887, it was introduced to the German Army, which quickly developed its own version of the Maxim machine gun and manufactured 12,000 of them by the beginning of World War I in August 1914. "How the Machine Gun Changed Combat during World War I," Norwich University online, accessed 19 November 2018; and Paul Cornish, "Machine Gun," *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, accessed 19 November 2018.

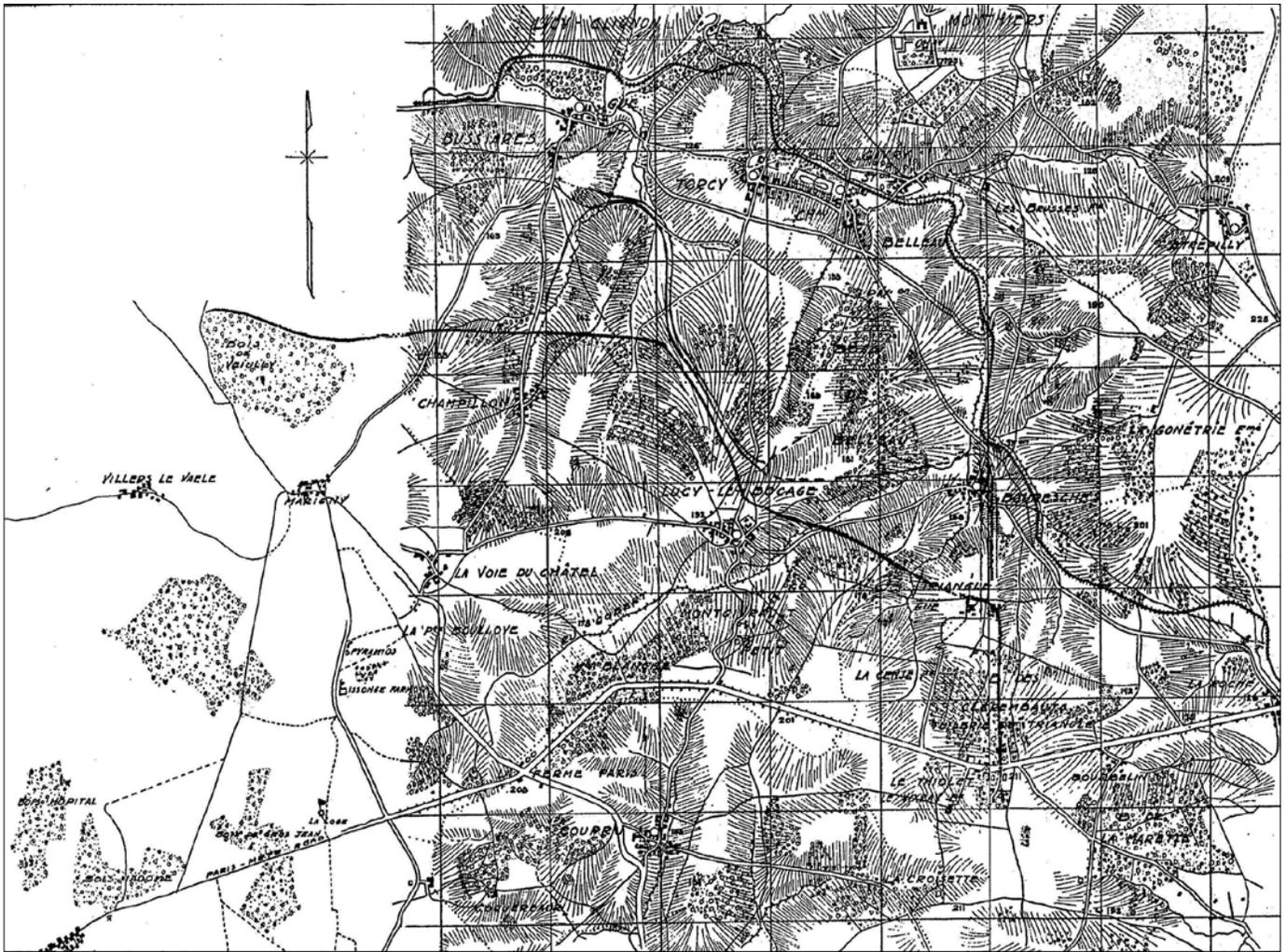
<sup>17</sup> Col John W. Thomason Jr., . . . *and a Few Marines* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), 475. Though a fictional short story, Thomason describes the attack on Hill 142. The actual German defenders might not have been Prussian. *Swank* is defined as ostentation or arrogance of dress or manner; swagger.

<sup>18</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry in World War I*, 84; and Otto, "The Battles for the Possession of Belleau Woods, June 1918," 944.

<sup>19</sup> Times are confusing, even in source documents. Located in northern France, the sun would rise on Hill 142 at about 0348. See National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Sunrise/Sunset Calculator, accessed 28 December 2017. The Allies used Western European Time, while the Germans used Central European Time, which was one hour ahead of the Allies. Both sides used daylight savings time. Otto, "The Battles for the Possession of Belleau Woods, June 1918," 942.

<sup>20</sup> Capt George W. Hamilton letter to Commandant of the Marine Corps, 19 November 1919, quoted in Mark Mortensen, *George W. Hamilton, USMC: America's Greatest World War I Hero* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), 210.

<sup>21</sup> The map used by U.S. forces in this attack was *Chateau-Thierry Sector, June 6-July 16, 1918*, at 1/20,000 scale. *Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Map Service, 1944).



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Map 2. Hachured map similar to the ones given to Capt George W. Hamilton and 1stLt Orlando C. Crowther early on the morning of 6 June.

ment], supported by the 8th and 23d Cos. Machine Guns.<sup>22</sup>

Due to the lateness of the hour, only company commanders Captain George W. Hamilton, 49th Company, and First Lieutenant Orlando C. Crowther, 67th Company, were told of the attack and given a map of the area. Platoon commanders and senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) were allowed to

look at their company commander's map (map 2).<sup>23</sup>

French Army units were to be on Turrill's left flank and Major Benjamin S. Berry's 3d Battalion, 5th Regiment, on the right flank. The two companies of the battalion conducting the initial assault were forced to travel 3.2 km over unfamiliar ground in the dark to their attack position on Hill 176. Even more concerning to the Marines, there had not been time

<sup>22</sup> Field Orders No. 1, 4th Brigade, June 5, 10:25 p.m., as cited in *2d Division, Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, DC: American Battle Monuments Commission, 1944), 11, 102.

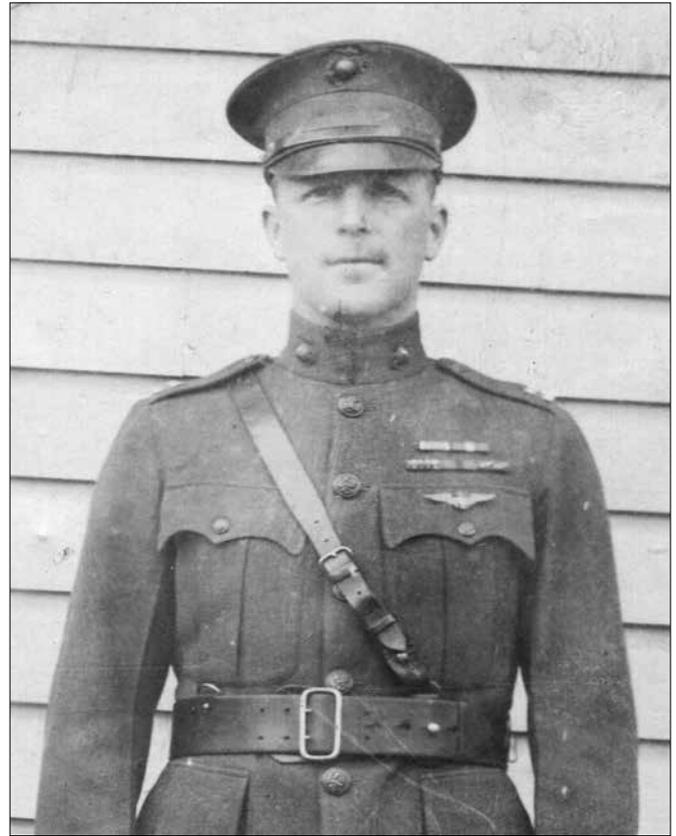
<sup>23</sup> The map referred to was the old Meaux-50,000 hachured map produced by Depot de la Guerre in 1832 and corrected in 1912. It was almost worthless. *Hachure* refers to the short lines used for shading and showing surfaces in relief and in the direction of the slope. Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry in World War I*, 81.

to bring up hot chow and they had not been fed.<sup>24</sup>

Holding a position on Hill 176 just south of Hill 142 was Major Berton W. Sibley's 3d Battalion, 6th Regiment, which had occupied the position since 2 June. At 2100 on 5 June, Major Frank E. Evans, adjutant of the 6th Regiment, sent Sibley a message notifying him that two companies would relieve his battalion "some-time tonight."<sup>25</sup> Hamilton's 49th Company arrived at its attack position on Hill 176 at 0240 on 6 June and he spent the next 20 minutes searching for the commanding officer of the company from the 3d Battalion, 6th Regiment, he was relieving. It was just getting light and a relief based on doctrine was not possible, so Hamilton told the defenders not to fire at any movement forward of their position. He then moved his company into an open area across from the Germans. He next moved to his left and found the 67th Company had just assumed their attack position at 0345, but there was no sign of the French on their left flank or the 3d Battalion, 5th Regiment, on his right. Hamilton located Second Lieutenant Thomas W. Ashley of the 67th Company's right platoon, and informed him his company was moving forward.<sup>26</sup>

## The Attack

The time designated for the attack, 0345 on 6 June, found the two companies of Major Turrill's 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, formed in four waves per company on Hill 176 to the east of Champillon and west of Belleau Wood. In these two companies were 11 officers and 475 enlisted men. The 67th Company's mission was to sweep down the left side of Hill 142 and into the wheat fields below. The 49th Company was to support the Marines of the 67th Company on their left flank and capture the crest of the hill and the road below it. Though not tasked in the brigade order, the 15th Machine Gun Company (6th Machine Gun Battalion) was positioned in Champillon and ready to provide support. Their fire had a telling effect on the 10th and 11th Companies of the 460th Regiment. The bat-



*Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division*  
Capt George W. Hamilton, commanding officer, 49th Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment.

talion's other two companies, the 17th (Captain Roswell C. Winans) and 66th (First Lieutenant Walter T. H. Galliford), and the 8th Machine Gun Company were in defensive positions at Les Mares Farm awaiting relief by French troops before they would rejoin their parent battalion.<sup>27</sup>

Major Turrill arrived at the attack position shortly before 0345 from Champillon. He made a significant command decision when he commenced the attack

<sup>24</sup> Mortensen, *George W. Hamilton, USMC*, 210; and Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 32.

<sup>25</sup> Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 218.

<sup>26</sup> Mortensen, *George W. Hamilton, USMC*, 210.

<sup>27</sup> Galliford was temporarily attached to the 66th Company from the 17th Company from 1 to 9 June as commanding officer and returned to the 17th Company on 10 June. The actual commanding officer of the 66th Company was Capt Raymond F. Dirksen, who was sick in the hospital. *U.S. Marine Corps Muster Rolls, 1893-1958*, microfilm publication T977, 460 rolls, Record Group (RG) 127, ARC identifier 922159, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, DC; Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 83-84; and Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 32-33.



Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division  
Ground over which the 49th Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines attacked on 6 June 1918. German machine guns in woods took heavy toll.

on schedule with two rifle companies supported by one machine gun company rather than asking to postpone the attack until the arrival of his whole battalion.

American artillery had been firing on the German positions and assembly areas since 0315, and while not knowing the exact trace of the German positions, the barrage was effective in suppressing them.<sup>28</sup> Dawn was just beginning to break when the two companies moved north from their positions on Hill 176 into a wheat field. Their initial objective, on the other side of the wheat field, was a copse of trees on the top of Hill 142 occupied by German infantry, heavily supported by machine guns.

The Germans began firing on the Marines after only 18.3 meters. The Marines advanced through the first wheat field, guiding center, and although encountering stiff resistance, quickly overran the 9th Company. The 9th Company sent up a red rocket—the signal for the German artillery to fire a barrage. On the left, the 67th Company came under fire from the Maxim machine guns in the Champillon ravine and suffered heavily in officer and NCO casualties. The 49th Company soon overran the 10th Company, 462d Regiment, as it moved down the hill, but immediately took fire from the 10th and 11th Companies of the 460th

Regiment in the square woods.<sup>29</sup> The 49th Company went through the square woods, but most of the two German companies were bypassed, effectively isolating them.<sup>30</sup>

While training under French troops at Bourmont, the Marines had been taught to attack in four waves. These tactics were a holdover from Napoleonic warfare, which theorized that two or three of the front ranks would be cut down in the assault, allowing the fourth rank to capture the objective. The Marines also were taught to go to the ground when taking heavy automatic fire and to respond with automatic weapons and hand grenades. Hamilton commented, “I saw immediately that such tactics would not do in this case. They might work against one nest, or two, but here was a nest broader than our battalion front and containing more machine guns than we had automatics. (No heavy machine guns attacked with us, and none joined us until several hours later.)”<sup>31</sup>

The Germans could not miss the Marines advancing on them in dawn’s light with the first rays of the sun shining on them. At this point, the Marines began to suffer heavy casualties and, according to doctrine, the second line moved into the first line and the fourth line moved into the third line. Shortly after that, casualties became so heavy that the Marines went to ground and advanced as best they could. Captain Hamilton later wrote that the Marines “hadn’t moved fifty yards when they cut loose at us from the woods ahead—more machine guns than I had ever heard before. Our men had been trained on a special method of getting out machine guns, and, according to their training, all immediately lay flat.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The “square woods” was not shown on the Marines’ maps. It would cause problems later in the day when Hamilton would misinterpret his objective and extend too far forward, eventually withdrawing back to his objective on the forward slope of Hill 142. Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 84.

<sup>30</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 85.

<sup>31</sup> Mortensen, *George W. Hamilton, USMC*, 211–12.

<sup>32</sup> Kemper F. Cowling, comp., and Courtney R. Cooper, ed. *Dear Folks at Home - - -: The Glorious Story of United States Marines in France as Told by Their Letters from the Battlefield* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), 126.

<sup>28</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 83–84.



Courtesy of George C. Marshall Foundation

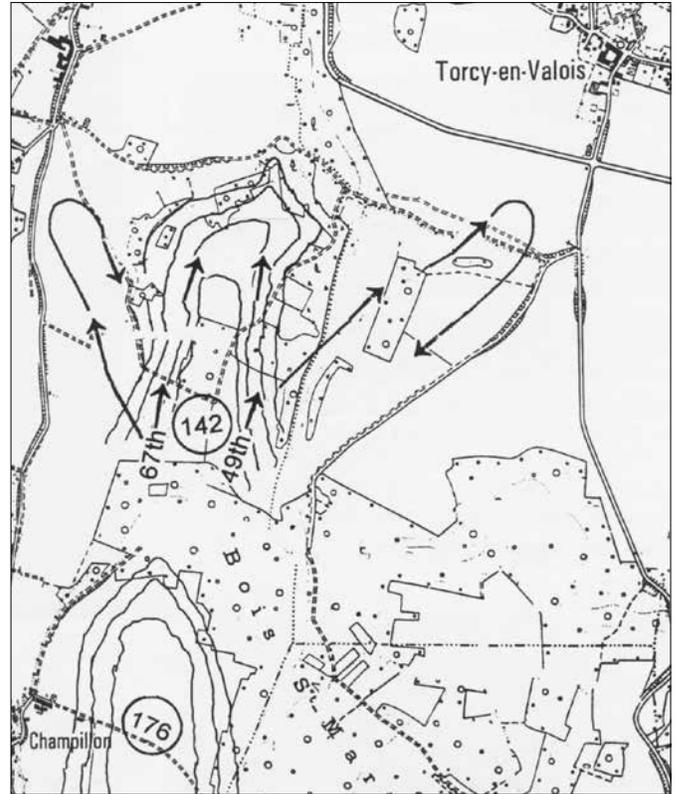
The Marines advanced over open ground and were greeted by German machine gun fire. *5th Marines at Champagne, France 1918*, by John W. Thomason Jr.

First Lieutenant Jonas H. Platt, 49th Company, described the initial advance:

Across the fields we raced, banging down the boches as we went, and into the woods. Machine guns rattled and men dropped. There we started to form again, while I tried to count my men. Suddenly a machine gun far ahead opened up spitefully. . . . I crawled a bit ahead to see what was happening. . . . There, grouped about a captured German machine gun, were ten of my missing men having the time of their lives, banging away with this captured gun at anything that looked like a boche.<sup>33</sup>

Turrill remained in his position watching the fourth wave move forward when First Lieutenant Gilfillan and his platoon of the 66th Company arrived at 0430. Turrill sent them forward and then established his post of command on the north edge of the woods on Hill 176. At about 0515, the remainder of

<sup>33</sup> Capt Jonas Platt, "Holding Back the Marines: They Would Go to Germany and Bag the German Army," *Ladies Home Journal*, September 1919, 114. *Boche* or *bosche* was pejorative slang used by French and American soldiers to refer to German soldiers.



John W. Thomason Jr., "Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry, 1 June–10 July 1918," unpublished manuscript, 1928, *Personal Papers, 1918–1950*, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin  
Map showing movement of the 49th and 67th Companies, 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, on the morning of 6 June 1918.

the 66th Company arrived and were committed to the action. The 8th Machine Gun Company arrived next and provided support to the attack. Company D, 2d Battalion, 2d Engineers, came up at 0530 and was initially put into the line as infantry to help repel German counterattacks and then were used to help fortify the position on Hill 142. Captain Winans and the 17th Company arrived at 0537 and were committed to the right of Hamilton's 49th Company. Unfortunately, the 23d Machine Gun Company would not arrive until the afternoon, too late to support the attack.<sup>34</sup> Captain Keller E. Rockey, the battalion adju-

<sup>34</sup> Cowling and Cooper, "Dear Folks at Home ---," 87–88.



*Untitled (Belleau Wood)*, by SSgt Kristopher J. Battles. Oil on canvas on hard board panel.

Art Collection of the National Museum of the Marine Corps

tant, reported to brigade that things were going well.<sup>35</sup> At 0537, Captain Rockey reported to Colonel Wendell Neville at 5th Regiment, “17th Co. going into deployment from old first line [Hill 176]-8th M G [Machine Gun] Co. already forward. Things seem to be going well—No engineers are in evidence—Can something be done to hurry them along—The advance is about one kilometer. Major Turrill up forward with the line.”<sup>36</sup>

Among the first killed was Second Lieutenant Walter D. Frazier of the 49th Company. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star, and Croix de Guerre for “extraordinary heroism.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Keller Rockey commanded the 67th Company earlier. He would later command the 5th Marine Division on Iwo Jima during World War II and retired as a lieutenant general in 1950. Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 83, 87; and Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 100.

<sup>36</sup> Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 36.

<sup>37</sup> George B. Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade* (Pike, NH: Brass Hat, 1993), 18. Original awards were the Army Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) and Silver Star Citation. See also George B. Clark, *A List of Officers of the 4th Marine Brigade* (Pike, NH: Brass Hat, 1995), 3–20; Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 2–52; and Jane Blakeney, *Heroes: U.S. Marine Corps, 1861–1955: Armed Forces Awards, Flags* (Washington, DC: Guthrie Lithograph, 1957).

The waves of Marines were moving forward when a German artillery shell exploded within their ranks and a man cried out. One of the young Marines of the 67th Company called out, “Hey, Pop, [First Sergeant Hunter] there’s a man hit over here!” Hunter’s reply was immediate and terse: “C’mon, goddamnit! He ain’t the last man who’s gonna be hit today.”<sup>38</sup> Moving forward across the wheat field, Hunter was hit twice, and twice he regained his feet and continued to advance.<sup>39</sup>

Early in the fight, First Lieutenant Orlando Crowther, commanding officer of the 67th Company, also was hit twice; the second wound proved fatal. He had made it across the wheat field to the first woods and had taken out one machine gun crew and was in the process of attacking a second machine gun position when he was shot in the throat and killed instantly.<sup>40</sup> Crowther was not alone; eight other Marines were killed in the attempt to silence the gun. For his actions, Crowther was awarded the Distinguished Ser-

<sup>38</sup> Mackin, *Suddenly We Didn’t Want to Die*, 17–18.

<sup>39</sup> Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 25; Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 35; and Clark, *The Devil Dogs at Belleau Wood*, 75–77.

<sup>40</sup> Mortensen, *George W. Hamilton, USMC*, 78.

vice Cross and the Navy Cross.<sup>41</sup> After Crowther fell, remaining Marines led by Corporal Prentice S. Geer charged with bayonets and captured the machine gun. One of the Marines grabbed the muzzle of the gun and pushed it over, losing his hand in the process. They repelled a counterattack. Geer was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, and Silver Star; he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in July.<sup>42</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Logan Feland, second in command of the 5th Regiment, went forward to take charge of the attack. At 0600, he requested support for the left flank of the 67th Company because the French had not yet moved up and the American flank was open. Colonel Neville deployed the 51st Company of the 2d Battalion, 5th Regiment—the brigade reserve—initially to Champillon; it then moved up the Champillon ravine and formed a right angle to the 67th Company. Machine guns were brought forward to provide support to the position.<sup>43</sup>

At 0430, the German 273d Regiment had reported that it was under attack and both flanks were giving ground, but that the center was holding. After the Marines swept over Hill 142 and continued north, the 12th Company, 460th Infantry, conducted a local counterattack. The regiment requested reinforcements and the 25th Jaeger Battalion of the 7th Saxon Regiment, the brigade reserve, was committed to action. The Americans did not record the time, but German records indicate this action was over by 0600.<sup>44</sup>

Initially, the Germans thought they could hold the line, but at 0610 the 273d Infantry Regiment requested artillery on its old position, and fire fell on Hill 142. At 0715, the 273d Infantry reported that it had been as-



Art Collection of the National Museum of the Marine Corps  
*Machine Gunner*, by Col John W. Thomason Jr. Pencil on paper.

saulted by a brigade of American troops, and at 0810, the infantry brigade of the 197th Division reported to the 237th Division that it was being attacked by French, American, and British troops.<sup>45</sup>

The attack stalled at this point, but the “old breed,” in the presence of Captain Hamilton and senior NCOs, carried the day. They moved up and down the lines, getting men to move forward and, in some cases, actually kicking them to their feet. Although the Germans on the southern edge of Hill 142 had been routed, some of the Marines were dazed and disoriented and hesitated to seize the advantage. Hamilton gathered five or six NCOs and told them, “Here is our direction. We go about a mile farther. When you come to a road, just over the nose of the hill, halt and dig in.” Yelling at the top of his lungs, Hamilton ran the length of the line, urging his men forward telling them, “We had ’em on the run.”<sup>46</sup>

It was also at this point that the Marine Corps’

<sup>41</sup> Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 13.

<sup>42</sup> Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 18. Because the muster rolls indicate only “wounded,” not the nature of the wounds, it is has not been possible to identify the Marine who lost his hand nor the specific injury that resulted in him losing his hand; however, since he grabbed the gun’s muzzle, his hand may have been shot off.

<sup>43</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 89.

<sup>44</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 86–87.

<sup>45</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 90.

<sup>46</sup> Mortensen, *George W. Hamilton, USMC*, 212.

investment in marksmanship paid off. Marines were inflicting casualties on the Germans with individual rifle shots at 274.3 meters. Private Walter H. Smith of the 49th Company wrote, "Then it became a matter of shooting at mere human targets. We fixed our rifle sights at 300 yards [274.3 meters] and aiming through the peep kept picking off the Germans. And a man went down at nearly every shot."<sup>47</sup> As they closed on the German positions, rifle shots were replaced with bayonets and rifle butts, and the Germans suffered extensive casualties.

The Marines of the 67th and 49th Companies surged forward through the wheat and went over Hill 142 before occupying positions on the hill's forward slope about 0700. The 67th Company quickly overlapped and swept through the German 9th Company on its left. Unexpected support came from the 10 machine guns of Captain Matthew H. Kingman's 15th Machine Gun Company of the 6th Machine Gun Battalion, described as "ten guns from the 15th Company, which obtained excellent overhead fire on enemy reserves and assembly points. When objective was reached the guns took up new positions to conform to the line established."<sup>48</sup>

At 0630, Captain Rockey had again reported to brigade that all was going well, and at 0710 he reported to division that all objectives had been taken and the position was being consolidated. Without a doubt, Hamilton was the key to the Marines' success that day. As the Marine attack got bogged down, he moved up and down the line, urging individual Marines to their feet and moving forward again. As his company moved through the woods, he sent prisoners to the rear, and at one point took an Iron Cross off of a German officer. The Germans began to withdraw and the Marines fired on them as they fled. The 49th Company moved through the first copse

of trees and came on another wheat field full of red poppies. Once again, the Marines had to rush across the open wheat field to the next line of trees defended by German infantry supported by machine guns. Hamilton commented that by every machine gun there was a dead gunner, and it was only by rushing the guns the Marines were able to take them as there were too many guns with mutually supporting fire.<sup>49</sup>

The two assault companies moved up the northern edge of Hill 142. The 67th Company halted at that point, while Hamilton continued to move to the northeast, possibly to seize the square woods northeast of Hill 142. Before the Germans halted his forward movement, three of his Marines actually entered the village of Torcy, announcing they held the town but needed immediate reinforcements. The remainder of Hamilton's company made it as far as the square woods between Hill 142 and Torcy before being forced to fall back to Hill 142.<sup>50</sup>

Platt and his men charged again, crossed another wheat field, and entered another wood holding many dead Germans. Platt's men halted their advance momentarily to collect souvenirs until he moved them forward again. During this third rush, Platt tripped and fell behind his advancing Marines. When he caught up with them, they had stopped in yet another wood and were in groups of twos and threes.<sup>51</sup>

Gradually rounding up his platoon, Platt moved to evaluate the situation. He ran into a first sergeant (who he later identified only as "Chuck" but who must have been First Sergeant Hunter, as the 67th Company was on the left of Platt's 49th Company) and 20 Marines from the company on his left.<sup>52</sup> When Platt asked Hunter where his company commander was, Hunter responded that it was him; the rest of the Marines in the company were dead. Hunter also told Platt that he was going after the Germans, an idea that Platt tried to talk Hunter out of executing.

<sup>47</sup> George B. Clark, ed., *Devil Dog Chronicle: Voices of the 4th Marine Brigade in World War I* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 163.

<sup>48</sup> Maj Littleton W. T. Waller Jr., *Final Report of the 6th Machine Gun Battalion* (Pike, NH: Brass Hat), 15; and LtCol Frank E. Evans, "Demobilizing the Brigades," *Marine Corps Gazette* 4, no. 4 (December 1919): 303-14.

<sup>49</sup> Cowling and Cooper, "Dear Folks at Home - - -," 127.

<sup>50</sup> Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 210n41.

<sup>51</sup> Platt, "Holding Back the Marines," 114.

<sup>52</sup> See Robert Asprey, *At Belleau Wood* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), 151. Hunter also was known as "Beau."

Hunter promised he would not move forward and Platt went to look for Captain Hamilton.<sup>53</sup> Sometime later, Hunter was hit a third time and was killed in action that morning. Hunter would be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, and Silver Star “for extraordinary heroism in action. He fearlessly exposed himself and encouraged all men near him, although he himself was wounded three times.”<sup>54</sup>

Having reached the bottom of the hill, Hamilton looked for the road he thought was his objective. Upon reaching a road, Hamilton began to reconsider his objective when he received fire from his flanks and rear. He studied his map and found that he had advanced a half mile too far. Seeing a large number of Germans in the town of Bussiares to the northwest and fearing death or capture, Hamilton ordered his men to return to Hill 142. On the return up the hill, Hamilton ran into First Lieutenant Platt with about a platoon of men and sent him back up Hill 142. On the way back to the crest of Hill 142, Platt and his men successfully broke up a German counterattack and took out several machine gun nests, but Platt sustained a serious leg wound.<sup>55</sup> Platt continued to direct his platoon. He charged and drove off a German machine gun crew and supervised the establishment of a defensive position before being evacuated. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, and Silver Star for his actions.<sup>56</sup>

Hamilton’s company continued through the second wood—his actual objective and where he should have halted his men. However, he was looking for an unimproved road that was on his map. At this point, the Germans were retreating rapidly, so Hamilton continued down the nose of Hill 142 in search of the road with one platoon. Moving north and entering open ground at the base of Hill 142, Maxim machine guns opened up on the Marines from both flanks. As Hamilton continued to move north with an automat-

ic rifle team, most of the platoon veered to the left to take out a German machine gun nest.

About that time, Hamilton spotted a road to his front with a good bank to offer protection, but he had overrun his objective and was just a few hundred meters short of the town of Bussiares to the left front. Most of the Germans had retreated at this point, but one company was forming for a counterattack when Hamilton realized he was too far forward. He soon sent his Marines back with the intent to occupy the nose of the hill and reorganize and dig in.

Hamilton went back up the hill in “a drainage ditch filled with cold water and shiny reeds. Machine gun bullets were just grazing my back and our own artillery was dropping close.” He finally occupied his objective and reorganized the 49th Company as well as the leaderless 67th Company. Hamilton then sent Marines to link up with French forces on his left and the 3d Battalion, 5th Regiment, on his right, but he could not make satisfactory liaison until the next day.<sup>57</sup>

Upon arriving back on Hill 142, Hamilton discovered that the 67th Company had lost four out of five officers, including its commanding officer, First Lieutenant Crowther, while the 49th Company had only Hamilton. Hamilton assumed command of both companies and established a defensive position, which was completed about noon.<sup>58</sup> By 0800, the French 167th Division had belatedly started moving forward.<sup>59</sup>

Captain Winans sent a message to battalion stating that his 17th Company was to the right of Hamilton but there was nothing to his left and the Germans were working around that flank. In response, Winans sent “10 then 20 men to help and protect his flank.” He encouraged battalion to “get something in to plug the hole on our left.” He also reported: “We don’t know whether there are Marines on our right. Can’t establish liaison to right or left yet. . . . We have a good position but can’t extend anymore.” He then notes “Hamilton is o.k.”<sup>60</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Platt, “Holding Back the Marines,” 114.

<sup>54</sup> Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 25; Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 35; and Clark, *The Devil Dogs at Belleau Wood*, 75–77.

<sup>55</sup> Mortensen, *George W. Hamilton, USMC*, 212–13.

<sup>56</sup> Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 38.

<sup>57</sup> Cowling and Cooper, “Dear Folks at Home --,” 127–28.

<sup>58</sup> Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 105–6.

<sup>59</sup> *2d Division, Summary of Operations in the World War*, 10, 11; and Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 106.

<sup>60</sup> Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 110.

At 1045, the French liaison incorrectly sent word that the Americans had more than 300 prisoners. Eventually, 1 officer and 15 enlisted captives were sent to the rear.<sup>61</sup> Although the 23d Machine Gun Company did not arrive in time to support the assault, six guns of the 81st Machine Gun Company were ordered to Hill 142 to support the 1st Battalion. The Germans attacked the consolidated position on Hill 142 on several occasions but were repulsed. At 1310, Turrill reported the French advancing on his left flank and the immediate threat of attack from that flank was over.<sup>62</sup>

The Germans had taken a beating at the hands of the untried Americans, and they knew it. The Americans struck the 1st Battalion, 460th Infantry, and practically annihilated the 9th Company of that battalion, although a few members of that company had fought their way out of the encirclement with bayonets. The 10th and 11th Companies had dug into a patch of woods southwest of Torcy. The two German companies beat back Hamilton's attack and were soon joined by the 12th Company, and these units held until nightfall.<sup>63</sup>

At 0840 on 6 June, Brigadier General James Harbord sent the following message to the commanding general of the 2d Division:

The French did not relieve elements on the left of my line until 3.00 a.m. this morning instead of 9 o'clock last night as expected. Our attack between brooks on either side of Hill 142 started with two companies and half a machine gun company on the front line. At 6.30 our line was considerable distance ahead of the French and had to be halted to wait for them. At 7.01 a.m. report was received that both 1st and 3d battalions of the 5th Regiment had reached their objectives. There had been some heavy shell fire, rifle and machine gun fire. Several men killed and quite a number wounded.

Figures as to casualties will be hurried as soon as received. Sixteen prisoners, including one officer, were reported captured by 5.50 a.m. . . . At 7.10 reported that our position was being consolidated as rapidly as possible and that our front line had thrown out strong posts in front of the position.<sup>64</sup>

At 0950, Captain Hamilton sent what was probably the most succinct report of the battle to battalion: Elements of this Company [49th] and the 67th Company reached their objective, but because very much disorganized were forced to retire to our present position which is on the nose of Hill 142 and about 400 yds. [365.8 meters] N. E. of square woods. Our position not very good because of salient. We are intrenching [sic] and have four machine guns in place. We have been counter-attacked several times but so far have held the hill. Our casualties are very heavy. We need medical aide badly, cannot locate any hospital apprentices and need many. We need artillery assistance to hold this line tonight. Ammunition of all kinds is needed. The line is being held by detachments from the 49th, 66th, and 67th Company & are very much mixed together. George W. Hamilton<sup>65</sup>

On the right flank, Captain Hamilton led his company and consolidated its gains with the remainder of the 67th Company, which had lost all but one of its officers. For his leadership, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Navy Cross, the Silver Star, and the Croix de Guerre.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 88.

<sup>62</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 89.

<sup>63</sup> Otto, "The Battles for the Possession of Belleau Woods, June 1918," 944.

<sup>64</sup> Maj Edwin N. McClellan, "Capture of Hill 142, Battle of Belleau Wood, and Capture of Bouresches," *Marine Corps Gazette* 5, no. 3 (September 1920): 284.

<sup>65</sup> Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 38.

<sup>66</sup> Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 20-21.



Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division  
Valley below Belleau Wood on way to Vaux road; Lucy-le-Bocage in background.

## German Counterattacks

Throughout the remainder of the day, the Germans launched at least five major counterattacks against the Marines' newly established position. The first, conducted by the *12th Company, 460th Infantry*, and the *26th Jaeger Battalion*, occurred as the *49th Company* withdrew from their advance position back to their objective on Hill 142.<sup>67</sup>

The *26th Jaeger Battalion* was sent forward to close the gap left by the *2d Battalion, 237th Infantry Division*, but the counterattack failed to dislodge the Marines from the hill. The *237th Infantry Division* was ordered to retake all lost ground at any cost, but spent the remainder of the day in futile attempts to dislodge the Marines. Attacks continued by numerous German units through the remainder of the day, but none penetrated the Marines' lines. The *197th Division* had lost about 2,000 casualties during the period 4–6 June and the *273d Regiment* reported the loss of 13 officers and 405 men on 6 June.<sup>68</sup> Hamilton described these counterattacks:

And now came the counter-attacks—five nasty ones that came near driving us off the hill—but—we hung on. One especially came near getting me. There were heavy bushes

<sup>67</sup> Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 104–5.

<sup>68</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 90.

## Awards for 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment's Attack on Hill 142, 6 June 1918

Original awards include the Army Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) and Silver Star citations. The Navy Cross was not established until 1919. When the Navy Cross was approved and awarded to Marines for their actions on Hill 142 long after the action, the citation was commonly a duplicate of the original DSC citation; the same was done for Army and Navy Medal of Honor citations.

In some cases, the award was for providing an “example to hereto untried troops,” which usually meant the Marine was recommended for the award because he was killed in battle. In the middle of June, Brigadier General James Harbord, commanding the *4th Marine Brigade*, sent a memo to his company commanders stating that he did not want to see any more recommendations for Marines to be awarded the DSC solely because they had been killed in battle.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clark, *A List of Officers of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 3–20; Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 2–52; and Blakeney, *Heroes: U.S. Marine Corps, 1861–1955*.

all over the hill, and the first thing I knew hand grenades began dropping near. One grenade threw a rock which caught me behind the ear and made me dizzy for a few minutes.<sup>69</sup>

While consolidating their position during one of these German counterattacks, Captain Hamilton discovered a line of about 15 Germans and five light machine guns setting up about 18.3 meters from the Marine line. Gunnery Sergeant Ernest A. Janson (who went by the name Charles F. Hoffman at the time) moved forward, screaming and firing his rifle, and in the process took on the Germans; after several minutes of strenuous hand-to-hand fighting, he killed several and routed the remaining Germans. Janson was awarded the Medal of Honor,

<sup>69</sup> Cowling and Cooper, “Dear Folks at Home ---,” 128.



Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division  
GySgt Ernest A. Janson (Charles F. Hoffman), 49th Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment.

Silver Star, and Croix de Guerre for his actions.<sup>70</sup>

At 1310, Turrill sent a message to regiment notifying them that the French had come up and oc-

<sup>70</sup> Cowling and Cooper, "Dear Folks at Home - - -," 128; and Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 23. Born Ernest August Janson on 17 August 1878, Janson spent 10 years in the Army before he enlisted in the Marine Corps at Marine Barracks Bremerton, WA, under the name of Charles F. Hoffman. On 3 January 1921, he submitted a letter to Headquarters Marine Corps requesting that his record be corrected to reflect his given name (Ernest August Janson). According to the letter, Janson enlisted in the U.S. Army in late 1899 but deserted about July 1900. On 10 November 1900, Janson reenlisted in the Army as Charles Hoffman. He honorably served in the Army under the name Hoffman before enlisting in the Marine Corps on 14 June 1910 under the same name. Headquarters accepted the request in late January 1921 and corrected all of Hoffman's service records to the name of Janson. Janson retired from the Marine Corps as a sergeant major on 30 September 1926.

cupied positions on his left flank, thereby helping to alleviate some of the pressure the battalion was experiencing.<sup>71</sup> Around midnight, the Marine positions on Hill 142 were consolidated and a defense was established. The square woods to the northeast were not occupied, but it was untenable to either side and the road running in front of the hill was covered by Marine rifles. At 0400 on 7 June, the 45th Company of the 3d Battalion, 5th Regiment, came up on the right flank and the defensive situation was somewhat stabilized.

The 9th Company, 462d Regiment, and the 9th Company, 460th Regiment, had both been practically annihilated. A vigorous counterattack was launched by the 12th Company, 460th Infantry, but was stalled when its commander fell. The regimental commander, Lieutenant Colonel Friederich Tismer, decided further attacks would produce severe casualties and ordered a withdrawal. Accordingly, during the night, the German 10th and 11th Companies withdrew to Torcy, taking their wounded with them. The 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, were in sole possession of Hill 142. The old breed's leadership had carried the day, but at a catastrophic cost in killed and wounded.<sup>72</sup>

Hamilton summarized the seizing of Hill 142 and the work of Turrill's understrength battalion:

After the counter-attacks we settled down to the work of digging in. Gee, it was a long day! The night proved to be worse, and on account of my flanks I was more worried than I cared to admit. The Boches went up the valleys to our right and left and from their flares I thought we were all but surrounded. Two more companies had come up [17th and 66th], however, and the fire from the rifles and auto-rifles of several hundred men must have made the Germans nervous, too, for about dawn they went

<sup>71</sup> Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 107.

<sup>72</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 91; Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 39; and, Otto, "The Battles for the Possession of Belleau Woods, June 1918," 945.

back and only left several machine guns to worry us during the next day.<sup>73</sup>

In the end, Major Julius Turrill led his two understrength companies to seize Hill 142, overwhelming the remaining German defenders and driving them off the high ground. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, two Silver Stars, and Croix de Guerre for extraordinary heroism in leading his command under heavy enemy fire.<sup>74</sup> The battalion adjutant, Captain Rockey, was also awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, and Silver Star for extraordinary heroism in carrying forward the attack and organizing and holding the position.<sup>75</sup>

Late that night, Rockey sent a message to Hamilton: "The rations sent to you tonight are for all companies . . . our ration truck was struck by a shell and rations are scattered all over the county. This is the best we can do tonight."<sup>76</sup>

The battalion's casualties were horrendous; one source set the number of 1st Battalion's killed, wounded, and missing at 14 officers and 318 enlisted men.<sup>77</sup> Sometime on 7 or 8 June, Turrill's battalion received a group of replacements, but they could in no way replace the experience of those who were killed in the attack on Hill 142. The Old Breed no longer existed. Additionally, the 8th Machine Gun Company lost 10 men and the 51st Company from the 2d Battalion reported 1 officer and 45 men were casualties. The 45th Company of the 3d Battalion that had come up to support the 1st Battalion's right flank suffered 2 officers and 71 men as casualties.<sup>78</sup>

Consequently, Thursday, 6 June 1918, was the most catastrophic day in Marine Corps history up to that point, with the 4th Brigade suffering 31 officer and 1,056 enlisted casualties. As many casualties were

suffered on that single day as in the Corps' preceding 143 years of existence.<sup>79</sup> When Major Frederic Wise's wife asked him "How are the Marines?" he replied, "There aren't any more Marines."<sup>80</sup>

## Conclusion

The capture of Hill 142 and subsequent battle for Belleau Wood have gone down as a defining moment in the annals of Marine Corps history. The battalion would continue to fight for the possession of Belleau Wood with the other units of the 4th Brigade until 26 June, when Major Maurice E. Shearer, commanding officer of 3d Battalion, 5th Regiment, would send the message "Belleau Woods Now U.S. Marines Entirely."<sup>81</sup>

Though the Marines suffered heavily in their first pitched battle, the Germans suffered far worse. A few days after the capture of Hill 142, an unmailed letter was found on the body of a dead German. Intended to be sent to his father, the letter said, "The Americans are savages. They kill everything that moves."<sup>82</sup>

In a report dated 17 August 1918, General Richard von Conta, commanding the *4th Reserve Corps* that faced the Marine brigade, wrote:

Fighting Value: the 2d American [Division] may be described as a very good division, and, might even be considered as being fit for shock troops. The numerous attacks by the two Marine regiments at Belleau Woods were executed vigorously and without regard for the consequences. Our fire did not affect their morale sufficiently to interfere appreciably with their advance; their nerves had not yet been used up. . . . In spirit the troops are lively and full of grim, but good-natured, confidence. Indicative is the expression of a prisoner "We kill or get killed."<sup>83</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Cowling and Cooper, "Dear Folks at Home - - -," 129.

<sup>74</sup> Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 47.

<sup>75</sup> Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 40.

<sup>76</sup> Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 109-10.

<sup>77</sup> Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 39.

<sup>78</sup> Thomason, *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry*, 91.

<sup>79</sup> Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 101, 128.

<sup>80</sup> Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 207.

<sup>81</sup> Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 202.

<sup>82</sup> Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 112-13.

<sup>83</sup> Otto, "The Battles for the Possession of Belleau Woods, June 1918," 962.

**Table 2.** Awards for 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment's attack on Hill 142, 6 June 1918 (continued next page)

Name	Unit	Award	Remarks
Pvt Joseph M. Baker	67th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross	
1stLt Albert P. Baston	17th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	WIA
GySgt Edward T. Bayman	66th Company	Silver Star	
1stLt Robert Blake	17th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross	
Pvt Ernest E. Borah	17th Company	Silver Star	
Sgt John Casey	49th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	WIA
Sgt Raymond P. Cronin	49th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	KIA
1stLt Orlando C. Crowther	Commanding officer, 67th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star, Croix de Guerre	KIA
Sgt John H. Culnan	49th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	WIA
Pvt John M. Fackey	67th Company	Silver Star	
Sgt John V. Fitzgerald	67th Company	Silver Star	
2dLt Walter D. Frazier	49th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star, Croix de Guerre	KIA
1stLt Earl W. Garvin	17th Company	Silver Star, Croix de Guerre	
Cpl Prentice S. Geer	67th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	
1stLt Max D. Gilfillan	66th Company	Silver Star, Croix de Guerre	WIA
2dLt Bernhardt Gissell (USA)	17th Company	Silver Star, Croix de Guerre	
Cpl Arnold D. Godbey	67th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	
Capt George W. Hamilton	Commanding officer, 49th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross	
Pvt John Harris	67th Company	Silver Star	WIA
Cpl Charles G. Hawkins	67th Company	Silver Star	

It was the “old breed of American regular” embodied by Major Julius Turrill, Captain George Hamilton, First Lieutenant Orlando Crowther, First Sergeant Daniel Hunter, and Gunnery Sergeant Janson who—along with others like them—not only carried the day at Belleau Wood, but also “transmitted their temper and character and view-point to the high-hearted volunteer mass which filled the ranks of the Marine Brigade.” And in that they found victory; not only on Hill 142 and Belleau Wood, but also at Soissons, Saint-Mihiel, Blanc Mont, and the Argonne Forest and in crossing the Meuse River on the last night of the war.<sup>84</sup>

### Epilogue: “That’s ‘Pop’ Hunter”

Major Turrill sent a message to the 5th Regiment at

0725 on 7 June requesting that the battalion’s dead be buried at Champillon and notifying the regiment he would send his dead to that town.<sup>85</sup> However, the remains of those Marines killed in action were initially interred in Cemetery 29 on the road leading from Hill 142 to Torcy. Replacements were brought forward to replenish the depleted Marine ranks. One of the replacements’ jobs was to bury the dead. Author George B. Clark relates how an old-timer passing by stopped to watch the burial detail and occasionally would salute a body. One of those brought in for burial was dressed in the forest green uniform of the Marines with a first sergeant’s chevrons and seven hashmarks for seven enlistments. Dangling from his neck was a whistle and his pistol flap was unhooked. The old-timer, taking note of the dead man, saluted sharply,

<sup>84</sup> Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 39.

<sup>85</sup> Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 39.

**Table 2.** Awards for 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment's attack on Hill 142, 6 June 1918 (continued)

Name	Unit	Award	Remarks
Pvt Arthur Hopper	67th Company	Silver Star	WIA
MG Henry L. Hulbert	66th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	
1stSgt Daniel A. Hunter	67th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	KIA
GySgt Ernest A. Janson	49th Company	Medal of Honor, Silver Star, Croix de Guerre	
Pvt John Kukoski	49th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	
GySgt Charles F. McCarthy	17th Company	Silver Star, Croix de Guerre	WIA
Sgt Dave W. McClain	67th Company	Croix de Guerre	
1stSgt Thomas J. McNulty	66th Company	Silver Star, Croix de Guerre	WIA
SgtMaj Carl J. Norstrand	17th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	
Pvt Pleas Parker	67th Company	Silver Star	
Cpl Robert C. Pitts	17th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Croix de Guerre	
1stLt Jonas H. Platt	49th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	WIA
Maj Keller E. Rockey	Battalion adjutant	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	
Lt (Junior Grade) Richard O'B. Shea (USN)	Battalion assistant surgeon	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	
GySgt Charles J. Smith	67th Company	Silver Star	
2dLt Vernon L. Somers	49th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	KIA
GySgt Sidney Thayer Jr.	17th Company	Silver Star	
Maj Julius S. Turrill	Battalion commanding officer	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star (2), Croix de Guerre (2)	
Sgt Arthur F. Ware	49th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star	KIA
Cpl Eugene W. Wear	49th Company	Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Silver Star	
Capt Roswell Winans	Commanding officer, 17th Company	Silver Star, Croix de Guerre	

Notes: KIA = Killed in action; and WIA = Wounded in action.

Source: Clark, *Citations and Awards to Members of the 4th Marine Brigade*, 2–52.

turned to one of the new Marines burying the casualties, and said, “Get a blanket, soldier. Wrap him up proper. That’s ‘Pop’ [Daniel] Hunter.”<sup>86</sup>

Perhaps Private Elton Mackin of the 67th Company wrote a fitting tribute to First Sergeant Hunter

and the 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment’s legacy on Hill 142: “Little crosses stand above the dead. They do not tell how men died. They hide the bitter human stories of the war. They seldom stand alone. Men see to that.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Mackin, *Suddenly We Didn’t Want to Die*, 44.

<sup>87</sup> Mackin, *Suddenly We Didn’t Want to Die*, viii.

# Planning for War

## THE MARINE CORPS IN CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR INDOCHINA AND SOUTH VIETNAM, 1951–65

By Edward T. Nevglowski<sup>1</sup>

The origins of the U.S. Marine Corps' initial involvement in the Vietnam War is a little-known part of the conflict's historiography.<sup>2</sup> In the nearly 50 years since the first combat unit arrived in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), or South Vietnam, military historians have yet to explore why it was U.S. Marines landing, as opposed to the Army, and why of all places in the RVN they landed at Da Nang on 8 March 1965. Underscoring this apparent oversight in the collective history of the conflict is the broad acceptance of the idea of a hastily planned landing and subsequent counterinsurgency campaign championed by the Marines. However, a thorough analysis of the volumes of documents pertaining to the planning for intervention in the RVN proves this to be a flawed characterization of the tasks assigned to the Marines in contingency plans drafted nearly a decade earlier.

What was the Marines' role in Da Nang and in

larger contingency plans? The absence of a comprehensive study to answer these questions adds to an already inaccurate and misleading historiographical account of the planning origins and how Marines came to be so deeply involved. The purpose of this article is to address these historiographical oversights by explaining the Marines' conceptual roles in contingency plans developed between 1951 and 1965. This affords the opportunity to correct a grave misinterpretation perpetuated by historians lacking a clear understanding of the war and military planning for intervention before 1965.

Nearly every study of America's military intervention in Vietnam begins with the description of this "hasty" landing in the wake of an increase in insurgent activity around Da Nang and elsewhere in the country. The controversial *Pentagon Papers* describes it as a watershed event in the history of the war presenting a "major decision made without much fanfare—and without much planning. Whereas the decision to begin bombing North Vietnam [the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)] was the product of a year's discussion, debate, and a lot of paper, and whereas the consideration of pacification policies reached talmudic [sic] proportions over the years, this decision created less than a ripple."<sup>3</sup> This rather common depiction of the landing could not be further from the truth.

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<sup>2</sup> The term *Vietnam War* can be confusing and sometimes misleading, depending on the historian and the context of its usage. The war between the French and the Viet Minh, from 1946 to 1954, is referred to as the First Indochina War. The period from 1955 to 1960 is a transitional period. The Vietnam War as typically discussed includes only the period involving full and direct U.S. military action from 1961 to 1975. However, for purposes of this paper and unless otherwise stated, the term Vietnam War will generally include all three periods.

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<sup>3</sup> Mike Gravel, *The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*, vol. 3, Senator Gravel Ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 433.

Even before the 8 March landing, planners considered the Marines essential to an array of contingencies for defending the south. Senior U.S. military officials would see to it that civilian officials followed these plans, though some were more difficult to convince than others. On the eve of the landing, Assistant Secretary of Defense John T. McNaughton proposed to Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Army's 173d Airborne Brigade should take on the security mission at the airfield and other key facilities and installations instead of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB). His sole reasoning was that any American military action had to be inconspicuous so as not to attract attention for fear of further destabilizing the situation there. In McNaughton's view, the image of Marines equipped with tanks and artillery pieces storming ashore from amphibious ships could do further damage. Conversely, he judged that Army airborne forces signaled a "limited, temporary nature of the U.S. troop deployment" since they carry less equipment and "look less formidable" than a Marine amphibious force.<sup>4</sup>

McNaughton's proposal received strong opposition from the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs and U.S. ambassador to the RVN, Maxwell D. Taylor, as well as from General William Westmoreland and Admiral Ulysses S. Grant Sharp, the commander of all U.S. forces in the Pacific, including South Vietnam. Admiral Sharp justified his rejection of McNaughton's last-minute proposal by referencing the seven active contingency plans governing American military intervention in Indochina that explicitly assigned Marines to Da Nang. Sharp insisted that, because "the situation in Southeast Asia has now reached a point where the soundness of our contingency planning may be about to be tested," there was neither the time nor the need to make changes to previously approved plans even if the political and military objectives were slightly different.<sup>5</sup> In addition, he argued that, from a planning and preparation perspective,

since the origination of OPLAN 32 in 1959, the Marines have been scheduled for deployment to Da Nang . . . contingency plans and a myriad of supporting plans at lower echelons reflect this same deployment. As a result, there has been extensive planning, reconnaissance, and logistics preparation over the years. . . . I recommend that the MEB be landed at Da Nang as previously planned.<sup>6</sup>

Sharp deemed McNaughton's request to replace the 9th MEB with the 173d Airborne Brigade "imprudent," particularly since military planners determined this region of the country required a lighter, mobile, and more self-sustaining force.<sup>7</sup> Like Sharp, Westmoreland also argued in favor of deploying Marines to Da Nang:

Almost all contingency plans developed through the years for Southeast Asia involved marines in the northern provinces of South Vietnam, and if one of the contingencies should come about, I wanted to go with the plan. In view of a lack of logistical installations or support troops, a marine force trained and equipped to supply itself over the beach was preferable to an airborne force lacking logistical capabilities.<sup>8</sup>

President Lyndon B. Johnson and McNamara agreed, ending McNaughton's proposal. The 9th MEB proceeded to Da Nang as planners intended.

In the early years of potential direct U.S. military involvement, from 1959 to 1962, amphibious ships of the U.S. Seventh Fleet carrying the 9th MEB responded repeatedly to Communist advances in Indochina. On each occasion, the Seventh Fleet acted according to contingency plans developed years earlier.

<sup>4</sup> Gravel, *The Pentagon Papers*, 402.

<sup>5</sup> Commander in Chief, Pacific Command, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 March 1965, Greene Papers, 3093, Box 3, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Jack Shulimson and Maj Charles M. Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Landing and the Buildup, 1965* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps History and Museum Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1978), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Shulimson and Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam*.

<sup>8</sup> William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 149.



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Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific theater.



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Indochina and the Ho Chi Minh trail network.

er to counter aggression in the region. Determined to prevent America's regional allies from falling to Communism, President John F. Kennedy kept close watch over Indochina and pledged to intervene, militarily, if necessary. During the Laos crisis of 1962, however, President Kennedy told his senior White House aide, Walt Whitman Rostow, that if he committed U.S. military forces to prevent Indochina from becoming a collection of Chinese satellite states he would do so in Vietnam, not in Laos. According to Rostow, Kennedy's rationale that southern Vietnam was the more logical choice was, among other reasons, because of its "direct access to the sea" and geography that "permitted American air and naval power to be more easily brought to bear."<sup>9</sup> That same year, the Geneva Accords

of 1962 (or Declaration of the Neutrality of Laos) prohibited all parties involved in the conflict from basing military forces and equipment there and shifted the U.S. military's attention back to the RVN, making the South China Sea an important part of planning. Less than three years later, the 9th MEB waded ashore at Da Nang.

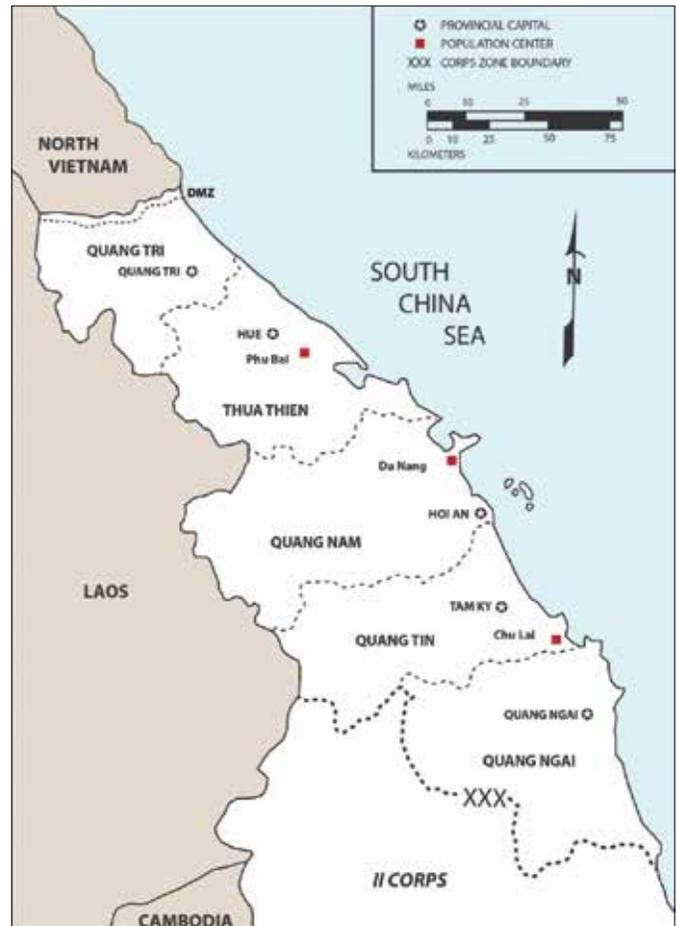
Long before Kennedy's edict, discussions among U.S. military planners on the prospects of military intervention in Indochina included some of the same rationalizations on sea power, Marines, and, among other key locations, Da Nang. Whether blunting a North Korean-style invasion of Indochina and, later, the RVN by Chinese and DRV forces, or curtailing an insurgency threatening to overtake all of Southeast Asia, Marines were sure to play a role based in part on the reasons Kennedy highlighted and the Marine Corps' mission, functions, and doctrine of the

<sup>9</sup> William L. Rust, *Kennedy in Vietnam: American Vietnam Policy, 1960-1963* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), 34.

time.<sup>10</sup> By the time the conflict reached the point of full American military intervention under President Johnson, contingency plans provided for a significant Marine contribution to defend the country's five northern provinces.

The relationship between the Marines and the conflict in South Vietnam dates as far back as the First Indochina War between the Viet Minh independence movement and the combined French colonial forces, including those from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The Viet Minh offensive of 1954, featuring Chinese-made tanks and artillery, ended with several captured or abandoned French outposts north of Hanoi and a high command pulling its combat units closer to the capital to prevent its capture. After nearly eight years of fighting, France saw the war as unwinnable unless the United States and Britain provided direct military assistance. One such French request included "twenty thousand Marines" to seize the seaport at Haiphong before opening an escape route between Hanoi and the port for safe passage of French forces to Da Nang.<sup>11</sup> With the exception of the size of the Marine contingent, the request mirrored a study presented to the French three years prior in 1951.<sup>12</sup> President Dwight D. Eisenhower concluded in both instances that, without concurrences from Congress or the support of U.S. allies, intervention was not in America's best interest.<sup>13</sup>

The 1954 Geneva Accords officially ended the war and partitioned Vietnam into two countries. The war's end also marked the beginning of America's deliberate planning to defend the RVN from an invasion by the DRV and China. Early plans for the commitment of U.S. forces entailed substantial Marine involvement. Like plans for contingencies elsewhere in the world, the Marine Corps tied its doctrine, operat-



Marine Corps History Division

I Corps Tactical Zone and northern provinces.

ing concepts, equipment acquisitions, officer education, and unit training to what it anticipated to be its role in the south. By 1962, the Marines were focusing on a conventional scenario, even though military planners on the Joint Chiefs' staff shifted their attention to a Communist-inspired insurgency and U.S. support for a national pacification effort. Although combating guerrilla forces and pacifying the population consumed a great deal of the Marine Corps' attention, the Service envisioned that it would still deploy combat units to repel a ground invasion and for sustained conventional military operations.

Civilian and military officials debated committing U.S. combat forces to end the stalemate and reunify the two Vietnams. Foremost on the minds of military planners was the potential for a North

<sup>10</sup> Alexander S. Cochran Jr., "American Planning for Ground Combat in Vietnam, 1952-1965," *Parameters* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 64-65.

<sup>11</sup> *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the First Indochina War, 1947-1954* (Washington, DC: Historical Division of the Joint Secretariat, Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004), 180-81.

<sup>12</sup> *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the First Indochina War, 1947-1954*.

<sup>13</sup> *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the First Indochina War, 1947-1954*.

Korean-style invasion to seize the south's major cities and seaports and the capital in Saigon. Agreements coming out of Geneva to hold national elections likely prevented an invasion, though few in President Eisenhower's cabinet expected the north to remain idle. Anticipating Communist aggression, Eisenhower's national security team began work in 1955 on a security policy vis-à-vis an American military response. The result was National Security Council Memorandum 5602/1 and a U.S. Department of Defense initiative to develop contingency plans for direct military involvement.<sup>14</sup> A planning cell under the supervision of the Joint Chiefs explored several scenarios requiring a direct U.S. military response. The cell formalized its findings in June 1956 with Limited War Plan-Indochina.<sup>15</sup> Aimed at repulsing "overt aggression" by China and the DRV, the plan outlined the American military response in two distinct phases: a massive allied air bombardment of invading formations, including the potential use of nuclear weapons, and the introduction of U.S. and allied ground forces to seize select military objectives in the south and the north.<sup>16</sup>

Critical to the success of the opening phase was a South Vietnamese "delaying action from the 17th parallel to the hill mass around Tourane" to buy time for U.S. forces to arrive and form the counterattack.<sup>17</sup> Three U.S. Army regimental combat teams and two Marine regimental landing teams served as the vanguard of an American-led campaign estimated to take

between 9 and 12 months to complete. The mission was to seize and defend the seaports and airbases at Da Nang, Cam Ranh Bay, and Saigon, where additional forces and supplies were to arrive before counterattacking Viet Minh forces (and potentially Chinese) south of the 17th parallel.<sup>18</sup> Their objective was to destroy or push all Communist forces north of the 17th parallel and reestablish the demarcation line.

That same year, the Army conducted its own study of the situation in Indochina. Campaign Plan-North Vietnam, like Limited War Plan-Indochina, highlighted many of the same points and offered a few changes. In its plan, an Army division would lead the counterattack north of Da Nang in conjunction with amphibious landings by Marines in the DRV to cut off Viet Minh escape routes and to seize key military bases on the coast.<sup>19</sup> Afterward, the Marines would join the Army for a follow-on attack against the port at Haiphong before moving west along the Red River valley and seizing Hanoi.<sup>20</sup> The end state was a reunified Vietnam under control of the RVN's government, thereby ending the conflict entirely and halting China's advances in Indochina and Southeast Asia. Planners estimated the counteroffensive alone to take three months to complete with another eight months to clear and secure Viet Minh base areas in the mountains north of Hanoi.<sup>21</sup>

The headquarters for all American military forces in the Pacific produced its own blueprint for conflict in Indochina, which was identical to the Army's Campaign Plan-North Vietnam, but with one major difference whereby amphibious landings north of the 17th parallel were contingent upon the intensity of the resistance at Da Nang and the high probability of success. Confident that a framework for American mili-

<sup>14</sup> Willard J. Webb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Prelude to the War in Vietnam, 1954-1959* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2007), 132.

<sup>15</sup> Limited War Plan-Indochina (revised 26 November 1956), as cited in *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam, vol. 5, Planning the War* (McLean, VA: BDM Corp., 1980), 3-6.

<sup>16</sup> Limited War Plan-Indochina (revised 26 November 1956), 3-6; Ronald H. Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years, 1941-1960—The United States Army in Vietnam* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1985), 270; and U.S. Policy in Event of Renewal of Aggression in Vietnam, JCS 1992/479 enclosure to Memo JCS to SECDEC, 9 September 1955, CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2), Records of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, RG 218, NARA, Washington, DC.

<sup>17</sup> Tourane was the French name for Da Nang at the time. See Webb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Prelude to the War in Vietnam, 1954-1959*, 132.

<sup>18</sup> *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam, vol. 6, Conduct of the War, book 2, Functional Analyses* (McLean, VA: BDM Corp., 1980), 3-7.

<sup>19</sup> Plan for U.S. Participation in Event of Viet Minh Aggression in Vietnam, Appendix to Memo, JCS for CINCPAC, 11 July 1956 as cited in Spector, *Advice and Support*, 270.

<sup>20</sup> *A Study in Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, 5:3-7; U.S. Policy in Event of Renewal of Aggression in Vietnam, JCS, 1992/479; and Spector, *Advice and Support*, 270.

<sup>21</sup> Spector, *Advice and Support*, 271.

tary action was in place, the Joint Chiefs delegated sole detailed planning and coordination responsibilities to the Pacific Command's multi-Service planning cell.<sup>22</sup>

With ownership of detailed planning and coordination, the senior joint U.S. military command in the Pacific theater began work on Operations Plan (OPLAN) 46-56.<sup>23</sup> Defeating a ground invasion by a combined Chinese-DRV force or by North Vietnamese forces acting alone was still the primary concern as was the timely arrival of U.S. forces and RVN holding actions between Da Nang and the demilitarized zone. Two major changes surfaced as a result of the Pacific Command's more detailed planning effort. The first was that OPLAN 46-56, unlike its predecessors, restricted the use of nuclear weapons. The second was the realization of a more complex Communist ground invasion scheme.

Based on their study of the terrain and geography, planners did not foresee the Communists limiting their invasion to one axis of advance, particularly if there was the potential for direct U.S. ground and air involvement. Instead, planners believed the Communists would rely on as many as three attack routes. The first and most direct route took invasion forces south across the demilitarized zone along National Highway 1 (the only north-south road in Indochina) to capture the major cities of Hue, Da Nang, Qui Nhon, Tuy Hoa, Nha Trang, and Phan Thiet.<sup>24</sup> Communist forces also might attack via the Lao panhandle along the Ho Chi Minh Trail network. With this particular route, invading forces could move south before turning east into South Vietnam at the central highlands and capturing the border towns of Kon Tum, Pleiku, and Ban Me Thuot straddling National Highway 14. Planners assessed that the Communists' goal was to

cut the country in half.<sup>25</sup> The third route planners considered began in northern Laos and traversed the full length of the Ho Chi Minh Trail through the central and southern part of the country and into eastern Cambodia along the Mekong River, putting invading forces within easy striking distance of Saigon.<sup>26</sup> Most expected enemy forces to use a combination of the three routes to deceive and overwhelm American and RVN command-and-control and defenses.

The opening phase of any combined American-RVN military response to the most simple or complex invasion was to keep the Communists north of Da Nang and to use ground forces and supplies for both land- and sea-based counteroffensives. Several coastal points were vitally important since, according to Vietnam War historian Dr. Alexander S. Cochran Jr., planners expected U.S. forces would deploy to "Vietnam by sea and a few by air" and be "resupplied through coastal ports."<sup>27</sup> As detailed planning continued, the Joint Chiefs approved a list of ground and aviation commands for the military response. Planners earmarked the 3d Marine Division and 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, both in Japan, for operations to seize the Hai Van Pass just north of Da Nang where National Highway 1 traversed the Truong Son mountain range and emptied into the enclave.<sup>28</sup> Optimistic that the Marines could slow the pace of invading forces with a hasty defensive line and buy time for additional American and allied forces to counter the offensive, planners wanted an additional Marine contingent to remain at sea for use in amphibious landings at various points on the southern and northern Vietnamese coasts.<sup>29</sup>

When planners surmised that the Communists might consider alternate and multiple invasion routes,

<sup>22</sup> See Webb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Prelude to the War in Vietnam, 1954-1959*, 132; and Limited War Plan-Indochina, 3-6. All four Services had planners on the staff of the Joint Chiefs and at the Pacific Command to ensure their interests and capabilities were understood during planning.

<sup>23</sup> *A Study in Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, 5:3-7, 3-8.

<sup>24</sup> Cochran, "American Planning for Ground Combat in Vietnam, 1952-1965," 64.

<sup>25</sup> Cochran, "American Planning for Ground Combat in Vietnam"; and Spector, *Advice and Support*, 268.

<sup>26</sup> Cochran, "American Planning for Ground Combat in Vietnam."

<sup>27</sup> Cochran, "American Planning for Ground Combat in Vietnam."

<sup>28</sup> *A Study in Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, 5:3-7; and Spector, *Advice and Support*, 268-70.

<sup>29</sup> *A Study in Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, vol. 5; and Spector, *Advice and Support*.

they realized Saigon might not be the only seat of government at risk. The Thai capital at Bangkok and the Laotian capital of Vientiane also were at risk of becoming Communist targets.<sup>30</sup> Their theory prompted senior military officials to consider drafting a more expansive plan and to include Thailand and Laos as part of their overall Indochina defense strategy. Events internal to South Vietnam and the greater Indochina region compelled Pacific Command to more critically assess North Vietnam's intentions, as well as those of China, and the means by which the Communists might overcome the advantages the U.S. military held in technology and firepower.

The rationale behind American plans centered on the type of conflict into which the Joint Chiefs believed U.S. forces were entering. In 1959, the Communists started to view reunification in terms of years and not as a result of a single overt military invasion. Graham Cosmas wrote in *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation* that the DRV recognized that a conventional invasion, with or without China, would not achieve reunification. Instead, it would have to combine "large-scale military campaigns with widespread popular uprisings" to realize this goal.<sup>31</sup> Getting the support of the people would take time. Cognizant of America's pledge to protect the south from invasion and of its advantages in military technology and firepower, the north decided instead to present numerous conventional and unconventional challenges to RVN officials and U.S. officials and their allies to resolve. Beginning first with the rise of the Communist Pathet Lao insurgency in Laos in 1957, the north put pressure on the south by creating instability on its borders. Then, in 1960, the DRV set conditions for war in the RVN when it revised its 1946 constitution. In it, the ruling Lao Dong (Vietnamese Workers) Party drafted a proclamation directing its forces to prepare to defend the north and liberate the south. The same decree gave formal rise to the southern branch of the

Lao Dong, known formally as the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP), with the mission of undermining the RVN government and stirring resentment among the southern people toward their government and military.<sup>32</sup>

Recognizing the United States was likely to suspect DRV involvement in violating the Geneva Accords by undermining the RVN government, Communist officials attempted to conceal their actions by encouraging nationalists and other non-Communist organizations to participate in reunification efforts. These groups formed the National Liberation Front (NLF) in December 1960, the majority of which was Communist.<sup>33</sup> The growth of the movement prompted the Lao Dong to form the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) to coordinate all political and military activities south of the demilitarized zone. Under COSVN's direction, the NLF carried out day-to-day guerrilla actions in the south. Similar to Mao's people's war in China, the NLF's strategy consisted of military operations at the regional, provincial/district, and village levels to wage a guerrilla campaign to gain the support of the population and control the countryside before "consolidating and expanding the base areas" and to strengthen "the people's forces in all respects . . . in order to advance to building a large, strong armed force which can, along with all the people, defeat the enemy troops and win ultimate victory."<sup>34</sup> The result was a massive expansion of the NLF in slightly more than two years. According to Cosmas's estimates, the

<sup>30</sup> Spector, *Advice and Support*.

<sup>31</sup> Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 2006), 72. MACV = Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

<sup>32</sup> According to Douglas Pike, there are numerous interchangeable titles historians use to describe the political and military organizations associated with the war. The NLF, referred to by South Vietnamese officials as the "communist traitors to Vietnam," or Viet Cong (VC), was a politico-military Communist-dominated nationalist insurgency seeking to liberate the country and reunify the north and the south. It was the successor to the Viet Minh (the precursor to the NLF), which was a collection of Communist and nationalist organizations formed to oust the Japanese and French between 1944 and 1954. The official title of the NLF's fighting arm was the People's Liberation Armed Forces, or PLAF. See Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966).

<sup>33</sup> See Pike, *Viet Cong*, 82.

<sup>34</sup> Cosmas, *MACV*, 72.

NLF grew “from about 4,000 fulltime fighters in early 1960 to over 20,000,” with as many as “20 battalions, 80 separate companies, and perhaps 100 platoons of widely varying personnel strength,” the bulk of which COSVN deployed in and around Saigon.<sup>35</sup> The NLF formed battalion-size units specifically to conduct conventional operations in the central highlands and northern provinces.<sup>36</sup>

The NLF adhered to the same tactics the Viet Minh used against the French. Fighting units consisted of three elements: main forces, provincial or district units, and local guerrilla forces. The uniformed and well-armed, organized, and equipped main forces consisted of battalion- and regimental-size units who took their orders directly from the COSVN and subordinate regional headquarters. These main forces were for major operations and attacks against large French (and later American) formations only. The provincial and district units were a composite of guerrilla and main force units operating at the company and battalion levels. Although equipped and organized similar to the main forces, these units were not nearly as capable. Their primary role was small-scale raids and other offensive actions.

The least capable armed component outside the “estimated 20,000 combat troops counted by the allies” was the village-level local guerrillas.<sup>37</sup> Formed into platoons or smaller units, guerrillas received their orders from district and village officials. Ill-equipped and untrained, guerrillas lived among the people and harassed South Vietnamese, French, and American units as they moved through or near villages. Their greatest attribute was conducting reconnaissance for the main forces as well as providing logistics support and partially trained replacements.<sup>38</sup> All levels of the Communist armed division relied upon the villages for food, clothing, recruits, labor, and medical supplies. Most of their weapons and ammunition, however, came from the DRV or were fabrications. As early as 1962, the NLF built base areas in the rural areas and

outside the RVN government’s sphere of control and influence. The Marines’ long-term plan in the northern provinces was to retake these areas, along with the enclaves, one at a time.

Successful incursions into Laos and inconspicuous interference in the south’s deteriorating domestic affairs shifted the momentum in favor of the Communists. Instability in the south increased as the Communists’ political cadres, educated and trained in the north just after the partitioning of Vietnam, returned to their hamlets and villages to play on the fear and anger of disenfranchised farmers and to challenge the legitimacy of the RVN government.<sup>39</sup> Promising sweeping land reforms in exchange for their loyal support—and punishment for their betrayal—the initial wave of political cadres made immediate gains among the people living in the rural areas and away from the large and more prosperous cities. At the same time, Chinese and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) advisors and equipment outfitted district and main force units. To ensure an endless flow of weapons and ammunition, the NVA carved out new infiltration routes leading to and from South Vietnam and expanded existing pathways.

The Pacific Command’s responsibility to plan for military action brought about a less centralized and unconventional way of thinking as well as a broader perspective emphasizing greater awareness of the regional situation and not one focused solely on the RVN. The principal issue prompting planners to revisit their earlier planning considerations was the potential for invading forces to use new and multiple routes. Since two of the three anticipated routes crossed through neighboring Laos and Cambodia, the security and stability of those countries were important to the South Vietnamese government. Border control, therefore, was important. Due to the RVN’s geographic disposition and the presence of Communist forces in Laos and Cambodia, planners saw value in developing more inclusive U.S. action.

The conditions in Laos, more so than in Cambodia and the RVN, convinced planners that a new and

<sup>35</sup> Cosmas, *MACV*.

<sup>36</sup> Cosmas, *MACV*.

<sup>37</sup> Cosmas, *MACV*, 72–73.

<sup>38</sup> Pike, *Viet Cong*, 79.

<sup>39</sup> Pike, *Viet Cong*, 82.

comprehensive series of plans reflecting simultaneous actions in different parts of Indochina was necessary. Known as Operations Plan 32: Defense of Indochina (OPLAN 32), the successor to OPLAN 46-56 was America's first real attempt to bring together military forces from throughout Southeast Asia to contain Communism and, specifically, to prevent the fall of Indochina entirely.<sup>40</sup> The series of plans consisted of actions in the RVN to counter both a conventional ground invasion and an insurgency, as well as actions to defeat DRV-backed insurgencies threatening Laos and Thailand. Actions specific to South Vietnam fell under OPLAN 32-59.

OPLAN 32 consisted of four distinct phases to counter or combat Communist aggression: Phase I-Alert; Phase II-Counterinsurgency; Phase III-Direct North Vietnamese attack; and Phase IV-Direct Chinese attack. In Phase I, U.S. forces were to assemble and to make preparations to respond to deployment orders regarding either or both scenarios. Phase II "extended from the time the United States decided to take military action against a Communist insurgency until the friendly government regained control or the conflict escalated into a full-scale local war."<sup>41</sup> Although Phase III put American forces in action against the DRV specifically, Phase IV dealt with actions against China in the event of its direct involvement in any ground invasion.<sup>42</sup> Concerning the Marines, Phase II entailed a "scaled-down version of the Phase

III deployment, with a portion of the Marine force going to Da Nang and two Army brigades to the Saigon area."<sup>43</sup> In Phases III and IV, a full Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) would deploy to Da Nang, with an Army division deploying to Qui Nhon and the central highlands and an Army airborne brigade to Saigon.<sup>44</sup> These forces were to assist RVN forces in blocking the Communist attack down the coast and against Saigon. Their principal mission was to defend the developed coastal areas, thereby freeing RVN units to take the offensive.

OPLAN 32 architects, unlike those of previous plans, conceded to the idea that an insurgency was likely and that by inciting instability in a neighboring country the Communists were attempting to divert U.S. attention and, if possible, military resources away from South Vietnam. The final draft of OPLAN 32 left open the possibility for American ground forces to "engage in unspecified counter-guerrilla activities" after turning back the anticipated ground invasion.<sup>45</sup> In the event of calling on U.S. forces to counter an insurgency, planners decided the same enclaves used as part of the defensive and counterattack against the ground invasion would still serve as bases of operations.

The presence of Communist forces in Laos that had remained in place by the Geneva Accords left the Royal Lao Government (an ally to the United States) and neighboring Thailand vulnerable to influence and attack. As the situation in Laos intensified, planners focused on developing a Lao-specific branch plan. With this in mind, the Pacific Command added OPLAN 32-59 (L) in June 1959 to prepare for unilateral U.S. military action to restore "stability and friendly control of Laos in the event it was threatened by Communist insurgency."<sup>46</sup> A theme common to all of the operation plans for Indochina was the rapid

<sup>40</sup> The number 32 signifies the overall purpose of the plan, which was to defend Indochina. With each plan's revision, planners attached the year in which the original work on the plan began (i.e., OPLAN 46-56 began in 1956). For specific situations in the RVN and in Laos that might be unrelated to the other, different numbering conventions existed. For example, OPLAN 37-64 was to stabilize the south, while OPLAN 99-64 was the effort to stabilize Laos, but only after the 1962 Geneva Accords made Laos off-limits to U.S. plans to protect South Vietnam. Each subplan provided specific guidance for confined missions or to achieve a specific result (e.g., OPLAN 34-64 Covert Actions in North Vietnam). Regardless of the specific situation, location, and mission, all plans fell under the overall OPLAN 32 construct. See *A Study in Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, 5:3-4.

<sup>41</sup> *CINCPAC Command History, 1960* (Honolulu, HI: Headquarters of the Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet, 1961), 21-24. CINCPAC = Commander in Chief, Pacific.

<sup>42</sup> *A Study in Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, 5:3-5.

<sup>43</sup> Cosmas, *MACV*, 188.

<sup>44</sup> Cosmas, *MACV*.

<sup>45</sup> Cosmas, *MACV*.

<sup>46</sup> Edward J. Marolda and Oscar P. Fitzgerald, *The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict*, vol. 2, *From Military Assistance to Combat, 1959-1965* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, Department of the Navy, 1986), 26; and Norman B. Hannah, *The Key to Failure: Laos and the Vietnam War* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1987).

deployment of conventional military forces. OPLAN 32 (L) was no different, but this time America's quick response was for securing airfields and the Mekong River crossing points connecting Seno and Vientiane, Laos, to Thailand. Those actions included a sizeable Marine air-ground commitment.

President Kennedy's election in 1960 brought with it several dramatic changes to U.S. military policy toward Indochina. It also impacted joint military planning and the Marine Corps' potential role in the war there. The first change came with President Kennedy's pledge to rebuild the U.S. Armed Services. Allan R. Millett explained in *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* that under Kennedy, the Marine Corps "began a five-year surge in readiness that brought it to its highest level of peacetime effectiveness by the eve of the Vietnam War."<sup>47</sup> Kennedy's rationale for restoring traditional military capabilities was to ensure that the United States possessed both feasible and credible counters to Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's encroachment into Western Europe. The most significant change, however, would be Kennedy's pledge to counter Khrushchev's declaration to support unconditionally wars of national liberation around the world. Indigenous rebellions and popular insurgencies in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and in other parts of Central America, Africa, and Indochina were but a few examples.<sup>48</sup>

Countering Soviet support for wars of national liberation was one of Kennedy's first directives to the Joint Chiefs. He tasked the Service chiefs with developing and including special warfare and counterinsurgency doctrine in Service training and professional military education. At the same time, Kennedy increased defense spending to prepare the Services to fight conventional wars. The Services responded to Kennedy's Flexible Response policy by overhauling

Service-specific roles and responsibilities to meet his mandate for providing courses of action other than the nuclear option championed by President Eisenhower in his New Look initiative beginning in 1953.<sup>49</sup> Despite Kennedy's interest in special/counterinsurgency warfare, he and Secretary McNamara wanted a Marine Corps "capable of sustained combat" against a peer competitor and on land.<sup>50</sup> The Marine Corps was already moving in that direction. A decade earlier, the 19th Commandant, General Clifton B. Cates, stressed that the Service build a "solid foundation of competence in conventional land warfare," adding that "if the occasion demands it" Marine forces will be "capable of moving in and fighting side by side with Army divisions."<sup>51</sup>

In 1951, Marine Corps doctrine writers began emphasizing a quick-strike capability as opposed to the Army's heavier and more deliberate land warfighting doctrine focusing on both offensive and defensive thinking. Service doctrine under General Cates centered on creating a force capable of seizing and holding objectives, such as seaports and airfields, to support the arrival of a larger Marine and Army force. Under Flexible Response, however, the Marines would not return immediately to amphibious ships waiting offshore. Instead, they would continue limited offensive and defensive operations to support the larger ground campaign as well as keeping lines of communication and resupply routes open for Army forces fighting farther inland. Rather than operating from ships, base

<sup>47</sup> Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Free Press, 1980), 543.

<sup>48</sup> *Analysis of the Khrushchev Speech of January 6, 1961: Hearing before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, Eighty-seventh Congress, First Session, Testimony of Dr. Stefan T. Possony, June 16, 1961* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961).

<sup>49</sup> *Flexible response or flexible deterrent options* refer to a U.S. defense strategy that offered a wide range of diplomatic, political, economic, and military options to deter an enemy attack. The term *flexible response* first appears in Gen Maxwell D. Taylor, USA (Ret), *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), which sharply criticized U.S. national security policy. Eisenhower's New Look approach relied heavily on the capacity for a devastating assault with nuclear weapons—massive retaliation—to fight Soviet military provocations, regardless of whether they involved nuclear weapons or not. The Eisenhower administration thought it could deter all forms of aggression by the Soviet Union and China without maintaining expensive and large conventional military forces.

<sup>50</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 546.

<sup>51</sup> Col John E. Greenwood, "The Pre-war Era," *Marine Corps Gazette* 56, no. 9 (September 1972): 37.

areas similar to the beachheads of the Second World War would provide the Marines with intermediate logistics support, artillery emplacements, and shore-based command-and-control nodes. With additional capabilities, the Marine force could extend or duplicate their beachheads farther inland, if necessary.<sup>52</sup>

While the Marine Corps improved its warfighting capacity, Pacific Command planners considered with great certainty that a DRV-sponsored insurgency was now the most likely threat to the RVN and that the long-anticipated conventional invasion was less likely. Counterinsurgency warfare and military support to political, social, and economic concepts received greater attention. Up to this point, U.S. advisors concentrated on preparing RVN forces to repel a conventional ground invasion. After conventionally organized and equipped NLF battalions routed Army, Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), units in 1961, President Kennedy sent his chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Maxwell Taylor, to South Vietnam to assess the situation and recommend a way forward. Taylor's trip led to the establishment of a new command structure, the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV), and the quadrupling of American personnel supporting its mission. He brought back a profound understanding of the conflict and a cautious tone concerning America's direct military involvement in the fighting.<sup>53</sup>

Unlike Taylor, the Joint Chiefs resisted widening America's advisory-and-assistance role. Although Commandant General David M. Shoup had a close professional relationship with Kennedy, it did not prevent him from being one of the more vocal opponents of America's and the Marine Corps' potential involvement in the conflict, particularly in a counterinsurgency role.<sup>54</sup> Shoup did just enough to convince Kennedy that the Marine Corps followed his directive to incorporate counterinsurgency warfare into

its doctrine and training. Historian Howard Jablon observed in an article on General Shoup that, despite Shoup's many accomplishments, he failed to convince Kennedy that "counterinsurgency warfare was unrealistic" and that the Marines were not suited for nation-building.<sup>55</sup> Given the option, Shoup wanted to keep from involving Marines in these types of conflicts.

The Pacific Command offered few deviations to their theories on both an overt and covert Communist takeover of the RVN. With President Kennedy's deep interest and concern that wars of the future would be both conventional and involve the people and guerrilla elements (as witnessed in Cuba, French Indochina and Algeria, and China), planners wanted to produce options in the event U.S. forces had to confront either or both. To be able to fight an insurgency, while at the same time having the resources in place to counter a conventional invasion, planners identified locations along the Mekong River stretching from Thailand across Laos and the RVN to the Tonkin Gulf and other positions south near the Cambodia-RVN border.<sup>56</sup> This main line of resistance, supported by the other allied nations making up the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) included armor and infantry forces as part of an anti-infiltration scheme designed to halt the flood of Communist advisors and equipment entering the country from North Vietnam.<sup>57</sup> These were the same locations planners considered to be potential border crossing points for the conventional ground attack, if it materialized.

In either instance, Marines would play a much larger and preemptive role than Pacific Command planners had conceived and studied with the idea of deploying U.S. ground forces in advance of an invasion and before the insurgency grew out of control. One plan called for a MEB to establish "secure base

<sup>52</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 546-47.

<sup>53</sup> Maxwell D. Taylor, *Report on General Taylor's Mission to Vietnam* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 1961), 8.

<sup>54</sup> Frank Wallace, *Kennedy's General: A Story of Uncommon Courage—The Remarkable Life of David M. Shoup* (Berkeley, CA: Minuteman Press, 2013).

<sup>55</sup> Howard Jablon, "General David M. Shoup, USMC: Warrior and War Protestor," *Journal of Military History* 60, no. 3 (July 1996): 513.

<sup>56</sup> See Cochran, "American Planning for Ground Combat in Vietnam."

<sup>57</sup> Created in 1954, SEATO was a response to the demand that the Southeast Asian area be protected against Communist expansionism. *A Study in Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, 5:3-8.

areas” at Da Nang and other coastal locations.<sup>58</sup> They also envisioned that a separate and larger MEF would either pass through Da Nang to carry out operations against the insurgency or stay “anchored on the coast to preserve additional amphibious option.”<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, a second MEF (minus the brigade at Da Nang) would remain at sea “to quarantine South Vietnam to degree necessary to significantly reduce Viet Cong sea infiltration.”<sup>60</sup> They continued stressing the importance of amphibious operations against the DRV to draw Communist forces away from the demilitarized zone and Laos-Cambodia-RVN triborder region. Roughly 205,000 U.S. combat and support personnel (six divisions) were to support this plan, including nearly 85,000 Marines.<sup>61</sup>

To prepare the Marine Corps for the range of potential tasks, General Shoup directed the Landing Force Development Center at Quantico to develop a classified advanced base staff exercise centered on the volatile security situation in and around Da Nang. The goal was to orient officers to the conflict and enhance their understanding of the Marine Corps’ prospective area of operations. He also wanted to glean ideas and concepts from their planning to improve Service-level thinking on the conflict and how the military command in South Vietnam could best deploy and employ Marine forces. All Marine officers assigned as students at both the Amphibious Warfare School and Command and Staff College in Quantico between 1963 and 1965 participated in a planning exercise titled Operation Cormorant. The scenario involved the deployment of a reinforced MEF at Da Nang in an effort to stabilize and defend the enclave in the face of a growing insurgency and looming Communist ground invasion.<sup>62</sup>

Given the security situation, a common trend Shoup noted was that students saw pacification of the populated areas as a critical task and that it would require a significant number of Marines to secure and hold pacified rear areas. No less important was their regard for conventional military operations. When the 9th MEB landed at Da Nang in 1965, a large number of the Marine officers assigned to the command were uniquely familiar with the security situation in Da Nang and the tasks assigned to them as a result of their Operation Cormorant planning experiences.<sup>63</sup> Regardless, Shoup was no more willing to get Marines involved in a purely counterinsurgency role. Instead, he stressed the Marine Corps’ neutrality: “We do not claim to be experts in the entire scope of actions required in counterinsurgency operations. We do stand ready to carry out the military portions of such operations and to contribute to such other aspects of the counterinsurgency effort as may be appropriate.”<sup>64</sup>

In the aftermath of widespread civilian unrest brought on by the insurgency, religious indifferences, repeated changes in the RVN government and military leadership, and ongoing pleas for land and social reforms, U.S. planners replaced OPLAN 32-59 with OPLAN 32-64 in early 1964.<sup>65</sup> The central theme of planning shifted from defending the south from an outside threat to stabilizing the country in spite of several internal threats. At the same time, to increase pressure on the north to cease its support for the NLF, the Joint Chiefs recommended an air campaign featuring a highly scrutinized list of 94 industrial and military targets to cripple the country’s economy and ability to provide the necessary warfighting materials and resources to sustain the war.<sup>66</sup> Some of the

<sup>58</sup> “Commandant of the Marine Corps’ Point Paper on Options in South Vietnam,” March 1964, Greene Papers, 3093, Box 3, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

<sup>59</sup> “Commandant of the Marine Corps’ Point Paper on Options in South Vietnam.”

<sup>60</sup> “Commandant of the Marine Corps’ Point Paper on Options in South Vietnam.”

<sup>61</sup> Gravel, *The Pentagon Papers*, 108.

<sup>62</sup> Francis J. Kelly, “Advance Base Problems,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 51, no. 11 (November 1967): 47-49.

<sup>63</sup> “Da Nang Revisited,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 49, no. 5 (May 1965): 1.

<sup>64</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 548. Shoup’s statement comes from an excerpt of his 1963 comments to the U.S. House Armed Services Committee. See *Hearing on Defense Appropriations Fiscal Year 1964, Before the House Armed Services Committee, 88th Congress* (January 1963) (testimony of Gen David M. Shoup, USMC), 909.

<sup>65</sup> South Vietnam endured failed military coup attempts in 1960 and again in 1964. A successful military coup in November 1963 ended the presidency and life of Ngo Dinh Diem.

<sup>66</sup> Gravel, *The Pentagon Papers*, 108.

perspectives from previous plans gained new life. In OPLAN 32-64, planners reintroduced three invasion routes that were identified in earlier plans, only this time they looked to these locations as crossing points for insurgents and NVA forces slipping into the south from the north, Laos, and Cambodia.<sup>67</sup> The plan established border control points to monitor these areas specifically. OPLAN 32-64 called attention to several major sea and coastal infiltration points as well.

Pressure to involve American ground forces accelerated in 1964 after a series of ARVN battlefield setbacks convinced U.S. political and military officials that the South Vietnamese government could not win the war. A once-cautious General Westmoreland, who assumed command of USMACV in June, contemplated implementing the defensive line outlined in OPLAN 32-59. In his proposal to the Joint Chiefs to consider the measure, he suggested deploying mobile light infantry units near the demilitarized zone to both delay invading forces and clear and hold guerrilla base areas and surrounding Saigon with an elaborate system of defenses formed around air cavalry units and mechanized and armor divisions extending north and west of the capital city.<sup>68</sup> In keeping with the plan, Marine forces would operate in the northern provinces, where they were to establish beachheads adjacent to the largest enclaves and where any number of beaches could be used for landing Marines and resupplies.<sup>69</sup> If the Communist ground invasion never materialized, the role of U.S. ground forces was to advise and build the RVN's military's fighting capacity in conjunction with support for national pacification programs to reinforce the population's confidence in the government. OPLAN 32-64 represented more than just a new plan; it reflected the way the United States viewed the evolving situation in South Vietnam.

The Johnson administration considered the NLF closer to overthrowing the RVN government than at any time in the past decade, reigniting both private and public debates over America's direct intervention. With each passing day, Communist political cadres

and guerrilla forces seemingly increased in numbers, popularity, and overall strength. Hanoi viewed the NLF's gains as an opportunity to increase pressure in the demilitarized region, infiltrating more than 12,000 soldiers in 1964 as compared to the 7,900 in 1963.<sup>70</sup> In the northern provinces, the Marine Corps watched closely as the contact between the ARVN and the main forces and NVA increased in frequency and lethality. In areas where NVA units were purportedly infiltrating, Chinese and Soviet weapons and ammunition surfaced in large quantities, as did reports of soldiers in uniforms and equipment typically worn by the Chinese military.<sup>71</sup> Official intelligence reports described the once relatively quiet northern provinces as a flashpoint. Main force attacks there, compared with the rest of the country, increased from 6 percent in 1963 to 13 percent in 1964.<sup>72</sup> Although the total number of enemy killed country-wide decreased from 20,573 in 1963 to 16,785 in 1964, the number killed in the northern provinces tripled from 664 to 1,887.<sup>73</sup> During 1963, 10 percent of the ARVN soldiers killed came as a result of fighting there, an increase of nearly 25 percent.<sup>74</sup>

In light of the increase in NVA activity, Johnson approved intelligence collection operations off North Vietnam, over the demilitarized zone, and along the Ho Chi Minh trail. He also encouraged the RVN government and military to go on the offensive against the NLF. The results of the latter, however, were not what Johnson expected. American military advisors reported wholesale corruption and incompetence at the highest levels of the military and low morale in the ranks as the primary reason for the ARVN's failures. Johnson sought a wider role for U.S. forces, and

<sup>67</sup> *A Study in Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, 5:3-10-3-12.

<sup>68</sup> *A Study in Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, vol. 5.

<sup>69</sup> *A Study in Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, vol. 6, 168.

<sup>70</sup> *Operations of the III Marine Amphibious Force Vietnam, March-September 1965* (Pearl Harbor, HI: Headquarters Fleet Marine Forces Pacific, 1965), 12.

<sup>71</sup> *Operations of the III Marine Amphibious Force Vietnam, March-September 1965*, 13.

<sup>72</sup> *Operations of the III Marine Amphibious Force Vietnam, March-September 1965*.

<sup>73</sup> *Operations of the III Marine Amphibious Force Vietnam, March-September 1965*.

<sup>74</sup> *Operations of the III Marine Amphibious Force Vietnam, March-September 1965*.

the Tonkin Gulf incidents in August 1964 gave him the justification he needed to “take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.”<sup>75</sup>

By the end of 1964, the South Vietnamese population’s diminished confidence in their government and the ARVN was impacting the country’s daily affairs. The ever-present fear of yet another military coup, coupled with the continuing trend of battlefield defeats, threatened the decades-old American effort to build a strong central government and national military in South Vietnam. The consensus was that the country was sure to collapse if the RVN government, with the assistance of the United States, did not reverse the “losing trend.”<sup>76</sup> During an official visit in January 1965, one of President Johnson’s top national security advisors, McGeorge Bundy, remarked that “the situation in Vietnam is deteriorating and without new US action, defeat appears inevitable—probably not in a matter of weeks or even months, but within the next year or so. There is still time to turn it around, but not much.”<sup>77</sup>

Still at an impasse as to the depth and degree of direct U.S. military involvement, Johnson was nonetheless resolute in keeping the south free from Communism despite the desperate political and military situations. He believed he was doing as much as he could politically. Militarily, however, Johnson acknowledged that there was still more the United States could, and would likely have to, do. He reached a decision point when the NLF attacked U.S. forces based at Pleiku and Qui Nhon on 7 and 10 February 1965, killing a combined total of 33 servicemembers and

destroying or damaging 52 aircraft.<sup>78</sup> Similar to the attack against the RVN-U.S. airbase at Bien Hoa outside Saigon on 1 November 1964, NLF guerrillas infiltrated multiple layers of security with relative ease before attacking aircraft revetments and personnel billeting. Unlike in the days following the events at Bien Hoa, however, Johnson responded to the Pleiku and Qui Nhon attacks with Operations Flaming Dart I and II. For the next three weeks, U.S. aircraft struck an NVA compound located at the port city of Dong Hoi in southern DRV and infiltration routes leading into the RVN from across the demilitarized zone and from Laos. Johnson and senior members of his cabinet viewed the air strikes as retaliatory actions and the first steps in pressuring North Vietnam to end its support of the NLF.<sup>79</sup>

Following a mid-February 1965 inspection tour of the military bases supporting the Flaming Dart airstrikes, General Westmoreland’s deputy commander, Army general John L. Throckmorton, voiced his concerns about the security of these installations as well as the protection of U.S. servicemembers and aircraft, citing the attacks at Bien Hoa, Pleiku, and Qui Nhon as evidence to back his concerns.<sup>80</sup> Troubled by his deputy commander’s assessment, Westmoreland sought permission from Admiral Sharp to employ the 9th MEB, afloat in the South China Sea since January, to secure the Da Nang airbase.<sup>81</sup> Westmoreland’s request for Marines—the second such request in three months (the first came after the Bien Hoa attack)—renewed the debate between civilian and military officials regarding the use of U.S. ground forces and the capacity in which they were to be employed.

The arrival of the 9th MEB marked the end of

<sup>75</sup> The Tonkin Gulf incident consisted of two engagements between DRV Navy torpedo boats and the American destroyers USS *Maddox* (DD 731) and USS *Turner Joy* (DD 951) off the coast of North Vietnam on 2 and 4 August 1964. House Joint Resolution 1145 passed on 7 August 1964, permitting Johnson to take the necessary action to defend U.S. forces and the RVN from Communist aggression. *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series)*, vol. 20, *Ninetyth Cong., Second Session, 1968* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2010), 1.

<sup>76</sup> Gen Westmoreland and other civilian and military officials frequently used this expression to describe the direction of the war.

<sup>77</sup> Gravel, *The Pentagon Papers*, 309.

<sup>78</sup> John Schlight, *The War in South Vietnam: The Years of the Offensive, 1965–1968* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Office of Air Force History, 1988), 17, 31.

<sup>79</sup> Schlight, *The War in South Vietnam*, 31.

<sup>80</sup> USMACV to CINCPAC, 20 February 1965, Box 237, Subject files, Office of the Secretary of Defense History, Washington, DC, hereafter USMACV February memo; and E. C. Janicik, *Southeast Asia Force Deployment Buildup, Part 1, 1965*, Incident for Defense Analysis Report R-137 (Washington, DC: Weapon Systems Evaluation Group, 1968), 33.

<sup>81</sup> USMACV February memo; and Janicik, *Southeast Asia Force Deployment Buildup*.

the advisory-and-assistance era and opened a new phase of American involvement. The absence of any study on the Marines' arrival from the historiography of the Vietnam War leads many to view the Da Nang landing as hasty, though long before the landing the Marine Corps already owned a vital part of the plan for combating Communist ground forces and stabilizing Indochina and the RVN from the start. Multiple plans directing military intervention during the later stages of the First Indochina War put Marines as the vanguard of any U.S. force committed to the region.

Although the circumstances prompting the landing at Da Nang were different than planners originally anticipated, the idea that it would be Marines landing there and operating beyond Da Nang was anything but hastily decided or new. Even after securing Da Nang, there was still a predetermined plan for what the Marines would do next; yet for reasons unknown, historians tend to overlook the central purpose of both, lessening the meaning and significance of the Marine commitment to the RVN and perpetuating a misleading view of their intended role.

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# The Creation of the Marine Corps' Combined Action Platoons

A STUDY IN MARINE CORPS INGENUITY

By William F. Nimmo, with Henry Beaudin<sup>1</sup>

The Marine Corps' Combined Action Platoons (CAPs) in the Vietnam War became a significant component of the Corps' counterinsurgency strategy to pacify the rural countryside.<sup>2</sup> The Marine Corps' general strategy, at least in part, was to clear and hold the land in its enclaves and expand the territory held like a spreading inkblot. Once an area had been cleared of Viet Cong by troops from the Marine or Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) infantry, adequate security forces were needed to stay in the villages to hold and protect them so enemy

forces could not easily return.<sup>3</sup> The task of protecting the village was the theoretical duty of a Popular Force platoon, if one existed in the cleared village, consisting of approximately 35 Popular Force soldiers. They were the lowest rung of the Vietnamese military structure, poorly trained, paid only half of what the regular ARVN soldiers were paid, and received no benefits. They were either under the age of 20 or older than 30; those between 20 and 30 were not eligible to elect for Popular Force duty.<sup>4</sup> An incentive to joining the Popular Forces was that the soldiers could stay in their home villages and work the rice fields

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<sup>1</sup> William F. Nimmo holds a juris doctor degree from Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, CA. He spent nearly 40 years as a criminal trial lawyer. He was an assistant CAP leader in CAP Alpha 7 near Hue in 1967 and 1968. Assisting in the research for this article was Henry Beaudin, a former CAP Marine, who served in 1969 and 1970, southwest of Da Nang. Author's statement: as the author researched the Combined Action Program's creation, he discovered that the extant historiography on CAP either were not precisely accurate or dealt with the program's creation only briefly. This work makes extensive use of the primary sources available to paint a very detailed picture of the program's creation and the preparations of the villages in advance of implementation with effective civic action programs.

<sup>2</sup> The historiography can be a bit vague about the proper use of CAP. For our purposes, CAP refers to Combined Action Platoons; when referring to the Combined Action Program as a whole, we will use the full reference and not the acronym.

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<sup>3</sup> There were several categories of enemy forces operating in South Vietnam. *Viet Cong* is the general term the Americans used for enemy forces that were not officially part of the North Vietnamese Army. It refers to political operatives, small insurgent cells, local force platoons and companies, and organized larger main force units (company and battalion size) that operated on a wider geographical basis. Such forces were routinely referred to in Marine Corps command chronologies and intelligence records of the time as Viet Cong and are distinguished only by the force organizational size and purpose. The author's usage of Viet Cong is based on how enemy forces were identified in the Marine Corps source documentation consulted.

<sup>4</sup> III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) Command Chronology (ComdC), January 1966, RF/PF Improvement, item number 1201002108, U.S. Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection (USMCHD Vietnam War Docs), Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, hereafter Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 3.

or other family business while providing protection.<sup>5</sup>

Many villages throughout the Marine Corps' area of responsibility had Popular Force platoons, usually placed around or near military bases or along main supply routes. Unfortunately, the Popular Force soldiers were not up to the job of protecting the villages. In assessing the situation in October 1965, III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) found that the Popular Force platoons' quality of performance and reliability were questionable.<sup>6</sup>

Each of the three major Marine Corps enclaves—Da Nang, Phu Bai, and Chu Lai—had substantially different populations and levels of Viet Cong saturation and organization. Even in the populations where the enemy had less power, the Popular Forces were not effective in providing security against enemy activities, especially at night. Throughout the life of the Combined Action Program, as it eventually came to be known, Marines were used to train, motivate, and assist Popular Force platoons to hold their villages once cleared of enemy forces.<sup>7</sup> As a force multiplier, the program involved embedding, or brigading, a squad of Marines and a U.S. Navy corpsman into a Popular Force platoon in the villages where each was located. The Marines lived in the villages full time with the Popular Force soldiers.

With Marines in the leadership billets, they worked together to defend the villages and to interdict and suppress Viet Cong activity. The Marines worked hard to raise the level of competence, reliability, and fighting spirit of the Popular Forces, a task that would

prove challenging during the course of the war. The official Combined Action Program unit table of organization was 14 Marines, a U.S. Navy corpsman, and 34 Vietnamese Popular Force soldiers.<sup>8</sup> These numbers were not always met, however.

A further goal was to try to win over conflicted populations by demonstrating through conduct and civic action that the United States was there to help. The Combined Action Program involved aggressive day and night patrolling, holding regular medical clinics, and participating in civic action projects to improve village life, when possible. In 1969, the program's peak year, platoons conducted 149,000 patrols, day and night. Serving in a CAP was dangerous duty. During the nearly five years of their existence, approximately 500–525 CAP Marines were killed in action. The available documentation of those killed in action lists 488 names, but it is likely that several deaths were left off while the program was still under the administrative control of infantry or other Marine battalions.<sup>9</sup> While the enemy kills were not the measure of success for the program, CAPs accounted for more than 4,900 enemy killed in action.<sup>10</sup> The Combined Action Program, which rapidly evolved and expanded, started out as an innovative experiment to defend a vulnerable section of the tactical area of responsibility (TAOR) of Phu Bai, one of the Corps' priority enclaves in the beginning stages of the war. The account of how the CAPs were created is a study in classic Marine Corps ingenuity in the face of limited resources. The following is a detailed history of their creation.

## Background and Context

The Marine Corps was the first of the U.S. military branches to land in force in Vietnam. The Corps' area of responsibility was the I Corps Tactical Zone

<sup>5</sup> Bruce C. Allnutt, *Marine Combined Action Capabilities: The Vietnam Experience* (McLean, VA: Office of Naval Research Group Psychology Programs, 1969), 37.

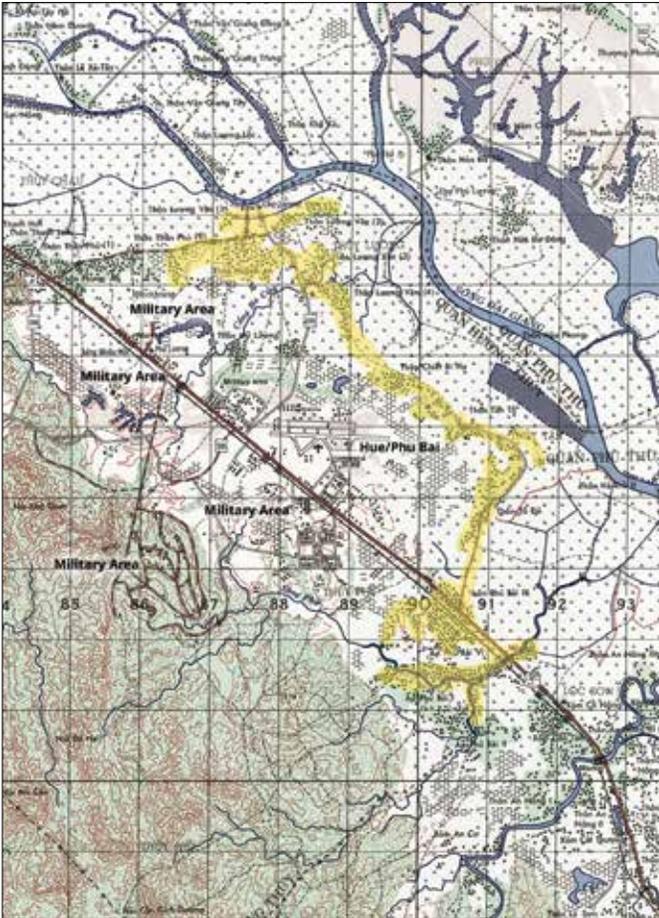
<sup>6</sup> Operations of the III MAF, Vietnam, Fleet Marine Force Pacific (FMFPac), 1 October 1965, item number 1201001017, folder 001, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 2.

<sup>7</sup> When the program was first initiated, embedded units were referred to as Joint Action Companies (JACs); as the program evolved, they became known as Combined Action Companies (CACs) and finally as Combined Action Platoons (CAPs). While the name for the units evolved throughout the program's life, this article refers to them generally by the last-used term, CAP(s), unless specifically discussing a period during which the platoons were referred to as JACs or CACs.

<sup>8</sup> Allnutt, *Marine Combined Action Capabilities*, table A-1, A2.

<sup>9</sup> Rick Schelberg, "CAP KIA Lists," CapMarine.com. Before CAPs became more organized, battalions recorded their members who were killed in action (KIA). In the authors' examination of the chronologies, it was discovered that several were not recorded on the cited lists. The authors therefore estimated.

<sup>10</sup> Fact Sheet [combined action force], 31 March 1970, item number 1201061098, folder 061, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 31, enclosure 8.



*Courtesy of Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, adapted by Marine Corps History Division*  
Map showing where the first three combined action-patrolled villages were located.

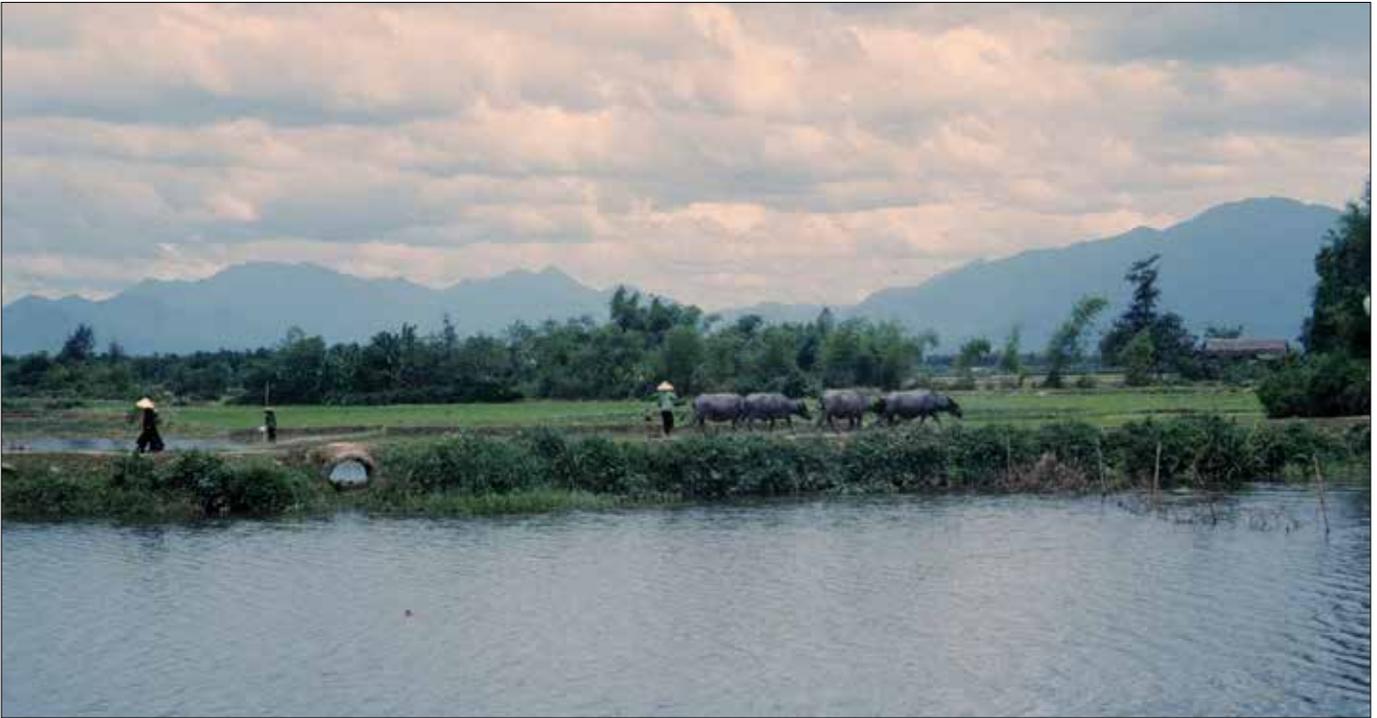
(ICTZ), known to most as I Corps, one of four military zones in South Vietnam. It comprised the five northernmost provinces of the country. At the northern end of I Corps was the demilitarized zone (at the 17th parallel) that separated the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), the north, from the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), the south. At I Corps' southern end was the southern border of the Quang Ngai Province.

When the Marines entered Vietnam in spring 1965, they quickly established three enclaves: Da Nang (established 8 March), Phu Bai (established 14 April), and Chu Lai (established 7 May). The Corps' theory was to establish and secure these enclaves and then



*Courtesy of Cpl Ed Matricardi*  
From the Phu Bai River at Thuy Phu village, looking out across the vast rice fields. The South China Sea lies directly east about 8.8 km.

to expand control into the surrounding countryside. The strategy was to clear and hold the land against the enemy so that the RVN government could stabilize and gain back the territory that had been lost. Prior to the landing on 8 March, there were only 200 Marines in Vietnam. Following the initial landing at Da Nang, the number increased to 5,075. A third battalion landing team and a fighter squadron came ashore on 10 April, increasing the number of Marines on shore to 6,500. A fourth battalion, landed 14–15 April, brought the total to 8,150 Marines, and an additional 5,000 Marines landed at Chu Lai in early May, increasing the numbers again to 13,150 in all three enclaves. This



*Courtesy of Cpl Ed Matricardi*

Village boys herding their buffalo along a river trail in Thuy Phu village.

movement of Marines into the desired positions in Vietnam resulted in an intense scene of activity.<sup>11</sup> On 5 May, the III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) was formed and assumed command for all Marines in Vietnam.

Geographically, I Corps was a long north-to-south section of the central part of Vietnam. The landward littoral zone at the time contained vast and rich fields of rice, giving way to foothills and then rising, at some points rapidly, to become the Annamese Cordillera (commonly referred to as the Annamite range or mountains), which run north to south for the length of I Corps' interior. The mountains are covered in large patches of triple-canopy jungle all the way west into Laos.

Between 80 and 90 percent of the population lived in the littoral zone in small rice-farming villages.

<sup>11</sup> Operations of the III MAF, Vietnam, FMFPAC, March-September 1965, item number 1201001016, folder 001, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, part A, 5, 17, and Part B, 21, 26, 29.

Aside from a few larger population centers, such as Hue City and Da Nang, the hamlet was the natural and fundamental community structure for the farmers and their families. Several hamlets were grouped together as a village for governmental administrative purposes. Many hamlets were represented by their own chiefs, and the whole was represented by a village chief.<sup>12</sup> The Marines' three enclaves fell within this littoral zone.

The Phu Bai enclave was established on 14 April when Colonel Edwin B. Wheeler, the commander of Regimental Landing Team 3, sent units of his 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, to secure the airfield and the Army's 8th Radio Research Unit (RRU) facility, until the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, could land and take over the Phu Bai defense. The mission was to defend the Phu Bai airfield and the 8th RRU. This unit was an important key to locating enemy units through radio

<sup>12</sup> LtGen Ngo Quang Truong, *Territorial Forces* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 30.



*Courtesy of Cpl James Ellison*

Typical village trail scene in the Phu Bai rice-growing lowlands.

intercept techniques, and General William C. Westmoreland wanted a force to protect it.<sup>13</sup>

After 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, landed in Da Nang, 512 Marines of the battalion were lifted by helicopter to Phu Bai to relieve the units from 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, and establish the defense of area. By 16 April, the battalion was fully offloaded and positioned to take command of the Phu Bai enclave. Although the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, were part of the 4th Marine Regiment, they were under the command and control of Colonel Wheeler's 3d Marine Regiment. Colonel Wheeler had the ultimate responsibility for the defense of both Da Nang Air Base and Phu Bai.

The Marines had originally been allowed an official TAOR of only two squares miles. This was sim-



*Courtesy of Historical Reference Branch,  
Marine Corps History Division*

The Vietnamese commanding general of I Corps, Nguyen Chanh Thi (center), was instrumental in the approval of the Combined Action Program and supported the program during its expansion in 1966 to Da Nang and Chu Lai.

ilar to Da Nang, where the Marines were originally confined within the airfield perimeter and a certain limited area to the west of the airfield. From approximately March through July, the Vietnamese took a cautious approach to the expansion of the Marine areas of responsibility. The Marines were ready and anxious to spread out to defend their areas and to expand control of the enclaves, but the ARVN commanders were cautious for two reasons. The Communists had told the population that the Americans were coming in to take over the country. Despite the fact that the top ARVN commanders also wanted the Marines to spread out, they needed to move slowly so as not to encourage belief in the Communist propaganda.<sup>14</sup> General Nguyen Chanh Thi, commander of I Corps, expressed another, perhaps more realistic concern. He was afraid that the Marines would not be able to handle the pacification aspects of the mission, especially in the populated areas south of

<sup>13</sup> Jack Shulimson and Maj Charles M. Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Landing and the Buildup, 1965* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1978), 22.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis Walt, interview with Martin Russ, 31 July 1976, tape 6329-30A, Oral History section, Marine Corps History Division, segment beginning at 26:42.

the Da Nang airfield. Implicit was a fear of incidents that would antagonize the population.<sup>15</sup> For the Phu Bai area of responsibility, this reluctance meant a serious limitation on the Marines' ability to adequately secure a portion of the area immediately adjacent to the base that was critical for base defense.

## The Zone A Defense Problem

The Phu Bai military facilities, the airfield, and the 8th RRU straddled Vietnam's Highway 1, which ran through the Phu Bai base area, angled northwest to southeast. Highway 1 was Vietnam's national highway and it ran the length of the country from north to south, but the term *national highway* is deceptive; it was a two-lane paved road that sometimes resembled a county road in middle America more than it did a major thoroughfare.

South of Highway 1 was a vast open area of ridges and hills, variously barren or covered with brush, which finally morphed into jungle in the southernmost sector. This area was near the mountains that led to Laos, and it was from here that the greatest enemy threat would likely come. It was nearly uninhabited for several miles to the Ta Trach River, and despite the fact that this area was not in the initial TAOR, it was necessary for the Marines to immediately explore and control to prevent an attack on the military installations at Phu Bai.

The command records show that 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, very soon after landing—despite the initial TAOR limitations—began patrolling several thousand meters south of its perimeter.<sup>16</sup> By 7 May, the TAOR was extended to include this southern area, making the TAOR now 38 square miles.<sup>17</sup>

The 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, in its defense of the Phu Bai perimeter and the 8th RRU, began an ag-

gressive campaign of patrolling and ambushing within its enlarged TAOR. The Marines used four rifle companies, Headquarters and Service Company, and Company C of the 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, along with the support of engineers, tanks, other armor, and artillery, to defend the perimeter and to patrol. They continued this patrolling for months, exploring the entirety of the TAOR, pinpointing the Viet Cong routes of ingress into the TAOR from the jungles, and blocking their activity on the main routes to the rice lowlands.<sup>18</sup>

The full defense of the Phu Bai military installations from the surrounding areas, however, posed a problem. To the north and east was a semicircle of three villages bounded by the Dai Giang River. From the perimeter of the air base, it was difficult to see up to and into these villages. The apron between the airfield and the villages was at least a kilometer wide and more in some places. The hamlets themselves were densely vegetated; so even at close range, it would be impossible to see any distance into them. The villages provided enough cover that an enemy mortar team or ground assault unit could get close enough to cause substantial damage. This area was known as Zone A.

These three villages and their hamlets had a total population of approximately 10,000 people, primarily subsistence rice farmers who had no electricity or running water. They worked in their fields during the day and went to bed by nightfall. The roads were all dirt, and the houses were made of bamboo framing with palm-thatched roofs and outer walls. Villagers cooked

<sup>15</sup> Operations of the III MAF, Vietnam, FMFPAC, March–September 1965, part B, 21.

<sup>16</sup> "Narrative," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, 1 April 1965, item number 1201045069, folder 045, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 2.

<sup>17</sup> "Statistical Highlights," Operations of the III MAF, Vietnam, FMFPAC, 1 March 1965, item number 1201001016, folder 001, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, part B, 25–27.

<sup>18</sup> "Narrative," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, 1 June 1965, item number 1201045070, folder 045, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 1–7; "Narrative," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, 1 July 1965, item number 1201045071, folder 045, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 1–6; "Narrative," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, 1 August 1965, item number 1201045072, folder 045, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 1–8; "Close Combat," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, 1 September 1965, item number 1201045073, folder 045, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 1–7; and "Close Combat," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, 1 October 1965, item number 1201045074, folder 045, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 1–8.



*Photo by SSgt C. Duris, courtesy of Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division*  
LCpl Thomas E. Reilly (right) points out information to his squad leader, Sgt David W. Sommers. This combined patrol is from Joint Action Company 2 at Thuy Tan village.



*Courtesy of Cpl Ed Matricardi*  
A village fisherman pushing his boat out to the fishing grounds near Thuy Phu village.

food over open fires and ate fish from the river and rice from their fields.

In each of these villages was a 30- to 40-man village Popular Force protection platoon tasked with protecting the village from the Viet Cong. In reality, however, they were no match for the enemy forces. They were poorly trained, and information showed they rarely patrolled to protect the village. Village officials hid at night.<sup>19</sup> It was also known at this time

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<sup>19</sup> Capt John J. Mullen Jr., "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program in the Republic of Vietnam," Individual Research Papers Collection, Capt John J. Mullen Jr. 1968-69, COLL/3953, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

that the Viet Cong exercised domination over these villages.<sup>20</sup> They taxed the villagers and spread propaganda.<sup>21</sup>

In the 21 April 1965 negotiations with General Nguyen Van Chuan, commanding general of the 1st ARVN division, Phu Bai TAOR parameters were agreed. Zone A would remain in the ARVN's control.<sup>22</sup> While the Marines quickly established control of their territory and maintained a commanding presence in the area, Zone A continued to bother Lieutenant Colonel William W. Taylor, the commanding officer of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines. Taylor made a formal request to Colonel Wheeler's 3d Marines command that the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines' TAOR be extended to include Zone A and that the Popular Force platoons remain under Marine technical direction. Taylor felt that the TAOR was overly restrictive and prevented an adequate defense of the airfield and the 8th RRU. He insisted that the Popular Forces be uniformed so they could be easily identified and offered that the Marines would provide the Popular Forces with uniforms if the ARVN would not provide them.<sup>23</sup> The request was granted, and it became official and operational on 21 June 1965.

## Expansion into Zone A

From early June onward, 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, pursued a dedicated and thorough civil affairs program to learn more about Zone A and to prepare for the moment when they were given full operational access to the area. First Lieutenant John J. Mullen was the adjutant and civil affairs officer for 3d Battalion,

4th Marines, and in that position directed or coordinated much of the activities involved.<sup>24</sup>

In early June, immediately following a meeting Lieutenant Colonel Taylor had with the village officials, the battalion began sending well-staffed medical clinics to all three villages on a semiregular basis. These mobile medical clinics were accompanied by a platoon from the infantry. This was not just for security; the infantry units were observing and learning about the villages as they provided security for the clinics.

By 15 June, it was known that the area of operations would be expanded into Zone A effective 21 June. On 15 June, First Lieutenant Mullen visited the district chief and the Popular Force platoon commanders to outline the plan to move Marines into the three villages for assessment and security operations. On 17 June, Mullen, along with the S-3 (the battalion operations chief), the S-2 (the battalion intelligence chief), the S-1 (the administrative chief), and a platoon from the reconnaissance battalion conducted a motorized patrol of all three villages. This was described as an observation patrol to familiarize the personnel aboard with the village characteristics and the Zone A terrain features.<sup>25</sup>

At 0730 on 21 June, the TAOR expansion went into effect. The battalion was also given operational control of the Popular Forces platoons in those villages.<sup>26</sup> That morning, infantry Company K (-), Headquarters and Services Company (-), one platoon of Company C, 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, the battalion commander, the S-1, the S-2, and the S-3 patrolled through the southernmost village of Thuy Phu to familiarize the battalion personnel with the area and to

<sup>20</sup> "Joint Company, Intelligence," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, 1 September 1965, item number 1201045073, folder 045, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program in the Republic of Vietnam," C-4.

<sup>22</sup> Commanding Officer to Commanding General, 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, "Hue-Phu Bai defense arrangements," 21 April 1965, 3d Marines, ComdC, April 1965, item number 1201037030, folder 037, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 29.

<sup>23</sup> "Zone A Hue Phu Bai," 3d Marines, ComdC, 1 June 1965, item number 1201037034, folder 037, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, tab 1.

<sup>24</sup> Situation Reports (SITREPs) no. 56-85, 3d Marines, 1-2 June 1965, item number 1201037035, folder 037, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, hereafter SITREPS no. 56-85.

<sup>25</sup> SITREPS no. 56-85, 15-17 June 1965; and 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, 1 June 1965, item number 1201045070, folder 045, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 4.

<sup>26</sup> "Joint Action Report," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, 1 September 1965, item number 1201045073, folder 045, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 1.

become acquainted with the population. This movement, which would be carried out during three days, was called Operation Neighbor.<sup>27</sup>

For the next two days, Lieutenant Mullen and his team of battalion representatives went to each of the villages and conducted thorough surveys of each area. They assessed the Popular Force soldiers, the village officials, the nature of the terrain, and possible enemy approaches to and through each village, and they considered artillery concentration points. On each initial village contact, Mullen reported, the nucleus of the civil affairs operation was present. This included him as the civil affairs officer, an S-3 representative, the S-2, the counterintelligence officer, the engineer's officer, a medical officer, the Vietnamese liaison officer, and an interpreter. During the first day it was decided, Mullen reported, to convene a civil-military advisory council with the goal of meeting soon for mutual cooperation and assistance.<sup>28</sup>

Lieutenant Mullen followed up the survey with meetings in the villages. On 28 June, a delegation went to Thuy Tan, the village grouping directly east of the base. They met with the village chief, the Popular Force platoon commander, and the Popular Force corpsman. They discussed a number of issues, including a medical program, locations for organized sales of goods to Marines, possible engineering projects, and local defense plans.<sup>29</sup> On 30 June, the delegation went to the northernmost village of Thuy Luong. The records document that the delegation included the civil affairs officer (Mullen), a doctor, the chaplain, the provost marshal, and the S-2. They met with the village chief, the Popular Force platoon commander, and three village elders to discuss possible programs and problems in the village.<sup>30</sup>

On 30 June, the village survey was deemed complete. The battalion used Company C, 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, to scout, by patrol and by ambush, many of the Zone A areas previously forbidden to the Marines. The infantry was now able to regularly send night patrols around the outside of the perimeter wire, which improved the security of the base and the airfield.

During this time, the civil affairs program was in full force. On 3 July, Lieutenant Mullen went to the American consulate in Hue City and met the leading Buddhist layman in the area. They visited a Buddhist hospital and an orphanage and arranged a meeting for the Catholic chaplain from 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, to meet the Buddhist bishop of the area. Mullen was trying to find projects for the villages that would benefit Catholics and Buddhists alike. In the Zone A villages, Catholics made up about 5 percent of the population, with the rest being Buddhists. Both groups in the villages got along with each other.<sup>31</sup>

In July, the medical aid missions to each of the Zone A villages continued on a regular basis. They consistently drew more than 100 patients. The reconnaissance patrols also continued. They were now entering and patrolling through the interiors of the villages and increasing their forays as time progressed. Company C, 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, began learning about and assessing the skills and competence of the Popular Forces, conducting several patrols with them, including a few night ambushes.

Lieutenant Mullen had been closely involved with the expansion, pacification, and security efforts in Zone A since the beginning. He had been charged with developing the civil affairs program, which was inseparably tied to the Zone A security issues. Mullen stated that by mid-July he became concerned that the program was not progressing enough and that the situation was "status-quo." He meant that the Marine patrols were meeting no resistance, the Popular Force platoons were not patrolling, and the village officials

<sup>27</sup> 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, 1 June 1965, item number 1201045070, folder 045, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 5; and SITREPS no. 56-85, 20-21 June 1965. The notation (-) after company or unit names indicates the company or unit is not a full-strength company/unit but is less some of its elements.

<sup>28</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," C-2, C-3.

<sup>29</sup> SITREPS no. 56-85, 28 June 1965.

<sup>30</sup> SITREPS no. 56-85, 30 June 1965.

<sup>31</sup> 1stLt Paul Ek, interview with LtCol D. J. Hunter, 24 January 1966, transcript, item number USMC0046, Oral History Section, U.S. Marine Corps History Division, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 66, hereafter Ek oral history.

still had to hide at night. He learned that the Viet Cong were still taxing the villagers, and evidence of propaganda was present.<sup>32</sup>

Of primary importance was the fact that the Marines were getting no intelligence—one of the prime products of a civil affairs program—of enemy activity from the villagers. To address the problem, Mullen called a meeting with all three village chiefs (although the command records show a meeting between Mullen and only two of the village chiefs on 17 July).<sup>33</sup>

Lieutenant Mullen reported that the village chiefs, without reservation, expressed gratitude for the Marines' effort and an appreciation that their villages were better off than ever before. They conveyed to Mullen that the missing element was security from the Viet Cong for the villagers. The chiefs declared that they were loyal to the government of the RVN and would like to help if they could but that none of the people could give information without the fear of reprisal. The Popular Force soldiers were no match for the Viet Cong, and Mullen said they "acted accordingly," which likely means the Popular Force soldiers confined themselves to the village headquarters at night rather than aggressively pursuing the Viet Cong, thereby protecting themselves and their families.<sup>34</sup>

Mullen said he had an epiphany about the crux of the problem. The Marines had carried out their civil affairs program by the book, but they had neglected the important factor of security for the population. He understood now why they were not receiving any intelligence.<sup>35</sup> This was a crucial observation. Mullen concluded that Marines were needed in Zone A on a more permanent basis.

## The Creation of Combined Action

Lieutenant Mullen brought the situation to the atten-

tion of Major Cullen C. Zimmerman, the executive officer. They discussed the problem, and Mullen recommended that Marines be assigned to the villages to provide the missing security element. Major Zimmerman was receptive to the idea and called a meeting of the major figures involved.

The precise details and timeline of the combined action concept's origin, the manner of approval, the selection of its commander, and the process of the selection of Marines for the program are rife with inconsistent accounts. The sources—including the combination of original records, recorded interviews, unrecorded interviews, written documents, missing interviews, and other missing documents—have made it difficult to determine certain facts precisely. Compounding the problem are the various studies and academic papers that have relied, with different degrees of accuracy, on the records available at the time of their writing. Regarding the historical outcome, however, these inconsistencies are only marginally important to the essence of how the combined action units came into existence and how they were initially employed.

The meeting called by Major Zimmerman regarding Lieutenant Mullen's observations and recommendations was attended by the S-3, the S-2, Mullen, and Zimmerman. Mullen writes that all agreed to the concept of assigning troops to the villages except for the S-3. The S-3 (operations) was worried about the utilization of troops and the plan's impact on casualties. Once they moved past his dissent, three plans were proposed and discussed.<sup>36</sup>

The first plan was to have one company from the battalion be responsible for all aspects—civic action and security—for one village. According to Mullen, this plan was rejected for several reasons: 1) each company would be reduced to two rifle platoons, which would make them less effective for other combat missions; and 2) there was concern that there would be no continuity or unity of effort among the villages. The second plan was to make one infantry company responsible for all of the villages in Zone A, which was

<sup>32</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," C-4, C-5.

<sup>33</sup> SITREPS no. 86-116, 3d Marines, 16 July 1965, item number 1201037037, folder 037, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive.

<sup>34</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," C-4, C-5.

<sup>35</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," C-4.

<sup>36</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," C-5.



*Photo by WO Jim Smith, courtesy of Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

The chief of Thuy Phu village pointing out to Gen Walt the surveyed artillery concentrations in connection with the Combined Action Program. To the general's right is LtCol William Taylor, commander of the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines. On the far left is 1stLt John J. Mullen, one of the creators of the Combined Action Program. It is believed that standing behind the village chief is 1stLt Paul Ek, the first commander of the Joint Action Company (JAC).

also rejected, because it would deprive the battalion of a whole maneuver element that could prove decisive in an operation.<sup>37</sup>

The third plan was to use a smaller group of Marines to supplement the Popular Force soldiers, and it was accepted. They discussed whether the group should be a platoon or a squad for each village and decided that the squad would be the best use un-

der the circumstances.<sup>38</sup> Mullen reported, seemingly with enthusiasm, that the squad was decided upon as a "revolutionary" and "speculative" concept.<sup>39</sup> Major Zimmerman, in an oral history interview, confirmed that the concept of the CAP was the product of a number of Marines throwing around ideas and

<sup>37</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," C-5, C-6.

<sup>38</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," C-6. Mullen's report does not indicate the specific circumstances, but it is likely that they were a lack of large Viet Cong forces; a squad was sufficient to deal with the number of enemy they were likely to encounter.

<sup>39</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," C-6.



Photo by SSgt C. Durie, courtesy of Historical Reference Branch,  
Marine Corps History Division

Lt Paul Ek discussing a tactical situation with the police chief and an interpreter in one of the Joint Action Company villages.

finally settling on one that seemed to make sense.<sup>40</sup>

It is not totally clear who originated the combined action concept. Mullen does not take credit for it in his 1968 written study, and Major Zimmerman, when asked about the topic in an interview, was also equivocal about Mullen's role in developing the concept. General Lewis W. Walt, the former commander of all Marine forces in Vietnam—in his memoirs, *Strange War, Strange Strategy*—credits Lieutenant Mullen “unequivocally” as originally coming up with the

idea. General Walt stated this in the context of mentioning that others have tried to take credit for the concept's origination.<sup>41</sup> It should be clear, regardless of who uttered the first words about combining Marines and Popular Force soldiers, that Lieutenant Mullen played an important role in the creation of the combined action concept.

Once the concept was agreed upon, Major Zimmerman presented it to the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Taylor, who approved. Mullen

<sup>40</sup> Maj Michael Duane Weltsch, “The Future Role of the Combined Action Program” (master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1991), 59; and Weltsch, interview with Col Cullen Zimmerman, 10 March 1991.

<sup>41</sup> Lewis W. Walt, *Strange War, Strange Strategy: A General's Report on Vietnam* (New York: Funk and Wagnall's, 1970), 105.

believed it was presented on 20 July 1965.<sup>42</sup> Major Zimmerman says that Taylor asked him to develop the details of the proposed combined force so that he could present it to the chain of command. Taylor said that once Zimmerman finalized the plans, he presented them to his regimental commander, Colonel Wheeler. And eventually, he presented them to Major General Walt and Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak.<sup>43</sup> The precise timing of the presentation to Generals Walt and Krulak is unclear. The program was implemented too quickly for there to have been a lengthy approval process.

Major Zimmerman wrote in 1968 that the concept in his mind was not the Marines' use of indigenous troops during the Banana Wars, but the British practice of brigading British troops with native units.<sup>44</sup> In a 1991 telephone interview with Duane Weltsch, Zimmerman elaborated that he had drawn from his knowledge of the British Army's experiences in nineteenth century India.<sup>45</sup> He felt this concept would leave the Popular Force platoons intact and allow them to better assume responsibility on their

own when the Marines eventually left the area. He also wrote that during the discussion phase, one idea had been to continue the existing policy but to use the Marines in a U.S. Special Forces-style advisory role, but that concept was rejected.<sup>46</sup>

The timetable shows that the concept moved quickly to execution. By 1 August, at least three squads had gone through a week's training and were prepared to enter the villages. Major Zimmerman said that he hand-picked all of the Marines. He instructed the company commanders to give him a full squad of volunteers, but not the best men from each company. He did not want the companies to sacrifice their capabilities, but he did insist on quality Marines. He went through the service records of each Marine and had to reject some who he felt were not qualified. Zimmerman said they ended up with experienced sergeants who had several years in grade and with corporals who at one time or another had filled the role of a squad leader.<sup>47</sup>

First Lieutenant Paul R. Ek was brought in from the 3d Marine Regiment and given command of the program. Historian Jack Shulimson suggests that Lieutenant Ek was specially selected in response to discussions that Lieutenant Colonel Taylor had with Colonel Wheeler.<sup>48</sup> While no documentation of this exists in the official records, this version of events makes sense. Colonel Wheeler, as commander of the 3d Marine Regiment, was responsible for the defense of the Phu Bai base and the airfield. He was in a senior and direct command position to Lieutenant Colonel Taylor. It would be in his best interests to make sure this unique program was successful and the base was fully protected. Lieutenant Ek was also an excellent choice because he spoke Vietnamese to near fluency and had been assigned to work counterinsurgency earlier in the year as an advisor with the Special Forces in Vietnam.<sup>49</sup>

On 23 July, Lieutenant Mullen, in his capacity

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<sup>42</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," C-6.

<sup>43</sup> Weltsch, "The Future Role of the Combined Action Program," 60.

<sup>44</sup> LtCol C. Zimmerman, review of *The Betrayal*, by LtCol William R. Corson, *Marine Corps Gazette* 52, no. 9 (September 1968): 14-15.

<sup>45</sup> Weltsch, "The Future Role of the Combined Action Program," 59. It is unclear how much influence or impact the Marine Corp's Banana Wars legacy had on the formation or the expansion of the Combined Action Program. Zimmerman is clear that he drew up the original plan and presented it to LtCol Taylor and that he drew on the British nineteenth-century experience of brigading troops with indigenous units. 1stLt Ek, who became the first commanding officer of the JAC unit, was later interviewed and commented that the program was patterned after the approach during the Banana Wars and that he understood it had also been done in Malaysia. Ek oral history, 9. 1stLt Mullen makes no mention of the historical origin of the concept. It is fair to state that the Corps' experience in working with indigenous troops in the past, especially the experience in Nicaragua in the late 1920s, was a significant part of Marine Corps history. It is likely that the spirit of that history entered into the thinking of those involved in the creation and the expansion of the Combined Action Program. LtCol Richard J. Macak Jr., "Lessons from Yesterday's Operations Short of War: Nicaragua and the Small Wars Manual," *Marine Corps Gazette* 80, no. 11 (November 1996): 56-62.

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<sup>46</sup> Zimmerman, review of *The Betrayal*.

<sup>47</sup> Weltsch, "The Future Role of the Combined Action Program," 60-61.

<sup>48</sup> Shulimson and Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam*, 65, 133.

<sup>49</sup> Ek oral history, 1.

as civil affairs officer, held an advisory council in the officer's mess with all the village chiefs, the hamlet chiefs, and the Popular Force platoon leaders located in the TAOR. The records state that mutual military and civilian problems were discussed. The officials were then taken on helicopter tours of the area. The records show that the reaction of the civilian officials was "very" favorable.<sup>50</sup> An inference can be drawn from this meeting that the plan to bring in more Marines to secure the population was being presented to the relevant officials so that they could prepare the people and troops they represented.

On 25 July, according to Lieutenant Mullen, Lieutenant Ek arrived and was briefed that night. He began work immediately. In an interview in January 1966, after he rotated back to the United States, Ek provided his insights into the program and how he set about developing it into a functioning unit, with Marines fully integrated into the Popular Force platoons. While Lieutenant Mullen must be given credit for helping to create the concept and for laying the groundwork with his civil affairs program for a smooth entry of Marines into the villages, Lieutenant Ek must be given credit for taking the concept to the next stage. Ek trained the Marines and used his language skills to integrate the forces into working units. In his mission to secure the airfield, he developed, during a two-month period, a counterinsurgency program based on an understanding of the villages and their people.

After the selection of the Marines was complete, Lieutenant Ek trained them for about a week before they went out into the field on operations. This training was geared to teach them all aspects of counterinsurgency warfare, including techniques of population control and the role of civic action. He said they were thoroughly briefed on intelligence. They needed to know what to look for and what means would be used to gather important information. He trained them in the political and military structure of Vietnam and taught them important local rules. He felt it was critical for them to know their place in any setting of peo-

ple before they entered a village. He wanted to teach them as much about Vietnam and the Vietnamese people as possible so they could live with the villagers as part of the community, while still carrying out their military mission.<sup>51</sup> Lieutenant Mullen must have been an invaluable resource in the military and political structure, as well as some of the local rules, since he had been studying these matters since May as the head of the civil affairs program.

## Combined Operations Begin

The Joint Action Company (JAC), as it was named at the time of its origin, was formed on the record on 1 August 1965. After training, the Marines were introduced into their villages and training with the Popular Forces, and operations began very soon. The chain of command was established with Marines in all leadership billets. The Marine sergeant became the combined unit platoon commander. The Popular Force commander became the executive officer of the platoon and second in command, performing the same role as a platoon sergeant in a Marine Corps platoon. With 30-40 men in the Popular Force platoon, they were divided into squads. The Marine corporals became squad leaders of a combined squad of four Marines and one squad of Popular Force soldiers. Lieutenant Ek was viewed by the village chiefs as their superior, although he said he treated them as equals.<sup>52</sup> The Vietnamese district chief was Lieutenant Ek's superior, although Ek said the district chief, who was a Vietnamese Army captain, treated him as his equal. Ek said that all of the Vietnamese officials and military personnel were cooperative. He cites the likelihood that the 1st ARVN Division commander sent word down for all to cooperate fully with this Marine effort.<sup>53</sup>

At first the JAC units did not focus on the villagers, but on learning the village well and working with their Popular Force counterparts.<sup>54</sup> Lieutenant Ek continued his training of the Marines, and he

<sup>50</sup> SITREPS no. 86-116, 3d Marines, 23 July 1965.

<sup>51</sup> Ek oral history, 7.

<sup>52</sup> Ek oral history, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Ek oral history, 13.

<sup>54</sup> Ek oral history, 12.



*Photo by Sgt Reid, courtesy of Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

Cpl Earl J. Suter and a Popular Forces soldier work on the construction of a bamboo barracks for the first squad of the Joint Action Company, which lived with the villagers of Thuy Luong. All of initial Joint Action Company squads were in joint projects with their Popular Force soldiers and hand-built barracks for the Marines out of bamboo, tin, and thatch.

trained them as a unit with the Popular Forces.<sup>55</sup> This worked out well, and by design, it created a bond between the Marines and the Popular Forces. The classes were conducted either by Ek or by his executive officer, a Vietnamese lieutenant. They conducted classes on scouting, patrolling, hand and arm signals, population control, intelligence needs, marksmanship, and a variety of other skills that they would need to be able to work together.<sup>56</sup>

The first JAC patrol occurred on 3 August 1965. The squad was trucked out to Thuy Tan Village and

arrived at 0925. The records do not show how long they stayed that day, but the typical daytime patrols in those first weeks were from early in the morning until midafternoon. All patrols at this time were trucked out from the command center at Phu Bai. The ride to the village would be no more than 10 minutes. On 6 August, three squads were sent out, one to each of the three villages. All three JACs began a regular routine of daylight patrols and activities in their respective villages.

There are no descriptions of these early patrols, so we can only speculate about their composition and routes. Lieutenant Ek instructed the Marines to learn the village while integrating into the Popular Forces

<sup>55</sup> Ek oral history, 8, 27.

<sup>56</sup> Ek oral history, 8.



*Courtesy of Cpl Pete Nardie*

A Citroen sedan, familiar in Vietnam in the 1960s, drives on the main road through CAC 4 at Loc Bon village. The building in the background became the Marines' barracks by 1966.



*Courtesy of Cpl Pete Nardie*

The central area of Loc Bon village on Vietnam's national Highway 1. The Marines are shown in the process of building bunkers and stringing concertina wire for extra security. The photo shows the daytime radio watch position, ca. 1966.

through patrols and other security missions. The Marines had topographical maps and compasses, which along with a lot of patrolling, resulted in learning a village during a period of weeks. Each one of the villages was several square kilometers in size with multiple hamlets that contained networks of trails, houses, and thick vegetation.

On any operation, Ek had one or two Popular Force soldiers paired with a Marine. This gave the Marines the ability to closely observe how the Popular Forces handled themselves, and it gave the Marines the opportunity for personal training in the field. Ek says that close relationships were formed between the Marines and the Popular Forces. He remembered that once, a wedding was held up for two hours for the patrol to return so the Marines could attend. Lieutenant Ek seemed satisfied that the Marines and the Popular Forces came to trust each other, and if something happened, the Popular Forces could be depended upon for support because of the personal bonds that had been established. At the end of his tour in late September 1965, Ek remarked how the Popular Forces had improved in discipline and military manner. They carried their rifles like Marines, they always put on a

cover when they went outside, and every day another Popular Force soldier showed up with a Marine-like haircut. Lieutenant Ek reported that the patrolling and ambush techniques of the unit as a whole were excellent.<sup>57</sup>

There was pressure to get night ambush or night patrols out as soon as possible.<sup>58</sup> The security of the people was important to start the flow of local intelligence, but the immediate security of the base from any surprise, mortar or ground attack, required nighttime coverage of the potential inbound routes. At Thuy Luong or Thuy Tan, an enemy force could cross the river at any time. Likewise, a nighttime force could pass through Thuy Phu, which backed up to the hills leading to the mountains where the known enemy base camps were located. Since the April arrival of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, there had been multiple contacts with groups of Viet Cong that were large enough to be taken seriously. During September 1965, 3d Battalion,

<sup>57</sup> "Combined Action Company Report," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045073, folder 045, 1 September 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, A-2.

<sup>58</sup> Ek oral history, 8.

4th Marines, documented sightings of 259 Viet Cong in or near the TAOR.<sup>59</sup>

Intelligence from 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, as they were preparing to conduct an operation to search the jungle in the southern part of the TAOR, suggested that there was a potential for more organized Viet Cong units that had only temporarily gone up into the mountains because of Marine presence.<sup>60</sup> The intelligence reports showed two enemy local force platoons had operated in the Zone A area. One platoon was the Huong Thuy platoon of 25 fighters, who had been operating in the village of Thuy Phu to the immediate south of the airbase along Highway 1. The An Nong platoon had operated in the village of Loc Bon, also known as An Nong, along Highway 1 to the south of Thuy Phu village. The intelligence report showed that both platoons had moved up into the jungle and operated exclusively from there once the Marines arrived in the Phu Bai area.

According to Lieutenant Ek, the Viet Cong dominated the villages. He observed that there were no active enemy troops in the villages and they were left alone as long as the villagers paid their taxes or provided rice. Estimates have been made that there was a 20–35 percent domination of the village by the Viet Cong.<sup>61</sup> One of the villagers' great fears was the threat of acts of terror against them if they did not pay taxes to the Viet Cong or against village officials who worked in opposition to their goals. Lieutenant Ek felt, as did others involved, that the village chief and the Viet Cong had an unspoken agreement that if the Popular Forces did not aggressively patrol at night they would not be attacked. In essence, the village chiefs ruled the day, and the enemy forces ruled the night.<sup>62</sup>

The night patrols started soon and by 22 August 1965, in all three villages, night ambush or night reconnaissance patrols went out on a regular basis. Between 12 and 18 September, the Marines were staying in the villages overnight, coming into the base only one day. During this time, both day and night patrols occurred on a daily basis.<sup>63</sup>

The Phu Bai TAOR had been expanded at the time of the Zone A initial expansion to include another village and another Popular Force platoon, but a JAC unit was not placed there until late August. The village was Loc Bon, south of Phu Bai on the junction of Highway 1 and the Nong River. The Nong River, which emptied into a large bay several kilometers from the highway, flowed from south to north, coming out of the mountains, where the enemy forces were based in the jungle areas. The Nong River route—the river and the land routes following the river—would be active grounds for contacts between the Marines and the enemy. A JAC unit started operations in Loc Bon on or about 31 August 1965. The records show the first patrol going out that day.<sup>64</sup>

As the Marines were integrating into the Popular Forces and building an operating unit, Lieutenant Ek turned his attention to the population. He reported that it took a while to build trust with the villagers. One of the first things he did was to reframe the villagers' view of the Marines as a source of financial gain. The Marines who had gone out earlier had given candy to children, cigarettes to adults, and paid higher-than-value rates for food. Ek stopped Marines from buying anything from the villagers for a period of time and banned the giving of candy and cigarettes. Over time, this accomplished his goal of setting the Marines and the villagers on a more equal footing. He instructed the Marines to sit down and talk with the

<sup>59</sup>“Intelligence Section,” 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045073, folder 045, 1 September 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive.

<sup>60</sup> Ek oral history, 18; and “Operation order 27–65,” 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045072, folder 045, 1 August 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, Appendix 1, A-1-3, A-1-4.

<sup>61</sup>“Report: Joint Action Company (b) Intelligence,” 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045073, folder 045, 1 September 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, enclosure 18, 3.

<sup>62</sup> Ek oral history, 25.

<sup>63</sup>“Daily journal,” 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045072, folder 045, 1 August 1965, U.S. Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive; and “Daily journal,” 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045073, folder 045, 1 September 1965, U.S. Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive.

<sup>64</sup>“Daily journal,” 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045072, 1 August 1965, 34.



*Courtesy of 2dLt Richard M. Cavagnol*  
1stLt Wayne Henderson (left), a forward observer with Company I, 3d Battalion, 12th Marines, providing artillery support to the JAC units in Phu Bai. This photo was taken while they were out checking on artillery concentrations in Thuy Phu villages. Standing next to Henderson are two Marines from the JAC.



*Courtesy of Cpl Ed Matricardi*  
Thuy Phu village market.

people using sign language or other means, rather than giving out candy and cigarettes. He cited one example on a night patrol in a village where a boy called out “cigarette.” When the cigarette was not forthcoming, the boy said to the Marines, “You number 10.”<sup>65</sup> Being exposed on a night operation could be deadly. Such incidents, instigated by villagers’ expectations of the Marines as a source of treats, could reveal a patrol’s location to any enemy forces in the area.

It took three or four weeks, but with all the night patrols, the Viet Cong stopped coming to the villages to collect taxes, to hand out propaganda, or to rally support. Lieutenant Ek reported that in this time, Marines got on “thoroughly intimate” terms with the people. They were no longer pestered for candy and cigarettes, and they were sold goods at Vietnamese prices.<sup>66</sup>

Ek also introduced the concept of population control. It was important to know everyone who was in the village. At that time, adult villagers were required to carry an identification card. Without warning, the Marines and the Popular Forces would cordon off a segment of a hamlet, approximately one-

kilometer square, and gather all the males for an identification check. They made sure the villagers were registered with the district and that the village chief knew them. Lieutenant Ek said that they apologized for the inconvenience and the people seemed to accept the procedure. According to Ek, the procedure took between two to three hours and occurred just as dawn was breaking.<sup>67</sup>

The Marines also checked the village marketplaces randomly for outsiders purchasing supplies for the Viet Cong. There was a limit of 12 pounds of rice per day that anyone could purchase. On more than one occasion, they caught individuals—mostly women—purchasing larger quantities of rice. On one occasion, five women bought 80 pounds of rice. Investigation showed that it was purchased for enemy forces based a few kilometers away in a nearby district.<sup>68</sup> The more the JACs built trust with the people and kept them secure, the more intelligence of this nature would flow into the units.

Lieutenant Ek used the tool of civic action projects to build relationships with the villagers. They did not perform random acts, but helped when a need was

<sup>65</sup> Ek oral history, 9–11.

<sup>66</sup> Ek oral history, 11.

<sup>67</sup> Ek oral history, 15.

<sup>68</sup> Ek oral history, 16.

discovered. For example, the season was especially dry, and the village wells had not been dug deep enough to compensate. The Marines helped to dig deeper wells so the villagers did not have to carry fresh water as far. In another example, rains had washed away the ends of a bridge, leaving a gap of 1.5 feet that carts or vehicles could not cross, making it more difficult to get their goods to market. The Marines started working on the bridge and filling it in with anything they could find, and several villagers who saw this pitched in, and it became a joint project.<sup>69</sup>

Soap was a luxury to the villagers at this time and it was conserved. The Marines provided soap to as many people as possible at the medical clinics, but they also started a baby washing service as a teaching tool. The Marines set up an assembly line system with one Marine washing a child, another rinsing the child, and a third dressing the child.<sup>70</sup> It is unknown what real effect this project had, but it may have softened the Marines' image and brought them closer to the villagers. Stories such as this often spread from hamlet to hamlet as villagers gathered at the markets and other venues and exchanged news.

## Intensified Operations and Mission Change

Lieutenant Ek left the unit to rotate home on 25 September 1965, and Lieutenant Mullen replaced Ek as the company commander. The unit's name was soon changed to Combined Action Company (CAC).<sup>71</sup> This change was made because the command felt that this reflected better the character of the unit. Mullen said the reasoning was that it was not a joint operation between units but one combined unit made up of

men from each country.<sup>72</sup> In late 1967, the name was changed again to Combined Action Platoon (CAP) due to a potential unfortunate meaning of the word *cac* to the Vietnamese.<sup>73</sup> CACs were assigned unit numbers (CAC 1, CAC 2, etc.). CAC 1 was assigned to Thuy Luong, the northernmost village in Zone A. CAC 2 was placed in the village of Thuy Tan at the eastern flank of Phu Bai Air Base. CAC 3 was positioned immediately south of Phu Bai Air Base in the village known as Thuy Phu (sometimes referred to as Phu Bai village). CAC 4 was placed the furthest south in the village of Loc Bon, along the Nong River.

Mullen made some immediate operational changes in the program, suggesting that he had a different opinion regarding the enemy threat and the need to confront it. First, he moved the Marines to the villages on a permanent basis; he began a program of saturation patrolling; and he demanded 100 percent alert at night. Operationally, he emphasized ambush and multiambush patrols. He also intensified combined training and concentrated it on marksmanship and small unit tactics, and he placed a new emphasis on population control and intelligence gathering.<sup>74</sup>

In the time period when Lieutenant Mullen took command of the combined action program, the patrol protocol—at least in CAC 3 at Thuy Phu village—was for all Marines to go out on night patrol with 10–15 Popular Force soldiers. They would leave at darkness and not return until daybreak. Patrol routines varied. Some nights they would go straight to an ambush site, and others they would patrol for a long period and then set up an ambush late, close to daybreak. When Private First Class Claude Martin first arrived at what was known as CAC 3 in very late September or early October, they stayed in the village headquarters building located on the highway, which was the main road through the village. Soon, the Marines and the Popular Force soldiers built a crude structure using

<sup>69</sup> Ek oral history, 23–25.

<sup>70</sup> Ek oral history, 24.

<sup>71</sup> "Operation Plan," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045074, folder 045, 7 October 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive. The last operation plan in September, dated 30 September 1965, set out dates in October using the heading "Joint Action Company," but the first operation plan in October refers to the unit as Combined Action Company. The October chronology also lists the unit as Combined Action Company.

<sup>72</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," Annex C, C-11.

<sup>73</sup> CAC and CAP are interchangeable terms, and they are used here as they were used at the particular time period being discussed.

<sup>74</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," C-9.

bamboo framing and corrugated walls and roof. At that time, the sergeant, the corpsman, and the radio-man remained based out of the village headquarters building and the rest of the Marines used the shack for their quarters.<sup>75</sup>

There had been no significant contacts between combined action units and enemy forces at the time Lieutenant Mullen took over. Intelligence, however, showed a potential threat nearby. One of the infantry battalion's thrust points (focus of operations) had been near the jungle to the direct south of CAC 3 and CAC 4. This area generally follows the Nong River south into the jungle and into the mountains and was a main route for units east of Phu Bai to get to the lowlands. It would become even more important as a route in the future. The village where Loc Bon was located was once the base and operating area of the Viet Cong local force platoon called the Loc Bon or the An Nong platoon. The intelligence showed that when the Marines of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, arrived and began their operations, the Loc Bon platoon moved its base into the jungle several kilometers south of the village.<sup>76</sup>

A major change to the philosophy of the program also occurred when Lieutenant Mullen assumed command. Previously, the ultimate goal of the mission had been to secure the Phu Bai Air Base from possible attack through the Zone A villages. That goal remained, but the program was broadened in the direction of a full-fledged effort to increase good relationships with the people and improve their welfare. Mullen was involved with Zone A from the beginning, and it appears that he incorporated his civil affairs orientation into the military integration of the Marines with the Popular Forces. Mullen proposed his new concept and the battalion commander approved and directed this new mission be put into effect, the elements of which were:

1. Secure the populated areas and deny their use to the enemy, thereby supporting the battalion primary mission and providing security for the civilian population.
2. Establish and maintain an effective civic action program, in conjunction with local officials, for the purpose of improving the welfare of the people, increasing good relationships between the people and friendly forces, establishing an effective intelligence network; and
3. Train the Popular Force platoons so that in the future they would be capable of protecting their own villages without U.S. troop assistance.<sup>77</sup>

Mullen said that the "intensified" operations began immediately.<sup>78</sup> The first major contact between a CAC unit and the enemy occurred on 27 September. An ambush patrol from the Loc Bon CAC, known as CAC 4, was heading out toward the incoming enemy route to intercept Viet Cong coming toward the village. They went out approximately 1.5 kilometers from the headquarters into a prime area on the enemy routes from the jungle and encountered a group of 20 Viet Cong, and a firefight began.

Two enemy fighters and one Marine were killed. The enemy broke off contact and headed back up toward the hills. Corporal Edwin J. Falloon was in the point team and was the first combined action Marine to die in Vietnam. Two men on the patrol were wounded. The weapons found on the dead fighters were a semiautomatic rifle and a Chinese submachine gun.<sup>79</sup> The weapons suggest that this was a Viet Cong local force company, quite likely the Loc Bon company that had been pushed up into the jungle when the Marines entered Phu Bai. A group of 20 was too big

<sup>75</sup> Claude Martin, interview with author, 4 May 2018. Martin is a former CAC Marine from Thuy Phu Village during November 1965.

<sup>76</sup> "Intelligence Section," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045072, folder 045, 1 August 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, A-1-A-4.

<sup>77</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," C-9, C-10.

<sup>78</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," Annex C: C-10.

<sup>79</sup> "Intelligence Section, Close Combat," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045073, folder 045, 1 September 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, enclosure 4, 5.

to simply hold rallies or spread propaganda leaflets.<sup>80</sup>

Lieutenant Mullen sensed that after this incident the population gained more confidence in the CACs' ability to protect and secure them from the enemy. He saw that the Popular Force soldiers were becoming more efficient. Intelligence began to come in on a regular basis, first through the village chief and then directly by the people. The National Police began to take the CACs more seriously too and started actively providing them with intelligence. By November, 75 percent of the CAC operations were based on intelligence. Viet Cong activity in the villages ceased. Mullen noted that the villagers and the Marines had totally accepted each other. He stated that one of the greatest hallmarks of the program's success was that eventually village officials stayed in their own homes again during the night.<sup>81</sup>

Following the 27 September incidents, there were several more contacts between CACs and the enemy forces. Most of these were either in CAC 3 or CAC 4 on the outer edges of the villages, consistent with groups coming down from the mountains. Both of those CACs sat on the direct trail from the Viet Cong jungle camps. Whatever intelligence was provided resulted in the CACs catching fighters coming into the village. There is a high likelihood that these ventures into the village were to obtain rice.<sup>82</sup>

The local force Viet Cong units depended on tax collections to support their operations. They also depended on rice grown by the villagers in the lowlands. When they were pushed up into the mountains, rice and other foodstuffs became difficult to obtain. They could not grow rice in the jungle camps, but they needed it daily to survive, so they had to come to the

lowland villages to obtain it and other supplies. The Marines of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, had learned through captured enemy fighters that the typical procedure was to make contact with a designated rice supplier, who delivered the rice to a collection point.<sup>83</sup> Rice was always an issue, but before the local Viet Cong units were driven up into the hills, they had easy access to foodstuffs.<sup>84</sup>

In November 1965, CAC 3 experienced incidents three nights in a row. On the night of 29 November, however, the CAC 3 patrol heading out to attempt to intercept Viet Cong coming down from the mountains ran into an inbound group of 20 enemy. A sustained firefight ensued that resulted in four confirmed kills at the firefight site and the capture of a wounded Viet Cong corpsman the next day. Three weapons were captured, including a Chinese K50 submachine gun and a French-made MAT-49 submachine gun (used extensively in the first Indochina war), along with 718 piasters (Vietnamese currency) was found on one of the bodies.<sup>85</sup> There were few reasons, aside from the intent to purchase rice and other supplies, for Viet Cong forces to be carrying money on a night patrol. They had not been to a village yet and they were coming from the jungle camps. The amount of money found was substantial. For comparison, Lieutenant Ek said that tax payments to the Viet Cong in the Zone A villages for villagers with a concrete house were 500 piasters. Villagers with thatched roof houses paid 300 piasters.<sup>86</sup>

Intelligence gathering and security efforts worked hand in hand to make for stronger and safer CACs. The more the CACs were trusted, the more intelligence came in from more sources. Consequently, the CACs gained more power to protect their villages.

<sup>80</sup> "Intelligence Section, Close Combat," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045073, enclosure 10, 5.

<sup>81</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program," C-10, C-11.

<sup>82</sup> 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045073, folder 045, 1 September 1965; USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive; and 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045074, folder 045, 1 October 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive.

<sup>83</sup> "S-2 Report, 4 June 1965," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045070, folder 045, 1 June 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive.

<sup>84</sup> "Intelligence Section, Close Combat," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045073, 5.

<sup>85</sup> "Intelligence," 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201045075, folder 045, 1 November 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 1, 2, 7, 19.

<sup>86</sup> Ek oral history, 11.

Lieutenant Mullen remained as the program commander through April 1966.<sup>87</sup>

## Expansion of the Combined Action Concept

While the original Phu Bai combined action units were technically an experiment, the concept soon became an accepted part of the Corps' counterinsurgency pacification strategy. The Phu Bai CACs became a model for future CACs and they were an inspiration to General Walt and the III MAF command.

The Marine command realized that the Popular Force platoons occupied hamlets and villages in key places to protect military installations and main supply routes. While the Marines were able to clear those areas of Viet Cong forces, however, the Popular Force soldiers proved inadequate to hold the cleared villages. A vacuum was created, and when the Marines moved on, the Viet Cong flowed back in and began their insurgent activities again.<sup>88</sup> By October 1965, in the opening words of the FMFPac command chronology summary, the Marines were experiencing "more and more emphatically, the realities of counterinsurgency war."<sup>89</sup>

General Walt tried to protect his rear areas from attack and at the same time aggressively move into uncleared areas to clear them with as many maneuver battalions as he could afford. The cumulative military installations at Da Nang were the nerve centers of the Marine Corps operation in Vietnam. At Da Nang was the main Marine Corps' air base, which could handle planes of any size and began to rival the traffic of the busiest airports in the world. There was a large peninsula to the east of the air base across the Han River, on which were located several important facilities including the III MAF headquarters and the main

Marine helicopter base for the entire TAOR. There was also a sizeable city in the middle of the area and a deep-water port where sometimes ships would line up for days to bring critical shipments of supplies into Vietnam. Protecting this operation was of the highest priority.

Da Nang was vulnerable to attack. Scattered in and around the Da Nang military complex were numerous villages and hamlets. Close to Da Nang the population was dense. The villages and hamlets extended out into the countryside for several kilometers in all directions. The villages, with plenty of vegetation, could and did easily hide enemy troops readying to make ground assault on the airbase, mortar attacks, and even rocket attacks.

In July 1965, an enemy attack against the airport occurred from the south that destroyed two Lockheed C130 Hercules transport planes and one Convair F-102 Delta Dagger jet fighter and damaged others. This attack caused the Vietnamese to open up the territory immediately south of Da Nang for clearing by the Marine infantry.

On 28 October 1965, a group of Viet Cong commandos attacked the Marble Mountain Air Facility in Quang Nam Province, the naval hospital under construction, and the Mobile Construction Battalion 9 (MCB-9) camp. The commandos destroyed 19 and damaged 21 more of the 60 helicopters based there. At the same time, 50 miles to the south at Chu Lai, the enemy destroyed two Douglas A-4D Skyhawk fighter jets at the Marine air base.

On 30 October 1965, in an area several kilometers southwest of Da Nang, Marine infantry clearing forces were attacked by a force of 300-400 main force Viet Cong. Company A of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, was at an established company base camp on a slight rise called Hill 22. There were a total of 154 Marines on the hill and 81 men on the perimeter when they were attacked in the early morning hours. Preceded by mortars and 57mm recoilless rifles, the attackers were able to break through Company A's wire on the northwest side. The attack lasted approximately an hour before the attackers could be ejected from the

<sup>87</sup> Mullen, "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program in the Republic of Vietnam," C-11.

<sup>88</sup> Operations of the III MAF, Vietnam, FMFPac, item number 1201001017, folder 001, 1 October 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 2, 15.

<sup>89</sup> "Summary," Operations of the III MAF, Vietnam, FMFPac, item number 1201001017, 1.

Company A perimeter. The action resulted in 16 Marines killed and 45 wounded. Confirmed enemy killed were 47, although it was believed that more than 100 dead fighters were carried from the battlefield. It was later learned that the attackers came from three Viet Cong main force companies and two local force companies.<sup>90</sup> The 3d Marine Division wrote that it “was first large scale attack on Marine positions in any of the TAORs.”<sup>91</sup>

These attacks and other incidents factored into the III MAF assessment to better protect the rear areas. They pursued control of the Popular Force platoons so that more Marine and ARVN forces could move forward to clear and drive the Viet Cong and their main force units out of the TAOR. Da Nang and the Quang Nam Province had 34 Popular Force platoons.<sup>92</sup> Many were located in key areas that would provide protection for the massive military presence at Da Nang. General Walt recognized both the value and the weakness of the Popular Force platoons, and the command realized the key was to gain command control of all Popular Forces in the I Corps.<sup>93</sup>

Bolstered by the success of the CACs in Phu Bai, Walt envisioned placing CACs to the extent possible in selected Popular Force platoons. Following the positive results in the Phu Bai area CACs and influenced by the potential of more attacks on Da Nang and the Marble Mountain area, General Walt had the support of the ARVN command to expand CAC and take control of the Popular Forces.

General Walt pursued permission to take command of the Popular Forces. He first was given authority in late November 1965 over eight Popular Force platoons in the Da Nang Air Base general area. The 3d

Battalion, 9th Marines, began training Popular Forces on 7 December 1965.<sup>94</sup> The training of these Popular Force platoons from the perimeter locations of the Da Nang Air Base continued throughout January 1966.<sup>95</sup> By 17 February 1966, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, took over as the air base defense battalion. They reported on 18 February 1966 that a CAC had been formed during this period and the individual units were in six locations around the perimeter of Da Nang Air Base.<sup>96</sup> There were many more Popular Force platoon locations, however, where CACs would be appropriate and useful.

General Walt next pursued authority over all Popular Force units in I Corps, submitting a formal request on 5 January 1966. On 28 January, Walt was granted written permission by General Thi, commander of I Corps, for command and control over all Popular Forces in I Corps.<sup>97</sup> In a letter dated 4 February 1966 to the commanding general of the 3d Marine Division, General Walt directed that the commanders in each TAOR coordinate closely with each Popular Force unit in their area of operations; to provide communications, supporting arms, and reserve forces; and to place Marines with selected Popular Force units. He also directed that Popular Force units in proximity to each other be formed into CACs (companies.) He stressed the role that the Popular Forces would play: “The importance of the Popular Forces to provide security for the rear areas which will allow Marine/ARVN combat forces to move forward, cannot be overstated.”<sup>98</sup> In the Da Nang TAOR, Walt

<sup>90</sup> “After action report for 31 October 1965,” 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, ComdC, item number 1201019166, folder 019, October 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive.

<sup>91</sup> 3d MARDIV, ComdC, item number 1201025033, folder 025, 1 October 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 7-8.

<sup>92</sup> Operations of III MAF, Vietnam, FMFPac, item number 1201001017, 15.

<sup>93</sup> Operations of III MAF, Vietnam, FMFPac, item number 1201001017, 1, 2, 16, 17.

<sup>94</sup> 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201057001, folder 057, 1 December 1965, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, cover page, 2.

<sup>95</sup> “Civil Affairs,” 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201057002, folder 057, 1 January 1966, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 4.

<sup>96</sup> “General Concept of Operations During the Reporting Period,” 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, ComdC, item number 1201055037, folder 055, 1 February 1966, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 4.

<sup>97</sup> Maj Charles W. Driest, *Combined Action Platoons: A Possible Role in the Low-Intensity Conflict Environment* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advance Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1989), Exhibits A-1 through A-5.

<sup>98</sup> Driest, *Combined Action Platoons*, Exhibit A-5.

would need all the resources he could muster to clear and hold the 54 villages and 241 hamlets, covering 395 square miles, with a population of 265,767. For comparison, the Phu Bai TAOR had 9 villages and 62 hamlets, covered 76 square miles, and had a civilian population of 36,131.<sup>99</sup>

The process of expansion started almost immediately. Internal Vietnamese political turmoil brought the expansion of the program to a virtual standstill. In June 1966, after three months, the program began to regain its thrust.<sup>100</sup> By July, there were at least 19 CACs in the Da Nang enclave placed in critical areas around the airfield and covering the peninsula where the Marble Mountain facilities were located.<sup>101</sup> Some of these CACs were placed to the immediate north and to the west/northwest of the airfield, as well, to protect those flanks.<sup>102</sup> Five CACs were farther out along the southwest inland main supply to the Dai Loc District. They helped to protect the main supply route (a dirt road) and the western flank of the TAOR.<sup>103</sup> Eight Marine infantry battalions, one reconnaissance battalion, and the 1st Military Police battalion, in an ongoing effort to drive out the presence of the Viet Cong, conducted saturation patrolling throughout the Quang Nam Province, including the areas where CACs were placed in the outlying areas. The total number of patrols dur-

ing July 1966, including ambush patrols, was 5,820.<sup>104</sup>

While Da Nang was a first-priority expansion, the Chu Lai enclave also began working with the Popular Forces to form CAC units. Unlike Da Nang, Chu Lai was not built in a highly populated area. The Marines selected Chu Lai as a base due to its geographic location and its suitability to build a full-length combat airfield. It was a new base with an airfield that had been constructed in May 1965. There were fewer existing Popular Force platoons in Chu Lai, but the Marines there also began working with Popular Forces. By the end of summer 1966, several CAC units had been established there in a similar pattern to protect the flanks of the airfield, the supply routes, and other military installations from ground and mortar attacks.

The expansion of CAC continued in spurts for the next three years. In mid-1967, the program became an independent organization under the direct command of III MAF and took on its most well-known name, the Combined Action Program. At this time, the individual platoons were called Combined Action Platoons (CAPs). The original units in Phu Bai remained the basic model for CAPs everywhere, until the program phased into totally mobile units beginning after the Tet offensive of 1968.

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<sup>99</sup> Operations of III MAF, Vietnam, FMFPac, item number 1201001017, 17,18,19,20.

<sup>100</sup> Operations of U.S. Marine Forces, Vietnam, FMFPac, item number 1201001060, folder 001, 1 June 1966, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, part A, 4.

<sup>101</sup> "CAC Chronology," 1st Military Police Battalion, ComdC, item number 1201010115, folder 010, 1 July 1966, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, enclosure 5, 1.

<sup>102</sup> "Popular Force, Combined Action Company weekly report," 3d Marines, ComdC, item number 1201037064, folder 037, 1 June 1966, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, enclosure 57, 2.

<sup>103</sup> "Op-Plan 66," 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, ComdC, item number 1201040003, folder 040, 1 July 1966, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 66, 1; and "Significant Events," 20 and 23 July, 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, ComdC, item number 1201039078, folder 039, 1 July 1966, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, enclosure 1, 42, 45.

<sup>104</sup> Operations of U.S. Marine Forces, Vietnam, FMFPac, item number 1201001066, folder 001, 1 July 1966, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, part A, 16.

# HISTORY IN ACTION

## Enduring Value

### ADVANCING THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE TET OFFENSIVE WITH THE FREDERICK VOGEL COLLECTION

By Alisa Whitley<sup>1</sup>

As a part of the Marine Corps History Division, the mission of the Archives Branch is to collect, preserve, and provide access to primary source documentation pertaining to the history of the U.S. Marine Corps. A vast collection of personal papers comprises a major portion of this documentation. The Archives Branch maintains more than 5,600 collections of correspondence, diaries, photographs, maps, scrapbooks, and other personal items created and collected by Marines ranging from privates to commandants. As an ever-growing section of the archives, the Personal Papers Collection receives approximately 125 new donation offers annually. These donation offers are evaluated by a team of archivists to determine whether the archives is the appropriate repository for the items being offered. Offers are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If the materials are deemed to have lasting historical value, a recommendation to accept them into the permanent holdings is referred to the president of Marine Corps University for a final decision. Upon acceptance, collections are arranged and described, and then made available to researchers.

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<sup>1</sup> Alisa Whitley holds a master of library and information science degree with a focus on archival management from the University of Pittsburgh. Following graduate school, she worked as an archivist for the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution. She has been serving as an archivist for the Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, since 2006 and as the branch head since May 2018.

Many of the collections are donated by the Marines whose service they document. Whenever possible, Archives Branch requests that donors bring their collections to Quantico, Virginia, in person. Meeting the donor enables archivists to better understand the context of the creation and use of the materials. It was under these circumstances that Archives received one of its newest collections: the personal papers of Frederick J. Vogel.

Frederick Vogel was commissioned as a first lieutenant in the Marine Corps in June 1965. He served a total of 42 months in combat in Vietnam (1967–69 and 1971–72). During this time, he served with the 1st Marine Division Headquarters, 1st Force Reconnaissance Company, and 1st Reconnaissance Battalion. Subsequently, he served with the Phoenix Program as a Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) field commander in Hoi An Province and later as a field advisor with the Vietnamese Sea Commandos under U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam—Studies and Observations Group (USMACV-SOG).<sup>2</sup>

Vogel was released from active duty in July 1972.

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<sup>2</sup> For information on the Phoenix Program, read Col Andrew R. Finlayson (Ret), “A Retrospective on Counterinsurgency Operations: the Tay Ninh Provincial Reconnaissance Unit and its Role in the Phoenix Program, 1969–70,” *Studies in Intelligence* 51, no. 2 (2007): 59–69; William Rosenau and Austin Long, *The Phoenix Program and Contemporary Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Rand National Defense Research Institute, 2009); and Douglas Valentine, *The Phoenix Program* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2000).



*Frederick J. Vogel Collection, COLL/5577,  
Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

The 1st Force Reconnaissance Company diving team after clearing the Silver Bridge.



*Frederick J. Vogel Collection, COLL/5577,  
Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

1st Force Reconnaissance Company Diving Team at USMACV compound in Hue-Tet 1968. The 1st Force Reconnaissance Company also served as infantry in Hue, bringing them under constant mortar and small arms fire. The destruction in the city was substantial.

As a reservist in Thailand, he served as liaison officer between Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group, Thailand and the Royal Thai Army/Navy/Marine Special Operating Forces for more than eight years. He retired from the Marine Corps Reserve as a colonel in 1995.

In April 2016, Archives was contacted by now colonel Vogel, who indicated he had some Vietnam photos he was interested in donating. Archives receives many donation offers every month, so he was sent the collection statement and a request to send in

the materials he was interested in donating. Approximately a week later, Archives received digital scans of Vogel's photographs and copies of books he had prepared using the photos. An initial review of Vogel's photographs confirmed that this was a very unique collection that held great research potential. Though Vogel's scans were of high quality, Archives always endeavors to obtain original photographs. Luckily, Colonel Vogel readily agreed and also was willing to deliver them in person.

Later that month, he brought all his photograph albums to Quantico, and he spent a couple of hours discussing his experiences in Vietnam and Thailand. At the end of this meeting, he donated 23 photograph albums.

Once the collection was officially accepted, it was processed by removing as many photographs as possible from the albums while maintaining the original order and subject of each folder. The collection is arranged primarily in chronological sequence by album. The collection also contains Vogel's service records, newspaper clippings, propaganda posters, and a variety of other documents, though photographs comprise the majority of the collection.

The images from Vietnam include Marines on patrol, scenes from Hue City, Marines around Phu Loc, a flamethrowing tank, a change of command ceremony, aerial views of the area, an enemy situation map, Da Nang, and Vietnamese locals.

The photographs from his service with the Mitrphap Education Foundation (a joint Thai-U.S. foundation to foster friendship and cooperation between the Thai and U.S. military forces) include parachutists, hand-to-hand combat demonstrations, exhibitions of Thai culture, and musical presentations.

The final processed collection consists of three boxes of material primarily related to Vogel's service as the executive officer of 1st Force Reconnaissance Company in Vietnam during the Tet offensive from 1968 to 1969 and with the Mitrphap Education Foundation. There is also a small amount of material related to his father, Raymond W. Vogel Jr., who was a naval aviator killed during the Korean War.

Hue was the major focus of the Tet offensive,



*Frederick J. Vogel Collection, COLL/5577,  
Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

Street scene in Hue 1968. Two blown-out tanks sit on either side of the street; a third disabled tank is just out of the picture. The remains of the tank crews were still at their stations.



*Frederick J. Vogel Collection, COLL/5577,  
Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

According to Vogel, “the Quang Nam PRU leadership was second to none—dedicated, courageous, some say ruthless—and the enemy feared and respected them.”



*Frederick J. Vogel Collection, COLL/5577,  
Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

“Among all the lasting images, though, it was the faces of the children that remain the most vivid. In the midst of war, they still projected innocence, hope, and promise. These young girls near Hue, with Sgt Hughes, are forever etched in my memory,” said Col Vogel.



*Frederick J. Vogel Collection, COLL/5577,  
Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division*

A provincial reconnaissance unit en route to a joint operation on Go Noi Island, Vietnam, deep in the heart of enemy-controlled territory.

which began on 30 January 1968. Passing through Hue was Highway 1, an important supply line that made the city a valuable asset. The city also provided access to the Perfume River. On the night of 30–31 January, the Viet Cong forces attacked and were able to rapidly

occupy most of the city. During the next month, the Marines and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam gradually drove them out during intense house-to-house fighting. With 1st Force Reconnaissance Company, Vogel led a diving team under intense fire into



Frederick J. Vogel Collection, COLL/5577,  
Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division

Col Vogel said of the action, "Returning from a mission to the DMZ [demilitarized zone], fatigue written on my face. We sailed north for anywhere from 8 to 12 hours, looping far out to sea to avoid enemy radar, then made a dash to the coast. The team launched by rubber boat to about 1,000 yards offshore, then swam into the target area to conduct the operation."

Hue to reconnoiter the approaches across the Perfume River and to prepare the advance of Marine infantry units to recapture the Citadel.

Later in the Vietnam War, small teams of Vietnamese special police, led by American military and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) personnel, were tasked with destroying the Viet Cong infrastructure. These special police units were called provincial reconnaissance units (PRUs), and Vogel served as a PRU commander from February to September 1969.

Vogel's last tour in Vietnam was with USMACV-SOG and the Naval Advisory Group. The Vietnamese Sea Commandos were launched by patrol torpedo

(PT) boat to raid along the north Vietnamese coast between February 1971 and February 1972. These commandos were experts at black operations against the enemy. They would infiltrate enemy territory by small boat and then conduct combat operations ashore, mostly at night.

Colonel Vogel left active duty in 1972 and pursued a career in government, serving as an operation officer with the CIA and as a foreign service officer with the Department of State. During this time, he continued to serve in the Marine Corps Reserve. In that capacity, he served as liaison officer between Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group Thailand and the Royal Thai Special Operation Forces for almost nine years. As deputy chief of mission and periodically charge d'affaires at the U.S. embassy in Vientiane, Laos, he also supported the U.S. POW/MIA task force. He retired from the Department of State in 2004.

Since Colonel Vogel supplied high-quality scans of the images from his collection (and with the help of Archives' summer intern), archivists were able to place a large portion of these images on the branch's Flickr page. On 7 September 2017, Archives was honored to have Colonel Vogel come to the History Division to deliver a talk on his career, during which his photographs were displayed on a wall-size LCD screen.<sup>3</sup>

Colonel Vogel's collection has helped fill a significant gap in the holdings of the Archives Branch. In 2014, Archives received the papers of Colonel Andrew R. Finlayson, who was a force reconnaissance platoon commander and wrote the books *Killer Kane: A Marine Long-Range Recon Team Leader in Vietnam, 1967-1968* (2013) and *Rice Paddy Recon: A Marine Officer's Second Tour in Vietnam, 1968-1970* (2015) about this service. Archives also maintains the papers of Major Michael R. Lamb, who served with 1st Force Reconnaissance Company in Okinawa, Japan, and was a parachute test jumper in 1964, as well as the papers of Bart Russell who served in 1st Force Reconnaissance Company in Vietnam from 1966 to 1967. With 2018 marking the

<sup>3</sup> For access to these photographs, please visit USMC Archives albums on Flickr.

50th anniversary of the Tet offensive, these collections will be of great interest to researchers. No archives can exist without generous donations of material such as Colonel Vogel's. It is through sharing these items

that Archives Branch is able to preserve not only his story, but the stories of those Marines with whom he served—especially those who did not return from Vietnam.

• 1775 •

## HISTORY IN ACTION

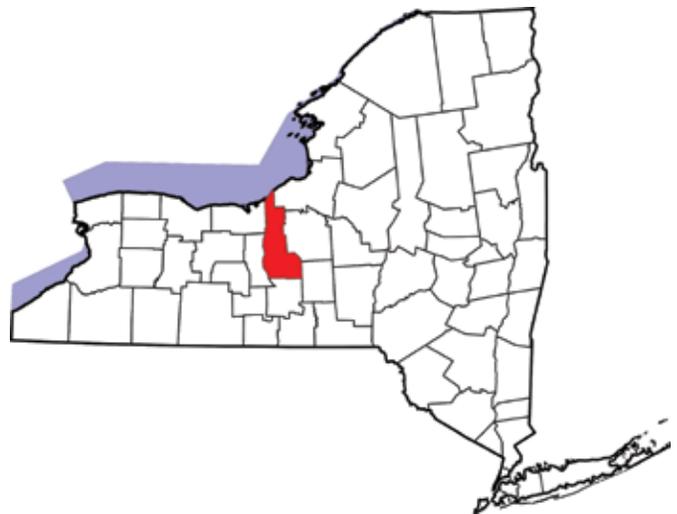
# Core of the Corps

## CAYUGA COUNTY MARINES IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

By Annette D. Amerman<sup>1</sup>

On 6 April 1917, the United States entered the First World War against Germany. At the start of the war in 1914, the Marine Corps' manpower stood at fewer than 11,000 Marines strong. They were relegated to small detachments on ships, garrison duty at naval bases, and expeditionary duty. All this would change, as would the mission of the Marine Corps, thanks to the war. By 1918, the size of the Corps had exploded to 1,503 officers and 51,315 enlisted men. This allowed the Corps to send a brigade of Marines (two infantry regiments and one machine gun battalion) to serve with the Army's 2d Infantry Division in France. The Corps also was able to send a second brigade to France, but it was relegated to duty with the Services of Supply—guard duty, quartermaster duties, and replacements. Two brigades would create a division-level unit and Army general John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, did not want a division of Marines in France. Men from small towns and large cities joined the ranks of those who had served in places such as China, Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. Men from one county in upstate New York are the focus of this piece—the men of Cayuga (pronounced kay-you-ga)

<sup>1</sup> Ms. Amerman is the head of the Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division. She started with History Division in 1995 as an intern, and later served as a research assistant. She returned to the division in 2003 and was promoted to branch head in November 2017. This piece is adapted from a presentation given at the Cayuga Museum of History and Art in Auburn, NY. Ms. Amerman, a native of Cayuga County, researched and presented this to the gathered audience on 1 June 2018.



Map courtesy of David Benbennick  
Cayuga County, NY, is shown highlighted in red.

County who joined the Corps in World War I. Cayuga County boasts being the home of Secretary of State William H. Seward, President Millard Fillmore, and in her later years, abolitionist Harriet Tubman.

Cayuga County was formed in the days after the American Revolution as the Military Tract of Central New York; it consisted of nearly 2 million acres of land set aside to compensate New York soldiers for their participation in the war.<sup>2</sup> Utilizing the New York state database of World War I military service records for

<sup>2</sup> Elliot G. Storke, *History of Cayuga County, New York, 1789–1879* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co., 1879), 32.

1917–19, which are now available online courtesy of genealogy research website Ancestry, it was determined that 9,007 men from New York joined the Marine Corps.<sup>3</sup> Of that number, only 94 were from Cayuga County, and the overwhelming majority were inducted via the recruiting station in Syracuse (table 1).

Of the 94 Marines from Cayuga County, 37 percent served in France. Of those Marines, 68 percent were in combat, and of those in combat, 41 percent were killed or wounded. Of course, there were Marines who served in combat in locations other than France—six Marines served in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, or Cuba. One of the most interesting facts to come out of the research is that 13 Marines (of the 94) enlisted on 20 August 1918. One explanation might be that the recruiters in Syracuse were at the New York State Fair enticing men into the Corps; however, 20 August was a Tuesday and the fair had yet to start for the year, so the reason for such a large number enlisting on the same day remains a mystery to be researched and solved.

The most prominent Marine from Cayuga County to serve in World War I was Leonard Earl Rea, born in Auburn, New York, on 14 March 1897. Rea was the son of a tea shop owner. He enlisted on 19 April 1917 and was sent to Parris Island, South Carolina, for recruit training. When his training was complete, Rea was sent to Quantico, Virginia, where he joined the 5th Regiment, which was bound for France that summer. Rea was promoted to corporal just before shipping over to France; he must have impressed his superiors during the next eight months because he was recommended for a commission and it was approved in April 1918. While attending 1st Corps Officer School in Langres, France, Rea missed the battles of Belleau Wood and Soissons, but was in combat in the battles of Saint-Mihiel and Blanc Mont. He was cited in orders for “unusual heroism, coolness, zeal and good judgment at the southwest corner of the

**Table 1.** Number of men joining the Marine Corps by town, Cayuga County, 1917–19

New York town	Number
Auburn	64
Weedspport	5
Scipio	3
Port Byron	3
Locke	3
Owasco	2
Genoa	2
King Ferry	2
Cayuga	2
Sennett	2
Moravia	1
Martville	1
Fleming	1
Aurora	1
Ledyard	1
Meridian	1

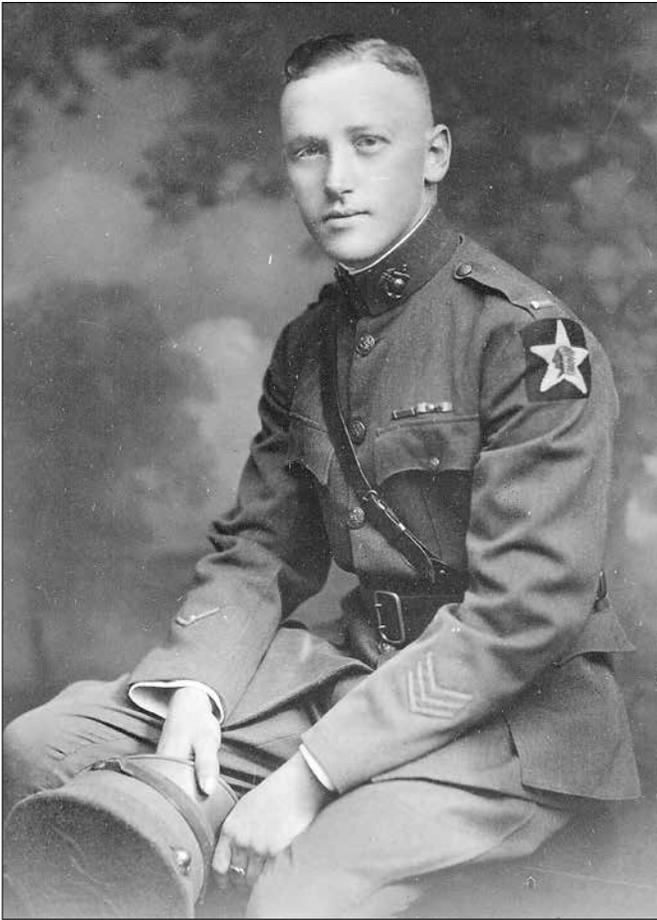
Source: Statistical data compiled from the “New York, Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917–1919,” Adjutant General’s Office, Series Bo808, New York State Archives, Albany, NY. Accessible via ancestry.com.

Bois de Bonveaux [sic]” on the days of 12–16 September. At Blanc Mont on 4 October, Rea was wounded in action, and despite being unable to move without help, he refused to leave his men or the line until he received a direct order from his commanding officer. For this, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, and the Navy later also awarded him the Navy Cross. Rea went on to serve in the Corps through the interwar period and World War II and rose through the ranks, retiring as a brigadier general on 30 November 1953.<sup>4</sup>

Many of the Marines from Cayuga County who made it to France and were in combat were wounded or killed. Benjamin F. Reister, born in Fleming on 6 December 1893, enlisted on 13 February 1917 in Syra-

<sup>3</sup> Statistical data compiled from the “New York, Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917–1919,” Adjutant General’s Office, Series Bo808, New York State Archives, Albany, NY. Accessible via ancestry.com.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard E. Rea, official military personnel file, National Archives and Records Administration, St. Louis, MO.



*Official U.S. Marine Corps photo*

1stLt Leonard E. Rea after the war.

cuse, just before the United States declared war. Reister was sent to Parris Island for recruit training and was then assigned to the ship's detachment of the USS *New Hampshire* (BB 25) for a short period before being reassigned to the 5th Regiment, bound for France. Reister saw action in every major battle with the 5th Regiment until 4 October 1918, when he was wounded in the leg during the Battle of Blanc Mont. He was evacuated but likely succumbed to infection and died just five days later. For his actions throughout the war, Reister was posthumously awarded the Silver Star as well as the French Croix de Guerre; his body was returned home to rest in St. Joseph's Cemetery in Fleming.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Entries for R, "Interments," St. Joseph's Cemetery, Auburn, NY, accessed 19 May 2018.

Not all Marines who made it to France were infantry Marines. Ronnell W. Ranf was born on 6 January 1896 in Silver Springs and resided in Auburn when he enlisted on 31 July 1917. Like many before him, he was sent to Parris Island for recruit training, but upon completion he was assigned to the 1st Marine Aviation Squadron in Cape May, New Jersey. He continued his education in aircraft mechanics as the unit moved from New Jersey to Mineola, New York, to Lake Charles, Louisiana, and then on to France in the summer of 1918. Ranf was promoted to corporal in May 1918 and to sergeant in June. Ranf was one of the several dozen Marine mechanics sent to the British aviation school in Eastleigh, England, where he later fell victim to the influenza. He survived the flu but did not see actual combat or frontline experience before being sent home at the end of the year. He was discharged in February 1919 and returned home to Auburn.<sup>6</sup>

To this day, many Marines still rest on French soil, lovingly cared for by the men and women of the American Battle Monuments Commission. Clarence L. Clark, born on 29 January 1896 in Weedsport, is one of them. Clark enlisted in Syracuse on 5 May 1917 and was sent to recruit training in Philadelphia. Like Rea and Reister, he joined the 5th Regiment, but upon arrival in France he was reassigned to the 6th Machine Gun Battalion.

Apparently bored with his service, Clark went absent without leave (AWOL) for a day; upon his return, he was found guilty and served 10 days loss in pay, but continued to serve in the Corps. In June 1918, in the midst of the opening days of the Battle of Belleau Wood, he was gassed. He recuperated from the gas through the summer and early fall and returned to his unit in October. Regrettably, on 2 November, just days before the Armistice, Clark was killed in action. His parents asked that his body remain in France with his fellow Marines, so today,

<sup>6</sup> Annette D. Amerman, "Integration of US Marine Corps Aviation with the Royal Air Force in the First World War: Legacy and Impact" (master's thesis, University of Birmingham, 2018), Appendix B, 153.

Clark rests in the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery.<sup>7</sup>

While Cayuga County is not the largest county in New York, and certainly not the most famous, when the United States entered World War I, the men of the county stepped up and did their duty. These stories are but a few of the Cayuga County men who joined the Marine Corps during the First World War, exemplifying the “Core of the Corps.”

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*Photo courtesy of Hubert Caloud*  
Headstone of Pvt Clarence L. Clark in Oise-Aisne American Cemetery and Memorial.

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<sup>7</sup> “Clarence Lee Clark,” American Battle Monuments Commission, accessed 20 May 1918.

## IN MEMORIAM

# Major Gary W. Cozzens, USMCR (Ret)

20 JANUARY 1956–31 JULY 2018

Gary Wayne Cozzens was born in Hobbs, New Mexico, on 20 January 1956 and grew up in Portales, New Mexico. In 1978, he graduated from Eastern New Mexico University with a bachelor's degree in history and political science and was then commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps. During more than two decades as a Marine infantry officer, Cozzens commanded two rifle companies—Company C, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, and Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines (known as Suicide Charley)—and Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines. He also served as the inspector-instructor for Company E, 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, and participated in Operation Desert Storm (1990–91).

For his service, Cozzens was awarded several decorations: the Southwest Asia Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Kuwait Liberation Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, and the Korea Defense Service Medal. He retired from the Marine Corps Reserve as a major in 1999 with more than 20 years of service.

From 1994 until 2013, Cozzens served as director of career and technical education, emergency management and distance education, for the Region IX Education Cooperative, covering several school districts in south central New Mexico. Much of Cozzens's life and career, however, centered around his love of history, including the history of his home state and of the Marine Corps. In 2011, he was recognized with the Governor's Award for Historic Preservation. He wrote



Photo courtesy of Shirley Crawford  
Gary Cozzens at the Lincoln State Monument in Lincoln County, NM.

articles for New Mexico history publications and authored the books *The Nogal Mesa: A History of Kivas and Ranchers in Lincoln County* (2011), *Capitan New Mexico: from the Coalora Coal Mines to Smokey Bear* (2012), *Tres Ritos: A History of Three Rivers, New Mexico* (2015), and *Teufelhunden!: A Bibliography of the United States Marine Corps in the World War I Era* (2017). He was also a significant contributor to *Marine Corps History* magazine.

From 2013 to 2016, Cozzens managed the Lincoln Historic Site in Lincoln, New Mexico, a historic landmark that at the time included 16 buildings, six of which were museums. He also served as the president

of the Lincoln County Historical Society and was a board member of Fort Stanton, Inc., a nonprofit organization that manages the Fort Stanton Historic Site in New Mexico.

Gary Cozzens passed away on 31 July 2018 at the

age of 62 in Nogal, New Mexico. He is survived by his wife, Shirley Crawford, his daughter and granddaughters, and his three sisters and their families. A memorial was held on 14 August 2018 at the Capitan Cemetery in Capitan, New Mexico.

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IN MEMORIAM

# Major General Lawrence H. Livingston (Ret)

5 NOVEMBER 1940–28 SEPTEMBER 2018

By *Edward T. Nevglowski*

Born only a few miles from Fort Defiance in northwest Ohio on 5 November 1940, Major General Lawrence Herbert Livingston epitomized his hometown's name. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1960 after a year of schooling at Defiance College. Livingston spent his first enlistment with the 2d Marine Division at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Before the end of his career, he would lead a battalion and regiment in the 2d Marine Division and retire as its commanding general in 1997.<sup>1</sup>

Livingston reenlisted in 1964 wearing the rank of sergeant, and in late 1966, the Marine Corps reassigned him to the 1st Force Reconnaissance Company, 1st Marine Division, III Marine Amphibious Force, in South Vietnam, where he led hundreds of combat patrols, ambushes, and direct-action raids into the hills and valleys surrounding the major Marine air base at Da Nang. The targets were the elusive Communist guerrillas and the main forces of the National Liberation Front. His knack for making contact with the enemy earned him the Bronze Star with combat "V," two Purple Hearts, the Navy Commendation with combat "V," and the nickname "Rhino," not only because of his physical stature but also due to the way he fearlessly charged at the enemy during firefights.<sup>2</sup> Participating in the Tet offensive in early 1968, his battalion com-



*Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division*  
MajGen Lawrence H. Livingston.

<sup>1</sup> MajGen Lawrence H. Livingston official biography, Biographical File, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division (MCHD), Quantico, VA.

<sup>2</sup> Livingston official biography.

mander nominated him for the Meritorious Commissioning Program.<sup>3</sup> Returning to the United States as a staff sergeant and completing Officer Candidates School, he departed Quantico, Virginia, for his first assignment as a new second lieutenant and infantry officer.<sup>4</sup>

Livingston spent the next 30 years forging his name in the memories of thousands of Marines in all three active divisions and an exchange assignment with the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. During his illustrious career, Livingston held some of the most challenging command and staff assignments an infantry officer could hope to occupy. His Fleet Marine Force experience included time as a platoon commander in the 5th Marine Division from 1968 to 1970 after its wartime activation; in the 1st Marine Division from 1976 to 1980, where he was a company commander, battalion operations officer, and battalion executive officer in the 5th Marines; and in the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing as the operations officer for Marine Aircraft Group 15 for one year in 1983, before heading back to the 2d Marine Division for duty as the 6th Marines' regimental executive officer. From 1984 to 1986, he was the commanding officer of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, which at that time was in the 2d Marine Division. Livingston deployed with the battalion to the Mediterranean Sea as part of the first special operations capable 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit

(26th MEU(SOC)) and participated in Operation El Dorado Canyon and the air strikes against Libya in April 1986. In 1990, he took command of the 6th Marines and spearheaded the 2d Marine Division's assault into Kuwait to recapture Kuwait City during Operation Desert Storm.<sup>5</sup>

Livingston also had a penchant for training and preparing Marines for war. From 1970 to 1971, he was the mortar platoon commander and a staff officer with the Basic Infantry Battalion and helped transition the battalion into the Infantry Training School, known today as the Infantry Training Battalion, at the School of Infantry West at Camp Pendleton, California. From 1973 to 1976, Livingston supervised the making of Marines as company commander and battalion and regimental operations officer at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, California. While there, he received a bachelor of arts degree in both economics and business administration from Chapman College. His final training assignment was as the tactics group chief and operations officer of The Basic School from 1980 to 1983.<sup>6</sup>

When not in the Fleet Marine Force or training Marines for war, Livingston was a dedicated student of war. His education included the Amphibious Warfare School in Quantico from 1972 to 1973, the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1980, and the National War College in Washington, DC, from 1986 to 1987.<sup>7</sup>

Like every good field Marine officer before and after him, Livingston paid his dues at Headquarters Marine Corps, though both of his assignments there would come late in his career. From 1987 to 1990, he was head of both the Joint Strategic Planning Branch and the Eastern Regional Branch of the Plans Division. Then, as a newly promoted brigadier general, Livingston returned to Headquarters Marine Corps as the assistant deputy chief of staff for the Force Structure Implementation, Plans, Policies and Operations Department from 1991 to 1992 before moving back to

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<sup>3</sup> The Meritorious Commissioning Program, or MCP, was one of several programs for eligible and qualified enlisted Marines to receive a commission. The MCP required Marines to have a college background and, before being eligible for promotion to the grade of major, to obtain a bachelor's degree in any field of study. The prospective candidates must have demonstrated exceptional leadership potential to serve as commissioned officers. Nominated by their command, the candidates, after a thorough physical and medical screening, attend Marine Corps Officer Candidates School for 10 weeks in Quantico, VA. Graduates receive their commissions as second lieutenants and are assigned for additional training at The Basic School.

<sup>4</sup> Livingston official biography. The nickname "Rhino" was relayed to the author during a discussion with Col John W. Ripley (Ret) in July 2003. Ripley was the former director of the Marine Corps History Division, a Marine advisor, and close friend of Livingston.

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<sup>5</sup> Livingston official biography.

<sup>6</sup> Livingston official biography.

<sup>7</sup> Livingston official biography.

Camp Lejeune to assume the post of base commanding general from 1992 to 1995.<sup>8</sup>

It was Livingston's tour as an infantry advisor to the 1st Battalion of the Vietnamese Marine Corps (1st VNMC) from 1971 to 1972, and his role in helping defeat the North Vietnamese Army's (NVA) invasion of South Vietnam in 1972, however, that solidified his reputation as one of the most competent and gallant Marines ever to have worn the uniform. It also explains why his Marines, during his first tour in South Vietnam, referred to him as "Rhino."

When the Easter offensive began on 30 March 1972, then-captain Livingston was at Fire Support Base Pedro about 80.5 kilometers west of the ancient imperial city of Quang Tri. Assigned to the battalion as the assistant advisor with its Bravo command element in the summer of 1971, Livingston had with him a small cadre of Marines to help him plan and execute operations. Through the previous months, enemy activity had increased. After an engagement with an NVA company that ended with 32 enemy fighters dead, Livingston sensed an offensive was imminent, particularly after finding a map on one of the enemy bodies pinpointing the location of every fire support base in the area.<sup>9</sup> Following an enemy sapper attack on Fire Support Base Pedro on 4 April 1972, the brigade withdrew the battalion back to the Ai Tu Combat Base northeast of Quang Tri City. There Livingston and the battalion's senior advisor, Major Robert C. Cockell, worked with the battalion staff to prepare for a counterattack against thousands of NVA forces penetrating south of the demilitarized zone separating North and South Vietnam.

During the initial days of fighting at and around Fire Support Base Pedro, Livingston found himself in a tank battle to prevent his and other VNMC battalions from decimation. During the course of several days, he would use South Vietnamese M48 Patton

medium tanks and U.S. aircraft to engage the enemy with such precision and effectiveness that one Marine advisor commented later that Livingston likely "had more experience with nose-on-nose tank battles than any other U.S. Marine."<sup>10</sup>

During the next six months, Livingston—on at least four occasions—demonstrated the kind of courage and defiance that you read about in books. On 12 April, Livingston and the Bravo command were searching an area overrun by a much larger NVA unit when the company he was with captured an enemy soldier and began the process of interrogating him. Within seconds, Livingston and the South Vietnamese Marines came under enemy attack. According to the citation commending Livingston for his actions, the large volume of enemy fire killed the Vietnamese Marine officer with Livingston and killed or wounded several others. The citation reads: "Without hesitation and with complete disregard for his own safety, Captain Livingston braved intense enemy fire to recover the body of the Vietnamese officer and to remove several wounded to a protected area." Sensing the enemy prisoner had viable intelligence, Livingston continued questioning him to learn the enemy disposition. Reorganizing the embattled and shocked Vietnamese company, he pushed the enemy back with supporting artillery fire and inflicted "serious damage to a larger enemy unit nearby," thereby saving "an untold number of friendly casualties." For his timely and courageous actions, he received the Silver Star.<sup>11</sup>

A little more than a month later, on 25–26 May, Livingston and the 1st VNMC battalion were just north of the ancient capital of Hue deployed in a series of company blocking positions to protect a major avenue of approach to the city from the north and northeast. On the evening of 25 May, the battalion identified three NVA tracked vehicles and an enemy force of unknown size approaching the main defensive line from the west. Livingston moved to where he estimated the enemy might attempt to penetrate the

<sup>8</sup> Livingston official biography.

<sup>9</sup> Maj Charles D. Melson and LtCol Curtis G. Arnold, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The War that Would Not End, 1971–1973* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1991), 66.

<sup>10</sup> Melson and Arnold, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam*, 69–70.

<sup>11</sup> "Valor Awards: Lawrence Herbert Livingston," *Military Times Hall of Valor Project database*, accessed 6 December 2018.

line. Using artillery to halt and disperse the enemy, at sunset he requested support from a Lockheed AC-130 gunship and directed its fire on the enemy vehicles and troops in their covered positions, destroying the vehicles. Throughout the night, the enemy forces targeted the companies with mortars and recoilless rifle fire. Livingston boldly moved about the blocking position to assess the situation. At 0530, two NVA battalions, under the cover of their own machine gun, recoilless rifle, and mortar fire, began their assault from the west.<sup>12</sup>

As the enemy closed on the battalion command group, Livingston moved to an exposed position to guide aircraft onto the target. Unaware that two enemy soldiers had closed within 20 meters of Livingston, the South Vietnamese Marines cut them down with rifle fire. An oblivious Livingston ordered the aircraft to drop their flares behind the enemy assault force, silhouetting them. According to his Bronze Star summary of action, "Captain Livingston continued to call and direct air strikes for the next eight hours" from an exposed position. His actions "not only staved off a major enemy effort to penetrate the defenses of Hue, but also resulted in the destruction of two battalions of the 88th North Vietnamese Army Regiment, as evidenced by over 250 enemy dead left on the battlefield."<sup>13</sup>

As American airpower and the tenacity of South Vietnamese military forces pushed the NVA back north of Quang Tri City, Livingston continued to do his part to ensure the battalion was able to secure the areas under its control. In July, the 1st VNMC Battalion was to conduct a helicopter-borne assault in NVA-controlled areas northeast of the city and to close Route 560, a major enemy resupply and reinforcement route leading into Quang Tri. The assault began on the morning of 11 July. As the helicopter-borne assault forced the landing zone it came under intense enemy machine gun and rifle fire, damaging several aircraft. The helicopter directly behind Livingston's burst into

flames after being hit by machine gun fire, killing 30 South Vietnamese Marines and the U.S. Marine aircrew. After landing, and with the entire force under heavy enemy fire, Livingston ran to assist his wounded Vietnamese radio operator. Carrying him to a nearby rice paddy and out of the way of enemy fire, Livingston bandaged his radio operator's wounds. Taking the radio from his operator but unable to make communication with his command element, he made contact instead with an aircraft flying overhead to relay his requests for fire support. Using naval gunfire from ships off the coast, Livingston would eventually secure the battalion's flanks.<sup>14</sup>

As the fighting raged, Livingston made his way from place to place, trying to push the Marines forward and out from their exposed positions. Seeing his naval gunfire spotter, First Lieutenant Stephen G. Biddulph, shot in both legs by enemy fire, Livingston rushed to his aid. Recalling the battle years later, Biddulph remarked that Livingston ran toward him under the trained eye of enemy rifle and machine gun fire and "came sliding in beside me like a man stealing second base."<sup>15</sup>

Finally finding his command element and the battalion commander, he organized the beleaguered South Vietnamese Marines into an assault force, picked an initial objective, oriented them, and charged forward. The objective, according to Livingston's Navy Cross citation, was an enemy trench comprising its main defenses. Without hesitation and despite "the continuing heavy concentration of hostile fire, he began the assault on the initial objective—a treeline approximately 50 yards distant. Although blown from his feet by explosions and periodically delayed to reform and redirect his casualty-riddled force, he forged ahead, leading the Vietnamese Marines into the enemy-infested trench lines of the objective and a subsequent hand-to-hand battle. Upon seizure of the initial portion of the trench line, Captain Livingston shed his combat equipment, emerged from the trench line,

<sup>12</sup> Summary of Action for the award of the Bronze Star with combat distinguishing device for Capt Lawrence H. Livingston, Biographical File, Historical Reference Branch, MCHD.

<sup>13</sup> Melson and Arnold, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam*, 102–3.

<sup>14</sup> Summary of Action for the award of the Navy Cross to Capt Lawrence H. Livingston, Biographical File, Historical Reference Branch, MCHD.

<sup>15</sup> Melson and Arnold, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam*, 115.



*Official U.S. Marine Corps photo, by PFC E. J. Young*  
MajGen Lawrence H. Livingston, commanding general, 2d Marine Division, tours migrant camp facilities aboard Camp Bravo in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, on 16 October 1996. This U.S. Atlantic Command operation deployed the Air Contingency Force of II Marine Expeditionary Force, to process more than 100 Chinese migrants.

and exposed himself to a hail of enemy fire to reach and carry his wounded naval gunfire spotter to a position of relative safety.<sup>16</sup>

Captain Livingston and a number of other Marine advisors, leading battalions of South Vietnamese Marines, along with American airpower, eventually retook and held Quang Tri City and the rest of the northern portion of South Vietnam. By 22 October, South Vietnamese forces reestablished the original

line of demarcation. Livingston returned to the United States and continued his remarkable career.

After nearly 40 years in a Marine uniform, Major General Livingston retired to his avocado ranch in Bonsall, California, on 1 January 1998. A humbled Livingston returned to Defiance, Ohio, to be honored as one of the state's most highly decorated combat veterans.<sup>17</sup> On 26 June 2010, the state of Ohio named the scenic Defiance County Road 424 the Major General Lawrence H. Livingston Highway.<sup>18</sup> On 28 September 2018, Livingston passed away peacefully at the age of 77 while surrounded by his wife, Karen; his two sons, Laurence and Michael, and their wives; his daughter, Jessica; five grandchildren; and numerous other relatives and close friends.<sup>19</sup> Services for General Livingston were held 5 November 2018.

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<sup>16</sup> Melson and Arnold, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam*, 289.

<sup>17</sup> "Livingston Will Be Remembered for Selfless Service to the Nation," *Crescent-News (Defiance, OH)*, 26 October 2018.

<sup>18</sup> "Major General Lawrence H. Livingston Highway: U.S. 424," *Exploring the River Region, Northwest Ohio's River Region* (blog), 15 August 2011.

<sup>19</sup> "Obituary: Lawrence H. Livingston, November 5, 1940–September 28, 2018," Dignity Memorial, accessed 6 December 2018.

IN MEMORIAM

# Lieutenant General William R. Maloney (Ret)

13 OCTOBER 1929–13 NOVEMBER 2018

*By Fred H. Allison*

Lieutenant General William R. Maloney passed away 13 November 2018. He was an accomplished and wise leader of Marines in both combat and peace. General Maloney had the privilege of commanding Marines at several levels, including a rifle platoon in combat, an aircraft squadron in combat, an aircraft group, and, uniquely, all three active-duty aircraft wings in succession.

He was born on 13 October 1929 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to James and Elizabeth Maloney. He graduated from West View High School and attended Brown University, where he was a Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps midshipman. Upon graduation, he was commissioned a Marine second lieutenant and entered The Basic School (TBS). He graduated TBS on 15 December 1951 and was sent to Korea, where he was in combat by 4 February 1952.

In Korea, he commanded a platoon of 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, into combat in the area known as the Hook. General Maloney was awarded the Bronze Star for his Korean War service. Upon return to the United States, he was assigned as executive officer of Marine Barracks, Naval Air Rocket Test Station Dover, New Jersey. He applied for and was accepted for flight training. His desire to fly melded with his combat experience. In an oral history interview, he said, “The only time that we could ever get our head out of the trenches in Korea was when the [Vought F4U] Corsairs or the [Douglas] ADs [Skyraiders] were overhead. . . . And, the best way to get anybody who was



*Official U.S. Marine Corps photo*

LtGeneral William R. Maloney.

hurt back to some medical care was with helicopters . . . I thought the air-ground team was pretty nifty.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> LtGen William R. Maloney, intvw with Benis M. Frank, 5 January 1989, transcript (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA), hereafter Maloney intvw.

He was “winged” in March 1955 as a naval aviator. Maloney was given his wish of aircraft type, the Douglas AD Skyraider, and joined Marine Attack Squadron 333 (VMA-333). Later, he transitioned to helicopters, and while assigned to Marine Observation Squadron 2 (VMO-2) in 1958, he flew the Kaman HOK-1 Huskie helicopter and the Cessna O-1 Bird Dog aircraft.

In Headquarters Marine Corps Helicopter Squadron 1 (HMX-1) from 1960 through 1962, Maloney also flew Sikorsky H-34 Seahorse helicopters as a presidential copilot for presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy. He was impressed with President Kennedy’s down-to-earth character, saying, “When we would drop him off [referring to flying President Kennedy back to the White House after a trip], Caroline would be running and Jacqueline Kennedy would be with her . . . like any other man coming home from work.”<sup>2</sup>

In July 1966 as a major (promoted to lieutenant colonel four months later), he took command of VMO-6 in Vietnam in combat. The squadron flew Bell UH-1E Hueys, conducting escort missions, extractions, tactical air coordination, and medical evacuation. Squadron Marines turned their Hueys into gunships by affixing guns and rocket pods onto the aircraft with field-expedient mounts. Then-major Maloney believed in leading from the front and took his turn at flying combat sorties. He became especially capable as an airborne tactical air coordinator, directing complex and dynamic combat air missions. One senior officer remarked that he exhibited “cool, level headed judgment and presence of mind” in these operations.<sup>3</sup> Maloney believed that flying Hueys in VMO-6 was the best of combat flying. “At the end of a mission, [you] have all of the good feelings that warriors want to have. One, we were able to shoot. We could pull the trigger. The other helicopter guys couldn’t do that. But we also had what they had, we had that warm, fuzzy feeling you have when you get some-

body who is hurt back to medical attention,” he said.<sup>4</sup>

He spoke from personal experience. In a mission for which he was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross, Maloney escorted a flight of Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knights on an emergency extraction of three wounded Marines. While the CH-46s attempted to pick up the three Marines, Maloney suppressed enemy fire with attack runs in his Huey. However, intense enemy fire kept the Sea Knights from safely landing in the zone. When other supporting aircraft, fixed-wing, and helicopter gunships arrived, Maloney took control and directed their strikes on enemy positions. Despite the additional fire power, enemy fire continued to keep the evacuation helicopters from picking up the now four wounded Marines. Maloney then flew into the zone and retrieved two of the wounded. He stayed over the zone in his Huey and turned its guns and rockets on the enemy to suppress enemy fire as a second Huey picked up the other two wounded Marines.

During his tenure as commanding officer of VMO-6, his squadron flew 10,455 combat missions, all without an operational accident. Lieutenant Colonel Maloney was awarded a Silver Star medal, the Legion of Merit, a Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Medal with numeral 21 for his Vietnam combat service.

In July 1972, now-colonel Maloney took command of Marine Aircraft Group 36 (MAG-36), the largest and most diverse, displaced, and complex air group in the Marine Corps. Although the Marine Corps, by and large, was out of Vietnam, elements of MAG-36 participated in key combat operations. In 1972, during the Easter offensive in which North Vietnamese conventional forces attempted a major invasion of South Vietnam, two MAG-36 composite helicopter squadrons, Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 164 (HMM-164) and HMM-165 provided unparalleled combat support to South Vietnamese Marines fighting to defend Quang Tri. Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 152 (VMGR-152), a MAG-36 squadron flying Lockheed Martin KC-130 tankers, provided essential aerial refueling support

<sup>2</sup> Maloney intvw.

<sup>3</sup> LtGen William R. Maloney official military personnel file, fitness report comments of Col Victor A. Armstrong, 10 November 1976, working file of Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

<sup>4</sup> Maloney intvw.



*Official U.S. Marine Corps photo*

MajGen William R. Maloney (left) walks with MajGen William H. Fitch after the change of command ceremony on 6 June 1980 in which Gen Maloney turned over command of the 1st MAW to Gen Fitch.

for strike fighters during the Easter invasion and the following Operation Linebacker air offensive. In Operation Marhuk, a Marine hunter-killer action, Marine Attack Helicopter Squadron 369 (HMA-369) Bell AH-1J Sea Cobras deployed aboard Navy landing platform, docks (LPDs). HMA-369's AH-1J gunships struck at clandestine light shipping that shuttled supplies from Soviet or Chinese freighters off the coast into North Vietnam. HMA-369 crews sunk numerous sampans (small boats) during Operation Marhuk. In Operation End Sweep, MAG-36 Sikorsky CH-53 Sea Stallions swept North Vietnamese harbors of mines

as American involvement ended in the Vietnam War in early 1973.

Maloney served in key leadership billets as Marine Aviation rebuilt and modernized after Vietnam. His leadership and wisdom were critical in these often difficult times. In June 1977, now-brigadier general Maloney became the assistant wing commander of the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing (3d MAW), though he also served as commanding general of the 5th Marine Amphibious Brigade. Promoted to major general on 31 January 1978, Maloney became the 3d MAW's commanding general. He took command of the 1st MAW

in the Western Pacific in May 1979 and was given an additional assignment as commanding general of III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF). The following June, General Maloney was assigned as commanding general of 2d MAW. He remains the only Marine officer to ever command all three of the Marine Corps' active duty aircraft wings, and he did this within a span of three years.

General Maloney also served a number of tours as a staff officer. At the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis from July 1963 to June 1966, he was assigned as a leadership instructor and later as an executive assistant to the academic dean. In June 1967, he served as assistant secretary to the general staff at Headquarters Marine Corps working directly for the Commandant, General Leonard F. Chapman Jr. Following this tour, he served on the staff of the Sixth Fleet commander as amphibious warfare officer and fleet Marine officer. After promotion to brigadier general in 1975, Maloney served as the director of information at Headquarters Marine Corps, handling Marine Corps public affairs with tact and wisdom. In 1981, now as a major general, Maloney served as the director of operations, J-3, Pacific Command, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii.

After promotion to lieutenant general, Maloney

served in two top leadership positions at Headquarters Marine Corps. From July 1982 to June 1983, he was the deputy chief of staff for Plans, Programs, and Operations, then he became the deputy chief of staff for Manpower and remained in that position until he retired in 1985.

General Maloney was truly both a warrior and a scholar. While on active duty, he completed his master of arts degree from Stanford University in 1963 and his master of science degree in international affairs from George Washington University in 1970.

Even after retiring from active duty, Maloney continued to serve the Marine Corps. From 1989 to 1991, he served as the chairman of the board of directors of the Marine Corps Historical Foundation. He remained a dynamic and devoted supporter of Marine Corps history throughout his retirement years.

General Maloney's love for the Corps was only superseded by the love he had for his family. He married his beloved Virginia Fellows in 1953; their marriage lasted 65 years. Virginia passed away six months prior to the general's death. Their only child, Lisa, and her husband, Jonathan Crotty, are the parents of three children: Matthew, William, and Lauren.

# REVIEW ESSAY

Major Peter L. Belmonte, USAF (Ret)<sup>1</sup>

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*The Second World War in Colour.* By Ian Carter. (London: Imperial War Museums, 2017. Pp. 120. £14.99 paperback.)  
*Weird War Two: Intriguing Items and Surprising Stuff from the Second World War.* By Peter Taylor. (London: Imperial War Museums, 2017. Pp. 192. £14.99 cloth.)

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World War II was so vast and complex that it is not surprising there should be vestiges of it—relics and ideas—that are to be found in museums and private collections around the world. The two books reviewed in this article showcase some of these items in the form of artifacts and photographs found in Britain’s Imperial War Museums (IWM).

Some artifacts are bizarre, humorous, or confusing. Peter Taylor, a former employee at the IWM, has compiled many such items in *Weird War Two: Intriguing Items and Surprising Stuff from the Second World War*. The book, a delightful compendium of weird facts, interesting artifacts, and trivia associated with World War II, is divided topically. A brief, one-page introduction to each topic is followed by photographs, illustrations, and captions. Most of the photographs are of items in one of the museums, while others are archival photographs designed to illustrate some aspect of each topic. Posters are also prominently featured.

Much of the material concerns Britain’s Armed Forces and home front, but there is also some information about the United States and Germany. Most of the captions and text are lighthearted and humorous—if such a thing can describe anything associated with World War II—and it is an easy read. Taylor wrote this book “to amuse and baffle you, and to pro-

vide a tiny testament to the creativity, inventiveness and, above all, silliness that can flourish even in the darkest times” (p. 7). Indeed, he sets the tone of the book by summarizing the war in just three sentences.

In the text and captions, we learn about unusual items, programs, and occurrences. We learn about carrot popsicles, innovated as a result of sugar rationing (the photograph of three young children eating carrot popsicles does not inspire confidence in the taste of these “treats”). The section on secret agents contains many intriguing tidbits. For example, there are two interesting mug shots of Lieutenant Colonel Dudley W. Clarke, a British spy who was supposed to deliver important papers to Egypt. Instead, Clarke, in disguise, was arrested for cross-dressing in Madrid. We also learn that one official was “concerned that agents dropped into Spain would be given away by the lack of garlic on their breath. To make the ‘smelly substance’ more pleasant to eat, he added it to chocolate bars” (p. 125).

The ingenuity of prisoners of war, coupled with hours and days of boredom, led to extremely creative escape attempts. In his “Great Escapes” chapter, Taylor includes a wartime photograph of what appears to be a large sack of mail; the sack actually contained Dutch prisoner of war (POW) C. Link, who tried to mail himself out of Colditz, Germany. Also included is a blueprint drawing of a two-man glider planned for another escape attempt from Colditz. To be built from bed boards and sheets stiffened with porridge, the aircraft might have been airworthy. We also learn that British intelligence created fake charitable orga-

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<sup>1</sup> Maj Peter L. Belmonte, USAF (Ret), holds a master’s degree in history from California State University, Stanislaus, and is the author of several books including *Days of Perfect Hell: The U.S. 26th Infantry Regiment in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, October–November 1918* (2015) and, with coauthor Alexander F. Barnes, *Forgotten Soldiers of World War I: America’s Immigrant Doughboys* (2018).

nizations whose purpose was to send games to POWs held in Germany. Some of these games contained maps and compasses cleverly hidden within them. Taylor includes a cover letter from one such organization, the Prisoners' Leisure Hours Fund. The letterhead contains its address in Bolt Court on Fleet Street in London; its fictitious board of directors includes men with the surnames Freeman and Underhill, and its secretary is named Miss Freda Mappin. POWs also put their talents to other creative endeavors. For example, British major Denis Houghton made a flute from "two stirrup pumps, two fire extinguishers, brass parts from 15-inch naval guns, bicycle spokes, a spring from a broken watch and a package of sewing needles" (p. 186). The result pictured in the book looks like a professionally made instrument. POW bird fanciers at a Bavarian *Stalag* built 27 nesting stations. Men watching the birds could also observe guard movements during escape attempts without arousing suspicion. One bird watcher, Peter Conder, escaped "dragging 17 notebooks of bird observations with him. Amazingly he made it, and after the war he became head of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)" (p. 187).

Also depicted is "Nellie, a mechanized excavating machine designed to dig its way toward the enemy in a 5ft deep trench" (p. 109). Winston Churchill is shown admiring the machine: "it took a him a long time to admit that it was a pretty useless throwback to the tactics of the previous war" (p. 109). There is also a photograph of what appears to be a model or a mock-up of one of the giant sea fortresses that "were positioned off Britain's coast and estuaries to protect them from enemy ships and planes" (p. 110). As many as 265 men lived on the forts in six-month shifts. Apparently, claustrophobia, called "fort madness," was a danger for some of the men who lived in the support columns below sea level.

We are treated to photographs of a photo reconnaissance Supermarine Spitfire fighter aircraft painted camoutint pink to blend with the sky, and the HMS *Kenya* (14) was painted Mountbatten pink (a blend of lavender and gray named for British admiral of the fleet Louis Francis Mountbatten, first Earl of Burma)

to make it more difficult to see at dawn and dusk. And what sailor would not want to serve aboard the HMS *Menestheus* (M 93), "converted into a floating brewery to supply soldiers in the Pacific with beer" (p. 168)?

The second book under consideration features World War II artifacts of a different sort. Ian Carter's *The Second World War in Colour* is a collection of color photographs from the archives of the IWM, where Carter served as the senior curator of photographs. Carter has selected a variety of full-color images from the archives to illustrate Britain's war effort in a general way. Most of the photographs are from "a select band of official photographers serving with the British armed forces, using a stock of Kodachrome film obtained from the United States" (p. 8). Unfortunately, Carter gives the name of only one photographer, Charles E. Brown, who was apparently a civilian aviation photographer. It might be that the names of the other photographers are unknown. The selected photographs cover a variety of subjects, from the home front to war in the air, on land, and at sea. The author introduces each section of photos with a two-page narrative. With the captions, these are enough to give a general overview of the war. Each caption, of course, sheds light on the subject of the image. The color images, as the back-cover text claims, "bring an immediacy rarely felt through black and white photograph."

Some of the photographs, though mundane, show us a part of the war we normally do not consider. One such picture shows a soldier in a supply office being issued his "demobilization suit," a suit of civilian clothes given to soldiers being discharged. The man is holding a suit coat and choosing a shirt, much as any man shopping for clothes today would be doing.

Subtle details that are lost in black-and-white photographs are brought to life when viewed in color. From the "fruit salad" on the tunics of General Dwight D. Eisenhower and his staff, to the splashes of orange prevalent on clothing, hats, and ribbons of Dutch citizens dancing in the streets after the liberation of Eindhoven in September 1944, shown on a two-page spread, these little details add to our effort to understand the period. Another photograph shows a Royal Air Force Avro Lancaster bomber crew preparing for

a mission. The men are clustered together, checking their gear; of note are the two bright yellow boxes containing homing pigeons to be used in case the crew had to crash-land or ditch the craft.

Other interesting photographs include a British Fairey Swordfish torpedo bomber—looking like it would be at home in the 1920s—in flight, and a British warship transiting the Suez Canal while a small Egyptian civilian sailboat passes by. A photograph of a French priest baptizing a baby within five miles of the front line nicely depicts the navy blue-and-white pattern on the cuffs and lower portion of the priest's vestment, as well as his gold-embroidered stole and the red collars and aprons of the two attending altar boys. There are only a couple of photographs of ground combat, notably British heavy and medium artillery crews in action. The home front is represented by various air raid scenes, an agricultural shot, and

an image of women manufacturing ammunition in an underground factory. There is also an interesting image of convalescent soldiers, clad in their hospital blues, relaxing outdoors while nurses tend to them.

Compendiums of World War II photographs are fairly common, and the U.S. Army is represented by at least one volume of color photographs (see Jonathan Gawne's *U.S. Army Photo Album: Shooting the War in Color, 1941-1945, U.S.A to ETO* [1996]). Carter's volume is a nice addition to works on World War II in photographs.

Neither book is footnoted, the only annotations being indications of where in the IWM the photographs are located. Both books should be considered works of popular history rather than scholarly works. As such, they would appeal to general readers, although World War II specialists will find things of interest in both.

# BOOK REVIEWS

Michael Westermeier<sup>1</sup>

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*Enlisting Faith: How the Military Chaplaincy Shaped Religion and State in Modern America.* By Ronit Y. Stahl. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017. Pp. 384. \$39.95 cloth.)

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“There are no atheists in foxholes” is an oft-cited trope regarding faith in the military. However, there are relatively few scholarly explorations of faith in the military and fewer still on the impact and influence of the American military chaplain corps on faith in America. Recently, social historians examined the impact and influence of the American military on American society and vice versa. Dr. Ronit Stahl’s book, *Enlisting Faith: How the Military Chaplaincy Shaped Religion and State in Modern America*, seeks to navigate a proverbial political and cultural minefield to posit an interesting take on the evolving nature of religion-state interaction in twentieth- and twenty-first century America.

Stahl argues that “over the twentieth century . . . chaplains built—in concrete policy and as figurative symbols—state-sponsored American religion. Whether anchoring the ‘band of brothers’ or sidestepping the My Lai massacre, chaplains deployed religion to achieve American military goals and sanction imperial aims” (p. 14). She goes on to contend that the American military chaplaincy, through exchanges between the federal government and faith groups, evolved and then sought to remake American society in its own image (p. 14). The state, through the chaplaincy, “quietly legitimized multiple claims to truth” by commissioning chaplains from several different faiths

but requiring them to address the spiritual needs of servicemembers of all faiths (p. 8). Military chaplains were used to promote an early twentieth-century progressive concept of moral monotheism by coopting American Judeo-Christian religious groups—namely liberal Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish—to remake the military as a staunchly moral but religiously tolerant organization. The ultimate goal was to use the military as a social incubator to spread this ideology across American society.

The initial chapter of *Enlisting Faith* does a fine job of supporting this argument. Stahl takes the reader through the build-up of the American Army for World War I and the Progressive Era clergy’s desire to professionalize and modernize the American military chaplain corps. Religious instruction was seen as a beneficial component of building a large and effective army, as inculcation of morality would, in theory, have the practical effect of combating the “immoral” tendencies of soldiers that led to venereal disease casualties and disciplinary problems. Additionally, modeling cooperation among faith leaders was seen as a way of unifying Americans from diverse backgrounds by highlighting commonalities amongst Judeo-Christian religions and thus aiding American nationalistic goals for waging a modern total war.

The subsequent chapters highlight the evolution of the chaplaincy after World War I and its efforts to mobilize religious fervor to support American war aims in the lead-up to and during World War II. The interwar period saw the development of *moral monotheism*, a concept in which the Judeo-Christian concept of God was combined with early to mid-

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Westermeier was an Army field artillery officer from 2004 to 2011 and later worked as a park ranger at Fredericksburg, VA, and Spotsylvania National Military Park after receiving his master’s degree in military history from Norwich University. He took a position as the unit historian with Marine Corps History Division in 2017.

twentieth-century standards of ethical living (pp. 52–53). Stahl also points to the chaplaincy's efforts to promote the ideals of *just war* to combat an increasing American trend toward pacifism in preparation for the looming war against fascism in the 1930s. Finally, Stahl provides a fascinating look at the *Chaplain Jim* radio program during World War II and how the military used it to assure wives and sweethearts that their loved ones were receiving spiritual and emotional care even though they were far from home, as well as to present the military's concept of American religious pluralism to the home front.

It is in chapter four, however, that Stahl begins to hit some discordant notes in her otherwise fascinating symphony. It begins with the discussion of how World War II Army chaplains in the European theater of operations assumed responsibility for lectures dubbed "sex morality" with the intent of curbing the young soldiers' sexual impulses (p. 117). Stahl begins to discuss rape in World War II and writes, "The exact number of rapes that occurred during and after the war is unknown, in part because rape is a weapon of war" (p. 120). Although she may not intend it, the implication when this unsupported statement is made within a discussion of American military activity in Europe during World War II is that the U.S. military used rape as a weapon. However, she contends on the next page that American chaplains distributed pamphlets against rape and that the American military court-martialed and executed soldiers for rape. Rape for the American Army in World War II was an individual criminal act perpetrated by individual soldiers, abhorred by military and religious leadership, prohibited by military regulations, and punished accordingly. While she may be referring to the widespread sanctioned rape of German women by Soviet soldiers, it seems out of place to make that statement about an American Army that actively sought to discourage and prosecute rape cases in wartime.

Stahl's next chapter covers the evolution of American religious ideology at the beginning of the Cold War as the military and American Judeo-Christian faith groups combined to form a moral monotheism counter to the avowedly atheist dogma

of Communism. This was critical because Western nations had to develop their own ideology to define their position against a Communist one. She explains how this expressed American dedication to freedom of religion also created problems in America's new standing conscript army, as drafted servicemembers sought accommodation for their individual religious practices in a highly regimented and tradition-bound institution. The role chaplains played as mediators, counselors, and collaborators for the faiths they represented and the military they served is quite fascinating and would bear further study.

Stahl next dives into the quagmire that is the debate over America's role in the Vietnam War. There is a thoughtful and well-documented discussion of how major faith groups in America argued about and reconciled support or opposition to the Vietnam War. However, her argument is hindered when she discusses chaplains as "moral vanguards" failing to challenge a pervasive American practice of war criminality in Vietnam, specifically the My Lai Massacre (p. 207). The note in this section references Nick Turse's book *Kill Everything that Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam* (2013), a controversial work that promotes the argument that the American military pursued a policy of atrocity against the Vietnamese as their primary war strategy. Stahl recommends Turse's work as "an expose [sic] of American war crimes in Vietnam that highlights how the military encouraged immoral behavior" (p. 321). Turse is criticized for oversimplification of the military war crimes investigation files and ignoring the fact that many atrocity stories were propaganda fabrications by the North Vietnamese.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, by citing Turse, the same criticisms can be levelled at Stahl's interpretations regarding chaplains failing to take a moral stand against alleged American atrocities in Vietnam if those atrocities were not, in fact, as pervasive as she may have been

<sup>2</sup> Gary Kulik and Peter Zinoman, "Misrepresenting Atrocities: *Kill Anything that Moves* and the Continuing Distortions of the War in Vietnam," *Cross Currents: East Asian History and Cultural Review* e-Journal, no. 12 (September 2014): 163–67.

led to believe.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, cruelty is a feature of all wars. Why, for instance, does Stahl not condemn U.S. Army Air Corps chaplains in the Pacific for not challenging U.S. military leaders who ordered the firebombing of Tokyo and subsequent mass slaughter of Japanese civilians?

The ultimate flaw in Stahl's work is that she takes individual agency out of the decision to enter the chaplain corps by assigning chaplains as primarily mindless adherents to their particular faith group. A counterpoint is presented by Joseph O'Donnell, CSC (Catholic Order Congregation of the Holy Cross [Congregatio a Santa Cruce]), who served as a Catholic Navy chaplain in Vietnam: "I am a player, a teammate, a consultant, an idealist living in reality. Credibility is not a given in the military, as it is may be [sic] in civilian churches or denominational institutions. One earns his or her place by being there, by listening, by keeping secrets, by speaking when it is time and not speaking when it is not."<sup>4</sup> While there undoubtedly were and are religious leaders more interested in corporate promotion of sects over selfless ministry, the vast majority enter military ministry with a desire to help their fellow humans physically and spiritually regardless of the constraints placed on them by a denomination. This might be out of the scope of Stahl's book, but it would have been nice to see even

a short discussion on this. Chaplains in *Enlisting Faith* are lumped into groups: Catholic, Liberal Protestant, Jewish, Evangelical, Buddhist, or Muslim. They are thus assumed to wholly sponsor and promote one of these groups within the military or use the military to promote social acceptance of their particular faith rather than sincerely minister to a very needful flock in particularly dire straits.

Overall, *Enlisting Faith* provides a new and thought-provoking perspective on the interaction of faith and government in the United States and how it has evolved through the twentieth century. Although there are some contentious spots in this book, the subject matter is too fraught with emotion and political charge to truly avoid controversy. Stahl did a tremendous amount of research through a plethora of primary sources and it certainly shows in her mastery of the material, although a reorganization of the notes chapter in future editions of the book for easier reference and a separate bibliographic essay on the archival sources would be welcomed. *Enlisting Faith* is a good contribution to the historical argument surrounding the ever-changing landscape of religion in America and its impact on the military, and it should provide a firm base for further exploration of the interaction of religion and state in America.

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<sup>3</sup> The My Lai Massacre, however, is a particularly astounding instance of failure by the chaplain corps, and the U.S. Army as a whole, to address an atrocity. It seems unfair to use this instance to paint all chaplains with the same brush.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph F. O'Donnell, "Clergy in the Military—Vietnam and After," in *The Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty First Century*, ed. Doris L. Bergen (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2004), 222.

*Joshua Tallis, PhD*<sup>5</sup>


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*Toward a New Maritime Strategy: American Naval Thinking in the Post-Cold War Era.* By Peter D. Haynes. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2015. Pp. 304. \$49.95 cloth.)

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U.S. Navy captain Peter Haynes's (Ret) *Toward a New Maritime Strategy* is a compelling read for those in the small but energetic naval strategy community. More importantly, Haynes's book is a must-read for those engaged in naval works but disengaged from the process and thought of strategic development.

The author demonstrates a historian's knack for narrative, chronological storytelling with a particular focus on the key decision makers who shaped the pockmarked process of developing America's naval strategy, from the sunset of the Cold War to the present. This narrative arc bends, however subtly, toward an eventual embrace of a maritime—as opposed to a distinctly naval—form of viewing the world. *Maritime*, in Haynes's context, speaks to a systemic understanding of the relationship between the U.S. Navy and the post-World War II American-led system. This concept stands in contrast with the Navy's longstanding, threat-oriented naval perspective, agnostic of the Service's unique capacity to safeguard the arteries of commerce that sustain American influence worldwide. Haynes takes the reader through the development of every major strategic statement drafted by the Navy from the late 1980s through 2007, punctuating his discussion with an eye for detail and personal dynamics that only comes from spending a career as a strategically engaged Navy officer.

The easiest critique of Haynes's book, structured as it is around the Navy's embrace of a more systemic understanding of the world and the Navy's role within

it, is a deemphasis of the systemic forces shaping strategy development in favor of a *great men of history* approach (and they are nearly all men). This is, however, ultimately a minor complaint. Haynes's contribution is quite clearly to shed light on a complicated, messy process inside the Pentagon by which individual and institutional agendas and worldviews have an enormous influence on the direction of strategy articulation. While larger forces—global, economic, political, etc.—are no doubt at play in strategic development, Haynes's insight into the inner workings of this personality-driven process is a definitive contribution to understanding why the Navy says what it does.

This latter point on the human factor in Navy decision making further widens the community of readers that may find this book valuable, including scholars interested in defense policy at large. The subtext across much of Haynes's chapters speaks to the competing necessities of individual people, commands, or military Services, reminiscent of the bureaucratic politics model, which carries relevance across the Department of Defense. Haynes paints a story of the relationship between the Navy and the Marine Corps, for example, and how its vacillations have affected Navy strategy—from the two Services attempting to align under the . . . *From the Sea* white paper in the early 1990s, to the fundamental tensions between the Marine emphasis on written doctrine and the Navy's preference for operational prerogative at sea.

Throughout, Haynes's most illuminating discussions include the tensions over strategy at the individual level, which itself is often a reflection of the larger institutional conflicts at play. One interesting subnarrative includes Fleet Forces Command's Admiral John B. Nathman's (Ret) preference for blue water, high-end capabilities pitted against the more mixed approach—the 3/1 Strategy championed by the

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Navy's deputy chief for operations, plans and strategy, Vice Admiral John G. Morgan Jr. (Ret).<sup>6</sup> Throughout, of course, is the more fundamental strategic struggle brought on by the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, which is personified in tensions between Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin L. Powell and proponents of Navy-driven strategy within the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO).

Meanwhile, some individuals chronicled by Haynes do not represent sources of institutional conflict but larger changes taking place throughout the Navy. Vice Admiral Arthur K. Cebrowski (Ret), for example, is not only an important part of the story in his own right, but reflects a wider cast of characters championing technology and driving toward a conversation on network-centric warfare. Haynes's story culminates in the achievement of a maritime strategy,

*A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* (2007), which is told in the guise of a *great men of history* narrative through the unlikely guidance of CNO admiral Michael G. Mullen (Ret).

Perhaps the greatest contribution to glean from *Toward a New Maritime Strategy* is just how critical it is for the Navy to understand (and take charge of) its own strategic narrative. The book illuminates how passionately a small cohort of naval officers thinks about strategy, and by contrast demonstrates just how dispassionately the Navy as an institution has historically regarded its responsibility to foster strategic thought. *Toward a New Maritime Strategy* should be required reading for upwardly mobile officers. The book demonstrates just how significant individual agency is in advancing the Navy's understanding of its strategic position in the maritime commons.

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<sup>6</sup> The 3/1 Strategy recognized the change in the national security environment since 11 September 2001 and that the Services had to be prepared for major combat operations but also for three new mission sets: the global war on terrorism, stability operations, and homeland security and defense.

*Christopher N. Blaker*<sup>7</sup>


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*Faces of the Civil War Navies: An Album of Union and Confederate Sailors.* By Ronald S. Coddington. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016. Pp. 440. \$32.95 cloth and e-book.)

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Ronald S. Coddington's *Faces of the Civil War Navies* offers a prolific anthology of biographies that explores the lives of 77 Americans who served in the Union and Confederate navies during the American Civil War. As with the preceding three volumes of the author's *Faces of the Civil War* series—of which this volume is the first to focus on the sea Services—it includes the accounts of those for whom period photographs could be located and obtained. Four-inch-by-two-and-a-half-inch photographic *cartes de visite* (literally, calling cards), or card portraits, were often taken before a sailor reported for duty and were left behind with loved ones to serve as wartime vestiges. By masterfully employing these historical images alongside detailed profiles of each man's life and service, Coddington achieves his goal of humanizing the Civil War by allowing readers to better understand the reasons these men fought, the hardships they endured at sea, and the ways in which they sometimes gave their lives.

Of the more than 3 million men and women who served in the American Civil War, little more than 100,000 served in the navies. Sailors on both sides of the conflict saw action along the Atlantic coastline—where Union forces blockaded the South and ironclad warships clashed for the first time in history—and on the many river systems winding throughout the United States, where respective “brown-water navies” vied for control of the country's interior. The demographic makeup of those sailors differed from that of the ground Services. Whereas the Union and Confederate armies were predominantly made up of farmers and workhands hailing from the country's heartland, both

navies consisted primarily of skilled industrial laborers from the coastal states. Moreover, the Union Navy also employed African American seamen during the Civil War, two of whom are included in this volume. Craig L. Symonds notes in the book's foreword that, while the Union Army did not begin enlisting African American soldiers until 1863, the U.S. Navy had accepted African Americans for service since 1775 and continued to do so during the war.

Rather than focus on the admirals and career captains who were tasked with formulating strategies and planning naval operations, Coddington highlights many of the war's lesser-known seafarers, many of whom were junior officers and enlisted sailors who volunteered for service at the outbreak of war. Because personal photographs were more often purchased and distributed by officers than enlisted men, 60 of the 77 men highlighted in Coddington's work are commissioned officers. The oldest man featured is John Faunce of the U.S. Revenue Marine Service, who as a 55-year-old captain of the U.S. Revenue cutter *Harriet Lane* (1857) was present just outside Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, on 12 April 1861 when Confederate guns fired on Fort Sumter and the war officially began. The youngest is Richard Rush of the Union Navy, who at the age of 15 entered the U.S. Naval Academy in 1863 and later went on to organize and publish the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, a comprehensive 30-volume collection of primary and secondary sources detailing the naval history of the Civil War (1894–1922).

The inclusion of 23-year-old First Lieutenant Charles H. Bradford of the U.S. Marine Corps reminds readers that Marines fought alongside the sailors of their sister Service during the many surface actions and landing operations of the war. When Union rear admiral John A. Dahlgren called for men to storm the

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Confederate-held Fort Sumter in September 1863, Bradford and 132 other Marines, as well as more than 250 sailors, volunteered. Following a bombardment of the fort by Union artillery, the sailors and Marines assaulted the position but were soon met by overwhelming musket and cannon fire. Bradford was gravely wounded in the attack and later died of his wounds in a Charleston hospital. The amphibious assault on Fort Sumter ultimately failed, though the Navy and Marine Corps had better luck storming Fort Fisher in North Carolina in January 1865.

Perhaps the best treasures found in this volume are the photographs themselves. Coddington notes that the generation that fought in the Civil War was the first to grow up with access to cameras and photography equipment, arguing that “photography individualized the identity of the common soldier and sailor” (p. xviii). Each image allows readers to carefully study the uniform, posture, and expression of its subject, which presents as many new questions as it answers. Fortunately, Coddington’s painstaking research allows him to describe where each sailor was born and raised, the vessels he served on during the war, which actions he participated in, and—if he survived the conflict—what he did during the postwar period. Left unanswered are many personal questions about the men

themselves. What was he thinking while he prepared to go to war? Was he fighting for an ideological purpose or out of obligation? Did he believe the war to be a moral crusade or a necessary evil? Though readers will never learn the answers to such questions, studying the faces of those 77 men as they prepared to go to war allows for a greater understanding than would exist otherwise.

*Faces of the Civil War Navies* ultimately transports readers through the Civil War’s many campaigns and skirmishes across the country and on the seas, providing a lens through which the conflict can be viewed in a fresh and unique way. While this volume’s emphasis on photography suggests that it would better serve as a cultural companion piece to more traditional works on the war as opposed to a standalone history, the author nevertheless finds success in chronicling the storied history of both navies during all stages of the conflict. Expertly researched and vividly written, Coddington’s work contributes much to the continuing historiography of the American Civil War. Historians and history buffs alike who are interested in the Civil War—as well as those fascinated by early photography of the mid-nineteenth century—will find this volume an enlightening and engaging work of history.

*Tal Tovy, PhD*<sup>8</sup>


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*Vietnam's High Ground: Armed Struggle for the Central Highlands, 1954-1965.* By J. P. Harris. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016. Pp. 522. \$45.00 cloth.)

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Military history of the Vietnam War, both the French phase (1946-54) and the American involvement (1965-73), usually focuses on the analysis of the campaigns and the battles conducted by the various forces, including the strategies and tactics employed by all sides and additional issues related to the military essence of the war, such as the deployment of air power, riverine operations, etc. The years between the two wars (i.e. between the termination of the French phase and the Americanization of the war), are generally thought of as an interim period and are discussed in the research mostly in its political aspect. However, one must not forget that in the Vietnamese narrative, the entire period between the declaration of independence (September 1945) and the fall of Saigon (April 1975) is viewed as one historical entity: the 10,000 days war, as the title of Michael Maclear's book *Vietnam: The Ten Thousand Day War* (1980) testifies. Understanding this interim period is very important for understanding the second phase of the war, as well as for closing the historical cycle of the first phase. As this book by J. P. Harris testifies, it also has an important military dimension.

The period between 1954 and 1965 can be divided into two subperiods. The first (1954-59) is characterized by recovery and restoration after the grueling war against France. During this time, the two states established in Vietnam settle down, with emphasis on strengthening the political rule of their leaders, as established by the Geneva Accords in 1954, separated by the 17th parallel. This agreement also stipulated that a general referendum be held within two years, allowing the Vietnamese people to decide whether they wanted to live under Ho Chi Minh's regime or under Ngo Dinh

Diem's. In spite of Ho Chi Minh's diplomatic efforts, the referendum was never held, and by 1957, he started preparing to renew the military conflict to bring about the full unification of Vietnam. Along with this gradual escalation came the deterioration of the security situation in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), or South Vietnam—both of which were also connected to the Buddhists' protest against their oppression by Diem. In addition, with the entry of John F. Kennedy to the White House, the American involvement deepened. This deterioration on one side and the increase of the American involvement characterize the second period (1959-65), the end of which can be marked by the Americanization of the war, which started in the first half of 1965 toward the Battle of the Ia Drang Valley in November 1965.

*Vietnam's High Ground* reviews in detail the military history of this interim period which, as mentioned above, has hitherto evaded a serious discussion. The focus of his book is the Central Highlands, currently called the Western Highlands (*Tay Nguyen* in Vietnamese). This region is a plateau, bordering Laos and northeast Cambodia, two states that served as a safe haven for the Communist forces during the Vietnam War. The area is inhabited by many ethnic minority groups, whom the French called *montagnards*, or mountain men, and whom the Vietnamese had considered "savages" (p. 3). These ethnic groups have fought throughout their history against various armies that were trying to take control of the area, including the French and the South Vietnamese. This is the subject of the first chapter, which provides a geographic, historical, and ethnographic overview of the area. This is necessary not just as an introduction to the history of the region but also to detail its complexity, especially the political and demographic aspects. This chapter lays the foundation for understanding the attitudes

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of the ethnic minorities of the Central Highlands toward nations and states that had tried to subordinate them. It also describes the history of the region during the war against the French, the incursion of the Viet Minh into the Central Highlands, and the attitude of the native population toward these trends and events. One of the most interesting trends was the recruitment of the montagnards both by the French and by the Viet Minh to help their war effort, a trend that continued throughout the years of American involvement.

The two following chapters describe the history of the area during Diem's regime as president of the RVN and the renewal/return of war to the Central Highlands toward the end of the 1950s. These chapters demonstrate the fact that the political events in Vietnam—the end of the French rule and the creation of two new states—had a very small effect on the pseudopolitical tendencies of the people of the highlands, who continued their ages-long resistance toward those who interfered with their traditional lifestyle or who tried to subject them to modern political and national systems. During this period, the war was waged between the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and the Viet Cong, and later also the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), which was penetrating the RVN at the time. All these forces repeatedly tried to harness the ethnic minorities within their military efforts, sometimes using coercion and terror. At this time, as Harris shows, American involvement increased, as elements from the 5th Special Forces Group, the Green Berets, arrived in the area. These "A Teams" organized the villagers into several counterinsurgency (COIN) programs, the main one being the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) as well as the Strategic Hamlet Program. These programs and the beginning of the American intervention are the subjects of the fourth and fifth chapters, while the sixth chapter, dedicated to 1963, serves as an interim summary of the chronological discussion. It also evaluates the effectiveness of the COIN programs and analyzes the military escalation in the Central Highlands. The year marked a double turning point in the history of the war in Vietnam. At the beginning of November, Diem was murdered

during a military coup; this was followed three weeks later by the assassination of President Kennedy. South Vietnam deteriorated into a state of political instability, and President Lyndon B. Johnson was sucked into a similar vortex in the middle of an election year.

The intensity of the events following November 1963 is extensively discussed in the seventh and eighth chapters. The pessimistic reports submitted to Johnson by his military advisors, especially Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and General Maxwell D. Taylor, together with Johnson's need to counter the Republican propaganda claims about the lack of a suitable American response to worldwide Communist aggression, caused the United States to step up its military involvement in Vietnam. At the same time, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the Viet Cong took advantage of the instability in the south and increased their military pressure, including stepping up the infiltration of Communist forces from Laos to South Vietnam. Thus, the Central Highlands area, which borders Laos, became the focus of intensive battles.

The main part of the book, chapters 9–13, is dedicated to describing 1965 in great detail. During this year, the American involvement increased, as the first Marine units arrived in the RVN, followed by U.S. Army divisions. Gradually, the American forces found themselves directly fighting the Communist forces, with the peak of this activity being the campaign in the Ia Drang Valley toward the end of the year. The end of the book deals with the events following the Ia Drang campaign and discusses the importance of the area in the military history of the Vietnam War.

The reader is exposed to a rigor of research that deals in a deep and detailed manner with the military and political history of a critical battle zone during the Vietnam War. However, this book has additional merits. First, there is a discussion of the transition from the French period to the American. Harris points to a clear military (and political) continuity between the two periods, although the intensity of the fighting was comparatively low. Second, the analysis of the American activity in the Central Highlands area explains the change from focusing on COIN programs

(e.g., CIDG) of the Green Berets to General William C. Westmoreland's Big Unit War concept. Thus, the book becomes a research that explains the military changes the American forces underwent, with the Central Highlands area serving as a test case to these dramatic changes. Reading into the military history of the Vietnam War points to similar processes that took place in other geographical zones of South Vietnam, such as the Mekong River delta. However, there is no deep research into this important zone paralleling Harris's extensive research. This brings us to another important point.

The last chapters are dedicated to the Ia Drang campaign, which was the first large-scale encounter between the American forces and the NVA as well as regular Viet Cong units. The campaign resulted in an American victory, mainly because of the DRV plan to invade the RVN from Cambodia to the shore, thus bisecting it. However, the results of the campaign had a long-term impact on the future strategy of both the United States and the DRV, lasting at least until the Tet offensive at the beginning of 1968. As far as General Westmoreland was concerned, the Ia Drang Valley campaign was clear proof that the continuation of the COIN program was irrelevant, since the fighting was carried out by regular units of the NVA, and that therefore the United States should rely on its technological superiority, firepower, and mobility to achieve military decision. On the other side, encountering the full military might of the United States convinced General Vo Nguyen Giap that his army was incapable of coping with American superiority, causing him to revert to attrition strategy until the Tet offensive.

The extensive discussion in Harris's book provides an excellent portrayal of the operational and tactical background of the strategies employed by the United States and the DRV against each other until 1968.

Harris's research makes an extensive and impressive use of archival material, mostly American, but also including translated Vietnamese documents. The analysis of the primary sources is backed by diverse secondary literature relevant to the discussions in the various chapters. The focus of the book is the historical-military analysis of a specific geographic area. However, Harris embeds this analysis within a wider discussion about the development of the war in Vietnam, complementing it with geographic, ethnographic, and political reviews, providing the reader with a complete picture. Thus, the reader can keep track of the wide historical context and balance the micro against the macro views. This is an advanced book about the Vietnam War, and should be tackled after having read some general books about the war, such as Spencer C. Tucker's *Vietnam* (1999) and others. Reading *Vietnam's High Ground* may trigger the reader to conduct their own in-depth research about other geographic regions in South Vietnam similar to Harris's achievement or to take up the research at the point where Harris stopped, from 1966 until the end of the American involvement (January 1973) or until the end of the war (April 1975). In this reviewer's opinion, such additional research will add conviction to Harris's arguments about the importance of the Central Highlands in the political and military history of the Vietnam War.

Keith D. Dickson, PhD<sup>9</sup>

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*Long Journeys Home: American Veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.* By Michael D. Gambone. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2017. Pp. 288. \$45.00 cloth.)

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The theme of this book is the returning veteran and social perceptions, especially how and why these perceptions were created. Michael Gambone's study is intended to shatter commonly held shibboleths about veterans who served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Misapprehensions about veterans in general, he notes, have now hardened into history. Veterans and their role and place in modern American society have been largely ignored, a minority group as yet unappreciated or discovered by social historians. Gambone seeks to explore assumptions about veterans' service, sacrifice, and recognition from these three wars and compare the perpetuated myths with reality.

The book is divided into four sections, each examining a unique part of the veteran experience: joining the military, wartime experience, the transition from warrior to veteran, and postwar employment and activism. Gambone's research reveals that the social context of wartime service is important. Much depends on whether or not the public accepts that the war was honorable, and therefore, public perception will shape the veteran's ability to make the postwar adjustment necessary to return to society (p. 81). Just as important to public perception of veterans is society's image of the American military during wartime. Gambone asserts that veterans from previous wars "had the strongest influence on the social acceptability of military service" (p. 11) and that "public support for conscription paralleled a larger public consensus that tended to support social, political, and economic institutions after 1945" (p. 32).

American culture changed significantly between

1945 and 1975, and these changing circumstances in American society shaped perceptions of veterans. During those 30 years, America had ended one war and fought two others. The full-scale mobilization required to fight World War II placed the burden of sacrifice on the large majority of Americans. However, while World War II service offered a degree of clarity and sense of purpose, service in Korea and Vietnam were more problematic for American society. Korea occupied a middle ground between World War II and Vietnam. The Korean War became increasingly unpopular, as Americans became far less willing to rally to support its limited and ambiguous objectives. The Korean War lacked open public opposition or criticism of the purpose of the war. The Vietnam War became an unpopular war through the perceived race and class inequalities of those drafted into service to fight it. It was unique in that open political opposition, a vigorous and highly visible antiwar movement, and the growing public perception of the war as unjust and unwinnable played a significant part in shaping public perceptions of returning veterans.

Gambone finds that "the personal responses to war among veterans were remarkably consistent over three decades" (p. 92). Those who served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, either as draftees or as volunteers, tended to serve for largely the same reasons—personal preference and social context representing a desire to maintain the traditional obligation of a citizen to serve in the military at the behest of the nation during times of crisis. The author highlights the often-overlooked aspect of the rapidly changing economy of the United States from 1945 to 1975 that was part of every returning veteran's experience. The transition from a nationalized war economy in 1945 to a free-market consumer economy created pressures for employers to assimilate the millions of returning

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veterans. Korean War veterans returning to a growing and prosperous economy after their service was completed found themselves at a disadvantage. Vietnam War veterans left one America and returned to a changed one, one ravaged by social and political turmoil and rampant inflation. During this 30-year period, most veterans, even with federal assistance programs, found that they had to make the necessary life and work transitions largely on their own. Gambone notes that postwar American society has consistently portrayed veterans of all three wars as outcasts, who are prone to crime and antisocial behavior. Gambone's research, based on a wide variety of primary sources, indicates that this perception has no basis in fact. He finds that feelings of alienation, isolation, frustration, and anger appear to be a common part of the veteran postwar experience. Although Vietnam War veterans are viewed as the only veterans who reflect these feelings, Gambone indicates that veterans of World War II and Korea had similar, though less open and documented, responses. In fact, Gambone concludes that veterans as a whole largely made a successful transition to peacetime society.

The author's approach relies on life course theory—the idea that social context not only defines the veteran, but also establishes public perceptions, stereotypes, and social status. World War II veterans, returning from the battlefronts as part of a national struggle for total victory, were perceived over time as representing the best of America. The confusing and frustrating war in Korea had far less influence on American society than the Second World War; the war itself seemed far away and more of a political morass within the Cold War than a battle for the survival of the free world. The Korean veteran returned to a largely indifferent society, eager to push aside the unpleasantness of the war and enjoy the economic fruits of victory reaped in 1945. In Vietnam, a combination of professionals, volunteers, and draftees fought a war that had none of the rhetoric that stirred public support. As the war escalated with no end in sight, the American public lost confidence in both the government and the military. The returning Vietnam veteran

was excoriated as a dupe, a sociopath, and a victim all at the same time.

The overview of the veteran as activist at first appears a bit curious. Gambone recounts that a few veterans during World War II and Korea opposed the ongoing wars, but the movements were miniscule and largely unrecognized. It is undoubtedly because of Vietnam that Gambone highlights activism. During Vietnam, veterans exploited a sympathetic media, joined nationwide peace demonstrations, organized protests, and created an organization that actively agitated to encourage draft resistance and became one of the centerpieces of the counterculture, culminating in the testimony of John F. Kerry before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1971. Kerry claimed to be speaking on behalf of veterans who had borne the mental and physical traumas of war and yet were derided for their antiwar stance.

Gambone's approach strikes the reader at times as something of a preliminary research report. The same information is repeatedly used to support different themes throughout the book. He makes some tentative findings, based on excellent empirical research, but is not fully confident in his conclusions, holding back, perhaps, because what is necessary for his conclusions to be validated is to match his research with an in-depth study of American society and culture from 1945 to 1975—an enormously daunting task, but perhaps a critical one to serve as the essential background to understand where veterans fit into the social and cultural landscape of American life. Although Gambone explores how military service was understood in America and the social perceptions that led young men to volunteer and to accept conscription willingly, he only touches on this aspect of American society that would lead him in a direction he was not prepared to address. In some ways, this analysis should be at the heart of Gambone's argument. Life course theory combined with a thoughtful study of American social norms related to military service would reveal a great deal about the connection between expectations of those who entered the military and the expectations they had upon leaving service.

He also only touches on changes in warfare and their effect on wartime experiences of individual servicemembers, but does not provide a complete discussion of the relationship between the changing conduct of warfare during 30 years and the understanding of war and its purpose. Some experiences of veterans in certain roles (supply, administration, maintenance) or in certain Services (shipboard routine, airbase operations) may remain consistent; but the number of veterans actually involved in combat steadily decreased between World War II and Vietnam, and new technologies, weapons, tactics, and capabilities completely reshaped the battlefield and directly influenced the experiences of veterans dealing with these new aspects of warfare. New modes of warfare may have

had a greater influence on postwar assimilation than Gambone recognizes.

Certainly of note is the interesting body of research used in this study. Primary sources predominate, as would be expected for this kind of broad-based approach, to provide a more measured analysis of veterans as part of American social history. Gambone used a number of unexpected sources, such as records from corporate industry, Federal Bureau of Investigation files, and the records of the National Urban League. It is clear that Gambone has made an admirable start, opening both a new channel for social history and new lanes of exploration related to the collective experience of the American veteran.

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*Richard L. DiNardo, PhD*<sup>10</sup>

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*Stopping the Panzers: The Untold Story of D-Day.* By Marc Milner. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014. Pp. 400. \$26.95 paperback.)

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If any army has been overlooked concerning its involvement in the Normandy campaign, it is the Canadian Army. While entire forests have been consumed on works covering the American, British, and German armies, the Canadian Army has received relatively short shrift. Some of this was, as Marc Milner notes, self-inflicted. At times, even the Canadian official history understated the extent of the Canadian Army's critical contribution to the success of the Normandy invasion. Milner's work offers a much-needed corrective.

The Canadian Army had previously played a major role in World War I. By 1918, the Canadians were regarded by the Germans as Britain's shock troops. For the Germans, any concentration of Canadian units presaged a major offensive. Milner shows convincingly that initially the Canadian Army was slated to play a key role for any future invasion of Europe. For a variety of reasons, however, which Milner delves into in some detail, the Canadian role in a cross-channel invasion during World War II was drastically reduced. Likewise, the initial commander of the Canadian forces in Britain, Lieutenant General Andrew L. McNaughton, came to be regarded by the British as unpalatable. He was replaced by General Henry Duncan Graham Crerar, who, while not enjoying the full confidence of Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery, was still regarded as a much better choice.

Ultimately, the Canadian participation in any Normandy landing was reduced to a heavily rein-

forced 3d Canadian Infantry Division. Milner's work focuses on the 3d Canadian Infantry Division and its actions from 6–10 June 1944. Milner goes into considerable tactical detail at times. His scholarly research, which is extensive, is well supported by knowledge of the local microterrain, a clear indication of several visits to the battlefields themselves.

Several points emerge from Milner's analysis of the actions of the 3d Canadian Infantry Division. The first is the prescience of the initial planners of the invasion, Frederic Morgan's COSSAC (chief of staff to the supreme Allied commander) staff, in regard to the German reaction to a landing in Normandy. They correctly predicted that the Germans would attempt to mount a major attack with three panzer divisions on both sides of the Mue River, between Caen and Bayeux, France.

The second point of Milner's analysis was that the German counterattack, when it did occur, was not as effective as it could have been because the Germans often got in their own way. Confused command relationships, rivalries between the army and the Schutzstaffel (SS), excessive haste, and SS officers more concerned with massacring Canadian prisoners than in executing counterattacks, often served to reduce the effectiveness of German attacks when they were mounted.

Finally, Milner shows just how close-run a thing the opening stage of the Normandy campaign was. A successful attack by the powerful German forces in the battle area could have threatened not just the Canadians at Juno Beach, but also the British forces at Gold and Sword beaches. That the Germans failed was due, above all, to the tactical skill and rock-ribbed

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<sup>10</sup> Dr. Richard L. DiNardo is professor of national security affairs at U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, VA, and is a prolific author of works on military history.

toughness of the soldiers of the 3d Canadian Infantry Division. This is a story too long obscured, and Milner makes sure that the Canadians get their due.

Milner's work is well-researched and crisply written, although at times the tone can come across as a

bit defensive. Nonetheless, Milner has made a major contribution to the historiography of the Normandy campaign. Students of the campaign, ranging from the most serious to the most casual, will profit from reading this work.

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## Colonel Walter G. Ford (Ret)<sup>11</sup>

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*Eyewitness to Chaos: Personal Accounts of the Intervention in Haiti, 1994.* By Walter E. Kretchik (Lincoln: Potomac Books, University of Nebraska Press, 2016. Pp. 240. \$34.95 cloth and e-book.)

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Walter E. Kretchik leverages his 1994–99 experiences as a U.S. Army lieutenant colonel assigned to produce a history of the Army’s role in the mid-1990s U.S. intervention in Haiti with his strength as a professor of history at Western Illinois University to author this brilliant narrative on America’s relationship with Haiti. While *Eyewitness to Chaos* focuses on the U.S. Army’s efforts to return a democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, to power in Haiti, it is of far greater value than a mere record of that effort and should be the minimal required reading for any U.S. government official or nongovernment organization or charity involved with Haiti.

The enduring value of Kretchik’s work is the very detailed history of Haiti’s cultural development since Christopher Columbus landed in the Americas: how Haiti became the country it is today after centuries of armed force and intimidation in day-to-day living. He devotes significant pages to this culture grounded in slavery, internal conflict, revolution, forced change of leadership at all levels, government by torture and coercion, and bullying. Appreciating this cultural underpinning and the history of multiple interventions by the United States provides both a framework for future interactions with Haiti and the compelling foundation for understanding the necessity for U.S. efforts in Haiti to be wrapped inside a multinational effort.

Among his other works, Kretchik coauthored *Invasion, Interdiction, “Intervasion”: A Concise History of*

*the U.S. Army in Operation Uphold Democracy* (1998), which summarizes the American intervention in Haiti in some detail. *Eyewitness to Chaos* draws from research for that book and 42 oral history interviews addressing the personal experiences of those planning and executing Operation Uphold Democracy and the United Nations (UN) mission in Haiti in 1993–94.

Kretchik points to the strategic geographic location of Haiti relative to the United States and the importance the United States places on ensuring the corresponding stability of Haiti. The strategic value of Haiti precipitated a continuing involvement of the United States in Haiti’s domestic and international relations, including a 19-year period of management of Haitian affairs beginning in 1915 that directly involved the U.S. Marine Corps in law enforcement by a national police force, the Gendarmerie d’Haiti. Recurring ruthless coups and dictatorships through the decades and U.S. interventions prevailed. With this background, Kretchik zooms in on the first free presidential elections in Haiti in decades in December 1990, when leftist Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected president. Just nine months into his controversial presidency, in September 1991, Aristide was deposed in a coup by a junta led by the Army commander-in-chief, Lieutenant General Raoul Cédras. Aristide fled for his life while thousands of his supporters were arrested, tortured, and murdered by Cédras’s henchmen.

The Organization of American States (OAS) and the UN quickly condemned Cédras’s actions, calling for the restoration of Aristide as president. The author details a laborious two years of back-and-forth deliberations by the UN, OAS, and U.S. government officials on actions for restoring the democratically elected Aristide as an internationally astute Cédras played a game—seemingly accepting and then rejecting proposed solutions. Kretchik defines how the

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<sup>11</sup> Col Walter G. Ford (Ret) is the former editor of *Leatherneck* magazine and publisher for the Marine Corps Association. He is the author of *Marine Corps History* articles on the Marine Corps Reserve in World War I and the recently released *Reducing the Saint-Mihiel Salient, September 1918* (2018), one of the History Division’s U.S. Marines in World War I Centennial Commemorative Series.

American military was designated to plan for both peacemaking (forcible entry) and peacekeeping actions and how diplomatic discussions deferred actions as the UN established missions such as the International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti and the UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH), to ensure the junta was respecting individual human rights.

The author's description of what became the *Harlan County* Incident provides a clear example of Cédras's manipulation of the UN, OAS, and United States bureaucrats. Representatives of Cédras and Aristide agreed with UN and OAS mediators that Aristide would appoint a new army commander, Cédras would take early retirement, and Aristide would return to Haiti on 30 October 1993. On 11 October 1993, the USS *Harlan County* (LST 1196), a U.S. Navy landing ship, tank assigned to take a group of Americans and Canadians, designated as the Joint Task Force-Haiti Assistance Group, to Port-au-Prince, sailed to begin preparations for a peaceful return of Aristide to power. The ship was met by small boats blocking anchorage and large, hostile mobs on the pier, all in front of international news cameras. *Harlan County* was forced to turn away and eventually returned to Virginia, yielding Cédras a victory and a black eye for the United Nations and the United States. The United States had, about this same time, suffered devastating losses in Somalia and there was no stomach by the administration or Congress for taking another risk.

The author describes in some detail the UN decisions to conduct planning for a military intervention, with the United States Atlantic Command (USACOM) in Norfolk, Virginia, in charge, and the mishaps associated with limited-access compartmentalized planning by USACOM and the designated invasion force, XVIII Airborne Corps (Joint Task Force 180), headquartered in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Planning for simultaneous peacekeeping operations was delegated by USACOM to 10th Mountain Division (Joint Task Force 190), an XVIII Airborne Corps unit headquartered in Fort Drum, New York, with its limited staff and little experience.

With negotiations at an impasse, on 30 July 1994,

the United Nations authorized a U.S. military forcible intervention to reinstate Aristide, and Kretchik points to yet another challenge. In September 1994, with 82d Airborne Division troops in the air, the 10th Mountain Division embarked in U.S. Navy ships underway to Haiti, and Army Rangers and Green Berets ready to make an assault, U.S. President James E. "Jimmy" Carter announced that an agreement was reached with Cédras. At this very last minute, the 82d Airborne Division turned for home, and the remaining assault forces, trained for combat, became a peacekeeping/humanitarian assistance force. Cédras again demonstrated his acute understanding of the international forces at play; the agreement allowed him more time in office and freedom to depart carrying his wealth and closest associates with him into exile.

There follows a detailed description of the challenges faced by Army combat units conducting humanitarian operations, limited cooperation between the regular Army units and Special Forces, replacement of those initial forces with other Army units, the introduction of a U.S. Marine task force (Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Caribbean, commanded by Colonel Thomas S. Jones) in Cap Haitien, and the United Nations declaring a secure and stable environment in Haiti in January 1995.<sup>12</sup> In his final pages, Kretchik outlines the ensuing long-term multinational intervention in Haiti, noting that "in a curious twist on what happened to Haiti in 1915, the six-month-long 1994 U.S.-led multinational intervention has now evolved into a long-term multinational intervention commitment" (p. 174). Therein lies the caution and counsel that *Eyewitness to Chaos* be required reading for government and nongovernmental representatives prior to any involvement with Haiti.

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<sup>12</sup> For more on Marines in Operation Uphold Democracy, read Col Nicholas E. Reynolds, USMCR, *A Skillful Show of Strength: U.S. Marines in the Caribbean, 1991-1996* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 2003).

*Colonel Rod Andrew Jr., USMCR (Ret)*<sup>13</sup>


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*My Lai: Vietnam, 1968, and the Descent into Darkness.* By Howard Jones. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 504. \$34.95 cloth.)

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In the last days of March 1971, a military court sentenced U.S. Army first lieutenant William L. Calley Jr. to life in prison for his role in the atrocities that had occurred at the village of My Lai three years before, in which as many as 504 Vietnamese civilians were murdered by American troops of 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 11th Infantry Brigade, 23d Infantry Division. American soldiers deliberately killed hundreds of old men, women, children, and babies. Though Calley was the only soldier convicted of wrongdoing in the massacre, dozens of other officers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and enlisted troops participated, and a number of more senior officers ignored evidence and suppressed the story to protect their own careers. No event of the Vietnam War caused more controversy, shame, and acrimony among Americans or had a more negative impact on their perception of their nation's cause. Though My Lai has been the subject of numerous books, articles, and documentaries, Howard Jones's balanced, insightful, and well-researched account may be the most comprehensive and useful yet published.

Jones attempts to explain how the massacre occurred, displaying a rare balance between sympathy for the stress and uncertainty of the combat infantrymen involved, combined with revulsion for the acts that many of them committed. Many factors, both institutional and personal, contributed to the tragedy. Training in the laws of land warfare and proper treatment of civilians was virtually nonexistent in the 23d Infantry Division, both for officers and enlisted

men. Other factors contributed as well: poor morale and low training levels within the division; the stress and bitterness from the high casualty rate suffered throughout the division during the previous two months from an unseen enemy; the difficulty in distinguishing Viet Cong from civilians who posed no legitimate threat; poor intelligence on the presence or absence of civilians in the village; the fog of war in the initial stage of the assault on the village; the incompetence of Calley and poor leadership of his company commander, Captain Ernest L. Medina; and orders that seemed either implicitly or explicitly to condone the killing of civilians.

Jones succeeds in displaying the human side of most of the characters in the story, including several Vietnamese victims and survivors, but he does not shrink from assigning blame or credit where they are due. Senior officers added to the shame of My Lai, including the battalion commander, brigade commander, assistant division commander, division commander, and numerous staff officers. They showed criminal negligence in failing to investigate the allegations or blatantly lied to protect their careers. President Richard M. Nixon was clearly concerned with the political damage that might result from the incident, not about the truth of what happened or seeing that the guilty were punished. Some enlisted men refused to obey orders to kill civilians, though they failed to report what they saw. Most admirable in Jones's book are Warrant Officer Hugh C. Thompson Jr., pilot of a Hiller OH-23 Raven observation helicopter, and his two crewmen, Specialists (E-4) Lawrence M. Colburn and Glenn W. Andreotta, as well as the pilots of two Bell UH-1 Iroquois (or Huey) helicopters who intervened in an attempt to stop the carnage. Thompson landed his helicopter at the scene and tried to persuade Calley and another lieutenant to stop the

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<sup>13</sup> Col Rod Andrew Jr., USMCR (Ret), is professor of history at Clemson University, SC. He has written numerous books and shorter monographs on American military history. The latter include his works on Operation Starlite and the Khe Sanh Hill Fights, published by Marine Corps History Division as part of the Marines in the Vietnam War Commemorative Series.

killing, and then landed a second time, placing his aircraft between the American troops and terrified civilians and evacuating those he could. Meanwhile Colburn, his crew chief, rescued an eight-year-old boy from a drainage ditch full of dead and dying villagers. Thompson was the first and most vocal soldier to report the killings.

Jones's coverage of these events is illuminating and fair overall, though in a few places his lack of familiarity with the military leads to awkward statements. Jones refers to NCOs in operational units as "drill sergeants" (p. 23), a term usually restricted to recruit trainers at basic training. More concerning is the book's inadequate description of command relationships (who reported to whom), perhaps partly reflecting the author's fuzzy understanding of them. This is a potentially serious issue when attempting to assess blame for alleged failures in reporting. Without reading other sources, for example, one would not know how responsible Major Frederic W. Watke was for failure to pass on reports he received from his subordinates. Watke, the immediate superior of Warrant Officer Thompson, was the company commander of the aero scout company of helicopters that was part of the 123d Aviation Battalion, which presumably was in some sort of temporary (or organic?) supporting role to the infantry battalion (or brigade, or 23d Infantry Division) in the My Lai area—again, it is not clear. Jones appears to fault Watke for dereliction in reporting the incident. It turns out that, while Watke's own unit did not commit the crimes, he did relay Thompson's report to the infantry battalion commander within 15 minutes of hearing it and then to his own aviation battalion commander later that night. Given what incomplete information there is on this command relationship in Jones's book, most military officers would conclude that Watke did all that could be expected of him.

Despite his generally skillful coverage of the events surrounding the massacre, Jones makes his most unique contributions in the second half of the book. First, he provides the most detailed coverage yet of the trials of Calley and Medina. Second, he provides illuminating analysis of the effect of the evolving

scandal on American public opinion once it began to unfold in the media in late 1969. For doves, the My Lai incident was simply the "result and symbol of what was wrong" (p. 3) with American involvement in Vietnam. More hawkish Americans came to see Calley as a scapegoat for the flawed military policy of senior officers and government officials that was standing in the way of American victory. Both factions made false assumptions about the affair—antiwar activists believed events like massacres on the scale of My Lai were typical in Vietnam, while the other side continued to believe that the civilians at My Lai were killed accidentally. For both groups, the Calley trial strengthened the consensus that something was seriously wrong with the war effort, though for different reasons. Meanwhile, many military officers then serving or recently returned from Vietnam bitterly denounced Calley for bringing dishonor to the uniform and undermining their own troops' efforts. Many pointed out that their units suffered from the same stresses as Calley's but did not resort to such shameful acts.

Jones does not use My Lai to scourge the U.S. Army or military institutions in general. He credits Army investigators such as Colonel William V. Wilson, Lieutenant General William R. Peers, the prosecuting attorneys at Calley's court martial, and other officers for their moral revulsion at the crimes and their determined efforts to see justice done. Like the outwardly ordinary soldiers who somehow committed barbaric acts, other soldiers who were on the right side of justice and morality were, in the end, ordinary human beings as well. And though it was too late for the My Lai victims, the Army as an institution subsequently took important steps to improve the training given to soldiers on the treatment of civilians and continues to do a far better job in this area than it did prior to 1968.

Jones's scholarly judgment is sound. First, he understands well, and explains well, that while it is important to grasp what happened at My Lai, it will always be impossible to know everything for sure. Mountains of conflicting testimony in the various investigations and trials make that impossible. He also

knows that, while it is important to understand why My Lai occurred so that steps can be taken to avoid future wartime atrocities, it is doubtful they can be prevented altogether. There is no neat, clinical solution to be found in new doctrinal publications on the laws of land warfare or better training for combat troops. Such reforms were necessary and positive but, after all, the Abu Ghraib prison crimes in Iraq followed several decades of improved training and did not even occur under the stress of combat. In the end, he suggests, there is a factor that goes beyond train-

ing or the circumstances in which soldiers find themselves, and perhaps it is best described by the term *character* (p. 396); some individuals will resort to savagery, some will refrain, and some will take a stand against it. The ultimate answer then, to what prevents or causes events like My Lai is found somewhere in the nobility and the darkness of the human heart. Jones sensibly does not claim to offer all the answers when it comes to My Lai, but he has produced an extremely well-researched and fascinating account that asks the right questions.

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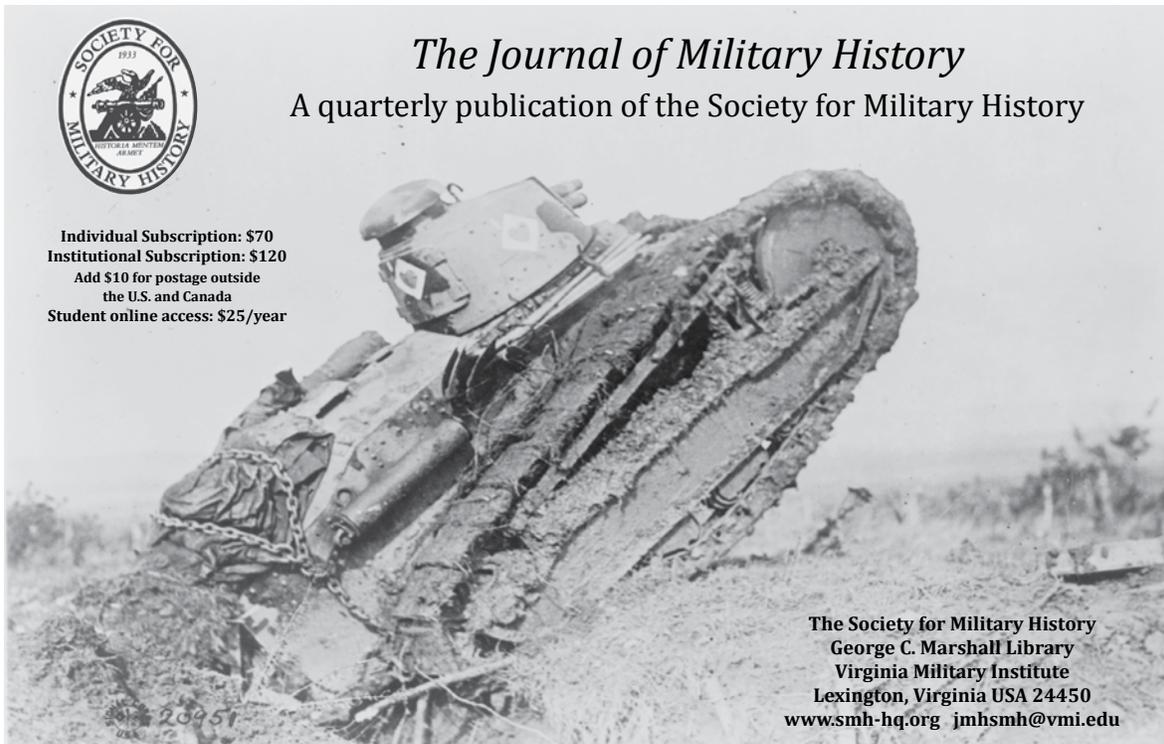


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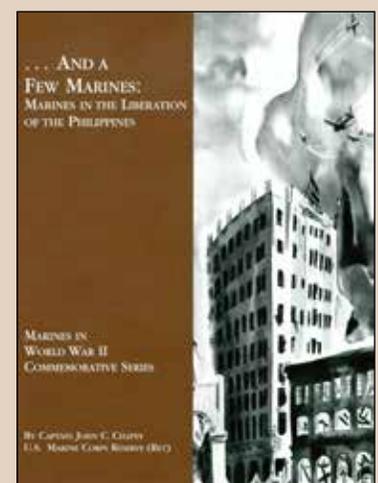
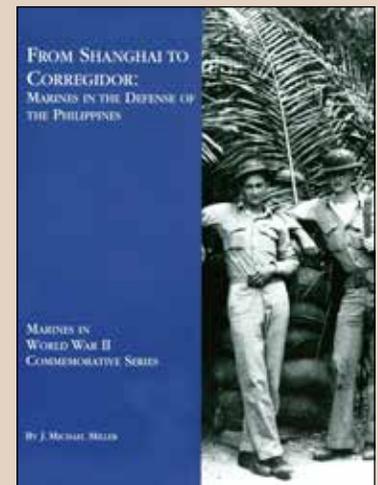
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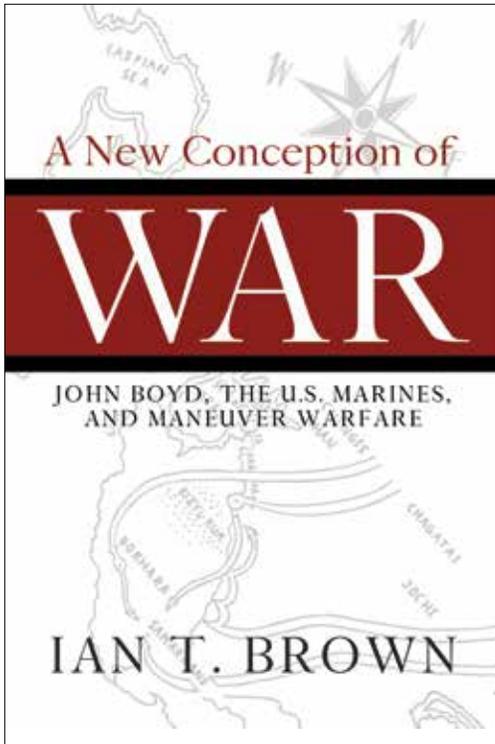
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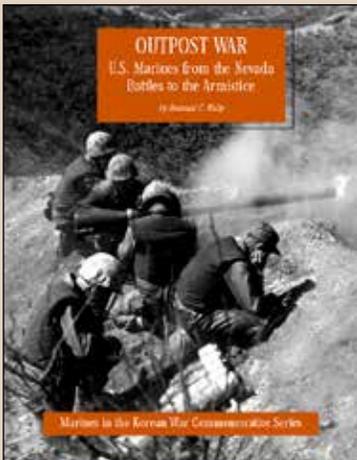
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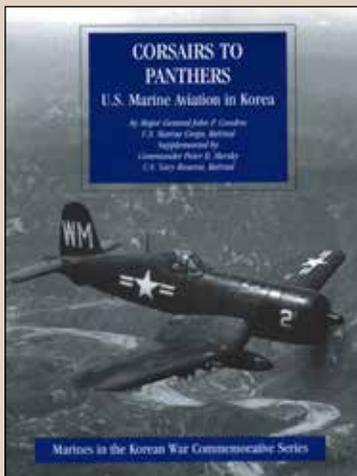


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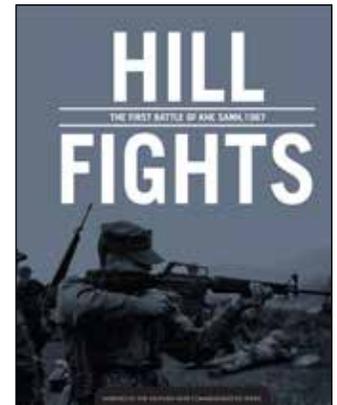
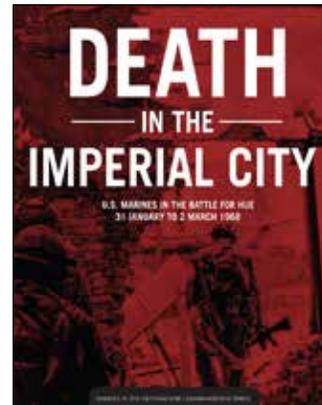


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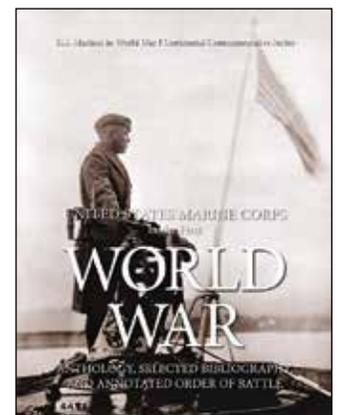
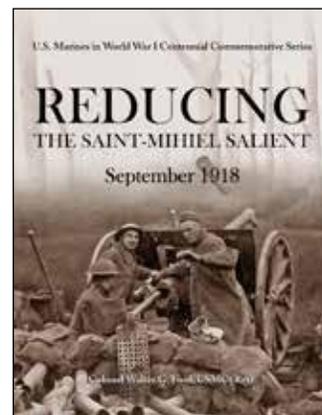


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