

MARINE CORPS HISTORY

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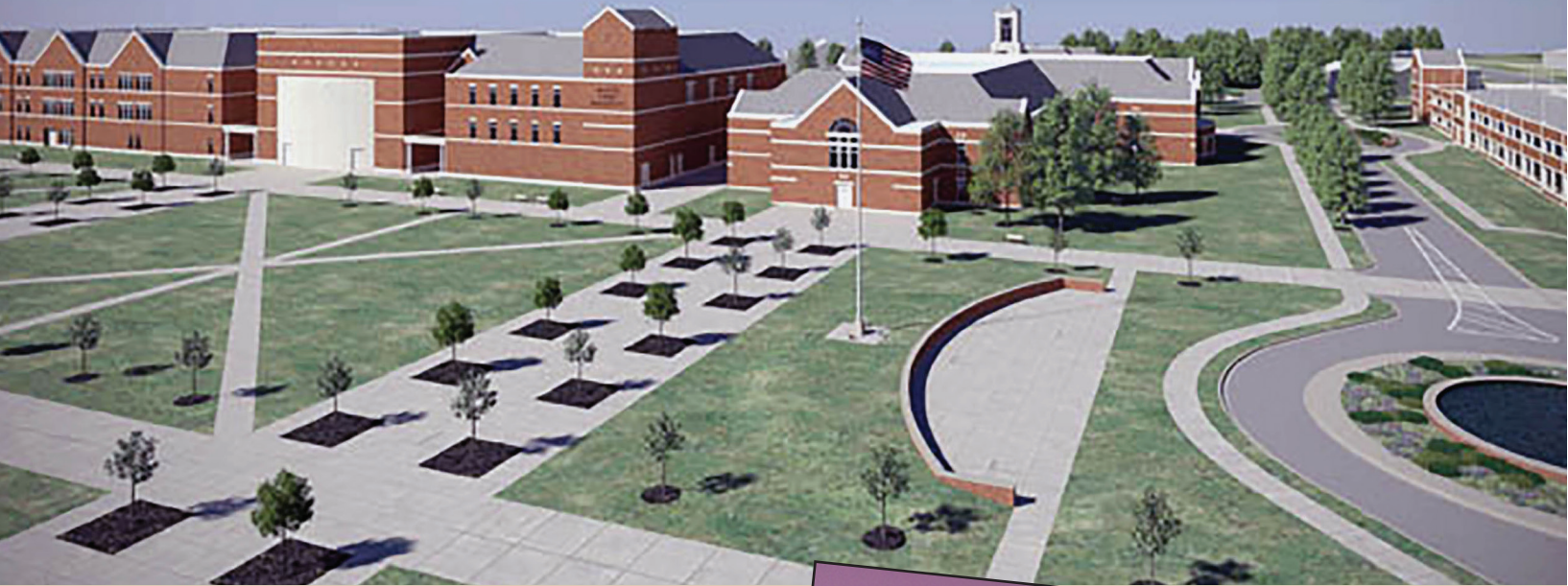
Operation Steel Dawn II

Vietnam Marines in the
Defense of Quang Tri 1972



The History Division is moving!

History Division will be moving to the Simmons Marine Corps History Center, part of the Marine Corps University. The new state-of-the-art wing will bring together all of the Marine Corps University schools into one unit. The structure will offer many new features and amenities for the student body, faculty, and staff at Marine Corps Base Quantico.

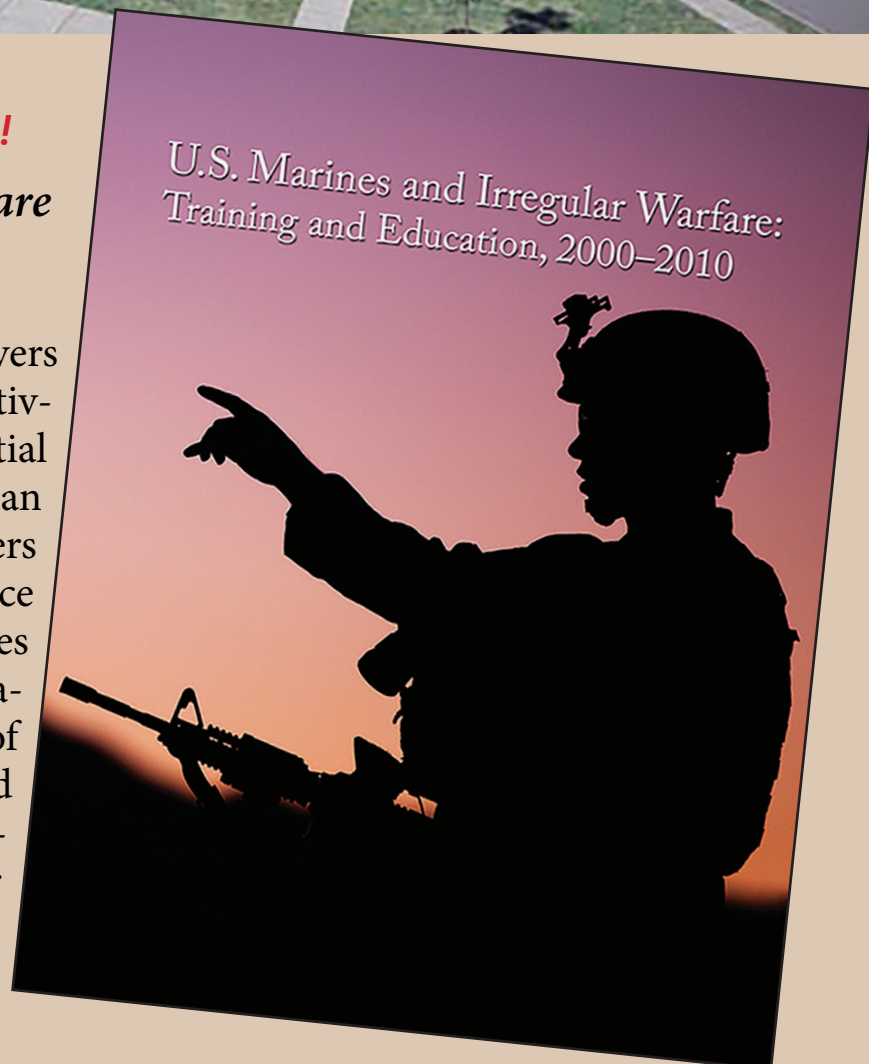


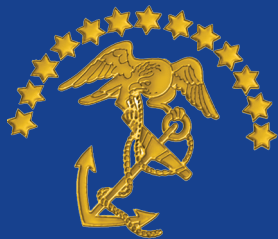
New History Division Publication!

U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare *Training and Education, 2000–2010*

Dr. Nicholas J. Schlosser

U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare covers a period of considerable intellectual activity for the U.S. Marine Corps. The initial fighting during the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars convinced many Marine leaders that it needed to strengthen and enhance how it trained and educated Marines in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. This book recounts the work of Marines and educators in the field and at home at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, and at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California.





MARINE CORPS HISTORY

Volume 1, Number 1

Summer 2015

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Cover Art:

"Gunner" by LCpl Richard R. Yaco, USMC
The gunner of a Boeing CH-46 Sea
Knight helicopter from Marine Me-
dium Helicopter Squadron 262,
Marine Aircraft Group 39, at Quang
Tri, Vietnam, in 1968.

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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD



Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer
Director, History Division
Marine Corps University

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *Marine Corps History (MCH)* magazine, which replaces the Marine Corps Historical Program's bulletin *Fortitudine*. *MCH* will contain substantive book reviews and features on new History Division publications, but most importantly, scholarly, in-depth analyses of Marine Corps' history on all elements of the Corps—culture, technology, doctrine.

The genesis of *Fortitudine* as a newsletter began in the early 1970s, renamed as a bulletin in the summer of 1987, and stayed as such until the present day. The focus of the 24-page newsletter was the Marine Corps Historical Program, which later became History Division. The content spanned a range of stories, reader feedback, awards, quizzes, Corps chronology, combat artists, museum acquisitions, new books, etc. The publication was written for general audiences with some knowledge of the Marine Corps. In general, the stories were short, usually no more than a couple pages, with a focus on the narrative of the moment.

In contrast, *Marine Corps History* will deliver scholarly military history articles that demonstrate

Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer: the director is responsible for the collection, production, publication, and dissemination of Marine Corps history and manages the functioning of a wide variety of Marine Corps historical programs.



Photo by Sgt Joseph R. Chenelly

Marines with Company C, Battalion Landing Team 1/1, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), raise the first American flag in Afghanistan on 26 November 2001 as Operation Enduring Freedom begins.

both the author's and the reader's deeper understanding of the topic. By encouraging academic rigor, History Division can make a more direct contribution to Marine Corps University, its students, researchers, and the general public. All submissions selected for publication undergo peer review by an editorial review board made up of subject matter experts. Hopefully, this change in focus demonstrates the core mission of Marine Corps University by providing ongoing academic military education that connects with the students' education before and after they leave campus.

In this, the first issue of *Marine Corps History*, Colonel Nathan Lowrey, who recently retired from the Reserves but is still an active historian with the Joint History Office, delves into Marine Corps operations in Afghanistan. Lowrey also previously served the History Division for a number of years as a historian, deputy director, and as a member of its Individual Marine Augment (IMA) detachment. He is



Photo courtesy of CSM Mike Martin, USA (Ret)

Vietnamese Marine infantry being airlifted into combat in Quang Tri Province on Bell UH1 Iroquois helicopters.

the author of the acclaimed History Division monograph, *From the Sea: U.S. Marines in Afghanistan, 2001–2002*. Colonel Lowrey's article, "Operation Steel Dawn II: The Raid on Bahram Chah" highlights Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, a subject that will likely resonate with a number of Marines today. Lowrey specifically focuses on Marine Corps efforts to interdict the Taliban and its drug smuggling activities in and around the village of Bahram Chah, a dangerous location once described by then Major General Richard Mills, the I MEF forward commanding general, as "a dark and evil place." The colonel's contemporary history article sheds light on the intense combat operations as they occurred in Helmand Province.

From the austere terrain of Afghanistan, we move further back in time to the Corps' involvement in the Second World War. Former History Division intern Ms. Zayna Bizri offers a period-specific perspective on the changing role of women in society and the military in "From Making Men to Making Marines: Marine Corps Recruiting During World War II." Bizri is working to complete her doctoral degree at George Mason University. This article represents a revised version of Bizri's presentation at the 2015 meeting of the Society of Military Historians held in Montgomery, Alabama. The information generated great discussion from the audience and highlights how gender studies and the military is just as active an issue today as it was when the war began.



Marine Corps Art Collection

"Serve . . . Women Marines" by Wayne Blickenstaff, 9 November 1955.

The author focuses on the period of Marine Corps history involving the recruitment and retention of female Marines (officers and enlisted) during World War II as compared to the methods the Corps used

to recruit males for active service. While this article serves as a direct contrast to the operational histories that the History Division has traditionally focused on, it sheds a great deal of light on gender issues and a woman's role in military service that continues today.

Chief Historian Charles Melson then offers an introspective analysis of the inter-Service rivalries that impacted Marine Corps activities in Southeast Asia in an article titled, "Vietnam Marines and the Defense of Quang Tri in 1972." This piece becomes a capstone to Melson's long and successful career as a Marine and as chief historian for the History Division. Early in his military career, Melson served at the conclusion of the Vietnam War in Quang Tri Province, making this article a poignant reminder of his service and focusing predominately on the activities of the Vietnamese Marine Corps (along with a handful of U.S. Marine Corps advisors) and their efforts to halt the massive "Easter Offensive" of the North Vietnamese Army. Melson sheds light on a little known aspect of the Vietnam War and the South Vietnamese Marines who valiantly attempted to hold their ground when so many were fleeing southward in panic and confusion.

Former History Division historian Nicholas Schlosser rounds out the discussion of the Vietnam War with a stateside perspective on the political machinations taking place as the Corps leadership attempts to define its role on the Joint Chiefs of Staff in an article titled, "Counselor of War: General Wallace M. Greene Jr. and the Escalation of the Vietnamese War, 1964–65." Dr. Schlosser recently joined the U.S. Army Center of Military History; however, prior to his departure, he was actively engaged in completing what will be his next published work, *The Greene Papers: General Wallace M. Greene Jr. and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* (October 2015). Schlosser's work represents pathbreaking scholarship in that some of General Greene's letters relating to the Vietnam War have only recently been declassified.

On 7 August 2015, the president of Marine Corps University, Brigadier General Helen B. Pratt, USMCR, along with the then 36th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., Senator John W. Warner, and Mr. Clark Simmons,



Defense Department (Marine Corps) 2-224-66

Gen Wallace M. Greene Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps, confers with a young lieutenant of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, in Vietnam 1966.

the son of History Division Director emeritus Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, will rededicate the Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons Marine Corps History Center and the Warner Center for Advanced Military Studies. Soon thereafter, the History Division will once again move to its final location, representing the third move in a decade. The new Marine Corps History Center will offer a state-of-the-art research venue for historians and other interested scholars with access to the university's experts and historical documents in a single location: History Division, Special Collections and Archives, etc.

As we move forward with this new venture in providing Marine Corps-specific history to our readers, I encourage you to become engaged with our process by submitting articles or even planning a visit to our modern research facilities. It is our hope that leaders like Generals Simmons and Greene and the Marine Corps community will be pleased by this dedication to and focus on professional military education. ♦1775♦

Operation Steel Dawn II

THE RAID ON BAHRAM CHAH

Colonel Nathan S. Lowrey, USMCR (Ret)
Joint History Office

Introduction

While speaking at a May 2003 news conference in Kabul, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld declared optimistically that Coalition operations in Afghanistan had “clearly . . . moved from major combat activity to a period of stability and stabilization and reconstruction activities.”¹ Benign neglect over the next three years, however, allowed the Taliban to regroup, to adopt new tactics, and to expand their insurgency to the south and east.² A British contingent of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) assumed command of Regional Command South (RC-South) in 2006, but encountered significant resistance when it attempted to challenge enemy activity in the area, particularly in Helmand Province to the southwest, where the enemy tended to operate with near impunity.³

Around the same time—as hostilities in Iraq began to decline—Commandant of the Marine Corps James T. Conway sought a more active role for his Service in Afghanistan.⁴ The number of Marine expeditionary forces in southwestern Afghanistan increased, with the type of deployed units growing steadily from a regimental to a brigade and finally to

a corps-size presence. Two months after the arrival of Major General Richard P. Mills and I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF/Task Force Leatherneck) in April 2010, Marines established Regional Command Southwest (RC-SW) in Helmand and Nimroz Provinces.⁵ In addition to allowing senior leaders to focus on smaller geographic areas, the new command enhanced the Marines’ autonomy and allowed them to maintain an offensive posture while working to extend security throughout the region.

Operation Steel Dawn II—a joint raid against an enemy command center and logistics hub in Bahram Chah, Afghanistan, during October 2010—exemplified I MEF’s aggressiveness as well as the operational utility of the Marine air-ground task force. Nestled in a remote desert valley among the Chagai Hills, Bahram Chah is situated in the southernmost district in Helmand Province. Its isolation and proximity to the Pakistani border provided the Taliban with a safe haven ideal for pursuing a wide range of illicit activities. In addition to an al-Qaeda training camp and Taliban prison, the area housed facilities for producing improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The Bahram Chah bazaar served as a central location for smuggling fighters, weapons, ammunition, and explosives northward into Afghanistan and for moving refined opium, heroin, and other narcotics southward out of the country.⁶ Major General Mills

¹ Associated Press, “Rumsfeld Declares Major Combat Over in Afghanistan,” Fox News, 1 May 2003.

² Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, “Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan,” *Orbis* 51, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 72, 81–82, 84.

³ Jeffrey A. Dressler, *Securing Helmand: Understanding and Responding to the Enemy*, Afghanistan Report 2 (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2009), 7, 33–34.

⁴ Ann Scott Tyson, “Marines’ Afghanistan Plan Sparks Debate,” *Washington Post*, 12 October 2007, A-14.

⁵ ISAF Joint Command-Afghanistan, “Regional Command Southwest Stands Up in Afghanistan,” *Resolute Support News*, 14 June 2010.

⁶ Dressler, *Securing Helmand*, 13; I MEF Navy Unit Commendation recommendation, 26 July 2012 (Military Awards Branch [MilAwardsBr], Headquarters Marine Corps [HQMC], Quantico, VA); and Sgt Stuart R. Sanford intvw with Maj Beth Wolney, 8 February 2011 (Oral History Collection [Oral HistColl]). All oral history materials cited in this work can be found at the Gray Research Center (GRC), Quantico, VA.

considered it “a dark and evil place” and decided to deny the enemy sanctuary.⁷

Background

Coalition forces were aware of the town’s notorious reputation and had been raiding Bahram Chah on a regular basis for six years. Established by the Taliban in the mid-1990s, the town tripled in size between 2002 and 2005, with as many as 1,000 drug traffickers operating in the area on a busy day. Coalition forces first confronted the enemy sanctuary in May 2005 when the recently established Afghan Special Narcotics Force (ASNF) raided the town’s bazaar during a three-day operation to eliminate drug laboratories in southern Helmand Province. Although the drug traffickers fled to safety across the Pakistani border before the raid force arrived, ASNF personnel seized 250 kilograms of heroin, 2.5 tons of opium, and 3.5 tons of precursor chemicals used to manufacture heroin.⁸

The Taliban retaliated four months later by ambushing a company-size Afghan National Police convoy as it traveled south through a canyon located five kilometers north of Bahram Chah. The attack began shortly before nightfall, with insurgents firing down from all directions. When the fighting ended seven hours later, six vehicles had been seized or destroyed and 18 police officers had been killed, including the provincial deputy police chief.⁹

Not to be deterred, the ASNF raided Bahram Chah several times in April 2006. During the first operation, the antinarcotics force seized 75 kilograms of opium resin and arrested one suspect. During the second operation, the force arrested four suspects, seized 1,000 kilograms of opium, and destroyed an arsenal of heavy weapons discovered in an under-

ground bunker. A third raid resulted in the death of one drug dealer as well as the seizure of substantial amounts of heroin, morphine, opium, and drug-making chemicals.¹⁰

In May 2007, a U.S. electronic surveillance unit (Task Force Orange) tracked Mullah Dadullah to Bahram Chah. Released two months earlier during a controversial prisoner exchange, Dadullah was a senior Taliban military commander and trusted advisor to Mullah Omar, the infamous one-eyed Taliban leader. After a small reconnaissance element determined that air strikes alone were insufficient to ensure Dadullah’s elimination, Afghan special operations forces and 50 commandos from C Squadron, British Special Boat Service (SBS), were inserted by two Royal Air Force Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopters. Although immediately targeted by rifles, machine guns, and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), the assault force maneuvered forward against the walled compound’s 20 defenders. After a four-hour firefight, during which the commandos suffered four casualties, the facility was cleared and Dadullah killed.¹¹

In October 2008, Afghani, Pakistani, and Arabic militants gathered at Bahram Chah. Coalition aircraft struck the group with precision munitions during a nighttime raid after ground reconnaissance forces positively identified the insurgents. Although an ISAF spokesman said that the target had been a small number of Taliban commanders, an Afghan official from Helmand Province claimed that two vehicles were destroyed and as many as 70 fighters killed.¹²

Bahram Chah may have escaped the Coalition’s attention in 2009, but southwestern Afghanistan did not. Arriving that spring as a vanguard of President

⁷ MajGen Richard P. Mills intvw with Dr. Kimberly Kagan, 2 May 2011 (Oral HistColl).

⁸ “Largest Drugs Bazaar Raided,” *PakTribune*, 31 May 2005, <http://paktribune.com/news/Largest-Drugs-Bazaar-raided-107625.html>; and Waheed, “Afghan Forces Destroy Country’s Largest Drug Bazaar,” *Afghan Warrior* (blog), 5 June 2005, <http://afghanwarrior.blogspot.com/2005/06/afghan-forces-destroy-countrys-largest.html>.

⁹ Ron Synovitz, “Afghanistan: Police Chief Says Smugglers Helped Taliban with Ambush,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 11 October 2005, www.rferl.org/content/article/1062020.

¹⁰ “Afghanistan Raids Drug Bazaar Near Pakistan Border,” *Voice of America News*, 11 April 2006; Daniel Cooney, “U.S. Warns Afghanistan Violence Will Worsen,” *ABC News*, 3 April 2006; and Reuters, “Afghans Seize Four Tonnes of Drugs, Arrest Seven,” *Afghanistan News Center*, 12 April 2006, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2006/april/apr122006.html>.

¹¹ “Special Boat Service Operations—Hunting Mullah Dadullah,” *Elite UK Forces*, 12 May 2007, <http://www.eliteukforces.info/special-boat-service/operations/mullah-dadullah/>.

¹² “Seventy Taliban Said Killed in Afghanistan,” *Reuters*, 15 October 2008; “Up to 70 Taliban Killed in Afghan Strike: Local Official,” *Agence France-Presse*, 15 October 2008; and “70 Taliban Killed in Afghan Strike,” *Daily Times*, 16 October 2008, <http://archives.dailytimes.com.pk/national/16-Oct-2008/70-taliban-killed-in-afghan-strike>.



Defense Imagery 101029-M-0000A-001

A light armored vehicle from Task Force Highlander (1st LAR) sits outside the Bahram Chah bazaar on 30 October 2010 during Operation Steel Dawn II.

Barack H. Obama's eventual troop surge, 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade deployed to Helmand Province and began clearing operations to break a stalemate that had existed between British and Taliban forces for three years. In July during Operation Khanjar (Strike of the Sword), three Marine battalions pushed south from Camp Bastion and occupied key population centers in Garmsir, Nawa-I-Barakzayi, and Khan Neshin.

The 2d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (2d LAR) occupied Khan Neshin and established the Marines' southern flank in the rural Khan Neshin District. Light armored reconnaissance forces continued to patrol the area during successive troop rotations, conducting counterinsurgency (COIN) operations along the lower Helmand River valley and interdiction operations across the southwest desert. Lieutenant Colonel Michael Martin, who commanded 4th LAR in December 2009, explained that while he would have welcomed an outpost at Bahram Chah, the battalion lacked sufficient resources and the town's isolation would have placed his Marines at risk.¹³

Lieutenant Colonel Scott D. Leonard and 1st LAR

(Task Force Highlander) assumed tactical responsibility for Reg-e Khan Neshin District, Helmand Province, (Area of Operations Mameluke) in May 2010. Task Force Highlander's headquarters was located at Combat Outpost Payne, situated near the district center in Khan Neshin on the northern side of the lower Helmand River "fishhook." Tasked with disrupting enemy operations throughout the region, Leonard assigned three of his maneuver companies to sectors of responsibility within the battalion's 750-square-kilometer area of operations; a fourth company supported I MEF operations in the Kajaki District to the north.

Companies A and C, commanded by Major John R. Bitonti II and Captain Jason T. Ford, focused on COIN operations conducted along the north and south banks of the lower Helmand River. These distributed operations had dispersed platoons assigned to areas of responsibility. The Marines patrolled actively to engage the populace and secure the region's thoroughfares, a physically demanding and dangerous mission that often became kinetic. Ambushes or strikes from IEDs buried along the dirt roadways were common and a constant concern. Each Marine company also worked diligently to develop the civil infrastructure, local government, and national security forces in their sectors.¹⁴

Farther south, operating in a more austere and sparsely populated area, Captain Adrian B. Haskamp commanded Company B. Lieutenant Colonel Leonard realigned the battalion's assets to take advantage of the armored vehicle's mobility and directed Company B to focus on interdicting the enemy's clandestine transportation routes, or ratlines, running through southern Helmand Province. During long-range patrols that lasted up to 30 days and were conducted more than 100 kilometers from the closest support facilities, the company split into platoons and sections to search for contraband and to document the region's demography. Assisted by intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance (ISR) assets that helped direct their efforts, the Marines detained 21 suspects for questioning, identified two enemy

¹³ Sebastian Abbot, "Taliban Sneak Past Marines in Southern Afghanistan," Associated Press, 16 December 2009.

¹⁴ Maj John R. Bitonti II intvw with Col N. S. Lowrey, 7 February 2011 (Oral HistColl); Maj John R. Bitonti II award, 2 December 2010 (MilAwardsBr, HQMC, Quantico, VA); and Sgt Dean Davis, "Charlie Company Marines Travel Far and Wide to Reach Afghan Locals," *Marine Corps News*, 4 June 2010.

command and control nodes, and seized more than 4,400 kilograms of opium, 1,750 kilograms of ammonium nitrate, and 70 IED components. The Marines' presence severely restricted Taliban movement and forced the enemy to shift its trafficking routes farther west and east into the desert.¹⁵

During 2010, as Coalition forces expanded their influence over southwestern Helmand Province, Bahram Chah received a greater amount of military attention. On 22 March, a combined patrol operating in Registan District stopped two vehicles transporting 725 kilograms of hashish to the enemy transshipment center.¹⁶ On 2 June, U.S. Air Force aircraft launched a missile and rocket at enemy positions that had fired on Coalition forces operating near Bahram Chah.¹⁷ Then, on 1 July, Afghan special operating forces and British SBS commandos again raided the town's bazaar.¹⁸

In the latter action, commandos were inserted via CH-47 helicopters near the village of Haji Wakil. They arrived around 0200 hours and, shortly after, encountered enemy resistance. Forward progress remained difficult, and the commandos had to maneuver through an orchard while being fired on from all directions. The commandos did accomplish their mission, but Royal Marine Corporal Seth Stephens was killed and at least one other team member wounded during the five-hour firefight.¹⁹

Although clear evidence of enemy activity in Bahram Chah was found, the military operation had been costly. The commando's ground assault force was unable to sufficiently support the withdrawal of the raid force, and 1st LAR—despite being designated the regional quick reaction force—was not contacted when the situation began to deteriorate. On 19 September, Coalition aircraft launched two rounds of precision munitions at the town's bazaar,

destroying an IED factory and 4,500 pounds of explosives material.²⁰

Planning and Preparation

Lieutenant Colonel Leonard and those from Task Force 210 discussed the problems with Bahram Chah that summer, but waited until early October to propose a raid of the enemy's logistics base. The proposal was presented to Brigadier General Joseph L. Osterman and 1st Marine Division (1st MarDiv Forward) staff at Camp Leatherneck.²¹ During an operational debrief, Leonard and his British counterpart described the tactical situation and pitched the concept for near-simultaneous air and ground assaults. The plan called for two companies driving down from the north to screen the bazaar from adjacent residential areas to the west and east, enabling the commandos to fly in and strike the objective.²² By attacking before the Taliban had an opportunity to withdraw southward into Pakistan for the winter, Coalition forces could delay the production of IEDs and disrupt enemy operations into the summer of 2011.²³

Around 10 October, 1st MarDiv endorsed the concept, adding slides to illustrate the mission before submitting it to I MEF (Forward) five days later.²⁴ Major General Mills directed the planning to continue and forwarded the proposal to the ISAF Joint Command (IJC) for approval. In the end, the plan took about two weeks to wend its way up the chain of command. At some point, ISAF briefed the Afghan government, which in turn notified the Pakistani government 24 hours in advance of the raid, enabling the Pakistani Army to withdraw its border position—but this may have also alerted the Taliban.²⁵

Most of the deliberate planning and preparations

¹⁵ Capt Adrian B. Hascamp intvw with Col N. S. Lowrey, 7 February 2011 (Oral HistColl); LtCol Scott D. Leonard intvw with Col N. S. Lowrey, 8 February 2011 (Oral HistColl); Capt Adrian B. Hascamp award recommendation, 2 December 2010 (MilAwardsBr, HQMC, Quantico, VA); and LtCol Scott D. Leonard award recommendation, 6 June 2011 (MilAwardsBr, HQMC, Quantico, VA).

¹⁶ ISAF Joint Command Headquarters, "Joint Patrol Discovers 725 kg of Hashish," 22 March 2010.

¹⁷ "June 2 Airpower Summary: KC-135s Provide Fuel Support," U.S. Air Force News, 4 June 2010.

¹⁸ Thomas Harding, "Special Forces Commando Took on Taliban Single-handedly," *Telegraph*, 24 May 2011.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ ISAF Joint Command Headquarters, "IED Factory, Materials Destroyed in Southern Helmand," 21 September 2010.

²¹ Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 365 (VMM-365) Command Chronology, hereafter ComdC, October 2010 (GRC, Quantico, VA), Part 2, 3.

²² Leonard intvw.

²³ 1stLt Thomas F. Clauss III intvw with Col N. S. Lowrey, 7 February 2011 (Oral HistColl); and Capt Nicholas S. Rapkoch intvw with LtCol R. S. Sellards, 7 February 2011 (Oral HistColl).

²⁴ Capt Nicolas S. Rapkoch award recommendation, 27 December 2010 (MilAwardsBr, HQMC, Quantico, VA).

²⁵ Leonard intvw.



Photo by Cpl Ismael E. Ortega, Defense Imagery 140514-M-RD023-096

Marines with Battery B, 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, fire the M777A2 howitzer during Exercise Desert Scimitar 2014 at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, California.

occurred at Combat Outpost Payne.²⁶ One of the more difficult issues the planners had to address was targeting. Although the first 140 kilometers of the proposed route to Bahram Chah included open desert, the final 20 kilometers involved traveling through one of two narrow mountain passes to reach the objective. Aware of the region's recent operational history, the Marines knew they would have to eliminate the enemy's defensive positions along the pass in advance of the movement. They developed the plan according to doctrine, incorporating shaping fires, suppressive fires, and fires in support of obstacle breaches. They also observed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) 398, which governed the use of supporting fires in theater. Captain Nicolas S. Rapkoch, 1st LAR's fire support coordinator, spent many evenings in discussion with the battalion lawyer, struggling to address the engagement requirements before seeking ISAF approval through the IJC.²⁷

Operation Steel Dawn II would ultimately involve "one of the most robust fires packages ever executed in Afghanistan," including a wide variety of offensive aircraft: Rockwell B-1 Lancer bombers, Fairchild Republic A-10 Thunderbolt II attack aircraft, Lockheed AC-130 Spectre gunships, McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet fighters, and Bell AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters.²⁸ While the IJC may have understood the rules of engagement, Captain Rapkoch later complained, the command did not necessarily appreciate their spirit or intent. The IJC chose to deny some preassault fires against fighting positions associated with residential compounds near Bahram Chah because the targeting requirement for two corroborating sources of intelligence in habitable areas was not met.²⁹

Marine planners understood that dust or thunderstorms could inhibit the use of aircraft, so an artillery presence would be necessary to ensure an all-weather fire support capability.³⁰ That task fell to Lieutenant Colonel Adolfo Garcia Jr. and 1st Battalion, 11th Marines. The artillerymen were already well known to 1st LAR—the two battalions had worked together during an Enhanced Mojave Viper exercise at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, California, shortly before deploying. After arriving in Afghanistan in May 2010, the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, established its headquarters at Fire Base Fiddler's Green. The headquarters, one rocket battery, and three cannon batteries operated eight firing positions distributed throughout I MEF's area of operations. In addition to supporting Regimental Combat Teams 2 and 7, the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, had also secured a portion of Route 605 in Marjah and conducted COIN operations in the Kajaki District.³¹

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Rapkoch intvw.

²⁸ 1st MarDiv ComdC, 16 October–15 November 2010 (MCHC, Quantico, VA) Section 2, Fires; and Rapkoch intvw.

²⁹ 1st MarDiv, Task Force Leatherneck After Action Report for Operation Enduring Freedom 10.1–11.1, 24 February 2011 (GRC, Archives, Quantico, VA), 68.

³⁰ LtCol Adolfo Garcia Jr. intvw with Col N. S. Lowrey, 9 February 2011 (Oral HistColl).

³¹ 1st Battalion, 11th Marines ComdC, 1 May–21 November 2010 (Marine Corps Heritage Center [MCHC], Quantico, VA) Part 2, 6–44; LtCol Adolfo Garcia Jr. comments on draft ms, 10 March 2015 (MCHC, Quantico, VA); and Garcia intvw.

Because Bahram Chah was located outside the range of the artillery pieces positioned at Combat Outpost Payne, artillerymen had to accompany the raid force. To facilitate coordination during the operation, Lieutenant Colonel Garcia formed an artillery group under the command of his operations officer, Major David J. Grabow. This special purpose task organization included the battalion's jump command post; 1st Platoon, Battery L, equipped with three 155mm light howitzers; and 3d Platoon, Battery S, equipped with the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS).³²

In preparation for the raid, Battery S, under Captain Jeffrey S. Curtis, conducted test fire ranges at Camp Leatherneck on 11 October and then at Combat Outpost Payne on 14 October.³³ The 3d Platoon also performed a route reconnaissance to a proposed assembly area to ensure the desert terrain was suitable for supporting the heavy HIMARS during travel.³⁴ In the meantime, Captain Bitonti and Company A received a warning order, switched areas of responsibility with Company C, remounted their armored vehicles, and embarked on an intense week of refresher training and maintenance.³⁵

On 19 October, organizations participating in the operation moved toward Combat Outpost Payne, which served as an initial staging area for Task Force Highlander. The 1st Battalion, 11th Marines' communications platoon, under Captain Ronnie L. Creech, began to actively support Operation Steel Dawn II, providing



Photo by Cpl Ismael E. Ortega, Defense Imagery 140518-M-RD023-077

Marines with Battery S, 5th Battalion, 11th Marines, fire the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System during Exercise Desert Scimitar 2014 at Twentynine Palms.



Photo by Cpl Paul D. Zelner, Defense Imagery 339079

A convoy from Combat Logistic Battalion 3, 1st Marines Logistics Group (Forward), heads to Combat Outpost Payne on 21 October 2010 to support Operation Steel Dawn II.

the equipment and personnel necessary to operate the forward combat operations center.³⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Leonard issued an operations order to key leaders the following day and, on 22 October, the participants reconvened to conduct a detailed re-

³² Maj David J. Grabow award recommendation, 14 February 2011 (MilAwdBr, HQMC, Quantico, VA); and 1st Battalion, 11th Marines ComdC, 35-39.

³³ Ibid., 38.

³⁴ Garcia intvw.

³⁵ Bitonti intvw; and LCpl Adam B. Ramirez intvw with Col N. S. Lowrey, 8 February 2011 (Oral HistColl).

³⁶ Garcia intvw; and 1st Battalion, 11th Marines ComdC, 23, 25.



Photo by Cpl Paul D. Zelner, Defense Imagery 101021-M-4388Z-004

LtCol Scott D. Leonard, commanding officer of 1st LAR and Task Force Highlander, addresses Marines participating in Operation Steel Dawn II at Combat Outpost Payne on 25 October 2010.

hearsal of concepts drill. Majors Matthew Miller and Jon A. Custis, the 1st LAR's operations and executive officers, respectively, walked the participants through the operational sequence and corrected problems identified during the group exercise.³⁷ Lieutenant Colonel Garcia later noted that "The thorough planning and rehearsals conducted prior to the raid ensured the seamless integration of these elements and refined the command and control of the raid force."³⁸

Companies A and B departed Combat Outpost Payne the next day, heading in opposite directions to conduct interdiction operations for five days. As part of Lieutenant Colonel Leonard's deception plan, the companies intended that any Taliban groups monitoring the Marine units' activities would interpret the movements as routine patrols.³⁹ Shaping and reconnaissance operations conducted in support of Steel Dawn II (e.g., Operations Steel Dawn I and Press 16)

also began on 23 October.⁴⁰ Gunnery Sergeant Aaron J. Abrams, Company A's 2d Platoon sergeant, served as Task Force Highlander's liaison to Task Force 210 during Operation Press 16. The British reconnaissance patrol collected information on the proposed route, identified enemy observation posts covering the mountain passes, and observed activities in and around Bahram Chah.⁴¹

On 25 October, Major Custis began to push command and support elements south. The intermediary goal was to establish a logistics staging area (LSA) about 60 kilometers from Combat Outpost Payne.⁴² Lieutenant Colonel Leonard, who considered Bahram Chah the "nexus of all bad things . . . happening"

in Helmand and Kandahar Provinces, spoke candidly to his Marines before departing: "We will go into the Bazaar of Barham [*sic*] Chah and say, 'We'll come here any time we want—you can't stop us. You don't get to operate with impunity.' We will tell them, 'If you want to come back and rebuild this place, go ahead. We will be back in three months.'"⁴³

The LSA was situated in a large *wadi* (dry stream bed) in the middle of the desert, a site specifically chosen for its remoteness. Task Force Highlander assembled 178 vehicles and 1,100 personnel into a raid force in the isolated location without being observed. Getting to the LSA was difficult as sand dunes and rough terrain hindered the progress of the heavily laden vehicles.⁴⁴ During the week-long operation, for example, one M88 armored vehicle crew recovered or repaired 53 vehicles.⁴⁵

Upon the artillery group's arrival at the LSA, Ma-

³⁷ Leonard intvw.

³⁸ Garcia comments on draft ms.

³⁹ Bitonti intvw; and GySgt Aaron J. Abrams intvw with Col N. S. Lowrey, 8 February 2011 (Oral HistColl).

⁴⁰ 1st MarDiv ComdC, Part 2, Fires.

⁴¹ Abrams intvw; and GySgt Aaron J. Abrams award recommendation, 2 December 2010 (MilAwardsBr, HQMC, Quantico, VA).

⁴² Maj Jon A. Custis award recommendation, 15 March 2011 (MilAwardsBr, HQMC, Quantico, VA).

⁴³ Cpl Derek B. Carlson, "Afghan, Coalition Forces Kill Insurgents; Seize Drugs, Weapons during Raid," *Marine Corps News*, 1 November 2010, <http://www.3rdmaw.marines.mil/News/NewsArticleDisplay/tabid/8112/Article/548747/afghan-coalition-forces-kill-insurgents-seize-drugs-weapons-during-raid.aspx>.

⁴⁴ Leonard intvw; and Maj Jon A. Custis intvw with Maj Beth Wolney, 7 February 2011 (Oral HistColl).

⁴⁵ Cpl Paul D. Zellner, "Wrecker Crew Keeps Convoy Rolling during Operation Steel Dawn II," Defense Imagery, 13 November 2010.

jor Grabow established a command and control node to support other task force elements during the operation. The communications platoon from 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, provided host services via multiple tactical satellite radio networks. Due to its communications capabilities, the artillery command element also fulfilled the role of camp commandant.⁴⁶

Combat Logistics Battalion 3 Marines provided critical assistance to Task Force Highlander throughout the operation. Motor Transport Company B, under Captain Matthew J. Neely, provided eight pallets of food and 15,000 gallons of water as well as fuel, ammunition, and other supplies via combat logistics patrols and helicopter support teams. Marines from Landing Support Platoon, Headquarters and Service Company, off-loaded supplies at multiple sites,⁴⁷ and the 1st Medical Battalion's Shock Trauma Platoon provided a mobile trauma bay.⁴⁸

Marine Wing Support Squadron 373 also contributed significantly to the operation, constructing a forward arming and refueling point (FARP) near the LSA.⁴⁹ A Bell Boeing MV-22B Osprey from Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 365 (VMM-365), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Craig C. LeFlore, was the first aircraft to land at the FARP on 29 October and provided assault support during the operation.⁵⁰ Captain Patrick W. Richardson, a Bell AH-1 Super Cobra pilot with Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369, also operated from the FARP. Richardson later explained that "We were able to spend 15 minutes in transit, 20–30 minutes to refuel and rearm, and get back to support troops on the ground."⁵¹ The facility also had on-hand casualty evacuation capability.

On 26 October, operating farther south near the objective area, Gunnery Sergeant Abrams and the British reconnaissance patrol conducted a night mortar raid against Bahram Chah. The commandos established two observation posts—situated on high



Photo by Sgt Derek Carlson, Defense Imagery 101029-M-4388Z-003
Supplies are offloaded from a Bell Boeing MV-22B Osprey with VMM-365 at a remote logistics staging area on 29 October 2010.

ground running along each side of the proposed route—and fired at enemy positions previously designated as on-call targets. When the rounds began to impact, the enemy fired flares into the night sky and attempted to flee in vehicles. Abrams reported that numerous headlights illuminated a large traffic jam.⁵²

The next day, the reconnaissance patrol rejoined Task Force Highlander at the LSA and delivered their account to Lieutenant Colonel Leonard. Although Leonard had originally intended to follow the western pass through the mountains, the patrol reported that the circuitous route would take the convoy directly past the city's main residential area. Shortly before departure, the route was changed to the eastern pass.⁵³

Movement to Contact

The raid was originally scheduled to begin on the evening of 28 October, but torrential rains resulted in a one-day weather delay.⁵⁴ Around 1800 hours the following evening, Task Force Highlander formed a

⁴⁶ 1st Battalion, 11th Marines ComdC, 13, 23; and Garcia intvw.

⁴⁷ Cpl Paul D. Zellner, "Marines Provide Logistics Support to Coalition Forces during Operation Steel Dawn II," Defense Imagery, 11 November 2010.

⁴⁸ Leonard intvw.

⁴⁹ Carlson, "Afghan, Coalition Forces Kill Insurgents."

⁵⁰ See image courtesy of Defense Imagery (337483) that accompanies Carlson, "Afghan, Coalition Forces Kill Insurgents"; and VMM-365 ComdC, 3.

⁵¹ Carlson, "Afghan, Coalition Forces Kill Insurgents."

⁵² Abrams intvw; and Abrams award. On 23 and 26 October 2010, Task Force Leatherneck executed dynamic strikes against compounds associated with the production of IEDs, destroying buildings and their contents, according to the 1st MarDiv ComdC.

⁵³ Rapkoch intvw; and Abrams intvw.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

column and headed south to Bahram Chah.⁵⁵ The Marines first needed to reach the line of departure on the north side of Chagai Hills—20 kilometers short of the bazaar—and then maneuver through the mountain pass to arrive at a designated release point by 0700 hours the following morning.⁵⁶ The time requirement deepened the Marines' sense of urgency; if they failed to arrive on time, Task Force 210 would have to execute its portion of the mission without ground support. Lance Corporal Ramirez, a vehicle driver from Company A, later recalled that the Marines had traveled light and fast—bringing only water, chow, ammunition, and a one-day pack per man.⁵⁷

Company A held the lead position in the 85-vehicle convoy, and Captain Bitonti divided the unit into two sections for movement: 2d Platoon with attachments from 3d Combat Engineer Battalion, company headquarters, and logistics vehicles followed by 1st and 3d Platoons. The engineering assets included assault vehicles with rocket-propelled mine clearing line charges and a D7 bulldozer and M870 semitrailer for breaching three IED-laden choke points. The battalion's jump command post was next in line, followed by Company B and the logistics train.⁵⁸ Major Grabow and the cannon platoon brought up the rear, while Captain Curtis and the HIMARS platoon remained at the LSA.⁵⁹ Major General Mills and representatives from several U.S. government agencies also accompanied the raid force.⁶⁰

Working its way south, Company A marked the route and relayed situational information to the remainder of the convoy. Gunnery Sergeant Abrams, who guided the lead platoon, recalled that the sky had been clear when the company began the road march. However, a solitary black cloud followed the Marines, eventually bringing rain, thunder, and

lightning. During the approach, the Marine company had expected to strike numerous IEDs, but none were encountered.⁶¹

Task Force 210 approached the objective area aboard CH-47 helicopters, relaying position reports to Marines as it crossed airborne phase lines. When the British were approximately two minutes from the landing zone, at around 1940 hours, Task Force Highlander initiated the kinetic portion of the operation.⁶² A B-1 bomber attacked enemy fighting positions and observation posts along the Marines' axis of advance and near the commandos' ingress point. During two passes, the bomber struck eight preplanned targets with laser-guided 2,000-pound bombs.⁶³

As the convoy reached the north side of the Chagai Hills, the logistics train and artillery group pulled off the road and established a functional firing position in only 15 minutes.⁶⁴ While Task Force Highlander maneuvered along the eastern corridor toward Bahram Chah, the artillerymen shot illumination rounds over the western pass in an effort to deceive the enemy on which direction the Marines would initiate the attack. When Company A approached the first IED-laden choke point, the Marines spotted Taliban fighters massing along high ground paralleling the canyon. At Captain Rapkoch's request, the cannon platoon began to shoot preplanned preparatory fires against enemy defensive positions, shifting in concert with the task force's advance, effectively suppressing the enemy with at least one sympathetic detonation and allowing the convoy to continue forward. At a second choke point, the cannon platoon again suppressed Taliban forces.⁶⁵ In all, the platoon fired 107 high explosive rounds in support of the breaches.⁶⁶

Task Force Highlander also employed close air support to strike the enemy.⁶⁷ Lance Corporal

⁵⁵ Clauss intvw; and MSgt Curtis C. Gregory intvw with Col N. S. Lowrey, 8 February 2011 (Oral HistColl).

⁵⁶ Rapkoch intvw; and Ramirez intvw.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Gregory intvw; and Custis award.

⁵⁹ Maj David J. Grabow intvw with LtCol R. S. Sellards, 9 February 2011 (Oral HistColl); Garcia intvw; and Grabow award.

⁶⁰ Leonard intvw; and Mills intvw.

⁶¹ Abrams intvw.

⁶² Rapkoch intvw; Clauss intvw; Abrams intvw; and Rapkoch award.

⁶³ Ibid.; and Rapkoch intvw.

⁶⁴ 1st Battalion, 11th Marines ComdC, 25; Rapkoch award; and Rapkoch intvw.

⁶⁵ Rapkoch award; Garcia intvw; and Leonard intvw.

⁶⁶ 1st Battalion, 11th Marines ComdC, 36.

⁶⁷ Rapkoch intvw.



Photo by Sgt Derek Carlson, Defense Imagery 101029-M-1842C-002
Artillery illumination and a desert storm light up the night sky over the Chagai Hills as Task Force Highlander maneuvers south through a mountain pass toward Bahram Chah on 29 November 2010.

Ramirez recalled the surreal experience of riding through the night with bombs exploding near the objective, artillery impacting along the ridgelines, and illumination rounds drifting downward over the western pass.⁶⁸ Sergeant Stuart R. Sanford, a vehicle commander in Company B, similarly remembered an “awesome fireworks show” as the “artillery was blowing the hell out of everything.”⁶⁹

The journey south was not without difficulties for Coalition forces. At one point, the trailer hauling the bulldozer became stuck and, when Marines tried to pull it free, an axle broke. While leaders contemplated what to do, a lance corporal climbed into the driver’s seat, backed the bulldozer off the trailer, and asked “Hey, gunny, which way do I go?” The gunnery sergeant pointed south, and the young Marine moved out at three and a half kilometers per hour.⁷⁰ On another occasion, the combat engineer support element led a convoy down the wrong corridor. When 3d Platoon Commander First Lieutenant Michael D. Wright realized what happened, he initiated corrective action and, on Captain Bitonti’s orders, assumed maneuver control of the engineer element.⁷¹

Progress was swift and Task Force Highlander

reached its designated release point, a hilltop near the southern entrance to the mountain pass, around 0430. Having arrived two hours before sunrise and well ahead of schedule, the Marines received word that Task Force 210 was not ready to launch the attack and halted the convoy. As Marines established a hasty blocking position and waited in the dark, the infrared strobe lights on the antenna of the armored vehicles reminded Captain Rapkoch of a traffic jam on U.S. Interstate 95.⁷²

Shortly after being inserted about three miles southeast of the bazaar, the British commandos began to receive small-arms fire. In response, the HIMARS platoon fired three GPS-guided rockets into the buildings where the gunfire emanated. Before long, the commandos proceeded to secure the perimeter. They established preliminary positions on each corner of the bazaar and an observation post on a mountain peak northwest of Bahram Chah; they also marked lanes for the armored vehicles to follow. The Marines then surged forward.⁷³

Actions on the Objective

The road sloped down beyond the release point, first heading southeast and then cutting sharply to the southwest before opening into a three-kilometer-wide valley.⁷⁴ The smaller village of Jumakhan was situated to the east, the larger village of Haji Wakil to the west, and the bazaar near the middle. When First Lieutenant Sean T. Knapp led the engineer platoon forward in the dark to breach the entrance to the objective area, the platoon encountered small-arms, machine-gun, and RPG fire. First Platoon, Company A, under First Lieutenant Jonathan R. Walaski, moved forward to establish a temporary blocking position and to provide cover fire; the company quickly suppressed the enemy. After the rocket-propelled line charges twice misfired, Captain Bitonti pushed forward with the mine rollers. Around this time, the bulldozer emerged from the pass.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Ramirez intvw.

⁶⁹ Sanford intvw.

⁷⁰ Mills intvw.

⁷¹ 1stLt Michael D. Wright award recommendation, 2 December 2010 (MilAwdBr, HQMC, Quantico, VA).

⁷² Leonard intvw; Bitonti intvw; Gregory intvw; and Rapkoch intvw.

⁷³ Ibid.; Clauss intvw; Abrams intvw; Garcia intvw; and 1st Battalion, 11th Marines ComdC, 39.

⁷⁴ Bitonti intvw; and Rapkoch intvw.

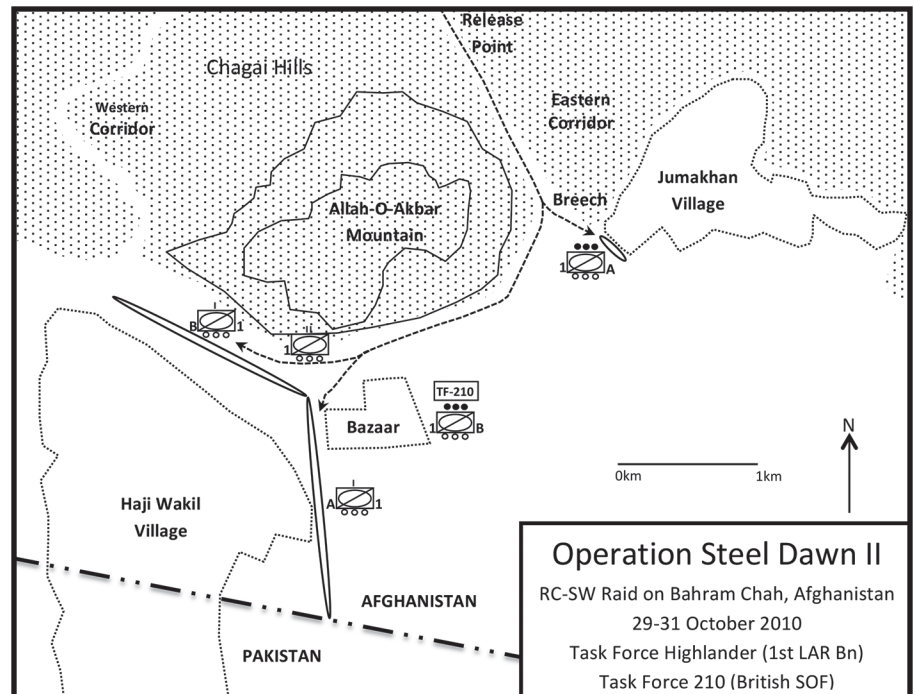
⁷⁵ Mills intvw.

The Marines 1st Platoon quickly maneuvered past the engineers, crossed into the objective area, and swung east to establish the assigned blocking position along the southwest side of Jumakhan. Although intelligence had predicted little if any resistance from the village of single-story adobe dwellings, as soon as the Marines pulled into position, they encountered additional small-arms, machine-gun, and RPG fire. The Marines again suppressed the enemy with ease.⁷⁶

With Lieutenant Walaski's platoon shielding the mountain pass exit, the remainder of Task Force Highlander was able to flow unimpeded into the objective area.⁷⁷ Company A passed through the British lines while skirting along the north side of the bazaar and then swung south to cordon off the southwest side of Haji Wakil.⁷⁸ Master Sergeant Curtis C. Gregory, Company A's operations chief, recalled a relative calm at that point, as flashes from the commandos' infrared lights and weapons sights could be seen atop buildings in the bazaar⁷⁹—good news for the Marines, who had been precluded from firing their weapons until they passed the British lines.⁸⁰

Captain Bitonti established a linear blocking position, facing west toward Bahram Chah. Lieutenant Michael D. Mitchell's 2d platoon was located on the southern flank in a low-lying, vegetated area near the Pakistani border. The rest of the company was situated on higher ground, with headquarters in the middle and Second Lieutenant Wright's 3d Platoon to the north.⁸¹

It was dark by the time 2d Platoon pulled into position. The enemy could hear, but not see the Marines' armored vehicles. Before long, the Marines



Map by author

spotted enemy fighters maneuvering toward their position, ducking in and out of buildings and crawling through the brush. The insurgents operated individually, as pairs, and occasionally in teams of three or four. Most were armed with assault rifles, although some carried machine guns and RPGs. In one instance, Gunnery Sergeant Abrams's crew killed a pair of fighters who had tried to fire an RPG at the Marines. When the enemy fell, another fighter picked up the RPG and tried to fire, but was also shot. Nearby, Lieutenant Mitchell's crew similarly engaged a fighter armed with an RPG who was maneuvering through vegetation about 75 meters away. The Marines may have killed a suicide bomber—a man wearing a vest appeared to explode as he ran at their vehicle and was shot.⁸²

The enemy maneuvered like well-trained and disciplined soldiers, yet they were obviously unfamiliar with the light armored vehicles' capabilities.⁸³ In addition to being well armed and impervious to small-arms fire, the vehicles had thermal imagery devices

⁷⁶ Bitonti intvw; and 1stLt Jonathan R. Walaski award recommendation, 2 February 2011 (MilAwdBr, HQMC, Quantico, VA).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Bitonti intvw.

⁷⁹ Gregory intvw.

⁸⁰ Abrams intvw.

⁸¹ Bitonti intvw; Gregory intvw; and Abrams intvw.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Bitonti intvw.



Defense Imagery 101030-M-1263P-011

Task Force Highlander's forward command center on the morning of its raid against Bahram Chah on 30 October 2010 was situated on the northern outskirts of the main residential area at the base of a hill in Afghanistan bearing an image of the Taliban flag.

that allowed the crews to shoot accurately in the dark at up to 3,000 meters. According to Sergeant Sanford, the thermal imaging devices made night "as bright as day and so detailed you can determine what kind of weapon the enemy is carrying."⁸⁴ Gunner Sergeant Abrams also acknowledged being able to see the enemy maneuvering through buildings and behind walls.⁸⁵

After passing through British lines, Captain Haskamp established a second blocking position with Company B facing south along the north side of Haji Wakil. Second Platoon, under First Lieutenant Gabriel M. Lavine, was positioned on the left flank, with the company executive officer, First Lieutenant Charles L. Hostetler, and Headquarters Platoon in the middle. Third Platoon, under First Lieutenant Christopher M. Phifer, was on the right flank. Each platoon had to carefully observe their sectors of fire,

because they were unable to see Company A to the southeast. In addition to cordoning off the residential area, 3d Platoon was also positioned to cover the entrance to the western corridor.⁸⁶

Shortly after Company B passed the bazaar, a vehicle crew spotted and killed three fighters armed with RPGs. Once in position, other members of the company engaged small groups of fighters who were maneuvering among the buildings and through the bush. First Sergeant Jon D. Jerome, unimpressed by the enemy's lack of situational awareness, was dumbfounded that they continued to use paths that the Marines covered with automatic weapons.⁸⁷

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel Leonard situated his jump command post on the edge of the objective area, north of the bend in the battalion's L-shaped blocking position, about 800 meters from Haji Wakil.⁸⁸ Major Custis established a multiuse point directly behind the objective area, which incorporated the casualty collection, maintenance collection, detainee transfer, and combined-operations coordination points for Task Forces Highlander and 210.⁸⁹ Captain Rapkoch took control of all supporting fires and employed AC-130 gunships to disrupt the insurgents' haphazard defenses.⁹⁰ According to intelligence reports, little danger of civilian casualties existed because Taliban forces had driven them out the area, and the civilians had not returned before the Marines' arrival.⁹¹ To prevent accusations of firing across the Pakistani border, Marines also used video to capture all weapons fires within the objective area.⁹²

Taliban resistance decreased as dawn broke, al-

⁸⁴ Sanford intvw.

⁸⁵ Abrams intvw.

⁸⁶ Sanford intvw; 1stSgt Jon D. Jerome intvw with LtCol R. S. Sellards, 7 February 2011 (Oral HistColl); and 1stSgt Jon D. Jerome phone conversation with author.

⁸⁷ Jerome intvw.

⁸⁸ Leonard award; Rapkoch intvw; and Jerome phone conversation.

⁸⁹ Custis award.

⁹⁰ Rapkoch award; and Rapkoch intvw.

⁹¹ Jerome intvw.

⁹² Grabow intvw.

though isolated individuals and locations were targeted throughout the day. In one instance, for example, Company B Marines observed an enemy spotter using a cell phone to direct 107mm rocket fire. Marines responded with a tube-launched, optically-tracked, wireless-guided (TOW) missile launched at the building in which the spotter was hiding.⁹³

Task Force 210 cleared the bazaar—which measured approximately 400 meters by 700 meters and contained about 150 shops—in 12 hours. First Lieutenant Buck A. Bradley's 1st Platoon detached from Company B upon entering the objective area and assisted the British by providing cover as the commandos maneuvered forward, suppressing enemy fighting positions and securing high-speed avenues of approach.⁹⁴ The commandos moved systematically from west to east and examined each of the bazaar's shops for indications that its occupants were contributing to the insurgency. If the search failed to find such evidence, the shop was left intact. If evidence of illicit activities was discovered (e.g., weapons, munitions, or bomb making or drug processing materials), the material was seized for further exploitation or destroyed on site.⁹⁵ During the clearing operation, commandos killed a suicide bomber before he could detonate his explosives.⁹⁶

Captain Bitonti and Master Sergeant Gregory coordinated the medical evacuation of two Afghan soldiers injured while clearing the bazaar. As the two Marines moved toward the bazaar to collect the



Photo by SSgt Jeremy Ross, Defense Imagery 379620

A 17 March 2011 photo shows the Bahram Chah bazaar, which facilitated the movement of enemy fighters, weapons, and ammunition into—and drugs out of—Afghanistan.



Defense Imagery 336189

British special operating forces and Marines from Task Force Highlander search a compound at one end of the Bahram Chah bazaar on 30 October 2010.

wounded, a HIMARS rocket struck and destroyed a nearby building, but they were uninjured. One of the Afghan soldiers had been shot in the hip, and the other had twisted his ankle.⁹⁷ After transporting the wounded to the multiuse point for treatment and evacuation, the Marines rejoined Company A.⁹⁸

Tensions grew throughout the day as a crowd of

⁹³ Jerome intvw.

⁹⁴ 1stLt Buck A. Bradley award recommendation, 23 November 2010 (MilAwdBr, HQMC, Quantico, VA).

⁹⁵ MajGen Richard P. Mills, "Major General Richard Mills on Afghanistan" (lecture, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, 27 April 2011), <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/04/27/major-general-richard-mills-on-afghanistan/49q>.

⁹⁶ Clauss intvw; Rapkoch intvw; and Leonard intvw.

⁹⁷ Clauss intvw; Rapkoch intvw; and Leonard intvw.

⁹⁸ Gregory intvw; and Clauss intvw.

unarmed men gathered on the Pakistani side of the border. The men moved about in groups of approximately 10–50 individuals and eventually totaled about 500 people.⁹⁹ Gunnery Sergeant Abrams recalled that the men sat on the ground, under trees, on walls, or in compounds. They watched the Marines with casual disregard, as if they were certain of their safety and waiting patiently for the Coalition forces to leave.¹⁰⁰ The prevailing opinion was that the men were Taliban reinforcements, assembled from villages throughout the region, preparing for a counter-attack that failed to materialize after the fatal morning defeat.¹⁰¹

Later that afternoon, the Marines were able to vent their frustrations over the growing crowd south of the border. A large hill mass north of the objective area overlooked Haji Wakil. On one slope, the enemy had inscribed “Taliban Pass” using white rocks. When A-10 aircraft destroyed the inscription with a 25mm cannon, Captain Bitonti likened the scene to “watching the eraser tool on [Microsoft] Paint.”¹⁰² The Marines cheered, but the Taliban were “livid, jumping around and slamming their fists on the ground.”¹⁰³ Another slope held the image of the Taliban flag with an accompanying inscription; however, a friendly observation post was located nearby, and the site was left intact.

Later that afternoon, insurgent activity escalated, with occasional teams of two enemy fighters emerging from buildings to take potshots at the Marines. Once night fell, scattered engagements of growing intensity occurred across the Marines’ frontage.¹⁰⁴ Originally, the combined task force was to remain in the objective area for a second day to clear Haji



Defense Imagery 336192

Flames and smoke rise from a damaged Taliban structure during Operation Steel Dawn II on 30 October 2010.

Wakil, but element leaders reckoned that the most important part of the mission was accomplished and that lingering any longer would tempt fate. The Coalition had suffered two casualties by that point, and the force had gone without sleep for 36 hours. Moreover, Haji Wakil was larger and more complex than the bazaar; the plan for Haji Wakil was not as well developed; and maintaining command and control would be difficult.¹⁰⁵

At the conclusion of the clearing operation, 1st Platoon, under Lieutenant Bradley, escorted Task Force 210 to an extraction point, located about four kilometers from the objective area.¹⁰⁶ The British were lifted out by helicopter around midnight. After confirmation of the commandos’ extraction, Task Force Highlander began its own move from Bahram Chah. Before leaving, however, the Marines destroyed the Taliban flag on the nearby hillside.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ Bitonti intvw; and Abrams intvw.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Bitonti intvw; and Leonard intvw.

¹⁰² Bitonti intvw.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Abrams intvw; and Gregory intvw.

¹⁰⁵ Rapkoch intvw.

¹⁰⁶ Bradley award.

¹⁰⁷ Bitonti intvw.

Operation Steel Dawn II

In late October 2010, Coalition forces from Regional Command Southwest (RC-SW) raided the bazaar at Bahram Chah, which served as a Taliban logistics base along the southwestern border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Task Force 210, a conglomerate of British and Afghan special operations forces, comprised the assault element. As the operation's main effort, Task Force 210's initial mission was to insert under the cover of darkness and seize the bazaar.

The 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (1st LAR/Task Force Highlander) served as the security element. Its role was to conduct a simultaneous road march to Bahram Chah, to link up with Task Force 210 at sunrise, and then to secure the objective area by cordoning off villages to the northeast and southwest of the bazaar. This would enable Task Force 210 to focus on searching for contraband and intelligence rather than fighting off insurgents.

The support element was primarily drawn from other I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) units. It included a platoon from 3d Combat Engineer Battalion, which accompanied Task Force Highlander and helped negate obstacles in the convoy's path. A groupment of light howitzers and rocket artillery from 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, eliminated enemy fighting positions along the route and in the objective area. Marines from Combat Logistics Battalion 3's Landing Support Platoon and Motor Transport Company B provided food, water, fuel, and ammunition as well as recovered and repaired damaged vehicles during the operation. Marine Wing Support Squadron 373 established a forward arming and refueling point. Operating from this location, pilots and aircrews from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466, Marine Medium Tiltrotter Squadron 365, and Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369 provided logistical, medical evacuation, and close air support to the ground forces. Close air support included the Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232, flying from the Kandahar International Airport, and U.S. Air Force Rockwell B-1 Lancer bombers, Fairchild Republic A-10 Thunderbolt attack bombers, and Lockheed AC-130 Spectre gunships. U.S. Army Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters were also on hand in case medical evacuations were required.

The raid was an unmitigated success and, according to Major General Richard P. Mills, commander of I MEF and RC-SW, it had a significant impact on the enemy's warfighting ability. In addition to killing between 15 and 25 insurgents, Coalition forces seized nearly 27 metric tons of ammonium nitrate, 60 cases of .50-caliber machine gun ammunition, 22 IEDs, and numerous artillery shells, automatic weapons, and assorted ammunition, as well as 40 kilograms of opium, 500 liters of acid, and 2,000 kilograms of precursor chemicals used to refine narcotics. No Marines were injured during the operation.

Task Force Highlander returned along the same route it had used to enter. The convoy departed by echelon, in reverse order of its arrival, while the cannon platoon covered its withdrawal with smoke rounds.¹⁰⁸ The only thing slowing the Marines' exit was the recovery of abandoned, inoperable armored vehicles from a platoon that had guarded the corridor during the raid.¹⁰⁹

The convoy reached the LSA around 0500 hours on 31 October. Companies A and B quickly established a southward facing screen in front of the as-

sembly area.¹¹⁰ While unit leaders participated in an operational debriefing, the Marines attended to their vehicles, weapons, equipment, and personal gear, but also found time to get much needed rest. The following morning, Task Force Highlander began to collapse the LSA. Over the next two days, the support and then the assault elements returned to their home stations.¹¹¹

The raid on Bahram Chah was considered an unmitigated success. While no Marines had been injured, official press releases reported that Coalition

¹⁰⁸ Clauss intvw; and 1st Battalion, 11th Marines ComdC, 36.

¹⁰⁹ Rapkoch intvw; and Abrams intvw.

¹¹⁰ Clauss intvw.

¹¹¹ Leonard intvw.

forces had killed between 15 and 25 insurgents. Reports also acknowledged that those numbers did not include dead or wounded fighters that the enemy might have retrieved during the prolonged action.¹¹² Other sources, which did account for those losses, estimated that the number of enemy dead might have been more than 70.¹¹³ In addition to seizing nearly 27 metric tons of ammonium nitrate—enough to arm 2,000 IEDs—the raid force also recovered 60 cases of .50-caliber machine-gun ammunition, 22 IEDs, and numerous artillery shells, automatic weapons, and assorted ammunition. Drug-related materials confiscated included 40 kilograms of opium, 500 liters of acid, and 2,000 kilograms of precursor chemicals used to refine narcotics.¹¹⁴

In November 2010, 3d LAR, under Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth R. Kassner, relieved Task Force Highlander. As Lieutenant Colonel Leonard had prophesized, Coalition forces returned to Bahram Chah in March 2011. The 3d LAR spent three days in the infamous border town during Operation Rawhide II. The Marines destroyed the bazaar, killed about 50 insurgents, and sustained minimal casualties.¹¹⁵

At the end of March 2011, Major General Mills turned command of RC-SW over to Major General John A. Toolan. After returning to the United States, Mills described Coalition efforts to deny sanctuary to the enemy and to “fight him on ground of our choosing” as having a “significant impact.”¹¹⁶

In a series of fairly aggressive movements up around the Sangin area and south against the border in Bahram Chah, we kept pressure on his lines of supply, kept pressure on his forces as they really tried to move to find areas to rest and relax in. We had some significant gains against

him in that way and began to see some of his forces begin to crumble. As the supply lines were cut, we got excellent intelligence that showed us it was impacting him in the fighting holes. He was running out of money. He was running out of equipment, he was running out of ammunition. We saw that in things like him digging up old IEDs to attempt to reuse them on the battlefield. Things he would not have done had he had a warehouse full of them sitting somewhere. We saw him saving his expended ammunition in order to repack his rounds. Things like that showed that he was having supply difficulties. We had very good intel that showed his subordinate commanders were also selling personal equipment, such as cars in order to pay their troops. Again, something he would not have done had he had access to the resources that he had at one point in time. So I think the pressure on him, the constant pressure, and the ability to fight him on ground of our choosing had a significant impact on his success.¹¹⁷

Epilogue

Despite those gains, Bahram Chah continued to serve as a Taliban logistics center in southwestern Afghanistan. One factor contributing to the site's staying power was the enemy's ability to seek sanctuary in nearby Pakistan. Major General Toolan lamented, “. . . it's like I can't shut the water off, I just keep mopping up the floor. If I could turn the water off in Pakistan, it would be a lot better.”¹¹⁸ The Pakistani Army's XII Corps was of little help on the southern side of the border because its government was preoccupied with a separatist movement in Balochistan, Pakistan.

Another factor was the aggressive withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan, which began in July 2011 and then accelerated in 2012.¹¹⁹ As strategic priorities shifted, Task Force Leatherneck focused on

¹¹² U.S. Department of Defense, “Officials in Afghanistan Provide Details of Operations,” DOD News, 1 June 2010; and ISAF IJC Headquarters, “Afghan, Coalition Forces Wrap Up Helmand Clearing Operation,” DOD News, 8 November 2010.

¹¹³ Leonard award.

¹¹⁴ Carlson, “Afghan, Coalition Forces Kill Insurgents.”

¹¹⁵ Sgt Jeremy Ross, “3rd LAR Strikes Key Insurgent Border Hub during Operation Raw Hide II,” II MEF Marine Expeditionary Force, 19 March 2011, <http://www.iimef.marines.mil/News/NewsArticle/tabid/472/Article/529363/3rd-lar-strikes-key-insurgent-border-hub-during-operation-raw-hide-ii.aspx>.

¹¹⁶ Mills intvw.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Jim Garamone, “Pakistan, Corruption Affect South, West Afghanistan,” American Forces Press Service, 24 April 2012.

¹¹⁹ CNN Wire Staff, “Afghan Withdrawal More ‘Aggressive’ than Military Proposed,” CNN News, 24 June 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/06/23/afghanistan.troops.drawdown/>; Chris Carroll, “As Marines Leave Helmand, Focus Turns to Training Those Left Behind,” *Stars and Stripes*, 11 July 2012, <http://www.stripes.com/news/as-marines-leave-helmand-focus-turns-to-training-those-left-behind-1.182699>; and Dan Lamothe, “Taliban Make Gains as Marines Take Backseat,” *Marine Corps Times*, 29 October 2012, <http://archive.marinecorpstimes.com/article/20121029/NEWS/210290319/Taliban-make-gains-Marines-take-backseat>.

training, advising, and turning operating areas over to Afghan security forces.¹²⁰ Major General Charles M. Gurganus, who followed Major General Toolan as commander of RC-SW, defined success during his tenure “as setting the conditions for the Afghans to take over their own security, their own government, and then they have an opportunity to decide what

to do with it.”¹²¹ Afghani Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Rasul Qandahari, who commanded an Afghanistan Border Police battalion situated along the southern Helmand River, conceded that he and his men would need more manpower and larger weapons before they could hope to push southward into enemy territory.¹²² ♦1775♦

¹²⁰ Robert Burns, “Afghanistan: Marines to Wind Down Combat in 2012,” *Huffington Post*, 26 November 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/26/afghanistan-marines-2012_n_1114239.html.

¹²¹ Dan Lamothe, “Marine General: Lethal Aid Entering Helmand Is Top Concern,” *Military Times*, 18 April 2013, <http://archive.militarytimes.com/article/20130418/news/304180025/Marine-general-Lethal-entering-helmand-top-concern>.

¹²² *Ibid.*

From Making Men to Making Marines

MARINE CORPS RECRUITING DURING WORLD WAR II

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The U.S. Marine Corps' reputation as an elite outfit in the military served as the foundation of its World War II recruiting campaign. The looming manpower shortage sparked both the creation of women's auxiliaries as well as massive recruiting drives for men and women. For the Marine Corps, recruiting women required a subtle, though significant, shift in both recruiting materials and strategy. Male recruits were encouraged to join an elite Service, to be among the first to the front, and to become "real men" in the process. Female recruits were presented with the same materials but with a vitally important difference. They were invited to join an elite Service with a grand tradition of excellence and to support the best fighters in the military, but they would remain "real women." This subtle modification in the recruiting message drew highly sought-after women to the Marine Corps and, quite unexpectedly, helped reshape the rules of femininity in the United States.¹

The foundation of Marine Corps recruiting was the belief that the Corps was the finest organization, only taking the best and making them better.² Since World War I, Marine Corps recruiting campaigns empha-

sized the Corps' elite status, "portray[ing] Marines as the finest, toughest, most elite warriors in the U.S. military."³ The World War I recruiting campaigns solidified a recognizable image of the type of men who chose to join the Corps, and World War II efforts were consciously based on these popular constructions.⁴

The real challenge for recruiters was finding a balance between the Marine Corps' staffing requirements and the culturally accepted workplaces for women. Civilian administrative office work was largely done by women in the 1940s. The Marine Corps needed clerks, typists, stenographers, messengers, and other office workers to make their administrative structure function efficiently. The Marine Corps' reputation as fighters and infantrymen—before anything else—made the concept of a woman Marine an incongruous idea with this perceived cultural reputation. The recruiting campaign had to attract unique women who still fell within the socially accepted parameters of womanhood. As a result, recruiting materials aimed at potential women Marines layered the idea of Marine elitism over existing structures of femininity to create the image of an ideal recruit. The recruiting posters were designed primarily to encourage viewers to join the Marine Corps, make more Marines, and win the war, not change the rules of gender or push the boundaries between men and women.

¹ In the face of a looming manpower shortage, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order in late 1942 requiring that all branches accept draftees ages 18–35 under the Selective Service Act. Because the Corps' status as an all-volunteer organization was key to their image as elite, exceptional, and selective, this requirement presented a challenge for the Marine Corps. Therefore, they took a two-pronged approach to their recruiting strategies during the period. One method was to accept and recruit 17-year-old volunteers who had parental permission to join. The other was to post Marine liaisons at induction centers to convince draftees to name the Corps as their preferred Service. As a result, approximately 90 percent of male recruits for World War II selected the Corps, a fact that the Public Relations Division used to support the image of the Marine Corps as an elite organization of volunteers. See Aaron B. O'Connell, *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 30.

² *Ibid.*, 7.

³ David J. Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936–1943* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 2011), 159.

⁴ O'Connell, *Underdogs*, 27–28.

One of the foundational themes of the male recruiting posters was that the Marines would make real men out of recruits. For a number of reasons, including the obvious, recruiting posters directed at women could not take the same approach. While posters for male recruits promised a significant transformation, posters developed for female recruits argued that women would still be feminine even after becoming Marines. There was real concern, among southern congressmen specifically, that military service would draw women away from their traditional gender roles in the home, leading to a social collapse.⁵ For many in the military, even the thought of women in uniform pushed the boundaries of gender too far. Following the creation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), soldiers wrote home with rumors that the women were prostitutes for soldiers. In some cases, concerned parents wrote to the WAAC leadership about their fears.⁶ For the Marine Corps specifically, the appearance of propriety and respectability was the most important factor in the design of its recruiting plan: "In all interpretations of activities . . . there must be the inference, through reflection, that the Women's Reserve is possessed of a greater dignity and peopled by higher caliber personnel than any contemporary women's force. Suggestions contained herein accept

the foregoing as a primary dictate."⁷ Because joining the military was a direct challenge to the traditional American strictures of femininity and respectable behavior, the women's auxiliaries and the Marine Corps, in particular, emphasized that their recruits would remain respectable ladies even as they took on a variety of jobs outside the home that may have previously been reserved for men.

In the first half of the twentieth century, women moved into many formerly male-coded occupations. The needs of the country and the demands of war had created a massive increase in industrial production requirements that precipitated a labor shortage. Concurrently, the military's manpower needs increased for both combat and support roles. During World War I, the military fielded approximately two combat soldiers for every support soldier. By World War II, the ratio had shifted to two combat soldiers for every three in support roles.⁸ Women filled the workforce gaps in industry, agriculture, and, ultimately, the military.⁹ Women also worked in offices as secretaries, stenographers, typists, and clerks and had served in the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps in World War I.¹⁰ On 30 July 1942, President Roosevelt signed the legislation authorizing enlistment and commissioning of women's naval reserves.¹¹ The WAAC,¹² Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service

⁵ Judith A. Bellafaire, *The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service*, CMH Publication 72-15 (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, undated).

⁶ Col Mary V. Stremow, *Free a Marine to Fight: Women Marines in World War II* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps Historical Center, 1993), 7. For more on the rumor campaign, fears of lesbians in the auxiliaries, and the sexualized attacks on women in the Armed Services, see Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); MajGen Jeanne Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*, rev. ed. (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1992); D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); and Marilyn E. Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II* (New York: NYU Press, 2007).

⁷ U.S. Marine Corps Public Relations Division, "Public Relations Plan" (Marine Corps History Division, Women Marines, Reserves 1 of 3, Subsection Articles, undated), hereafter "Public Relations Plan."

⁸ John J. McGrath, *The Other End of the Spear: The Tooth-to-Tail Ratio (T3R) in Modern Military Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007), 11-24.

⁹ For more information on women's work roles during World War II, see Campbell, *Women at War with America*; Doris Weatherford, *American Women in World War II: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Woodbridge, CT: Twayne Publishers, 1982); and Emily Yellin, *Our Mother's War: American Women at Home and at the Front during World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

¹⁰ For more information on the gender-based changes in office work, see Carole Srole, *Transcribing Class and Gender: Masculinity and Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Courts and Offices* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009). For more information on the history of women in the Navy and Marine Corps during World War I, see Jean Ebbert and Marie-Beth Hall, *The First, The Few, The Forgotten: Navy and Marine Corps Women in World War I* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2002). For more information on the history of women in the Army in World War I (the Hello Girls of the Signal Corps), see Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider, *Into the Breach: American Women Overseas in World War I* (New York: Viking Books, 1991); and Lettie Gavin, *American Women in World War I: They Also Served* (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 1997). The last women serving with the Marine Corps and Navy left service in 1922.

¹¹ Roosevelt authorized the creation of the Army, Navy, and Coast Guard women's auxiliary/reserves. The Army's female auxiliary members become known as the WAACs; their Navy counterparts become known as the WAVEs. For more information, see the Web site for the Department of Defense, "National Women's History Month," http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2015/0315_womens-history/.

¹² The WAAC's official birthday was 15 May 1942. It was converted to Regular Army status, becoming the Women's Army Corps (WAC) on 3 July 1943. See Bellafaire, *The Women's Army Corps* at <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/WAC/WAC.HTM>.

(WAVES),¹³ and the Coast Guard Women's Reserve (SPAR)¹⁴ were instituted in the next few months and immediately began advertising for not just their particular branch but the idea of women serving in the military. Despite the traditional view of women as homebound nurturers, thousands of young women answered the call to arms and joined.¹⁵

Military leaders were reluctant to include women in their branches, but the Marine Corps in particular was vehemently opposed to the idea. Marine Corps Commandant Lieutenant General Thomas Holcomb was determined to maintain the elite status of his Service, which he believed was the result of its homogeneity: a service of white men. He believed that including women would "ruin" the Marine Corps, and said as much to Congressman Melvin J. Maas, who introduced the Women's Reserve legislation.¹⁶ Obeying the presidential order to integrate, Holcomb implemented far more stringent requirements for women than those applied to men.¹⁷ The Marine Corps' standards for men were higher than the other branches,¹⁸ and the additional hurdle winnowed the women applicants even further.

In the months between November 1942 and February 1943, the Women's Reserve and the Procurement Division had to conceptualize, design, and execute multiple types of recruiting materials to attract the specific women they wanted.¹⁹ The first decision was "to influence the choice of women who have already, or who are in the process of making up their minds to don a uniform."²⁰ As a result of their efforts, the divi-

sion created recruiting brochures, window placards, and posters for display. Some of the materials were destined for national distribution while others were distributed regionally. For the most part, the women's marketing campaign modeled the men's campaign, selling the elite status and tough reputation of the Marines Corps. Despite the intent to discourage women from applying, the higher standards actually strengthened the elite reputation of the Marine Corps. Many high-quality female applicants were drawn by the Corps' reputation, so much so that the Women's Reserve met its recruitment goals (18,000 women by June 1944) six months ahead of schedule.²¹ The Marine Corps began structuring its Reserve in November 1942, searching for a woman to serve as director, for a small staff, and for space for training and housing, and for creating a regulatory structure. The new group was activated on Sunday, 13 February 1943 as the Marine Corps Women's Reserve.²²

The creators of the Women's Reserve deconstructed the ideal of Marine-hood to a few fundamental components: tradition, being the first to fight, group membership and cohesion, and an elite status. All of these parts were combined to form the basic structure of Marine recruitment in World War II. The ideal changed from building *men* to building *Marines*. Recruiting materials emphasized that the female recruits would be equal with the men, with the same pay, same rank, same discipline, and the same name. The posters recast essential markers of femininity, such as clothing, makeup, and hairstyle, to empha-

¹³ The WAVES official birthday is 30 July 1942. For more information, see Jessica Meyers, "The Navy's History of Making WAVES," 30 July 2013, http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=75662.

¹⁴ The SPAR's official birthday is 23 November 1942. The abbreviation for their name comes from their motto, *Semper Paretis, Always Ready*. PA2 Robin J. Thomson, *The Coast Guard & The Women's Reserve in World War II* (Washington, DC: Coast Guard Historian's Office, 1992), <http://www.uscg.mil/history/articles/SPARS.pdf>.

¹⁵ Approximately 400,000 women enlisted to support the wartime effort. For more information, see <http://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/rr/s01/cw/students/leeann/historyandcollections/history/lrnmrewii.html>.

¹⁶ Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory*, 164.

¹⁷ Enlisted women requirements included: U.S. citizenship, not married to a Marine, no children younger than 18 years of age, height of not less than 60 inches, weight of not less than 95 pounds, good vision and teeth, age between 18 and 35 years of age, and at least two years of high school. Officer candidates' age range was between 20 and 49 years of age, but they must be a college graduate or have a combination of two years of college and two years of work experience.

¹⁸ To meet enlistment quotas, many of the Services reduced their male enlistment standards, particularly by lowering the physical requirements for admission. On 16 April 1942, recruiting officers could grant waivers for slight deviations with respect to age, height, weight, character discharge from previous Service, and police records. Additional modifications were made on 24 August 1942 when the maximum age for recruits was raised from 33 to 36. For more information, see RAdm Julius Augustus Furer, "The United States Marine Corps: Origin, Legal Status, and Mission," in *Administration of the Navy Department in World War II* (Washington, DC: Navy Department, 1959).

¹⁹ The Women's Reserve was activated several months after the other women's auxiliaries, and therefore needed to prioritize its time and budget for maximum efficiency.

²⁰ "Public Relations Plan."

²¹ *Strength Reports, Women Marines*, Reports 1 of 5 (Washington, DC: Marine Corps University, History Division).

²² Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 2.

size belonging. A prominent example can be seen in the emphasis placed on women wearing feminine skirted uniforms that were still in colors unique to the Marine Corps. The advertisements accessed cultural constructions of gender, social expectation, and ideals of masculine and feminine performance to successfully draw both men and women into a gender-integrated Marine Corps.

In the 1940s, U.S. society was still attached to the Victorian ideals of separate spheres and proscribed places for men and women. Women worked in “respectable” fields, such as nursing, teaching, and office support staff. Yet women consistently pushed the boundaries of acceptability and respectability, sometimes due to financial necessity but often for personal fulfillment. For example, women aviators (or aviatrixes) not only flew their own planes, they also maintained them. Women worked the counters at their families’ shops, worked their families’ farms, and worked in factories to send money back to their struggling families. Women also owned their own businesses or worked in positions of power as stockbrokers, police officers, and manual laborers.²³

As women advanced into male-dominated workspaces and took their place in the public sphere in the 1940s, they were faced with accusations of manishness, both mental and physical. Despite the societal changes of the previous few decades, women still needed to be identified as such. With the start of World War II and the increased need for workers in all industries, women and the businesses and military branches recruiting them were faced with a unique opportunity that was fraught with challenge: how to convince women to perform nontraditional work while preserving the traditional gender binary.²⁴ While it seems a small thing, the crucial aspect of the gender binary is the sexes’ legibility to other people; that is, it must be recognizable to others. Even as women took jobs as mechanics, drivers, logisticians, and factory workers, they were actively encouraged

to maintain feminine appearances. Subtle cues in the Marine Corps WWII-era posters indicate that the women shown fulfilled the traditional feminine space with things like makeup, nail polish, and fashionably styled hair. The emphasis in Marine Corps recruiting on the uniforms and, later, cosmetics designed specifically for the Marine Corps Women’s Reserve are both ways women could achieve what Judith Halberstam calls “a cardinal rule of gender: one must be readable at a glance.”²⁵

Dramatic changes in American society opened new opportunities to women across a wide swath of industries, yet the underlying implication of the advertising was that women’s work during the war would be temporary. Once the conflict ended and the men came home, the women would all return to the domestic sphere and welcome their returning soldiers. This assumption had been in place before the war, as young single women were expected to work only until they married. The onset of combat required employers to hire married women and mothers of young children, despite the taboo against it. Enticing married women and homemakers to enter the workforce supported the connections between housework and industrial work, and women’s employment during World War II reinforced the gendered separation of labor.²⁶

Another method used to draw women into the workforce was to feminize the tasks involved. No matter how heavily masculine the job had been prewar, when women were needed to take over vacant positions, the work was described as similar to housework, using the same terminology or making a direct comparison. Working a lathe was compared to an electric washing machine, welding to sewing, a drill press to a juicer. Further, newsreels and printed articles emphasized how pretty and feminine war workers remained despite their masculine-coded tasks: “As if calculated to assure women—and men—that war work need not involve a loss of femininity, depictions of women’s

²³ For further information on women’s professional lives between World War I and World War II, see Virginia Nicholson, *Singled Out: How Two Million British Women Survived Without Men After the First World War* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008). For more on American women’s professional activities in the early 1940s, see Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*.

²⁴ Gender binary is the artificial division of the world into things that are “masculine” or “for men” and things that are “feminine” or “for women.”
²⁵ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 23. Halberstam is the director of the Center for Feminist Research at the University of Southern California.

²⁶ Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 61–64.

new work roles were overlaid with allusions to their stylish dress and attractive appearance.”²⁷

While new workers were enticed into industry, the Marine Corps targeted the pool of women clerical workers. A radio announcement first made on 13 February 1943 clearly articulates the role women were expected to play in the Marine Corps.

The men of the Corps are traditionally famous for out-fighting the enemy anywhere on the globe . . . These stout-hearted men are now needed overseas. Your service will be important not only because of the military duty itself, but also because you will be unleashing another fighting Marine to advance against the enemies over there.²⁸

Office work had become respectable work for women at all stages of life by this point, and professional competence was now a stoutly middle-class replacement for the refinement of an upper-class woman. Carole Srole argues that the shift in gendered office work occurred in the late nineteenth century, making it more acceptable for women to work as clerks and typists. At the height of the Industrial Revolution, women worked in factories and shops as domestic workers and teachers. With the advent of technology, such as typewriters, women flooded shorthand and typist positions, work previously done almost exclusively by men. The arrival of women into the workforce pushed both men and women to recreate their images as office workers and separate from other classes of laborers. Masculine and feminine traits were intermingled to create a new aesthetic of professionalism, one that was applicable to both sexes with only a few differences, including ambition, mental acumen, and independence.

Women still faced challenges, created by men who tried to cast all working women as immoral or incompetent, and created a new, respectable image of the professional businesswoman. The professional businesswoman had all the characteristics of the classic image of the middle-class businessman but also the empathy and caring nature of an upper-class “lady” without the hyperfeminine weaknesses. This

woman stood in contrast to the “typewriter girl,” or the “gold-digger” of questionable morals who was only working long enough to catch a husband. The businesswoman became a respectable member of the middle class as both men and women created new, “professional” identities that were distinguishable from earlier models of both masculinity and femininity.²⁹

Shifts in who did the work also precipitated changes in how the work was perceived. Reframing what work entailed recast the tasks as respectable for women, though the job itself was devalued in the process. For example, in the automobile and electrical manufacturing industries, women were assigned jobs that were considered “light work.” Even if men and women performed the same task, different wage rates meant the men were paid more for the same job. However, there was no continuity across industries or geography, indicating that descriptions of “women’s work” varied according to each employer’s preconceptions of propriety and ability.³⁰

The shifts in workplace norms also pushed a change in gender itself. Gender is expressed through behaviors, which are codified through an agreed-upon performance of those behaviors. Judith Butler describes gender as “the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.”³¹ Gender is created when socially agreed-upon behaviors are performed repeatedly for others and the self. As such, people perform behaviors they associate with their gender identities. According to Butler, there is no original gender, merely performances based on an individual’s perception of the socially described gender; it is socially created through unspoken conversations between members of a social group. That being said, this does not mean that gender is not real, rather, it means that no gendered behavior or practice is fixed, and that any gendered or ungended behavior can be inscribed on a set of behaviors by common consensus.³²

²⁷ Ibid., 61.

²⁸ “USMCWR Recruiting Copy,” Women Marines, General Information 1 of 2, Subsection Press Releases (Washington, DC: Marine Corps History Division, undated), 12–14.

²⁹ Srole, *Transcribing Class and Gender*, 11–12.

³⁰ Milkman, *Gender at Work*, 15–19.

³¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1987, 2006), 45.

³² Ibid., 34–45.

Recruiters for the Women's Reserve had to convince women that they could join the Marine Corps without compromising either the women's femininity or the Corps' reputation as the toughest outfit in the U.S. Armed Services. Yet the core of the Marine Corps advertising for both men and women shifted away from the prewar campaign of "making men" to simply "making Marines."

USMC recruiting posters that targeted men and were focused on the Corps' traditions and history. Some materials directly recalled historical events with images or direct references of the Marine Corps' birthday of 10 November. Other materials showed Marines wearing the iconic blue dress uniform, inviting the viewer to join, or used the eagle, globe, and anchor emblem alone to identify the Marine Corps.

Many posters directed toward male recruits featured action, an allusion to the first to fight reputation of the Marine Corps. An early poster bluntly asks the viewer "Want Action? Join U.S. Marine Corps!"³³ The Marine extends his hand forward toward the viewer, inviting him into the picture. A plane flies in the distance, above a series of ships, most likely troop transport ships. The Marine has a welcoming expression on his face, as if he is identifying the viewer as a man worthy of becoming a Marine. Instead of encouraging the viewer to do his part—to enlist, to answer the call to arms—the poster instead presumes the viewer is already planning to join the military and the only question is how much "action" the man would like to see. Here we see the presumption of service—the man viewing this poster has already decided to join and only needs to choose his branch of Service.

The most direct recruit advertising, used to push the Corps' elite reputation and history, were produced in 1942 and 1943 to both commemorate the Marine Corps' birthday and to recruit in honor of it. The 1942 poster follows the red, white, and blue color scheme found in other posters and uses a two-part background image: the Marine Corps emblem on the right and a shipboard battle scene on the left, with names of famous Marine battles overlaid. A contemporary Marine stands in the center, holding a rifle with bayonet fixed, staring at an enemy to the right of frame. The text, "Always Advance with the



U.S. National Archives

"Want Action." A World War I-era U.S. Marine Corps recruiting poster for men.

U.S. Marines," plays into the Marine reputation as the outfit that sees the most action. The battle scene reminds the viewer that the Marines are soldiers of the sea, an amphibious force. The names of battles, up to and including recently won island battles, emphasize both the tradition and the reputation of the Marine Corps without explicitly stating either. The poster creates a powerful image, but the open composition and lack of visual context detaches it from reality.³⁴

The 1943 poster provides more visual context and less cheerleading. The text is simple including the Marine Corps motto, "*Semper Fidelis*," and the anniversary date and years, "November 10, 1775–1943."

³³ "WANT ACTION? Join U.S. Marine Corps!," National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 44-PA-70, World War II Posters.

³⁴ "1775 . . . 167th Anniversary . . . 1992," National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 44-PA-336, World War II Posters.



U.S. National Archives

"Always Advance with the U.S. Marines." This 1942 Marine Corps recruiting poster was also used to mark the 167th anniversary of the Corps.

Two Marines in jungle gear are charging ahead toward the viewer. The damage done to their uniforms indicates that they have been in battle and are continuing the fight. The background is a cloud, recalling the fog of war, and a Continental Marine-era drummer exhorts the Marines to further valor. The eagle, globe, and anchor emblem in the top right corner rests on a dark blue background rather than on the cloud. In this poster, the connection to tradition and history is most important. The Revolutionary-era Marine connects the modern Marines to the nation's history, and the insignia and motto connect them to other Marines—a sign of group cohesion. The drummer is the driving force behind the two Marines. The poster illustrates the tradition and history driving the Marines, and it implies that the male recruit will be part of an organization with both a storied past as well as a powerful present and future.³⁵

Other posters from the time focused on the present and future of the Marine Corps. Aviation was crucial to the war effort, especially in the Pacific theater, where vast distances complicated battle plans. With the Doolittle Raid³⁶ and the success of Allied bombing campaigns in Europe, aviation quickly became a glamorous position, one that all branches advertised.



U.S. National Archives

"Semper Fidelis." In this 1943 Marine Corps anniversary poster, a Revolutionary War drummer exhorts Marines in battle.

Here, too, the Marine Corps used its first to fight reputation in the aviation-specific recruiting material.

In a departure from the generally minimalist posters discussed here, one aviation poster is a complex and vivid scene. A Marine aircraft hangs in the foreground, flying away from the viewer and firing on a Japanese fighter plane in the background, as a Japanese bomber falls in the middle range of the image. The scene is set over a Japanese village, with the iconic Mount Fuji in the distance. The buildings are traditional Japanese wooden residential structures. At the back of the village stands two simple Shinto gateways. The falling bomber appears to be about to crash into one of the houses. The poster invites the viewer to imagine himself as the aviator who takes

³⁵ "Semper Fidelis. U.S. Marine Corps," National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 44-PA-243, World War II Posters.

³⁶ The 18 April 1942 Doolittle Raid, named for LtCol James H. Doolittle, USAAF, represented the first U.S. attack on the Japanese home islands. The attack came in retaliation for Pearl Harbor, and had little military but high psychological significance.



U.S. National Archives

"Hit Hard and Often." A majority of Marine recruiting posters during World War II incorporated aviation themes, such as a Marine attack on a Japanese village as portrayed in this poster.

the fight to the Japanese, reinforcing the Marine reputation as the first to fight. The text reads "HIT HARD and often WITH the MARINES"; this is the most direct reference to Japanese aerial attacks of all the posters.³⁷

Part of the Corps' elite status is also about looking the part. The iconic dress uniform is one of the Marine Corps' most distinctive markers, and it was used as a marketing tool. The striking color scheme and expert use of simple design and tailoring techniques make it an almost universally flattering garment. The uniform sets the Marines apart from the other Services visually, making it clear that they are distinctive and separate.



U.S. National Archives

"READY." The Marine uniform was a common element in both male and female recruiting posters during World War II as a way to distinguish the Corps from the other military branches also heavily recruiting at the time.

Several posters show a Marine in his iconic dress uniform. A strikingly simple poster shows a Marine at parade rest against an off-white background in front of the word "READY" in red across the top. The remainder of the text falls below the uniform belt, reading "Join U.S. Marines/Land/Sea/Air."³⁸ The minimalist design lets the uniform do the work. The short, sharp phrasing emphasizes each word, making them stand out, and the red, white, and blue color scheme continues that of other posters. The dress uniform emphasizes the Marine Corps' uniqueness and acknowledges that the uniform itself is desirable on an aesthetic level.³⁹

Another unique poster makes use of several of the methods discussed above, increasing the complex-

³⁷ "Hit Hard and Often with the Marines," National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 44-PA-995, World War II Posters.

³⁸ "READY. Join U.S. Marines," National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 44-PA-1618, World War II Posters.

³⁹ "This Device on Headgear or Uniform Means U.S. Marines," National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 44-PA-2025, World War II Posters.



U.S. National Archives

"Always on the Alert." In this WWII-era poster, promoters played on the Marine motto "first to fight" as a selling point for the elite nature of the Corps, focusing on a male Marine in dress uniform manning an antiaircraft position during an air raid.

ity of the composition. The poster depicts a night air raid. A spotlight picks out four aircraft silhouettes over a generalized city skyline. A Marine in dress uniform trousers and cover mans an antiaircraft gun in the foreground. The Marine is clearly firing upon the incoming aircraft. The text reads "Always on the Alert, at Sea, on Land, in the Air." The generalized skyline could be any number of American cities, underscoring the fear that the U.S. mainland

was as vulnerable to attack as Hawaii and Alaska had proven to be. This poster marks the individual as a Marine by his trousers, and implies that he was involved in a formal, noncombat event when the attack began. Because Marines are "always on the alert," he was able to establish a defensive position in time to protect the city. Once again, this image reinforces the ideal of the Marines as elite and the first to fight. Instead of interacting with the viewer, the scene merely focuses on the individual. By telling a single Marine's story, the poster reinforces Marine Corps values and invites the viewer to become a part of the storied Corps.⁴⁰

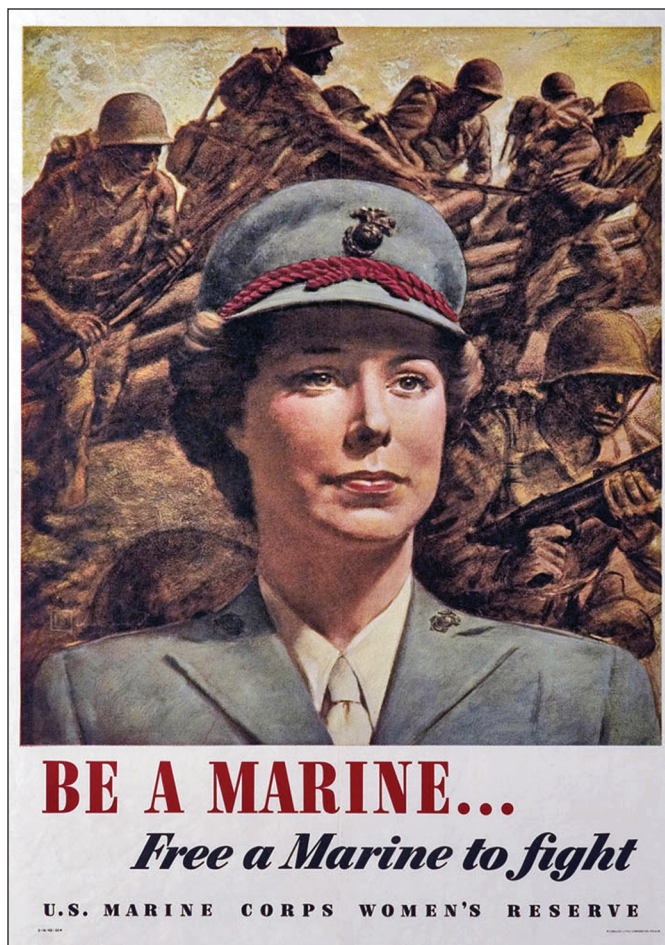
These recruiting posters worked from a few basic assumptions. First, that the Marine Corps' unique traditions were worth upholding, and that they were good ideals to add to one's own. Second, that the viewer was already planning on joining the military, it was merely a matter of deciding where to go. Third, that the viewer considered himself worthy of the Marine Corps' elite status. These posters imply that the viewer already sees Marine Corps' virtues in himself, and only needs to join to bring those seeds to full flower. The concept was clearly carried over to the recruitment material directed toward women.

Recruiting posters targeting women also invoked tradition, using images of male Marines fighting.⁴¹ Wartime costs limited the number of poster designs and the types of promotional materials that could be produced during the war years. Therefore, the Women's Reserve used other media along with posters, such as radio advertisements and sponsored spots, newspaper articles and fillers, and strategic use of posters, window signs, car placards, and booklets. The Women's Reserve was also represented in the broader Office of War Information (OWI) campaign that introduced female recruits to all of the women's Services.⁴² The Women Reserves' main objective was to set it apart from the other women's Service

⁴⁰ "Always on the Alert," National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 44-PA-339, World War II Posters.

⁴¹ Note that, even though our focus here is on the visual recruiting materials, the same concepts were highlighted in other formats, such as radio spots. The elite status of the Marine Corps was implied in much of the written material. Radio spots and advertisements directly connected the Women's Reserve to the assaults on Tarawa and Guadalcanal, arguing that the victories, however difficult and costly, would have been impossible without the women Marines. Each radio spot and advertisement clearly explained the enlistment requirements for women. They clearly explained the process of becoming a Marine and emphasized that being a Marine would be difficult but worth the effort. Radio spots also emphasized the more feminine aspects of life as a woman reservist, and in all cases rested on the assumption that the women wanted to be changed by their experience but did not want to change too much. For more, see "March of the Women Marines" radio advertisements, Marine Corps University History Division, Women Marines, Enlistment-Enlistment, Training-Specialist Schools, and Assignments-Miscellaneous.

⁴² "Public Relations Plan."



Walter Clinton Jackson Library,
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

The image of Maj Ruth Cheney Streeter, the first director of the Women's Reserve, was often used on recruiting posters for female Marines during WWII.

branches. The most obvious difference was the lack of an official nickname. In a 1944 interview with *Life* magazine, Holcomb, despite his own reservations, made it clear that the women were as much Marines as the men. "They are *Marines*. They don't have a nickname and don't need one. They get their basic

training in a Marine atmosphere at a Marine post. They inherit the traditions of the Marines. They *are* Marines."⁴³ In that same spirit, the women's recruiting material was based on the same premise as the men's, particularly that the materials targeted women who had already decided to join the military and were still deciding which branch to join.⁴⁴

A common image used in female recruiting during World War II was that of the first director of the MCWR, Major Ruth Cheney Streeter. In her mid-40s at the time, Streeter was a philanthropist and homemaker with sons in the military. Her biographical details were repeatedly emphasized in Marine Corps press releases along with her most striking accomplishment: she was an aviator with a commercial pilot's license. She had applied to the Women's Air Service Pilots (WASP) and was subsequently denied five times for being too old. She carried her passion for aviation with her to the Marine Corps.⁴⁵ Despite her aviation credentials, Streeter's main appeal as the director of the newly formed Reserve was her status as a mother, fulfilling the traditional role expected of women. Her entire family worked for the war effort, and her status as a blue-star mother made her more relatable to parents of potential reservists.⁴⁶

By using Major Streeter's image, the Marine Corps headed off hints of impropriety and deviance about young women joining the military ranks. Her status as a mother combined with her professional competence made her an ideal leader—one to whom parents entrusted their daughters, and one that enlistees could respect as a leader. In recruiting posters, the contrast between her and male Marines is subtly emphasized. She wears the uniform with red highlights and, while the basis of the uniform is a man's suit, she appears quite feminine. Streeter wears a fashionable but regulation hairstyle with understated yet appro-

⁴³ "Women Marines," *Life*, 27 March 1944, 81-84.

⁴⁴ A variety of public relations tools were used in addition to the posters. The few posters produced were placed prominently around town, just as were the men's posters. The women's procurement officers also provided car and window placards for display. Brochures were often distributed at meetings of local women's groups and clubs. Procurement officers were guest speakers, though the preferred speaker was a local woman reservist. The meetings and recruitment events were announced and covered in local newspapers. Some women who attended the meetings were sworn in there, and the photos of their swearing-in became future promotional material for the area. See "Public Relations Plan."

⁴⁵ Stremow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 3-4. Planes were often featured prominently in recruiting imagery, and ultimately, about 50 percent of women reservists worked in aviation in some capacity. This statistic came from an untitled radio address given by MajGen Field Harris, director of Marine Aviation, for the MCWR's second anniversary in 1945.

⁴⁶ Streeter's motherhood was both acknowledged and celebrated, and it was often presented as proof that the young women would be well cared for while in the Marines. The idea that the women would be properly chaperoned and their reputations would be untarnished by their service was important in the recruiting effort, and something that set the Women's Reserve apart from both the men and the other women's Services. Stremow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 7.



U.S. National Archives

"Be a Marine." Maj Streeter's image was repeatedly used for female Marine recruiting as an indirect assurance to possible recruits and their families that the Marine Corps was a safe place to entrust their daughters for military service.

priately feminine makeup. She looks to the horizon, over the right shoulder of the viewer. Her expression is resolute, showing strength without harshness. An easy confidence comes through, painting Streeter as a person comfortable with the conflicts inherent in her position.

One recruiting poster featuring Major Streeter has a background of Marines charging a beach. The text below the image reads "Be A Marine . . . Free a Marine to fight." The billboard version shows Streeter on a white background with the same text in red and blue. These strikingly simple designs are a hallmark of many of the Marine Corps recruiting posters. Used within the first months of the female recruiting efforts, the focus on the director and the basic function of the Women's Reserve transmitted the Corps' female recruiting message clearly and quickly.

The short, concise slogans implied that the Marine Corps had no need to sell themselves. Rather, the Marines invited a select few to join them. As such, recruiting materials sold the Corps as an elite organization of singular individuals. By inviting viewers to see themselves through this lens, potential recruits could then take the short step to being Marines. Streeter further emphasized this message in 1943.

To those who have long wanted to be a Marine, I say: the door is now open. The next step is up to you. To those who have not yet found their post of greatest service, here is your opportunity.⁴⁷



U.S. National Archives

"Free a Marine to Fight." The recruiting rhetoric behind this poster was similar to the "Be a stand-in for a hero" concept that encouraged women to take on jobs in the Marine Corps to free up their male counterparts for combat-related positions.

Women-focused recruiting efforts clearly emphasized aviation. Posters not featuring Streeter all focus on a woman in front of a plane. The women hold clipboards, obviously taking an active role in aviation administration during the war. In two of the three posters, the female Marine stands alone. In the third, however, a male aviator looks to the woman reservist for instruction. These women are strong, capable, and have authority that is respected and accepted by their brothers in Service. Showing the women independent from men provides legitimacy to their work, quietly underscoring that these women are different than most and that their ability and dedication are unquestioned.

⁴⁷ USMCWR Recruiting Copy, 4.

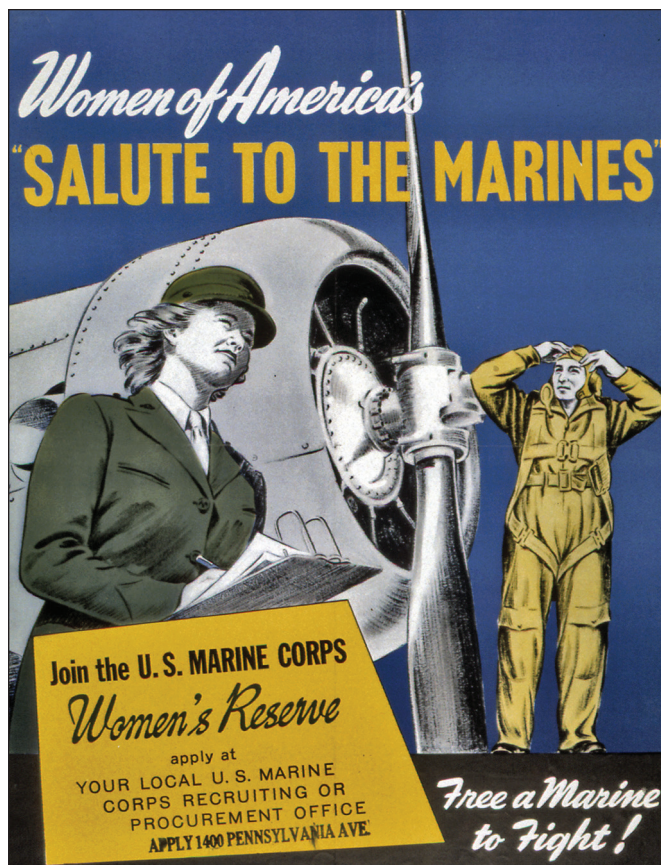


Marine Corps History Division

"So Proudly We Serve." Aviation-themed recruiting posters were often used for female Marines during WWII as more than 50 percent of female reservists worked in aviation in some capacity during the war.

These three images do more than emphasize aviation as a possible occupation. They also emphasize freedom, strength, ability, competence, and opportunity. The female reservists all look to the right of the frame, slightly upward in the same direction as those featuring Major Streeter. While images of people looking to the sky are common at an airfield, the consistency with Major Streeter's portrait is significant. Each of these women seems to be looking to the future, but they understand that there is work to be done now, work that may lead to careers after the military.

The aviation posters all reflect the goals of the female recruiting program—being a Marine does not mean being less of a woman. The female Marines are conventionally pretty and sharply dressed in their uniforms. Their hair and makeup is both properly feminine and appropriately military. The women



U.S. National Archives

"Salute to the Marines." This Washington, DC, area Women's Reserve recruiting poster includes several elements commonly used during WWII to attract female recruits, including an aviation theme and a women posed in a well-tailored Marine uniform.

are competent and strong; they are doing important work to support the war effort, but they have not lost the characteristics that make them women. The women Marines are a part of the larger group, with as little differentiation as possible. For example, they wear the service uniform with a coat and the Marine Corps emblem. Their uniforms are well tailored and consistent with the men's everyday uniforms. However, even though they appear as similar to their male counterparts as possible, they are still clearly women, both feminine and attractive.

The visuals for the window placards and car cards followed the same conventions as the posters. A window placard for display at each procurement office showed a gray scale sketch of a woman Marine on a white background. She is facing the viewer directly, calmly, and confidently. Above her head in bold red letters are the words "Enlist Now," and below, in black text on a red block, "Inquire Here!" The posi-



Marine Corps History Division

This female Marine recruiting window placard was used for display in Marine Corps procurement office windows across the nation to attract potential recruits.

tioning of the woman Marine in these materials is different, as she faces the viewer directly. This composition gives the viewer a sense that this image is not based on a portrait, but is instead an idealization of the woman looking at the poster, showing her a possible future as a female Marine. She is attractive, neat, fashionable, and sharp. The image starts at the neck, so the only part of the uniform shown is the headgear with the Marine Corps emblem and distinctive braid. Her gaze is almost challenging: "Are you coming?"⁴⁸ Designed specifically to be displayed

in a recruiting office window, the placard would have had a powerful impact. The placard follows the same lines as the "Want Action" and "READY" posters (see pp. 20 and 30) directed at male recruits. The Marine in the poster expects that the viewer has already decided to join the military, and is encouraging him or her to choose the Marines.

Having reached the maximum enlistment of 19,000 by December 1944, recruiting efforts were reduced to a maintenance level pace by the February 1945 birthday. A unique placard was created specifically for the MCWR's second anniversary. The window placard featured a portrait of a woman reservist over a red, white, and blue background. The text reads, "Be a Stand-in for a Hero!" The slogan skips the subtext of earlier posters and immediately places the combat Marine at the top of the heap. He is a hero and, by implication, standing in for him in a noncombat job makes a woman a hero as well.⁴⁹ The message again points to the elite status of the Marine and will transfer to the woman Marine.

The MCWR recruiting materials emphasized traditional markers of femininity and womanhood and tied them to the uniform. The women's uniforms were a major selling point, one that was actively promoted.⁵⁰ In a surprising connection of the commercial and military worlds, Elizabeth Arden Cosmetics was contracted to create a red nail lacquer, lipstick, and rouge to complement the Women's Reserve uniform. Named "Montezuma Red," it was the same distinctive shade of red as the military issue scarf and flashes on the uniform, and was quickly marketed to the MCWR and the nation as a properly patriotic form of makeup.⁵¹ Connecting high-end cosmetics to the Women's Reserve told women already in the Reserve and those considering it that the women of the MCWR were quite feminine, enough so that they had their own unique cosmetic color.⁵²

Even without the Elizabeth Arden connection, the

⁴⁸ World War II Recruiting Center Window Placard, Women Marines Publications (3 of 3) (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University, History Division, undated).

⁴⁹ Second Anniversary Recruiting Placard, Women Marines Publications (3 of 3) (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University, History Division, undated). A photo is unavailable, as the original placard is damaged.

⁵⁰ The shoes were practical but still fashionable, the pocketbook came with a removable slipcover, and the flashes of red on the "forestry green" uniform were mentioned repeatedly in press releases and news articles. Wearing makeup, including nail polish, was encouraged as a method of feminine expression.

⁵¹ See Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 19; Lindy Woodhead, *War Paint: Madame Helena Rubinstein & Miss Elizabeth Arden: Their Lives, Their Times, Their Rivalry* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2003), 287-88; and Elizabeth Arden advertisement, Women Marines-Wars (1 of 2), Subsection Articles (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University, History Division, undated).

⁵² Woodhead, *War Paint*, 287.

female reservists understood the importance of maintaining their appearance. Wearing cosmetics meant they were still properly feminine, and still within the conventional bounds of respectability. Hairstyle was also important. Regulation hairstyles required that hair not fall beyond the collar, so shorter, fashionable styles were encouraged. Beauty parlors were added to military installations so the women could maintain fashionable and regulation-compliant hairstyles, which sometimes required chemical processing, a concession to different social rules for men and women in the Marine Corps, despite organizational efforts to make them as similar as possible.

While the Marine Corps' internal struggles over presentation were not visible to the public, the results were clear in the recruiting materials. The women were all attractive, wore delicate makeup that looked lightly applied, and had painted nails where the hands were visible and short, practical hair that was still stylish. The models were typically pretty women in a time when "pretty" meant girly and petite. Because of this clearly marketed preference for delicacy, internal memos indicate that, despite the need for men in combat, some male Marines had to remain in stateside assignments to handle the heavy lifting for the women.⁵³

While Marine Corps WWII recruiting materials were consciously based on the Marines' reputation as an elite outfit in the military, which was clearly visible in the men's recruitment material, the message subtly shifted when applied to female-focused materials. The Women's Reserve made this conceptual leap less daunting by playing on both the extant Marine Corps reputation as an elite organization and appealing to the viewer's self-image as an exceptional individual. Deceptively simple, this strategy required careful balancing of respectability, tradition, and innovation, moving from "You'll become a man" to "You'll still

Montezuma Red

Elizabeth Arden's newest lipstick color — Montezuma Red
... inspired by the brave, true red of the hat cord, scarf
and chevrons of the Women in the Marines.
A vivid red to wear with black, white, gray,
beige, navy and tweeds. A tribute to some of the
bravest men and women in the world.

Complete Montezuma Red Makeup:
Montezuma Red Lipstick, 1.50 (refills .75)
Montezuma Red Cream Rouge, 1.25 and 1.75
Montezuma Red Nail Polish, .75
All Day Foundation, Dark Beige, 1.00
Illusion Powder, Special Mat Finish, 1.75 and 3.00
Creme Powder, Rose Beige, 1.75 and 3.00
Eye Shade, Mahogany, 1.25
Eyelash Pomade, Dark, 1.00 and 2.00
(green plus taxes)

Free a Marine to
Fight! Share the
great traditions of the
Marines. Join the U. S.
Marine Corps Women's Reserve

Elizabeth Arden

Copyright 1943, Elizabeth Arden

Marine Corps History Division

Cosmetic company Elizabeth Arden joined the ranks of business supporting the Marine Corps' ability to recruit females with the release of lipstick and nail polish in "Montezuma Red" that was made specifically for women Marines, as shown in this magazine advertisement that ran in fashion magazines of the time.

be a woman." That simple change in recruiting strategy not only drew highly sought-after women to the Marine Corps, it also helped reshape societies' views on femininity, the military, the workplace, and the woman's place in the United States. ♦ 1775 ♦

⁵³ *Marine Corps Women's Reserve General Policies, Women Marines—Wars* (1 of 2), Subsection Regulations (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University, History Division, 25 November 1943); and *Monthly Report from Assistant for Women's Reserve, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Survey of Distribution of MCWR Personnel, Camp Lejeune, as of 1 May 1944, Women Marines—Assignments, Subsection—Locations* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University, History Division).

Vietnam Marines and the Defense of Quang Tri in 1972

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The United States and Free World forces began withdrawing from South Vietnam in 1971 as a result of the Vietnamization policy envisioned by the Richard M. Nixon administration, which left the Vietnamese to conduct their own military forces with American advice and support. After the departure of the major U.S. Marine air and ground commands from Military Region 1 (MR 1), a residual force of American Marines remained in the form of advisors, communicators, fire support coordinators, and embassy guards. While previous incursions into neighboring Cambodia and Laos appeared to indicate the limitations of this approach, a major test of the concept took place in 1972. For the American and South Vietnamese Marines, this began with a head-on confrontation with the invading North Vietnamese along the demilitarized zone in conventional fighting that culminated with the loss of the provincial capital, Quang Tri City.

After the acrimonious and confused fighting that began in April and May 1972, this singular defeat



Courtesy of author

Vietnamese Marine Corps insignia, patterned after the American eagle, globe, and anchor.

would be redeemed later in a singular victory. The combat, so late in the war, was still significant. For the South Vietnamese, it meant they could not hold their own against the North Vietnamese without critical American support. For the Americans, it was a foretaste of the impact of high-tempo conventional operations after the counterinsurgency era. This and the lessons of the 1973 October War (Yom Kippur War) in the Middle East would serve as important

*The foundations for this article began at the USMC Command and Staff College Easter Offensive Symposium in December 1986. It was a paper funded by the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation for the Society for Military History Meeting at the Royal Military College of Canada in May 1993, along with presentations by Dale Andrade and Howard Feng. The account was based on the primary information generated by the events and participants. Documentation came from the Marine Corps Historical Center (MCHC, Washington, DC), the U.S. Army Center of Military History (USACMH, Washington, DC), and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA, College Park, MD). More recent secondary material was consulted to include John Grider Miller's *The Co-Vans: U.S. Marine Advisors in Vietnam* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000); Dale Andrade's *America's Last Vietnam Battle: Halting Hanoi's 1972 Easter Offensive* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001); Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole's *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1971-1973* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, 2007); Stephen P. Randolph's *Powerful and Brutal Weapons: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Easter Offensive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Ha Mai Viet's *Steel and Blood: South Vietnamese Armor and the War for Southeast Asia* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008); and Robert E. Stoffey's *Fighting to Leave: The Final Years of America's War in Vietnam, 1972-1973* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2008).



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

LtGen Le Nguyen Khang, Commandant of the Vietnamese Marine Corps, with Senior Marine Advisor Col Joshua W. Dorsey III.

preparation for U.S. armed forces in the 1990–91 Gulf War in Southwest Asia.

In 1972, both the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV) asserted that the Vietnamese Marine Corps (VNMC) played a major part in the battlefield defeat that resulted in the loss of Quang Tri City and Province of the Republic of South Vietnam in April and May 1972. This was based on two observations: one, Vietnamese Marine commanders paid more attention to their service leader than their tactical commander; and two, this was caused by pressure from the Vietnamese Marines and their American Marine advisors to fight as a division command for the first time.

During the North Vietnamese spring offensive, the South Vietnamese 3d ARVN Division was defeated in a series of engagements that climaxed on 1 May 1972 with the loss of Quang Tri City (first battle of Quang Tri City). The aftermath of this event was muddled by acrimonious disputes among American forces over the conduct of the defense of Quang Tri Province in MR 1 (or ARVN I Corps), which saw the U.S. Army advisors withdraw while U.S. Marine ad-



Defense Department (Marine Corps) A800666

Senior Marine Advisor Col Dorsey with BGen Bui The Lan commanding the Vietnamese Marine Division.

visors remained with their Vietnamese counterparts.

The actions and motivation of the Vietnamese Marines were subjected to various interpretations: senior 3d ARVN Division advisor, U.S. Army Colonel Donald J. Metcalf, stated that the VNMC lost Quang Tri City; First Regional Assistance Command's Army Major General Frederick J. Kroesen Jr. implied it; and USMACV's Army General Creighton W. Abrams Jr. directed his ire against both VNMC and ARVN armored units—at least until he departed Vietnam in June 1972, which coincided with the beginning of the successful counteroffensive to regain both the province and city by the VNMC and ARVN airborne divisions supported by American air and naval forces.

As early as 1974, Australian Army Brigadier Francis P. Serong repeated claims of VNMC misconduct, similar to those made by ARVN and U.S. Army personnel.¹ U.S. Army General William C. Westmoreland even commented on the misconduct in his memoirs in 1976.² And the debate created by Colonel Gerald H. Turley—one of the Marine advisors' most vocal participants—in his 1985 book continued to fuel the unsubstantiated charges of Vietnam-

¹ Brig F. P. Serong, "The 1972 Easter Offensive," *Southeast Asian Perspectives*, no. 1 (Summer 1974): 32–34.

² Gen William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1976).

ese Marine misconduct more than a decade after the debacle.³

In Their Own Image

In 1954, a scattering of riverine commandos was designated as the “Marine infantry” of the Republic of Vietnam Navy, later known as the Vietnamese Marine Corps (VNMC or TQLC in Vietnamese). The Marine infantry became part of the armed forces general reserve and was separated from the Vietnamese Navy in 1965 and from then answered only to the Joint General Staff of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). It expanded from a solitary battalion to nine infantry battalions and three artillery battalions in a multibrigade structure along with



Defense Department (Marine Corps) A193103

LtGen Hoang Xuan Lam, the senior South Vietnamese leader in MR 1, advised in 1972 by MajGen Frederick J. Kroesen Jr., commanding the 1st Regional Assistance Command in Da Nang.

service and support units. Also present was a small advisory team of U.S. Marines as part of the Cold War proliferation of the Marines Corps in the area of the U.S. Pacific Command, which included Korea, Vietnam, Nationalist China, the Philippines, and Indonesia. American forces brought a background based on established naval amphibious forces, division-level employment, and a legislated structure. As a result, the vision of a Vietnamese Marine Division reflected the organization and doctrine that the United States was familiar with. This concept was fostered by Vietnamese attendance at Marine Corps schools and the material support of the advisory effort. Despite resistance from the ARVN and USMACV command structures, by 1968, the goal of a full division of Marines was a priority for Lieutenant General Le Nguyen Khang, the VNMC commandant, and his advisors. Divisional structure was reached by 1970, but no large scale employment occurred. The pressure for this structure increased with external operations in Cambodia in 1970 and Laos in 1971. Those operations deserve a closer look (which is not possible in this limited analysis) due to the friction that occurred with the respective VNMC and ARVN command structures. Difficulties also arose between the VNMC brigade commanders and acting division commander, Colonel Bui The Lan.⁴

Prelude To Defeat

By 1971, with the departure of most American combat units from MR 1, VNMC brigades were deployed in rotation to Quang Tri Province and placed under ARVN command. Even with a deployment to Laos in February 1971, under Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Lam (who commanded I Corps) as part of Operation Lam Son 719,⁵ the Vietnamese Marines did not operate at any greater level. General Khang and his American advisors felt General Lam did not support the VNMC units and gave Lam the nickname “Bloody Hands” for his expenditure of Marine lives during the failed incursion. The extent to which pol-

³ Col Gerald H. Turley, *The Easter Offensive: The Last American Advisors, Vietnam, 1972* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1985).

⁴ Background on the Vietnamese Marine division includes American Embassy Saigon, *Command Histories and Historical Sketches of RVNAF Divisions*, 6 February 1973 (MCHC); Capt William D. Wischmeyer, *Vietnamese Marine Corps/Marine Advisory Unit Historical Summary, 1954-1973*, 22 March 1973 (MCHC); MajGen L. Nguyen Khang oral history intvw, 30 September 1975 (MCHC); MajGen L. Nguyen Khang, “Republic of Vietnam Marine Corps,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (November 1966): 68; and Col Victor J. Croizat, “Vietnamese Naval Forces: Origin of the Species,” *Proceedings* (February 1973): 48-58.

⁵ Major operation into Laos by the ARVN between 30 January and 24 March 1971.

itics overrode tactical decisions was difficult to gauge when VNMC requests to withdraw were met by comments of “Now the Marines will have to fight.” Speculation circulated that the damage to the Vietnamese Marines was the desired result to weaken the Khang-Ky (South Vietnamese Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky) faction, just as the losses to the Vietnamese airborne had impacted the Lam-Thieu (South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu) faction in the Vietnamese government.⁶ This was an example of the complex network of political, professional, and familial relations that shifted within the politics of USMACV and the Vietnamese.⁷

A more significant factor with Lam Son 719 was that the Americans provided critical control of maneuver and fire support, which should have come from the Vietnamese forces. The senior American commander in Vietnam, General Abrams, concluded in July 1971 that the Vietnamese suffered from weak leadership and the inability to control American firepower. Abrams did not expect American advisors to “play a major role in the improvement of South Vietnamese military forces.”⁸ The Vietnamese Marines learned from combat with the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and adjusted accordingly, and even the ARVN noted the Marines had retained unit integrity regardless of losses.⁹

In the fall of 1971, the 3d ARVN Division, the Ben Hai Division, was formed and assigned the defense of the demilitarized zone. Vietnamese Marine units in this area of operations came under the command of Brigadier General Vu Van Giai, the division commander for tactical matters, but still remained firmly under VNMC control for material and political support. The relationship of separate military organizations was based upon the degree of support provided: general, direct, or attached. In theory, an attached unit was supposed to be given the same level of consideration and support as one belonging to the parent command; in practice, this was often



Marine Advisory Unit photo

LtCol Nguyen Nang Bao commanding VNMC Brigade 147.

not the case. According to General Kroesen, the senior American in MR 1, General Giai was not satisfied with Marine responsiveness to his orders, but the brigades were combat tested, fully reliable, and respected. General Kroesen observed that the brigades' ability to rotate forces proved vital in maintaining combat effectiveness. Significantly, they were well supplied, equipped, and maintained at effective strength by Marine logistics and replacement channels.¹⁰

The Spring Offensive

This arrangement was battle tested on 30 March 1972 when the North Vietnamese began conventional attacks coinciding with the continued withdrawal of American forces from the region. By this time, U.S. troop levels were at 69,000, leaving 11 maneuver bat-

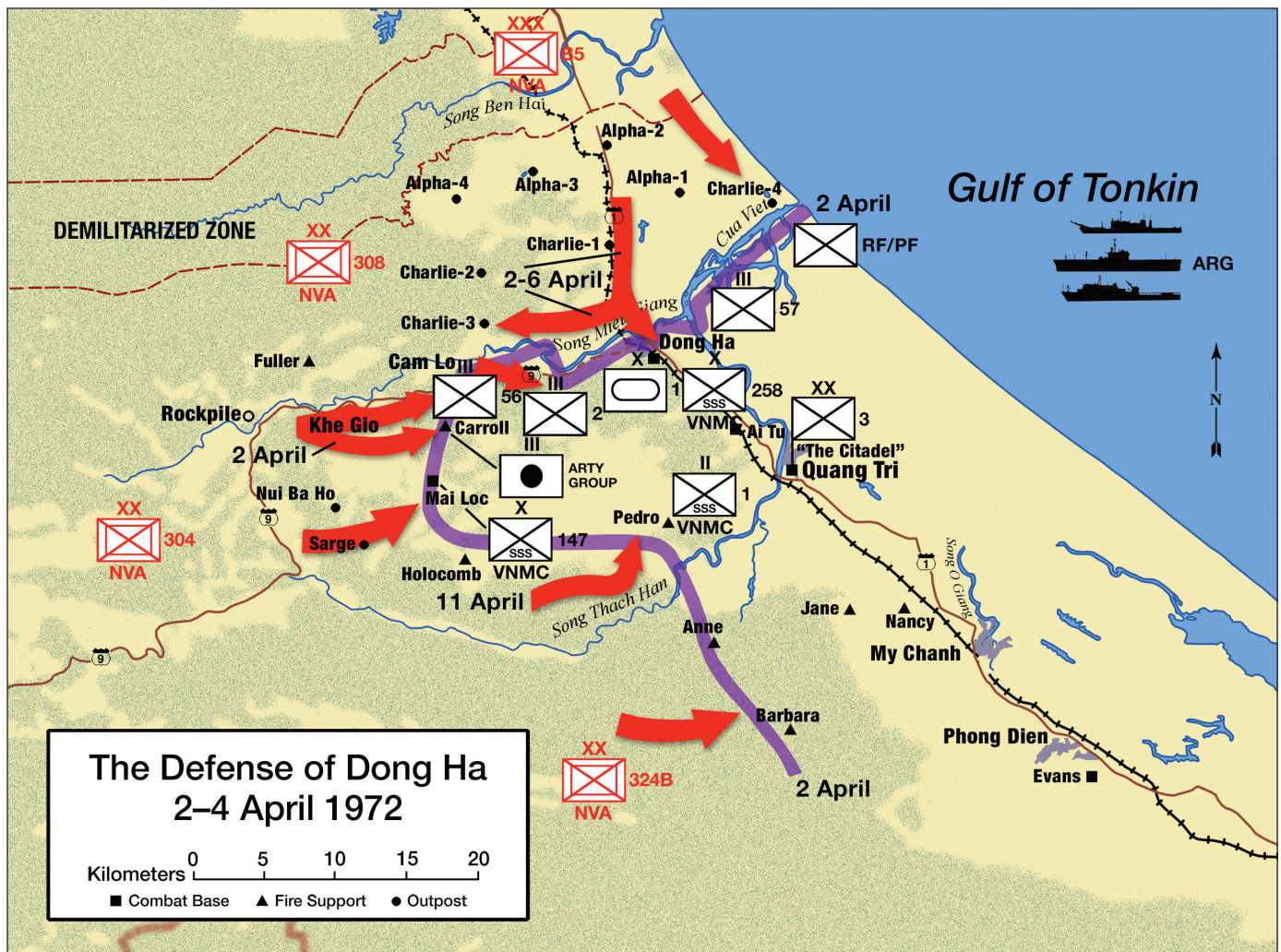
⁶ Note that these same arguments emerged again during the defense of Quang Tri in 1972.

⁷ Marine Advisory Unit File, *Lam Son 719 Critique Folder* (MCHC); Senior Marine Advisor, *Combat Operations After Action Report Lam Son 719*, 21 March 1971 (MCHC); and Col John G. Miller comments to author, 19 May 1992.

⁸ Jeffrey J. Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years, 1965-1973* (Washington, DC: USACMH, 1978), 476, 508; Graham A. Cosmas and LtCol Terrence P. Murray, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment 1970-1971* (Washington, DC: HQMC, 1986), 195-210; and Webb and Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 1-17.

⁹ For recent accounts of this action, see MajGen Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Lam Son 719*, *Indochina Monographs* (Washington, DC: USACMH, 1979), 154; Robert D. Sander, *Invasion of Laos, 1971: Lam Son 719* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014); and James H. Willbanks, *A Raid Too Far: Operations Lam Son 719 and Vietnamization in Laos* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014).

¹⁰ MajGen Frederick J. Kroesen Jr., “1972 Vietnam Counter-Offensive” (student paper, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1974), 7-4.



Map by W. Stephen Hill

while conducting harrowing withdrawals of the 57th ARVN Regiment and Marine Brigade 147. Eight South Vietnamese fire support bases were lost before the Communists paused in MR 1 to refuel and refit, as strong attacks continued in MR 2 and MR 3. Marine Brigade 258 and the 1st ARVN Armored Brigade barely held at Dong Ha as General Giai regrouped his division south of the Cua Viet River during the first week of April. With a forward command post at the Ai Tu Combat Base, General Giai's main headquarters stayed at the Quang Tri City Citadel, along with USMACV Advisory Team 155.¹⁵ However, the Vietnamese Marine Division G-3 operations advisor, Lieutenant Colonel Gerald H. Turley, concluded

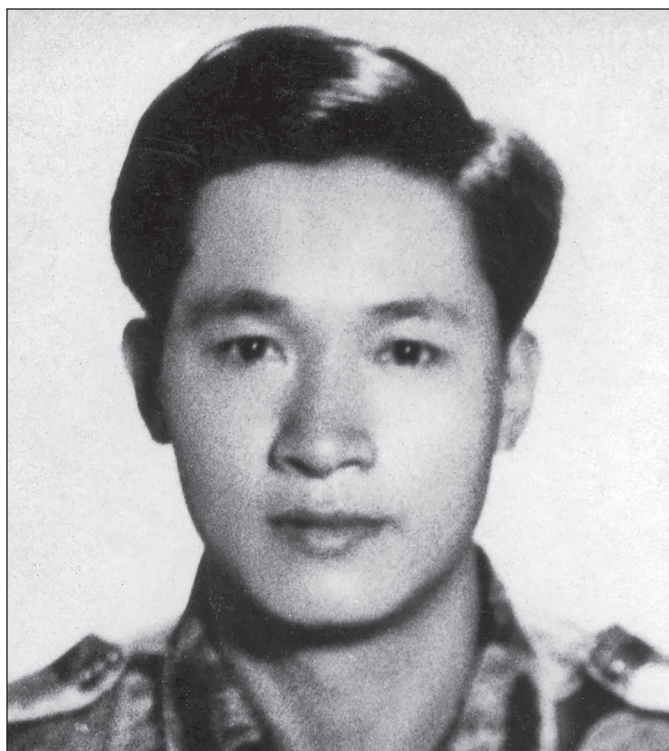
that "the main North Vietnamese thrust was halted and the Communist army's time schedule for seizing Quang Tri City within seven days was disrupted."¹⁶

On 3 April 1972, the Vietnamese Joint General Staff sent the entire Vietnamese Marine division to MR 1, but General Khang was directed to place his brigades under the operational control of General Lam, commander of I Corps.¹⁷ While the 3d Division held Dong Ha from attacks across the demilitarized zone to the north, the emphasis of the battle shifted significantly to the western approaches of the Ai Tu Combat Base and Quang Tri City. From 9 to 11 April, the battle swung in the balance around Fire Support Base (FSB) Pedro with substantial artillery

¹⁵ Webb and Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 154.

¹⁶ LtCol Gerald H. Turley and Capt Marshall R. Wells, "Easter Invasion 1972," *Marine Corps Gazette* (March 1973): 22. This article offers an excellent summary of VNMC operations in 1972 by the division G-3 advisor.

¹⁷ Khang intvw; Senior Marine Advisor, *Operations Summary Report, VNMC, 11 April 1972-4 May 1972* (MCHC); MACV Advisory Team 155, *Daily Staff Journal*, 29 April 1972-1 May 1972 (NARA); and Turley and Wells, "Easter Invasion 1972," 18-29.



Marine Advisory Unit photo

LtCol Ngo Van Dinh commanding VNMC Brigade 258.

and armored duels.¹⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Turley reported that “the invading North Vietnamese divisions continued to press their attacks toward Quang Tri City with enemy armor and infantry forces using the Cam Lo Bridge as their primary crossing point. Once south of the Cam Lo-Cua Viet River, NVA units moved on Dong Ha from the west. Other enemy forces moved south, passing FSB Carroll and Mai Loc, toward Route 557 and FSB Pedro.”¹⁹ There, the first enemy tank-infantry assaults were repulsed by defending Vietnamese Marines and left NVA dead and destroyed vehicles on the battlefield. Attempts by General Lam to conduct a counteroffensive from 14 to 23 April (Operation Quang Trung 729) failed to get off the ground despite heavy American air support, including strategic B-52 bomber Arc Light strikes. This slow rate of advance only seemed to focus NVA attention on the westward approaches to Quang Tri and Hue City.

The demands on the 3d Division command and control system, which was reinforced with as many as 36 battalion-size units, increased. Kroesen pointed out that at no time were the 3d ARVN Division’s logistics resources expanded and that communication links continued to be maintained with outside commands to ensure needed support. South Vietnamese materiel losses were estimated by MACV as 18 155mm and 45 105mm guns or howitzers, 37 tanks, and 89 armored personnel carriers—a total of more than 240 vehicles of all kinds. Personnel losses through death, injury, or desertion could only be estimated. Colonel Donald J. Metcalf, the senior U.S. Army advisor to General Giai, believed this arrangement did not carry “the allegiance and loyalty” necessary to conduct successful combat operations.²⁰ Despite these difficulties, Lam refused to use the two division-level headquarters placed at his command by the Joint General Staff, the Vietnamese Marine Division, and the ARVN Ranger Command. The chairman of the general staff, General Cao Van Vien, recalled they were “never utilized or given a mission.”²¹ General Kroesen wrote that Lam dismissed suggestions to provide a multidivision structure to fight the battle north of the Hai Van Pass as “unnecessary and impractical.”²²

Lam’s focus on the premature counteroffensive prevented him and his staff from even considering the obvious problems of defending Quang Tri or Hue. The Vietnamese command issues of Lam Son 719 were felt again when Lam and Khang refused to deal directly with each other. As a result, General Kroesen and Colonel Joshua W. Dorsey III, the senior Marine advisor to General Khang, served as the only means of contact between the two Vietnamese generals. According to the Marine Division G-3 advisor, Khang and his staff monitored every move of Marine Brigades 147, 258, and 369 as they waited impatiently to assume control of all three brigades.²³

For Kroesen, the lack of effective authority within I Corps became obvious with the ARVN Marine Division and Ranger Command in issuing guidance,

¹⁸ Webb and Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 157–58.

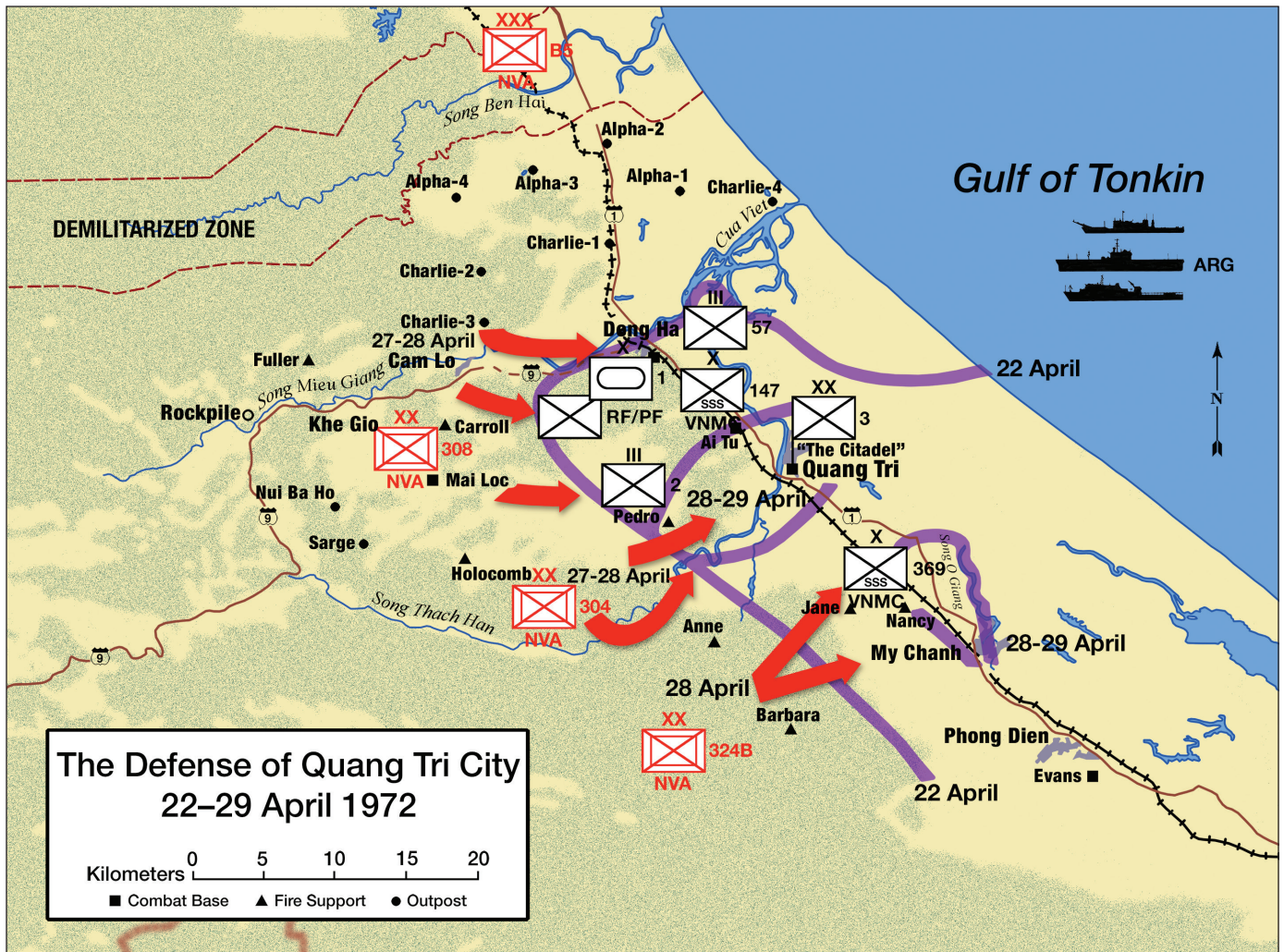
¹⁹ Turley and Wells, “Easter Invasion 1972,” 24.

²⁰ Col Donald J. Metcalf, “Why Did the Defense of Quang Tri Province, SVN Collapse” (student paper, U.S. Army War College, October 1972), 29.

²¹ Gen Cao Van Vien, *Leadership* (Washington, DC: USACMH, 1981), 130.

²² Kroesen, “1972 Vietnam Counter-Offensive,” 7–7.

²³ Turley, *The Easter Offensive*, 231, 245.



Map by W. Stephen Hill

responding to complaints and questions, and providing “unsought advice and counsel concerning their forces to anyone who would listen.”²⁴ General Lam compounded this by going directly to 3d ARVN Division units—particularly the 1st ARVN Armored Brigade, whose advisor, U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Louis C. Wagner Jr., complained about receiving orders from the corps commander, the corps commander’s deputy, and his operations officer.²⁵ General Kroesen concluded that all this undercut the authority of General Giai by planting the seeds of distrust and disobedience that would culminate at the end of the April in near mutiny.²⁶

At this stage, by 24 April 1972, the 3d ARVN Di-

vision was organized around five mixed task forces. The 1st ARVN Armored Brigade along with the 57th ARVN Regiment held the area from Highway 1 to five kilometers east, bounded by the Cam Lo River in the north and the Ai Tu Combat Base in the south. Marine Brigade 147 was at the Ai Tu Combat Base with the division forward command post, conducting defensive operations in an arc to the west. The 2d ARVN Regiment defended the area southwest of Ai Tu to the Thach Han River. The 1st ARVN Ranger Group was located south of the Thach Han River, and Marine Brigade 369 was farther south near Hai Lang on FSBs Nancy and Jane while Marine Brigade 258 was refitting at Hue.²⁷ General Kroesen described

²⁴ Kroesen, "1972 Vietnam Counter-Offensive," 7-9; and Vien, *Leadership*, 132.

²⁵ LtCol Louis C. Wagner, *1st ARVN Armor Brigade After Action Report*, May 1972 (NARA), 16.

²⁶ Kroesen, "1972 Vietnam Counter-Offensive," 7-9.

²⁷ Metcalf, "Defense of Quang Tri Province," 18-20; and Marine Advisory Unit (MAU) Command Chronology, May 1972 (MCHC), hereafter MAU ComdC.



Viet Nam magazine wartime photo, courtesy of Capt Edwin W. Besch
North Vietnamese soldiers on a T54/55 tank are welcomed by civilians as they move south during the Spring Offensive.

a pattern of action then established within the 3d ARVN Division's area where "no orders, threats, or exhortations" were able to force subordinates to move or stay if they disagreed. Both Generals Lam and Giai were losing control on the battlefield to this general state of confused inertia because each appeared willing to let American airpower win the fight for them.²⁸ Consequently, the North Vietnamese Army moved to cut off Dong Ha and Quang Tri City in order to collapse the ARVN defenders.

Confusion at Quang Tri City

On 27 April 1972, the North Vietnamese renewed the general offensive throughout the Quang Tri Front. The 308th NVA Division attacked Dong Ha and "liberated" it on the afternoon of 28 April. Communist forces pushed the defenders back toward Highway 1 and south toward Quang Tri City using 122mm and 130mm artillery, T54/55 tanks, and infantry. The 304th NVA Division attacked toward the Ai Tu Combat Base and, at the same time, the 324th NVA Division

struck farther to the south. As a result, Highway 1 was blocked and Quang Tri City was cut off from the rest of I Corps.²⁹ This situation was compounded as NVA artillery hit the ammunition dump at Ai Tu Command Base, and stocks went up in flames. On 29 April, Giai issued orders for a general withdrawal to positions along the O'Khe and My Chanh Rivers but was overruled by Lam.³⁰ The various accounts of events made Giai and Lam's command dynamics difficult to analyze and explain. General Vien commented that the Quang Tri debacle involved some intricacies "that only the principals could clarify."³¹

Early Sunday morning, on 30 April, a regiment-size NVA force supported by armor was assembled southwest of Ai Tu. Up to this point, Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Nang Bao's Marine Brigade 147 (with brigade advisor Major James R. Joy) had been able to use artillery and tank support to halt the North Vietnamese's attacks. But then, ammunition supplies were low, and the 20th ARVN Tank Squadron (a battalion-size unit) was being parceled out south of the Thach Han River in an effort to keep Highway 1 open. American naval gunfire could not be used effectively against the enemy staging area, because it was at maximum range. The Marines called in aircraft with attack sorties striking close to the front lines, but even heavy air attacks could not save the untenable salient that had developed north of the Thach Han River.³² Upon seeing the armor moving to the south, the remaining ARVN infantry drifted away from their positions; all types of vehicles began running out of fuel, and rumors were rampant. Colonel Metcalf recalled that several thousand troops and hundreds of vehicles were bunched up on Highway 1 with no escape route except into withering fire and panic. At this stage, according to Metcalf, the higher headquarters—for I Corps, South Vietnamese Marines, and Rangers—all added to the confusion by passing contrary orders, which Giai and his staff were unable to sort out.³³

A critical move occurred with the decision to pull

²⁸ Kroesen, "1972 Vietnam Counter-Offensive," 7-9.

²⁹ Webb and Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 159-60.

³⁰ LtCol Louis C. Wagner Jr., *3dARVNDiv Special Message*, DTG212529, April 1972, encl. 4 (MCHC).

³¹ Vien, *Leadership*, 132.

³² Senior Marine Advisor, *Personal Evaluation of the NVA Easter Offensive*, n.d. (MCHC); Maj James R. Joy, *Memorandum*, 3 May 1972 (MCHC), 16, hereafter Joy memo; Col Charles J. Goode Jr. and LtCol Marshall R. Wells oral history intvw, 19 January 1984 (MCHC); and Maj Glen Golden oral history intvw, 3 July 1975 (MCHC).

³³ Metcalf, "Defense of Quang Tri Province," 25-26.

Marine Brigade 369 off of FSB Jane and to reopen Highway 1, which exposed the 3d ARVN Division's whole southern flank. At daybreak on 30 April, South Vietnamese Colonel Pham Van Chung of Marine Brigade 369 (with brigade senior advisor Major Robert F. Sheridan) sent a battalion north to Highway 1 in an attempt to break through to Quang Tri City on orders from the division and I Corps. The battalion met heavy automatic weapon and recoilless rifle fire along the way and waited for these enemy positions to be hit by Allied air strikes. The Marine battalion then reached a bottleneck between the O'Khe River bridge and Hai Lang, where the Communists were positioned along the highway. With the destruction of this enemy force, the exodus of refugees fleeing south came down the road, and the prospect of the battalion linking up with the units in Quang Tri City faded. The Marine battalion was low on ammunition, overextended, and unable to move up the road through the flow of refugees. Colonel Chung directed the battalion to return to the O'Khe River bridge and hold it for the units breaking out from the north.³⁴

The best chance of holding Quang Tri City fell to Marine Brigade 147, the only tactical unit remaining in any condition to fight; Metcalf called the unit "our last ditch defense."³⁵ At noon on 30 April, General Giai ordered Brigade 147 from the Ai Tu Combat Base into the city proper. The remaining 3d ARVN Division units could then form a defensive line south of the Thach Han River, while the 1st ARVN Armored Brigade tanks and armored personnel carriers were to be used to keep Highway 1 open toward Hue. General Lam was notified of this plan and acknowledged it, but no specific approval was provided and no orders were issued by I Corps.³⁶

Lieutenant Colonel Bao and Major Joy were briefed by the 3d Division staff, and the plan began smoothly enough as the brigade headquarters and artillery battalion departed Ai Tu. The Marine advisors effectively directed and controlled tactical air strikes and artillery and naval gunfire missions, slowing the pursuit of the NVA forces and permit-



Marine Advisory Unit photo

Col Phan Van Chung commanding VNMV Brigade 369.

ting the brigade's orderly and covered withdrawal. The withdrawal went well until the column reached the approach to Quang Tri City and discovered that division engineers had already destroyed the bridges across the Thach Han River. The Marine infantry waded or swam across the river at the bridge site and moved directly into their fighting positions. The brigade artillery tried to tow its howitzers across a ford, but the swift current and soft bottom of the river slowed the effort; 18 howitzers and 22 vehicles were lost in the attempt. The 1st ARVN Armored Brigade fared worse than Brigade 147 when its recently assigned commander had to destroy 12 tanks, 18 howitzers, and numerous armored personnel carriers for lack of fuel and ammunition. Fortunately, the 20th ARVN Tank Squadron forded the river north of the bridges with 16 of its remaining M48 Patton battle tanks. By nightfall, Brigade 147 and remnant forc-

³⁴ Col Donald L. Price, comments on author's manuscript for *The War That Would Not End: U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1971-1973*, 10 October 1990 (MCHC).

³⁵ Col Donald J. Metcalf, intvw by USMACV, 15 September 1972 (NARA), 8; and Vien, *Leadership*, 133.

³⁶ Metcalf intvw, 8-9; Kroesen, "1972 Vietnam Counter-Offensive," 7-10; and Maj David A. Brookbank, USAF, *Special Report of Air Liaison Officer*, 31 July 1972 (MCHC), 20.

es occupied the defenses that were planned to hold Quang Tri City.³⁷

Collapse

On the morning of 1 May 1972, General Lam informed General Giai that all Quang Tri positions were to be held, and no withdrawal of any kind was authorized. This directive came from Saigon with Lam receiving his orders from President Thieu.³⁸ Intelligence reports indicated the city would be hit again that evening by a heavy artillery attack estimated at 10,000 rounds of munitions. With this assessment in hand, General Giai decided that any further defense of Quang Tri City would be fruitless. "To protect the lives of all of you," Giai authorized units to fall back farther south because, at this point, he was in no position to stop them. Giai and Metcalf were in conflict with Metcalf insisting that the Vietnamese Marines could hold the Citadel "indefinitely" with American supporting arms. This had been his advice the previous month when Marine Brigade 258 was left to cover the division's withdrawal through Dong Ha.³⁹

At 1215 on 1 May, the chief of staff of the 3d Division walked into Advisory Team 155's bunker and, using the American radio circuits, called all subordinate commanders: "General Giai has released all commanders to fight their way to the My Chanh River!" Within 30 minutes, the I Corps commander, General Lam, again sent his "stand and die" orders. At this point, all of General Giai's subordinate senior commanders refused to obey, stating Giai could withdraw with them or be left behind; a threat that, according to General Kroesen, they proceeded to carry out. Other units did not respond to the change or refused to deviate from their original orders to pull back.⁴⁰ Metcalf was left to watch his counterparts on the division staff pack their belongings, totally unaware or concerned by the situation. Shortly

afterward, Colonel Metcalf radioed Marine Brigade 147 and said, "The ARVN are pulling out; advisors may stay with their units or join me" for evacuation by helicopter. Major Joy responded that the Brigade 147 Marines would stay with their units.⁴¹

Recalling the division's previous abandonment of the brigade at Mai Loc, Lieutenant Colonel Bao declined to defend what all others were now abandoning. The sight of the 3d Division soldiers departing with their families did nothing to engender the desire for a last stand. Luckily for the Marines, their dependents were in MR 3, unlike most ARVN units whose soldiers fought and lived in the same area. A little after 1430, the brigade headquarters was southwest of the Citadel where the unit expected to be joined by General Giai and his staff before pushing south to link up with Marine Brigade 369 at My Chanh. The move had been coordinated earlier by Joy and Metcalf. In the confusion, the division commander and staff did not arrive. Metcalf stated Giai left him and the other advisors at the Citadel while Kroesen stated the Marines had left Giai with Bao holding the bag for both.⁴² Metcalf then radioed Joy to inform him that the linkup would not be made and that the American advisors should resort to their own devices; Joy declined. In what was taken as proforma, Metcalf reiterated that the Marine advisors could join him for the helicopter evacuation from Quang Tri City. Major Joy again declined, and the departing Team 155 senior advisor responded, "Good luck!" At 1635, Brigade 147 moved east toward the coast and then turned south. After making several difficult stream crossings, the column arrived in the vicinity of Hai Lang, 10 kilometers south of Quang Tri City.⁴³

The intermingled civilian and military stragglers prevented maneuver on the highway, and the cross-country route used by Brigade 147 was extremely difficult for attached M48 tanks and vehicles, most of which were lost trying to ford the Nhung River.

³⁷ MAU ComdC; Joy memo, 14; and LtGen D'Wayne Gray, comments on the author's manuscript for *The War That Would Not End*, 9 December 1989 (MCHC).

³⁸ Gen Frederick J. Kroesen Jr., comments on the author's manuscript for *The War That Would Not End*, 3 January 1990 (MCHC); and Vien, *Leadership*, 133.

³⁹ Metcalf, "Defense of Quang Tri Province," 27.

⁴⁰ MajGen Frederick J. Kroesen Jr., message to Gen Creighton W. Abrams, 2 May 1972, Abram's Papers (USACMH).

⁴¹ The evacuation was accomplished by USAF Sikorsky HH-3 Jolly Green Giant search and rescue helicopters, although the offshore U.S. Navy and Marine amphibious ready group was alerted as a backup.

⁴² Metcalf intvw, 9; Kroesen, "1972 Vietnam Counter-Offensive," 19; and Joy memo, 17.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

The South Vietnamese and Americans thought that at least a reinforced North Vietnamese regiment held Highway 1 at Hai Lang and had engaged the fleeing South Vietnamese, halting all movement to the south.⁴⁴ The interdiction of the road by artillery and infantry weapons earned it the title “Highway of Horror” for the estimated 2,000 civilian and military dead left along the three-quarter-mile stretch of road. One North Vietnamese soldier reported, “The people were moving on bicycles, motorbikes, and buses . . . No one was able to escape.”⁴⁵

After a long and heated discussion with his battalion commanders, Lieutenant Colonel Bao established a tight perimeter for the night and planned to resume the march the next day. During the morning reorganization, the brigade commanders ascertained that all of their units were still organized and combat effective. Brigade 369’s senior advisor, Major Sheridan, had closely followed Major Joy’s radio traffic in the days preceding the mass exodus.⁴⁶ Brigade 369’s efforts were directed at keeping the bridges across the O’Khe and My Chanh rivers open for withdrawing troops and civilians. But farther to the south, Brigade 369 had been unsuccessful in keeping the road open between Quang Tri and Hue, although it had inflicted heavy losses on the Communists and had not become pinned down.⁴⁷

As the last position in Quang Tri Province, FSB Nancy fell the next day on 2 May 1972. General Khang and the Marine division headquarters were ordered by the Joint General Staff to assume command of all Marine units and to defend along the My Chanh River. Two Marine brigades, 147 and 369, were engaged with the enemy, and the situation was confused as to who and what, if anything, were left to aid in the defense. Brigade 258 was still held in reserve, as Khang, his staff, and their advisors went into action defending Hue City.⁴⁸

In light of this crisis, the Vietnamese National Se-

curity Council met with President Thieu and took drastic action to restore order. Outside of Hue along Highway 1, military police units with highly visible sandbagged posts for firing squads acted as a draconian reminder of duty for stragglers from Quang Tri City. The next day, General Lam and his deputy were relieved, and on 4 May, President Thieu went to Hue to place Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong in command of I Corps. General Khang was moved to the Joint General Staff as J-3 operations officer after turning down command of II Corps. The Vietnamese Marine Division remained under his deputy, Brigadier General Bui The Lan, to hold the province, lost in part to American and Vietnamese interservice rivalry.⁴⁹ For the first time since the invasion began, the Vietnamese Marines had their own area of operations. Even as they began digging in, the North Vietnamese continued building up their forces to attack toward Hue. By 6 May, the 3d ARVN Division could only account for 2,700 of its men, and General Giai was arrested and later brought to trial for disobeying orders and abandoning his position in the face of the enemy. He claimed that, with food, fuel, and ammunition gone, he saw “no further reason why we should stay on in this ruined situation.”⁵⁰

Finale

U.S. operations, including Linebacker (aerial bombing), Freedom Train (continued air strikes), and Pocket Money (mining of ports in North Vietnam), did not have an immediate effect on the Communist offensive; the tipping point militarily for this effort came in May 1972.⁵¹ In an interesting final note, General Kroesen felt the North Vietnamese’s inability to pursue and destroy routed South Vietnamese forces was evidence that if defended, Quang Tri City might not have fallen. The Communists did

⁴⁴ Maj Anthony P. Shepard, comments on the author’s manuscript for *The War that Would Not End*, 11 January 1990 (MCHC).

⁴⁵ Government of South Vietnam, *The Communist Policy of Terror* (Saigon: RVN Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1972), 41–42; and Government of South Vietnam, *La Route De L’Horreur* (Saigon: RVN Ministry of Information, 1972).

⁴⁶ LtCol Robert F. Sheridan, comments on the author’s manuscript *The War That Would Not End*, 20 March 1990 (MCHC).

⁴⁷ Maj William T. Sweeney, memorandum, 8 May 1972, Senior Marine Advisor Evaluation Folder (MCHC).

⁴⁸ Senior Marine Advisor, *Historical Summary 1972*, 13; Brigade 258 Advisor’s Log, 2 May 1972, Marine Advisory Unit File (MCHC); and Price comments.

⁴⁹ Vien, *Leadership*, 134.

⁵⁰ Turley, *The Easter Offensive*, 203.

⁵¹ Webb and Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 161–62.

not have the resources or organization to do what ARVN forces had done to themselves with American counsel.⁵² The North Vietnamese doggedly held the Quang Tri Citadel for five months. Claims arose that Marine Brigade 147's withdrawal on 1 May precipitated the collapse of Quang Tri, even though the unit was the last to leave and stayed long enough for the division commander and his advisors to escape. The brigade actually maintained itself as an effective force by saving lives and equipment, the same logic given by General Giai in his trial.

Real questions should have been directed at the performance of South Vietnamese Army units, particularly the 2d and 57th ARVN Regiments, and Gen-

eral Lam's conduct. The presence of the Vietnamese Marine division staff and General Khang provided only a backdrop to these events, and even the U.S. Army belatedly recognized the Marines' drive for division status was correct and valuable.⁵³ Later, the American embassy in Saigon concluded that "Marine units recaptured Quang Tri City on September 16, 1972, after its abandonment by ARVN troops in May 1972."⁵⁴ In recognition of this, U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth F. Bunker and the Commanding General of USMACV, Army General Frederick C. Weyand, proposed that the Vietnamese Marine Division receive an American Presidential Unit Citation, which was not approved.⁵⁵ ♦ 1775 ♦

⁵² Kroesen, "1972 Vietnam Counter-Offensive," 7-11.

⁵³ *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, vol. 6, *Conduct of the War: Book 1 Operational Analyses* (New York: BDM Corp., 1980).

⁵⁴ Embassy of the United States of America, Saigon, Vietnam, Marine Division, 6 February 1973 (MCHC).

⁵⁵ Embassy of the United States of America, Saigon, Vietnam, Unit Award Recommendation, 1 December 1973 (MCHC), 1-3.

Counselor of War

GENERAL WALLACE M. GREENE JR. AND THE ESCALATION OF THE VIETNAM WAR, 1964–65

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Shortly after his term as Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps came to an end, General Wallace M. Greene Jr. recorded an extensive oral history for the Marine Corps History Division. During one session, Greene discussed the difficulties of advising President Lyndon B. Johnson. Recalling that the task often had the feel of a game of poker, Greene said of the president, “He had that look in his eye, as if he was wondering why I played that card.”¹ As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Greene believed his duty was to provide the president with honest and frank military advice. At the same time, Greene was continually frustrated by what he believed to be the president’s failure to adequately come to terms with what the United States needed to do to win the war in Vietnam.

Although they were officially the president’s principal military advisors, the Joint Chiefs often had a contentious relationship with Johnson, who favored consulting civilian officials such as Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy on national security matters.² For the Joint Chiefs’ part, Service parochialism often led them to give less than frank advice to the



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo A411928

Gen Wallace M. Greene Jr. became the 23d Commandant of the Marine Corps on 1 January 1964.

¹ Gen Wallace M. Greene Jr. Oral History collection conducted for Marine Corps History Division (Gray Research Center (GRC), Quantico, VA); Wallace M. Greene Papers: Notes on the Situation in South Vietnam (GRC, Quantico, VA). Greene’s personal papers exist in two collections. The first collection contained unclassified material covering his entire career in the Marine Corps. The second, designated Notes on the Situation in South Vietnam, entails 12 boxes focusing only on the Vietnam War. This material has only recently been declassified. Since the Marine Corps Archives is currently working on organizing the two collections, the author refers to the collections as Greene Papers and Greene Papers: Vietnam Notes to simply, but clearly, differentiate between the two sets.

² George C. Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Lies that Led to Vietnam* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997); David M. Barrett, *Uncertain Warriors: Lyndon Johnson and His Vietnam Advisers* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993); David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (Greenwich, NY: Fawcett Publications, 1972); and Robert Buzzanco, *Masters of War: Military Dissent and Politics in the Vietnam Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

president, and both Johnson and his predecessor, John F. Kennedy, often felt that their counsel was neither reliable nor constructive.³ However, while Johnson and McNamara (and most historians of the Vietnam War) treated the Joint Chiefs as a unitary body, it was in fact made up of five individuals whose positions on national security often differed. The chiefs held opposing views not only on the Vietnam War but also on what the actual purpose and role of their body was. Although they were the highest ranking military officials in their respective Armed Services, the Joint Chiefs were technically outside of the chain of command and consequently occupied an ambiguous position within the U.S. national security structure.

This problem became particularly pressing as the Johnson administration rapidly Americanized the U.S. commitment to South Vietnam between 1964 and 1965.⁴ A committed cold warrior, Greene believed that the United States needed to take a decisive stand in South Vietnam and counter the insurgency there by using American military power against North Vietnam. However, Greene frequently felt that his advice was not reaching the president, despite what he believed to be his statutory duty to serve as an advisor to the commander in chief on military matters. The Commandant blamed structural shortcomings in the advisory system for effectively blocking access to the president. These systemic problems could be traced to the Kennedy administration and that president's preference for relying on close personal advisors to make ad hoc national security decisions.

To confront this issue, Greene proposed substantially restructuring the National Security Council with the addition of a National General Staff. The staff would include a joint military-civilian staff tasked with both advisory and operation responsibilities. Such an organization, Greene believed, would overcome the obstacles that prevented President Johnson from receiving sound and effective military advice on the situation in South Vietnam. At the same time, Greene hoped the plan would force Johnson to make a firm commitment on the Vietnam crisis.

General Wallace M. Greene and the Joint Chiefs of Staff

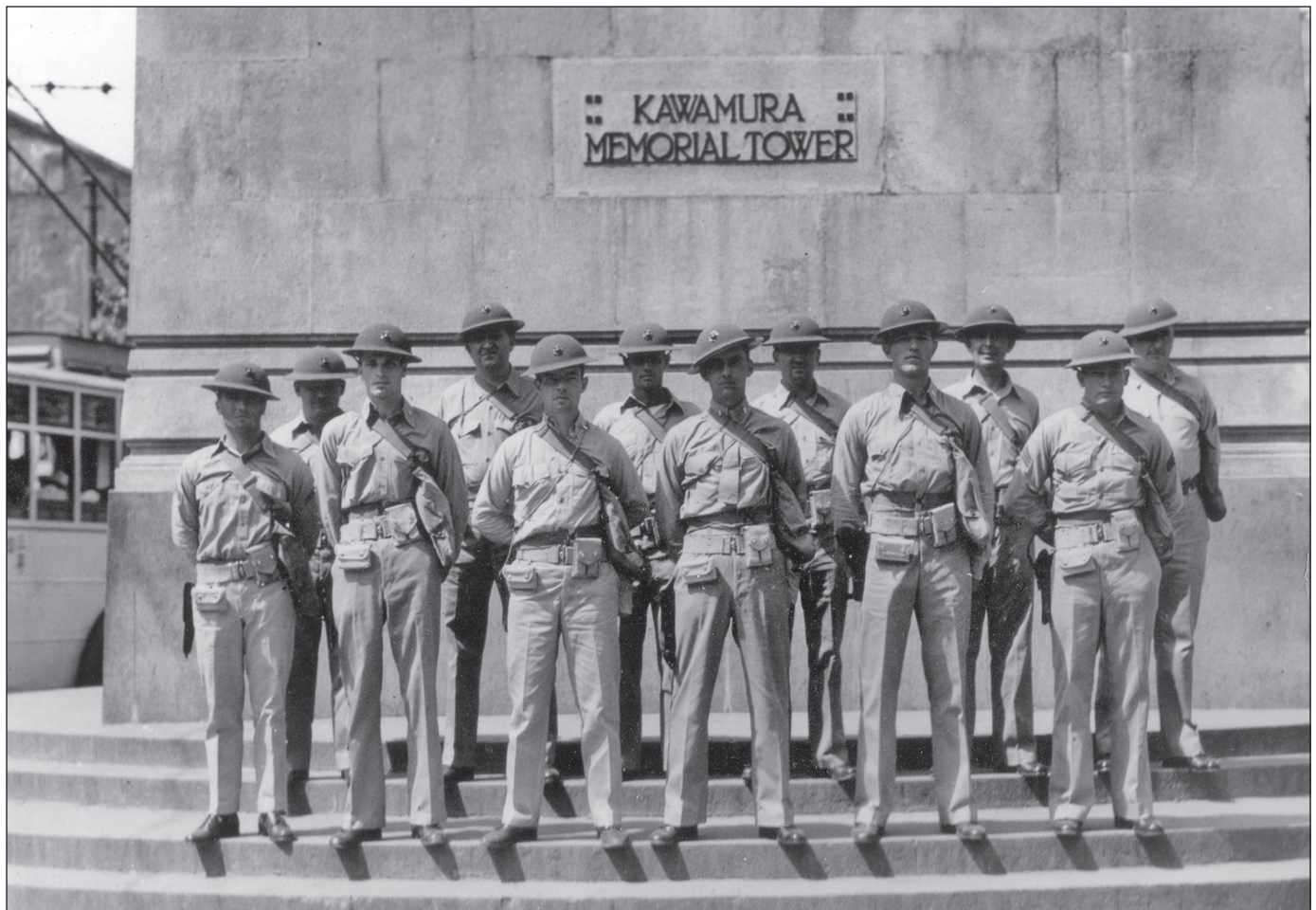
General Greene became Commandant in 1964. The appointment was the capstone to a long career as a dedicated and effective staff officer and planner. A graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Greene's career before World War II mirrored that of many Marine officers in the 1930s: postings to ships' detachments and service with the 4th Marines in Shanghai, China. During the critical months before the America's entry into the war, Greene served in the 1st Marine Division's operations section and in the United Kingdom, where he observed British commando units—later using lessons learned from that experience to strengthen and improve U.S. amphibious warfare techniques.

Throughout World War II, Greene's billets gave him considerable experience as a planner and organizer. He served as the operations and training officer for the 3d Marine Brigade—as operations officer for the Tactical Group 1 during the Marshall Islands campaign in early 1944 and as operations officer for the 2d Marine Division during the Mariana Islands campaign in the summer of 1944. During the latter operation, he first worked under Colonel David M. Shoup, who served as the division's chief of staff. In the postwar period, Greene continued to serve in operations billets with both the Marine Corps and Joint Staff, working as a representative on the staff of the National Security Council. In 1956, as the new commanding general of the Recruit Training Command at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, South Carolina, Brigadier General Greene once again found himself working with Shoup. Greene and Shoup, who was then serving as inspector general of recruit training, were tasked with investigating the recent accidental drowning of six recruits at Ribbon Creek, Parris Island, and also with reforming Marine Corps recruit training. Following this, Greene worked as the operations officer for Headquarters Marine Corps as deputy chief of staff of Plans, and following Shoup's appointment as Commandant in 1960, served as the new Commandant's chief of staff.⁵

³ McMaster, *Derelection of Duty*, 326–33.

⁴ Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1999).

⁵ The best scholarly account of Greene's life is the chapter by Allan R. Millett in *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, ed. Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 381–401.



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo 530841

Like many Marines commissioned in the early 1930s, Greene served with the 4th Marines in Shanghai. Then 1st Lt Greene is pictured here (front row, third from left) with other officers and noncommissioned officers of the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, in front of the Kawamura Tower in Shanghai in 1937.

By the time President Kennedy nominated Greene to succeed Shoup in 1963, Greene had built a career as an adept staff officer capable of working with “vocal, volatile extroverts.”⁶ He had earned two Legions of Merit for his planning work during the Marshalls and Marianas campaigns. He had also learned to pursue goals regardless of whether or not he would alienate senior officers in the process, notably during the time he was tasked with reforming Marine recruit training. This, along with his experience working for the Joint Staff and the National Security Council, gave him ample experience navigating the halls of power in Washington, DC. In short, Greene

represented in the Joint Chiefs of Staff the shift away from officers with experience leading large formations in combat to those who had spent most of their careers working as staff officers.⁷

According to the amendments of the National Security Act of 1947 passed in 1952, the Commandant was allowed only to attend Joint Chiefs’ meetings in which matters relevant to the Marine Corps were on the agenda.⁸ Since most matters of relevance to the combined Service chiefs concerned joint operations of some kind, this provision proved to be a technicality, and Greene always acted as an equal to the chiefs of staff of the U.S. Army and Air Force and to

⁶ Ibid., 384.

⁷ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 108-9.

⁸ An act to fix the personnel strength of the United States Marine Corps, and to establish the relationship of the Commandant of the Marine Corps to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Pub. L. No. 82-416, 66 Stat. 677 (1952).



Photo by Alfred W. Rohde Jr., courtesy of U.S. Marine Corps Photographic Section

In this undated photograph, BGen Greene sits with senior noncommissioned officers during his term as commanding general, Recruit Training Command.

the chief of naval operations. In accordance with this status, Greene believed the Commandant needed to participate equally in the task of advising the president on matters of national security.

Greene's vision of the duties and roles of the Joint Chiefs, however, was not necessarily shared by his colleagues. In particular, the chairman at the time Greene became Commandant, Army General Maxwell D. Taylor, had a conception that was in many ways diametrically opposed to the Commandant's. For his part, Greene did not believe that the Service chiefs were required to speak with one voice or that the chairman's voice should carry more weight than those of the other chiefs. He argued that

[the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] is not a man who votes and breaks a deadlock, but he is the man who is supposed to organize and run the Joint Staff and also to present the views of the Chiefs. If the views differ from

his own or among the Chiefs, then these views should be presented for final decision by the Secretary of Defense or the President.⁹

In contrast, Taylor saw the chairman as a personal advisor to the president whose voice carried greater weight than the other chiefs. His position could be traced to his close relationship with President Kennedy, who had recalled Taylor to active duty in 1961. Following the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, Kennedy became convinced that the Service chiefs had failed to adequately prepare him for the possibility that the clandestine attempt to depose Cuban dictator Fidel Castro would fail. Already uncomfortable with the military, Kennedy asked the then-retired General Taylor to serve as his representative to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹⁰ It was a curious and confusing approach to managing national security affairs, effectively creating a parallel advisory

⁹ Wallace M. Greene Jr. Oral History, 21 September 1971, Greene Papers, Vietnam Notes (GRC, Quantico, VA), hereafter Greene Oral History, 21 September 1971.

¹⁰ Douglas Kinnard, *The Certain Trumpet: Maxwell Taylor and the American Experience in Vietnam* (New York: Brassey's Inc., 1991), 56-73.

system. If Taylor was to serve as the personal advisor to the president, then what was the role of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army General Lyman L. Lemnitzer? The approach, however, suited Kennedy well. Inexperienced and somewhat unsure of himself, the president was more at ease receiving advice from those with whom he had developed a close rapport, most notably the U.S. attorney general, his brother Robert F. Kennedy.

During the first two years of Kennedy's presidential term, Taylor served closely with Kennedy and grew to believe that the president needed a close, informal relationship with his chief military advisor. In his memoir, Taylor set forth a vision of the chairman's responsibility that strongly contrasted with General Greene's.

With the opportunity to observe the problems of a President at closer range, I have come to the understanding of an intimate, easy relationship, born of friendship and mutual regard, between the President and the Chiefs. It is particularly important in the case of the Chairman, who works more closely with the President and Secretary of Defense than do the service chiefs. The Chairman should be a true believer in the foreign policy and military strategy of the administration which he serves or, at least, feel that he and his colleagues are assured an attentive hearing on those matters for which the Joint Chiefs have a responsibility.¹¹

In 1962, Kennedy replaced Lemnitzer with Taylor. In making Taylor chairman, the president resolved the awkward dual-track system created shortly after the Bay of Pigs invasion. However, by appointing his personal advisor, the president also undermined the effectiveness of the Joint Chiefs as a corporate body; Taylor firmly believed that the chairman's personal assessments of national security matters carried greater weight than the other chiefs' assessments. Consequently, Taylor tended to present his views to the president as if they were the chiefs' combined views, creating the impression of unanimous consent when none perhaps existed.¹²

These diverging opinions ultimately led to considerable distrust on Greene's part regarding Taylor.

As Greene noted, "I always had the feeling that he [Taylor] was not properly presenting either the views of the Joint Chiefs to the National Security Council and to the president, but instead favored them with his own views, and also he never accurately reported back to the Joint Chiefs his conversations with the president and with the National Security Council."¹³ Frequently in his recollections, Greene noted his conflicting attitudes concerning Taylor, always following up remarks on the chairman's brilliance and intelligence with more critical comments about the general's dishonest and untrustworthy behavior as head of the Joint Chiefs. "There is no doubt about his outstanding capability as far as his brain was concerned, but not as far as his motives sometimes were concerned."¹⁴

Kennedy's death in November 1963 elevated Vice President Johnson to the presidency. Although in most ways the rough-hewn, outwardly confident Texan was a stark contrast to the polished and cautious Kennedy, the two presidents shared a preference to rely on advisors outside official channels to make national security decisions. Thus, Greene began his term as Commandant of the Marine Corps already facing obstacles that would thwart his wish to play an active and energetic role in national security policy planning.

Greene's Assessment of the Vietnam War in 1964

As Shoup's chief of staff, General Greene delivered an address to the U.S. Army War College in May 1963. During the question-and-answer period, he was asked about his position on U.S. involvement in South Vietnam (then largely advisory in nature). He described the situation as a quagmire and expressed concern about the United States becoming bogged down in the country. He also expressed the hope that the Marine contingent operating in Vietnam would remain small for fear that a larger commitment to Southeast Asia would sap the Corps' ability to fulfill its duties as a contingency force.¹⁵

¹¹ Gen Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1972), 252.

¹² See McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 14–17; Kinnard, *The Certain Trumpet*, 74–79; and Mark Perry, *Four Stars* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 121–22.

¹³ Greene Oral History, 21 September 1971.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ "A Marine Corps View of Military Strategy," question-and-answer session (audio file), HD 6276 (Marine Corps History Division: Quantico, VA).



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

Gen David M. Shoup, Commandant of the Marine Corps, passes the Marine Corps battle color to his successor, LtGen Wallace M. Greene Jr., during change of command ceremonies at the Marine Barracks Washington, DC, on 31 December 1964.

Scholars of the Vietnam War have cited comments like this as evidence that Greene “explicitly rejected” American intervention.¹⁶ Actually, the chief of staff’s attitude was more lukewarm and ambivalent. While he criticized the character of the American involvement, Greene also stressed that “if we were, could, go into South Vietnam and do it our way, I think we could maybe clear that situation up within a rea-

sonable time.” Yet, on the whole he was skeptical of what the United States could achieve in the country. When another participant asked about bombing North Vietnam, Greene stated he did not think such a move would make a significant difference: “I mean, there’s just so many of them that I feel that if you were to bomb Hanoi [Vietnam], you wouldn’t stop them from doing what they are doing. And you

¹⁶ Buzzanco, *Masters of War*, 157. Buzzanco makes two mistakes when citing this particular speech: he states it was delivered at Headquarters Marine Corps when it was in fact delivered at the Army War College, and he states it was delivered in “late 1963.” It was delivered in May 1963. See, Wallace M. Greene Jr., “A Marine Corps View of Strategy” (address delivered at the Army War College, Carlisle, PA, 8 May 1963). The mistakes are understandable in light of the lack of information appended to the audio recordings on file in the Greene Papers at the Marine Corps History Division.

might well bring the Chinese Communists in on there. And then what are you going to do, use atomic weapons?"¹⁷

Pointing out that the American public would not accept a significant number of casualties to defend the South, he made a prediction that proved to be eerily accurate: "Now, that old grindstone starts turning faster and faster. That means more and more casualties, more and more of the money and treasure of the United States going to be spent there, and maybe in 10 years, we'll either clean up the situation or we'll have to get out like the French did."¹⁸ Thus, a member of Greene's audience could have left with the reasonable belief that the future Commandant was against escalating American involvement in the Vietnam War.

Yet, by the following January, he had become much more hawkish. In a January 1964 report on an inspection trip to Southeast Asia submitted to President Johnson, now-Commandant Greene described morale amongst anti-Communist forces in South Vietnam as good, described U.S. advisors as "capable and enthusiastic," and recommended that the "destruction of economic targets in North Vietnam designed to bring Ho Chi Minh to the council table should be initiated immediately."¹⁹ A month later, he once again advocated increasing American involvement, stating in a staff study to the Joint Chiefs that "first, there must be a clear-cut decision either to pull out of South Vietnam or to stay there and win. If the decision is to stay and win—which is the Marine Corps recommendation—this objective must be pursued with the full concerted power of U.S. resources."²⁰

What caused the change in attitude, from "explicitly" warning against escalation to calling for the use of "the full concerted power of U.S. resources" in Southeast Asia? First, one should be cautious about pinning down Greene and other advisors with over-

ly reductive labels, such as "hawks," "doves," "true believers," "doubters," etc. As Secretary of Defense Clark M. Clifford responded when asked if he was a hawk or a dove, "I am not conscious of falling under any of those ornithological divisions."²¹ Other government officials felt the same way, and their attitudes and positions were often fluid. From his May 1963 comments, Greene clearly had not yet fully formulated his thoughts on the Vietnam conflict. The speech he delivered did not mention Vietnam at all, and only in the question-and-answer session did Greene address the matter in (what sounds like) an off-the-cuff manner. Also of note in 1963, Greene was speaking as the representative of General Shoup, an opponent to expanding the U.S. involvement in Vietnam.²²

Second, the situation in South Vietnam had dramatically changed between May 1963 and January 1964. The summer of 1963 was a troubled time for the government of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, as Buddhist-led protests against his Catholic-dominated regime garnered world attention. The image of Buddhist monks self-immolating on the streets of Saigon poisoned American public support for Diem's government, and the Kennedy administration soon concluded that the counterinsurgency effort in South Vietnam would be more effective if the South Vietnamese president was removed from power. Just weeks before Kennedy's death, Diem was murdered during a U.S.-backed coup led by a group of South Vietnamese generals. Effects of that putsch were still being felt in January 1964 when the military council that had replaced Diem was deposed in yet another coup, this one led by South Vietnamese General Nguyen Khanh.

Greene's inspection tour of South Vietnam took place shortly before Khanh seized power. The inspection was one of Greene's first acts as Commandant and seemed to leave an indelible mark on his posi-

¹⁷ "A Marine Corps View of Military Strategy," HD 6276.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Commandant of the Marine Corps Trip Report for Visit to South Vietnam, January 1964," Greene Papers, Vietnam Notes, GRC.

²⁰ "Outline Staff Study, Subj: Alternate Courses of Action, Vietnam, 21 February 1964," attached to "Memorandum for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Subj: Alternative Courses of Action, Vietnam, 13 March 1964," Greene Papers, Vietnam Notes, GRC, hereafter "Outline Staff Study," 21 February 1964. Emphasis by author.

²¹ "Clark M. Clifford: 9th Secretary of Defense," Department of Defense, accessed 8 September 2014, http://www.defense.gov/specials/secdef_histories/SecDef_09.aspx.

²² For Shoup's opposition to the Vietnam War, see Howard Jablon, "General David M. Shoup, U. S. M. C.: Warrior and War Protester," *Journal of Military History* 60, no. 3 (1996): 513-38.

tion regarding the war. Upon returning to the states, he became a firm advocate for bombing North Vietnam. Throughout the first months of his term, Greene repeatedly pressed for launching military attacks against the north. At the same time, he also believed that the United States could never guarantee the independence or viability of South Vietnam unless the Americans made it clear to the world that the United States was committed to destroying the Viet Cong's ability to wage its insurrection. In the February study quoted above, Greene saw five possibilities open to the United States: (1) a complete withdrawal of American forces; (2) the neutralization of South Vietnam; (3) intensification of current operations; (4) extension and expansion of operations into North Vietnam *without* U.S. involvement; or (5) expansion of operations into North Vietnam *with* U.S. forces.²³ Greene dismissed the first three options, believing that withdrawal and neutralization would harm American interests.

Greene believed that the final two options provided the best course to follow. Expanding the war but continuing to limit U.S. involvement would provide the possibility of a military victory, demonstrate America's determination to win the war, and maintain the "face of a Vietnamese war being fought by Vietnamese." However, the Commandant admitted that this course did not "insure [*sic*] an early victory."²⁴ Direct involvement would provide even clearer evidence of American determination to win the war, allow the South Vietnamese to draw on superior American air and naval forces, and speed up the "timetable for winning the war."²⁵ The open commitment of forces carried considerable risks, however, including provoking intervention from the People's Republic of China. Direct involvement could also potentially alienate neutral allies, create strains with European powers, and further drain U.S. resources.

Pointedly, a staff study acknowledged that direct involvement would commit the "U.S. to an 'unpopular' war" and carry no guarantee that militarily defeating North Vietnam would in any way increase support for South Vietnam's "unpopular and auto-

cratic regime."²⁶ Greene subsequently concluded that the best course was to expand the war using South Vietnamese forces and continue indirect American involvement. However, the United States needed to reserve the option of taking direct action if required.

Despite his exhortation that the United States needed to "indicate unequivocally" that it was not going to abandon South Vietnam, Greene expressed uncertainty about whether any of his proposals would achieve victory, given the limited means at America's disposal. Greene believed that the president's administration needed to "make clear to Congress and to the American people that the U.S. policy is to win in South Vietnam."²⁷ At the same time, however, the Commandant recognized that a firm commitment did not guarantee victory, did not ensure the legitimacy or stability of South Vietnam, and did not present a clear course of action.

Despite this ambivalence, Greene pressed for a more aggressive campaign against the North Vietnamese involving both air strikes and a naval blockade. He recommended transforming the commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) into a true theater commander with authority over all U.S. efforts in the region. He also called for a range of new security measures in South Vietnam: censorship, a national identity card program, and curfews. He envisioned a bombing campaign that would, "in a rising crescendo," carry out the "systematic destruction" of targets in North Vietnam using both the South Vietnamese Air Force and U.S. air assets. It was, in all but name, a recommendation for a campaign of graduated pressure against the North. Commando raids, covert operations, and naval bombardment could also be utilized in support of the operation. The Commandant also recommended that the United States warn Laos and Cambodia to cease allowing Viet Cong forces to use the countries' territories for logistical support.²⁸

The subject of Vietnam came up during a meeting with President Johnson and the Joint Chiefs held on 4 March 1964. As the participants reviewed an impending inspection trip to South Vietnam by Mc-

²³ "Outline Staff Study," 21 February 1964. Emphasis by author.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. The quotes around "unpopular" are in the original document.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

Commandant Greene reviews an evening parade at the Marine Corps Barracks Washington, DC, alongside the surviving Commandants on 9 July 1964. From left: Gen Greene, Gen Thomas Holcomb (Ret), Gen Alexander A. Vandegrift (Ret), Gen Clifton B. Cates (Ret), Gen Lemuel C. Shepherd (Ret), and Gen David M. Shoup (Ret).

Namara and Taylor, the president solicited the opinion of each chief. Taylor recommended expanding the war to include selective strikes against North Vietnamese targets. When Johnson responded that such an action would “almost certainly” spark an intervention by China and the Soviet Union, Taylor stated that he did not think such a response would occur. Greene said that he did not subscribe to Taylor’s view and argued that expanding the war north would likely spark a Chinese response.

I told the President that, in my opinion, this would result in a major campaign, smaller perhaps, but similar to that which had taken place in Korea, and that there

was risk of a possible escalation into another world war. However the bitter fact was that we were going to have to take a stand somewhere and the decision which he was going to have to make, as President, was whether or not SVN [South Vietnam] was the location where this stand should be made.²⁹

Was Greene stating that escalating efforts in Vietnam was worth the risk of a potential third world war? Or was he exaggerating the potential consequences in order to convince President Johnson not to expand American involvement? Based on the recommendations he made in February to the other Joint Chiefs, one can reasonably conclude that Greene firmly be-

²⁹ “Meeting Summary, Joint Chiefs White House Conference with the President, 4 March 1964,” Greene Papers, Vietnam Notes, GRC, hereafter “Meeting Summary,” 4 March 1964.

lieved that a war with the major Communist powers was inevitable and that aggressively taking the fight to North Vietnam was a necessary step in the broader struggle against international Communism.

Johnson responded that he “subscribed to the analysis of ‘The Marine General’” and that he felt either outright withdrawal or an expansion of operations were the best options available to the United States. However, the president immediately declared that, while he agreed expanding the war was the best option, he did not want the United States committed to a war until after the November presidential election, when the political situation “would be stabilized” and the “President and the new Congress could then actively advocate a stepped-up campaign.” Greene recorded in his meeting notes that he suspected Johnson was “indirectly telling General Taylor that he did not want him to return from [South Vietnam] with a recommendation that the campaign there be expanded to include [North Vietnam] to the extent that the risk might arise of a Korean-type war, or all-out war with the Communists.”³⁰

Johnson, the consummate politician, kept his cards close to his chest, leaving the chiefs with little sense of where he stood on the war. On the one hand, he expressed concern about Chinese intervention. On the other, he agreed that the war would likely have to be expanded to North Vietnam if South Vietnam was to survive as an independent state. Ultimately, Greene concluded that President Johnson wanted to delay making any major decisions about the war and consequently pressured both Taylor and McNamara not to recommend escalation. Greene’s notes from a Joint Chiefs’ meeting held the next day recorded that “the Chairman said that he didn’t know what he might recommend at this time; however, he knew that his neck and the [secretary of defense’s] neck were on the chopping block.”³¹ The meeting with Johnson and the comments by Taylor led the

Commandant to draw the conclusion that both the chairman and secretary of defense were going to withhold their honest assessments of the situation in South Vietnam and not recommend taking what he believed were the necessary steps for achieving victory in Southeast Asia.

Upon returning from his visit to South Vietnam, McNamara submitted a memorandum that confirmed Greene’s worries. The memo laid out a number of measures for the United States to take that McNamara believed would help stabilize the war situation. The measures focused on strengthening South Vietnam’s ability to fight the war, without a significant increase in U.S. involvement. Thus, McNamara recommended increasing the size of the South Vietnamese armed forces through national mobilization, furnishing new armored personnel carriers and attack aircraft, and continuing American reconnaissance flights over the Cambodian and Laotian borders.³² Although McNamara did propose that the United States be authorized to conduct air attacks against Viet Cong forces across the border “for the purpose of border control,”³³ the secretary of defense’s recommendations were largely designed to maintain the status quo.

The chiefs were near unanimous in their belief that the measures were inadequate.³⁴ “Half-measures won’t win in South Vietnam,” Greene declared, further noting that, “I do not believe that the 12 recommendations discussed above offer little more than a continuation of the present programs of action in Vietnam.”³⁵ He also stated that the proposals placed too many restrictions on the United States and left the initiative with China and North Vietnam. The drive to maintain the status quo would continue to drain American resources and increase, rather than reduce, “dissatisfaction amongst the American people.”³⁶

Despite the chiefs’ protests, McNamara submit-

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ “Notes for JCS Meeting, 5 March 1964,” Greene Papers, Vietnam Notes, GRC.

³² “Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense to the President, 16 March 1964.” McNamara’s memorandum went through several iterations. The final version, which is annotated to reflect how it changed from its first version, is reproduced in Edward C. Keefer and Charles S. Sampson, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Vol. I, Vietnam, 1964* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), 153–67.

³³ Ibid., 167.

³⁴ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 76–77; and Graham A. Cosmas, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968*, Part 2 (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2012), 36–38.

³⁵ Marine Corps memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CMCM 31-64/AO38B8-jd), “Comments on the Secretary of Defense Draft Memorandum for the President, South Vietnam, dated 13 March 1964,” Greene Papers, Vietnam Notes, GRC.

³⁶ Ibid.



Photo by Abbie Rowe, courtesy of White House photographs, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston

President John F. Kennedy meets with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maxwell D. Taylor and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara on 2 October 1963.

ted the memorandum to President Johnson without change, and the proposals were adopted as National Security Action Memorandum 288.³⁷ Greene later criticized both McNamara's and Taylor's handling of the process, recalling that "it was noteworthy that at no time did the Secretary of Defense invite the Chiefs to discuss his memorandum with them. In other words it was a *fait accompli*. He accepted without comment the Chiefs' memorandum which covered his own memorandum to the President, but he never at any time had discussed his final paper."³⁸ In Greene's view, the secretary and chairman presented Johnson with the range of options that the president wanted to hear, not the options he needed to hear. In short, Greene was convinced that Johnson was not receiving sound or honest advice.

Even more frustrating was that Taylor and McNamara were possibly misconstruing the positions of the Joint Chiefs. Just days after Johnson had accepted

McNamara's recommendations, Greene learned that Central Intelligence Agency Director John A. McCone had expressed doubts about the proposals and that General Taylor deliberately withheld McCone's comments from the chiefs. Even more surprising, Taylor apparently inked out references to annotations McCone had made on the draft of McNamara's memorandum that had been submitted to the chiefs for comment.³⁹ Greene called the chairman's actions "unethical" and "dishonest" and confronted Taylor on the matter the next day. In a heated exchange, Greene asked whether the chiefs' views were being presented in their entirety to Johnson. Taylor angrily retorted that if the chiefs had concerns, they could take their personal views to the president themselves, but he would not submit any memorandum drafted by other members of the Joint Chiefs to McNamara that he did not agree with.⁴⁰ The chairman also claimed that the chiefs' views and estimates of the situation in South Vietnam had been submitted "over a period of time and appeared in parts in a number of papers."⁴¹

Taylor's attitude unnerved Greene, who believed that the chairman was deliberately misconstruing his positions to President Johnson. Just as troubling was Taylor and McNamara's efforts to paint a picture for the president about South Vietnam that Greene believed did not match the reality on the ground. McNamara's dominance of the advisory process was particularly frustrating for the Commandant as he believed that the secretary of defense "appeared to think that he knew more about all the military aspects of the problems in Vietnam and the cures therefore than any of the military persons present."⁴² The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in short, were not being used as they should. The Commandant believed that President Johnson was far too reliant on a small coterie of advisors, and neither McNamara nor Taylor saw any fault with this particular approach.

³⁷ Memorandum to the president from the secretary of defense, "South Vietnam," 16 March 1964, LBJ Presidential Library, <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/nsams/nsam288.asp>.

³⁸ Greene Oral History collection, Greene Papers, Vietnam Notes, GRC. For the Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum laying out their criticisms of McNamara's memorandum, see memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the secretary of defense, "Draft Memorandum for the President, Subject 'South Vietnam,'" 14 March 1964, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (Document no. 82), 149-50.

³⁹ "Summary of Discussion with Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs (LtGen Henry W. Buse Jr.) and Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force (Gen Curtis E. LeMay, USAF)," teleconference, 17 March 1964, Greene Papers, Vietnam Notes, GRC, hereafter "Summary of Discussion with Deputy Chief of Staff," 17 March 1964.

⁴⁰ "Summary of Action in JCS Meeting, 18 March 1964," Greene Papers, Vietnam Notes, GRC.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² "Summary of Discussion with Deputy Chief of Staff," 17 March 1964.



Photo by Yoichi Okamoto, courtesy of LBJ Presidential Library

President Johnson meets with the Joint Chiefs at his ranch in Texas in December 1964. Clockwise from the president: Secretary of Defense McNamara, the president's military aid MajGen Chester Clifton, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen Curtis E. LeMay (with signature cigar), Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen Earle G. Wheeler, Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus R. Vance, Army Chief of Staff Gen Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Naval Operations Adm David L. McDonald, and Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen Greene.

Reforming the Advisory System: Greene's Proposals for a National Staff

At this early stage in his term, Greene clung to the idea that if his positions on the situation in Southeast Asia could be effectively and accurately relayed to the president, then a true shift in American strategy could take place. He pursued this task as the consummate staff officer. Having served on various national security posts during three presidential administrations, Greene was convinced that the informal advisory system used by both Kennedy and Johnson was the root cause of the Joint Chiefs' inability to provide adequate and effective advice on the Vietnam War. As a member of the National Security Council staff during Dwight D. Eisenhower's presidency, Greene had gained firsthand knowledge and experience with the formal advisory structures used by that administration. Kennedy saw these structures, in particular the National Security Council's Planning Board and Operations Coordinating Board as

well as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as ineffective and unwieldy. Consequently, he dissolved the two boards and relied on personal military advisors rather than the Joint Chiefs.⁴³

Greene believed rebuilding these planning organizations would not only strengthen strategic planning but also ensure that the president could make a firm decision on the situation in South Vietnam. Throughout 1964, Greene repeatedly pushed for a solution he described as a "National Staff" or "National General Staff." Greene promoted his concept in meetings with presidential advisors, in speeches, and in formal memoranda submitted to the Joint Chiefs. The Commandant elaborated on this concept in a May 1964 speech at the Armed Forces Staff College. In the address, Greene noted that the executive branch did not have a mechanism to ensure continuity between different administrations in regard to planning for impending national security crises and emergencies. While the National Security Council had a staff, the staff lacked "an operational function, as all executive authority is vested in the President

⁴³ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 4-5.

and in the Heads of the several departments and agencies of the Government.”⁴⁴

The United States, Greene argued, lacked an inter-departmental organization capable of coordinating how national security decisions made by the president could be implemented by the various executive agencies and departments. “Because of the lack of such a body with interdepartmental membership, programs must be implemented through so-called ‘normal coordination’—or, as is most usually the case, through ad hoc arrangements devised for individual problem areas.” Greene proposed resurrecting the National Security Council’s Planning Board and creating a National General Staff “composed of representatives of all departments and agencies concerned with overall national security.”⁴⁵ The staff would be a civilian organization tasked with the same responsibilities and empowered with the same authority as a military general staff. The staff would even include a National Command Center, which would serve a similar function as the National Military Command Center.⁴⁶

Greene continued to press his idea of a National General Staff throughout 1964. He found an ally in the chief of staff of the Air Force, General Curtis E. LeMay. Toward the end of August 1964, LeMay submitted his own memorandum to the chiefs and McNamara recommending the resurrection of the National Security Council’s Planning Board. In a statement that reflected many of the same arguments made by Greene, LeMay criticized the ad hoc nature of security planning and the basic problem that the professional recommendations of the United States’ military leadership were not reaching the president in a systematic manner.⁴⁷ Responding to LeMay’s proposal, Greene used a lengthy memorandum to appraise the chiefs of his National General Staff concept.

The memo restated most of the major arguments

of his speeches from the spring of 1964: the current National Security Council lacked the capability and mission “to maintain a continuing appraisal over all events and happenings which have impact on security policies.”⁴⁸ The Joint Chiefs also were unable to fulfill this role, being comprised only of military personnel and serving only as advisors to the president. Again, Greene suggested reconstituting the Planning Board “as a full-time agency with a Chairman and members appointed by the President, who would have no other duties in the Government.” The Planning Board would manage the National General Staff in much the same way that the Joint Chiefs managed the Joint Staff. The staff would then “coordinate and direct the implementation of all Executive departments and agencies of approved policies and programs.”⁴⁹

Greene’s proposal involved an ambitious and radical restructuring of the national security advisory system. Thus, while it may have streamlined the manner in which presidential decisions were implemented, the likelihood of such an organization coming to pass was improbable. Critically, the concept did little to address Johnson’s own preferred method of operating. When Greene brought up the concept during a meeting with Bromley K. Smith, the National Security Council staffer pointed out the difficulties of creating such an organization. In the course of the session, Greene noted that the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion had convinced him that the advisory systems used by President Kennedy was an ineffective means for making national security strategy and policy. Greene went on to argue that the Johnson administration threatened to make the same mistakes with Southeast Asia, in large part due to the administration making decisions “without proper advice” and with “poorly rounded estimates of the situation.”⁵⁰

As Greene laid out his vision of a national staff,

⁴⁴ “Remarks of Gen Wallace M. Greene Jr., USMC” (speech at Armed Forces Staff College, Norfolk, VA, 21 May 1964). The entirety of the document can be found in Greene Papers, GRC.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “Memorandum to Gen Greene from Gen Curtis E. LeMay, Chief of Staff, USAF, 19 August 1964,” Greene Papers, Vietnam Notes, GRC.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Memorandum to Gen LeMay from Gen Wallace M. Greene, “Re-Activation of the Machinery of the National Security Council, 27 August 1964, Enclosure 1: Organization of a National Staff,” Greene Papers, Vietnam Notes, GRC.

⁵⁰ “Summary of a Meeting with Mr. Bromley Smith, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Council Affairs, 17 June 1964,” Greene Papers, Vietnam Notes, GRC.



Photo by Frank Hall, courtesy of Department of the Army

The Joint Chiefs of Staff in February 1965. From left: Chief of Naval Operations Adm McDonald, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen John P. McConnell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Wheeler, Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen Greene, and Chief of Staff of the Army Gen Johnson.

Smith pointed out how President Kennedy would never have agreed to such an arrangement. While he noted Johnson might be more receptive, Smith nevertheless observed that National Security Advisor Bundy's centralized White House staff was better suited to the type and detail of advice the current president wanted. According to Smith,

... the President was interested in a great deal of detail; e.g., during the recent air strike against Viet Cong targets in Laos, he wanted to know when and where each of the strike planes had landed and when they were all safely home, even though it might be necessary to wake him in the middle of the night to acquaint him with these facts.⁵¹

While Smith recognized that excessive reliance on Bundy and his staff was a problem, Smith was also skeptical that the president would be able to get so many agencies and individuals to surrender their prerogatives to a National General Staff.

Greene's concept of a National General Staff attested to his abilities as a creative and ambitious planner. He saw himself not only as the senior officer of the Marine Corps, but also as a senior advisor to the president. Furthermore, Greene acknowledged that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were limited in the kind of advice they could provide to help the president deal with the almost constantly changing and emerging national security threats of the Cold War. Greene recognized that confronting these threats required close coordination and cooperation between civilian and military agencies. Consequently, he admitted that the Joint Chiefs would only serve as a supporting element to the National General Staff.

However, while the idea of a national staff may have been ambitious and would potentially place a rational structure that would help organize the seemingly chaotic constellation of advisory agencies, committees, and departments serving the president,

⁵¹ Ibid.



LBJ Presidential Library

In this meeting held in July 1965 concerning the Vietnam War, President Johnson is flanked by some of his principal advisors. From left: Gen Greene, Gen Johnson, Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy (standing), President Johnson, and Secretary of Defense McNamara.

by proposing a national staff Greene demonstrated a basic misunderstanding of how influential a president's personality and personal style were in shaping how decisions were reached and implemented. Greene was convinced, for example, that the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion was due to the Kennedy administration's overreliance on an informal, ad hoc advisory system. Yet Kennedy drew the exact opposite conclusion, feeling that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had failed to provide him with a frank assessment of the consequences of the operation and placed the blame for the failure at their feet.⁵² Kennedy saw the large, formal advisory systems of the Eisenhower era as slow, ungainly, and potentially more interested in their own prerogatives than in serving the president.

In his 1964 speech to the Armed Forces Staff College, Greene argued that "an organization such as the one proposed would so prove its usefulness that it would be perpetuated and strengthened by any Chief Executive who had to face the tangle of problems that will continue to confront our nation as the Free World

leader."⁵³ Greene failed to acknowledge that certain presidents would potentially have a different view. As scholars of his presidency have shown, Johnson preferred receiving advice from a tight-knit group of advisors who would reinforce, rather than challenge, his preconceptions.⁵⁴ Believing this approach to be detrimental to strategic planning, Greene hoped his National General Staff would both strengthen America's ability to cope with national security challenges and ensure that the president would make appropriate and effective policy decisions.

The system was never created because the proposals did not move beyond the Joint Chiefs of Staff. President Johnson never changed his approach; he continued to carry out foreign policy using close, personal advisors in an often, improvised manner. Beginning in 1965, Greene's attention began to shift. The South Vietnamese government continued to be afflicted by coups and instability. The Viet Cong also seemed to be taking the initiative in the conflict, and the commander of the MACV, Army Gen-

⁵² McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 5-7; Buzzanco, *Masters of War*, 19-20; and Michael R. Beschloss, *The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev 1960-1963* (New York: Edward Burlingame Books, 1991), 146.

⁵³ "Remarks of Gen Wallace M. Greene Jr., USMC," 21 May 1964.

⁵⁴ Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*; Buzzanco, *Masters of War*; Barrett, *Uncertain Warriors*; McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*; and Logevall, *Choosing War*.



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo A184014

Gen Greene visits the headquarters of the South Vietnamese Marine Brigade in April 1965. He is accompanied by BGen Le Nguyen Khang, commanding general of the South Vietnamese Marines.

eral William C. Westmoreland, became concerned that South Vietnam's collapse could be imminent. In March 1965, following General Westmoreland's requests for U.S. troops to protect American installations in South Vietnam from Communist attacks, the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade landed two assault battalions at Da Nang, Vietnam. General Greene was responsible for raising and equipping the Marine Corps forces that were then operating in increasing numbers in South Vietnam. Unsurprisingly, concerns about a National General Staff be-

came less of a concern for the Marine Corps Commandant.

Conclusion

In the period between the passage of the National Security Act of 1947 and the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, the Joint Chiefs of Staff occupied an ambiguous position within the United States' national security system.⁵⁵ Neither the chairman nor the Service chiefs were in

⁵⁵ Douglas T. Stuart, *Creating the National Security State: A History of the Law that Transformed America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Adrian R. Lewis, *The American Culture of War: The History of U.S. Military Force from World War II to Operation Iraqi Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

the official chain of command and, while they were tasked by statute with providing the president and secretary of defense with military advice, the commander in chief could accept or dismiss the advice as he saw fit. For a number of reasons, this limitation on the Joint Chiefs' authority was reinforced during the Johnson administration. Johnson personally preferred drawing advice from a limited number of advisors to reinforce his own viewpoints. Seeing the conflict in Vietnam as a Cold War emergency, both Johnson and McNamara believed the situation could be managed through a mixture of diplomatic and military pressure. The two men believed the Joint Chiefs only saw potential military solutions to the problems. Consequently, the chiefs saw their advice as potentially irrelevant.

Greene believed that Johnson's advisory system was fundamentally flawed. Although Greene was not adverse to the principles of graduated pressure, he conceived of Vietnam as a military problem that required military solutions. If there is one constant throughout his comments on Vietnam, it is that a piecemeal, limited approach would be ultimately fruitless. He also firmly believed—even when he suggested a certain reticence about the conflict in 1963—that the United States could only achieve a quick victory if it Americanized the conflict. Greene and many senior Marine officers maintained this position throughout the first three years of direct American involvement in the conflict.⁵⁶ Consequently, Greene

believed that the Service chiefs, rather than civilians, should serve as Johnson's principal advisors on Southeast Asia. Unsurprisingly, he was continually frustrated with the president's tendency to defer decisions and avoid firm commitments when presented with difficult choices.

Thus, the proposal for a National General Staff was not only an attempt to improve the national security advisory system but also a means designed to force President Johnson to make a decision on Vietnam, which would have favored Greene's own conclusions. Greene felt that the deactivation of the National Security Council's formal planning boards and committees had allowed the president to defer difficult decisions. A rational and organized advisory system would force the president to take what the Commandant believed to be the best course of action in the Vietnam War.

However, as a number of scholars have demonstrated, the presence of a coherent foreign policy advisory structure would not guarantee that successive presidential administrations came to the best decisions concerning Vietnam.⁵⁷ While Greene's proposal was never implemented, it is difficult to imagine Lyndon Johnson using such an organization or allowing such an organization to force him to make a decision regarding the Vietnam War. The efforts of this most consummate professional military staff officer to engage the most consummate of politicians had decidedly mixed results. ♦1775♦

⁵⁶ Nicholas J. Schlosser, "Reassessing the Marine Corps' Approach to Strategy in the Vietnam War, 1965–1968," *International Bibliography of Military History* 34, no. 1 (2014): 27–52.

⁵⁷ Barrett, *Uncertain Warriors*, 190–94; and Leslie H. Gelb and Richard K. Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1979), 1–6.

BOOK REVIEW

Victory Fever on Guadalcanal: Japan's First Land Defeat of World War II

James A. Smith
Military Historian

Victory Fever on Guadalcanal: Japan's First Land Defeat of World War II. By William H. Bartsch. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014. Pp. 360. \$35.00 cloth.)

As World War II battles go, the misnamed battle of the Tenaru River in Guadalcanal was a small-scale affair. In the predawn hours of 21 August 1942, Japanese Colonel Kiyonao Ichiki's first echelon of the Imperial Japanese Army—a regiment reduced to a reinforced battalion by the inadequacies of Japanese logistics—attacked a battalion of the 1st Marine Division entrenched on the west bank of Alligator Creek. William H. Bartsch has written a definitive account of

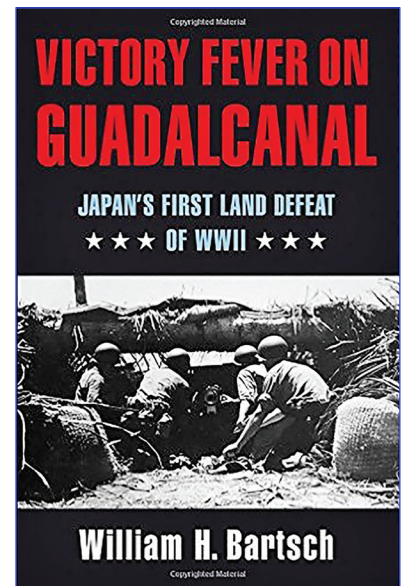
James A. Smith received his BA in history from Washington College, Chestertown, Maryland, in 1973 and was that year's winner of the college's award for distinguished studies in history. A life-long student of military history, Smith received his MA in military history in September 2014 from Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont. He has concentrated his studies on the naval history of World War II in the Pacific, particularly the Guadalcanal Campaign. He wrote the article "Admiral William Pye's 1943 Evaluation of the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal, November 13–15, 1942" in *U.S. Military History Review* (December 2014): 44–65. His other works include: "The U.S. Navy and The Tokyo Express at Guadalcanal, August–December, 1942: A Battle That Required 'Every Conceivable Weapon'"; "The Influence of Alfred Thayer Mahan upon the Imperial Japanese Navy"; and "Naval Gunfire Support from Gallipoli to Tarawa." Smith is currently working on a book about the Tokyo Express in the campaign for Guadalcanal.

this battle in his *Victory Fever on Guadalcanal*.

In the foreword, noted Pacific war historian Richard B. Frank describes the battle at Tenaru as "the smallest American battle of World War II with the greatest effects" (p. xi). The Marines' ability to hold Henderson Field, tested for the first time at

Tenaru, spelled the difference between victory and defeat in the Guadalcanal campaign. Moreover, this battle was the Pacific War's first substantial encounter between the Marines and the Imperial Japanese Army. The Marines facing Colonel Kiyonao Ichiki were post-Pearl Harbor recruits who had undergone abbreviated training. The Ichiki first echelon, by contrast, was an elite, combat-tested unit, which would have the advantage of numbers at its chosen point of attack. Ichiki's plan of attack—a stealthy advance leading up to a sudden attack with minimal prior preparation, but maximum emphasis on shock and speed—was basic Japanese doctrine. As Eric M. Bergerud observed in *Touched with Fire*, his 1996 study of the land war in the Pacific:

In a very real sense, Ichiki was acting on assumptions that had to be true if Japan was to prevail in the war. If the enemy was their equal in skill, if spirit could not overcome



material, if night attack could not neutralize firepower, Japan would lose at Guadalcanal. Japan would also lose in the South Pacific. The Tenaru Battle was far more than a single assault. It was a clash of doctrine and of assumptions concerning the enemy. The stakes were very high.

The result of this clash was a lopsided American victory that stripped the Japanese of their aura of invincibility, gave a huge lift to American morale, and set the terms upon which larger future battles on Guadalcanal and beyond would be fought.

Firsthand accounts of the battle for Tenaru exist from such participants as Robert Leckie, Richard W. Tregaskis, and Merrill B. Twining. Workmanlike narratives are available from a number of historians, including Samuel E. Morison, Richard B. Frank, Samuel B. Griffith II, and Eric M. Hammel. Indeed, Bergerud's superb synopsis of this battle, quoted in part above, is one of many reasons why his book is required reading for anyone seeking to understand the land war in the South Pacific. These accounts, however, describe the battle as part of a larger story. In *Victory Fever on Guadalcanal*, Bartsch provides the first full-length monograph devoted solely to the battle, allowing him to furnish the reader with a wealth of detail about the battle from both sides.

Though not a trained historian or political scientist, Bartsch has written extensively and exclusively on the Pacific War. Most of his prior books dealt with the desperate early days of the Japanese offensive against the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies. In *The Old Breed of Marine: A World War II Diary* (2003), Bartsch annotated the diary of a member of the 11th Marines, one of the units at Tenaru. In these earlier works, Bartsch perfected the technique of telling the events he was writing about as "bottom-up" history told from what Bartsch describes as "the human standpoint." This is participant-driven history with a vengeance, and Bartsch has gotten very good at it.

Applying this technique to the Tenaru battle in *Victory Fever on Guadalcanal*, Bartsch relies on oral histories, letters, and diaries to trace the involvement of individual participants. The resulting narratives give the book a strong sense of presence and immediacy. Significantly, Bartsch is able to employ the same approach toward the Japanese forces. Working from previously unknown or untapped Japanese sources, Bartsch provides a hitherto-unseen look at

life as a soldier serving in Ichiki's first echelon. Considering how completely Ichiki's force was destroyed, this is a notable testament to Bartsch's doggedness and determination as a researcher.

The prologue follows the 1st Marine Division from the spring of 1942 to its invasion of Guadalcanal. Bartsch writes this part of the story primarily from the viewpoint of Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift, the division's new commander. On Vandegrift's shoulders fell the burden of converting the large influx of post-Pearl Harbor recruits into combat-ready Marines at a primitive training camp in New River, North Carolina. By the summer of 1942, this was still very much a work in progress. To employ this force as the spearhead for America's first Pacific offensive, therefore, would have seemed to an informed outsider, a premature and ill-advised adventure.

Bartsch then switches the focus of his narrative style from generals to privates. The succeeding chapters form a series of parallel narratives between the men of the 1st Marines and the Ichiki detachment from the spring of 1942 onward as they approach their fateful collision in Guadalcanal.

In the first three chapters, Bartsch focuses on the Marines training at New River, deploying to New Zealand, and invading Guadalcanal. By the end of chapter 3, the Marines have seized the airfield but watched with dismay as their transports, half-unloaded, sailed away after the disastrous defeat at Savo Island.

In chapter 4, the Ichiki forces come into sharper relief. They are the only force immediately available to carry out the Imperial general headquarters' orders to recapture the airfield on Guadalcanal. At *Seventeenth Army* headquarters in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea, bad intelligence, overconfidence, and a reluctance to impose meaningful restraints on an impetuous officer lead to the Ichiki detachment's annihilation. Fanciful intelligence reports suggest the U.S. Marines are withdrawing. The headquarters staff knows that reinforcements are 10 days away, but drafts Ichiki's orders immediately giving him the option of attacking with his small detachment. Ichiki's transportation arrangements form a further link in his ultimate destruction: six destroyers with room for only 900 of his soldiers and virtually none of his artillery. When Ichiki advises Rear Admiral

Raizo Tanaka, the destroyer force commander, that he intends to seize the airfield with a bayonet charge, Tanaka is dismayed by the thought of such “bamboo spear” tactics, but he says nothing. Ichiki’s force lands east of the Marine lines at Taivu Point on 18 August. Meanwhile, tipped off by radio intelligence, coast watchers, and missionaries, the Marines shift their main line of resistance from the beach facing “Ironbottom Sound” (Savo Sound) to the line of the mislabeled Tenaru.

Bartsch graphically communicates the closeness and intensity of this combat. A key component of the Marines’ defense was the nests of water-cooled .30-caliber Browning machine guns, which inflicted murderous casualties on the Japanese. These nests, in turn, became the foci of the fighting as the Japanese began counterfire with their own heavy machine guns:

While it was firing, Fincher’s gun took a hit in the jacket, and the water soon started boiling inside. His assistant gunner, Pfc. [Private First Class] Joe Fontaine, passed Fincher the spare barrel. While Fincher was changing the barrel, another flare burst overhead. Fincher turned and saw a Japanese [soldier] coming into his gun emplacement. Overcoming his initial shock, he reacted by hitting the unarmed man with the old barrel several times until he was sure his nemesis was dead (p. 183).

Chapter 10 addresses the last act of the battle, which took place after daylight, when the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, crossed the river farther south, encircling and annihilating the disorganized remnant of Ichiki’s now-leaderless force, with the aid of a squad of light tanks crossing the sandbar. The new Marine arrivals at Henderson Field strafe Japanese soldiers trying to escape the encirclement on the beach or by boat. Bartsch tells some harrowing tales from the Japanese side, as the few survivors manage to avoid death (often by feigning it) and make their escape back to Taivu Point.

The epilogue returns to the sand spit at Alligator Creek, now a scene of indescribable, odious carnage. Amidst this horror, Bartsch, with his eye for detail, catches a moment of humor and gives an example of how to weave the many participant accounts, upon which he has relied, into a smooth-flowing narrative:

Earlier, when the POWs [prisoners of war] had come marching down the beach road, four abreast, in step,

guarded by Marine MPs [military police], they appeared to Phillips “like midgets” compared to the MPs, all of whom seemed to be over six feet tall. Armed with their submachine guns, the MPs were calling cadence from the flanks, a scene that to Phillips was reminiscent of Parris Island days. One bit MP would bellow, “in cadence count,” which was followed by a chorus of Oriental voices shouting “Roosevelt good man, Tojo eat s—t!” Phillips and the others watching the procession nearly split their sides in laughter at the sight (p. 214).

As the Marines collect their few prisoners, the Japanese at Taivu Point muster their few survivors—of the 900, which Ichiki had led ashore a few days earlier, only 100 remain; Ichiki himself is not among them. The exact circumstances of his death is one of the few mysteries of this battle, which Bartsch does not conclusively resolve, choosing instead to present conflicting accounts.

While the surviving Japanese report the dolorous news to Rabaul, the Marine commanders on Guadalcanal are taking stock—34 Marines dead and 75 wounded, a pittance for the losses they inflicted on the Japanese. The Marine Corps commanders are pleased by their troops’ performance, but aware that they were lucky and aided by the enemy’s mistakes. Ichiki had not reconnoitered the Tenaru farther south, where the defenses were less substantial, and had not awaited his reinforcements, which the Marines now knew were coming. In committing these mistakes, Twining concluded, Ichiki suffered from “victory disease.”

At this point, Bartsch shifts his narrative back from Marine privates to that of generals. He demonstrates that Ichiki, far from being “an eager beaver who saw a chance to grab the glory,” as Twining thought, was thoroughly versed in, and acting in full accord with, Japanese tactical doctrine which he, as an instructor at the Infantry School in Tokyo, was completely familiar with (p. 222). Bartsch identifies five factors contributing to Ichiki’s defeat: (1) his decision to attack immediately rather than waiting for reinforcements; (2) his decision to rely on the infantry to spearhead an attack; (3) his decision to attack at the point of the Marines’ greatest strength; (4) his failure to attack, or even to reconnoiter, upstream; and (5) his failure to commit the firepower available to him—heavy machine guns and two 70mm battalion guns—at the onset of the attack. While these factors tend to put the lion’s share of responsibility for the loss on Ichiki’s shoulders, one sees a

fair share of responsibility resting on the Japanese high command and on larger Japanese attitudes. The high command pushed for a speedy attack over a well-prepared or strong one. The command drafted Ichiki's orders loosely; it transported only a fraction of his overall command without his heavy equipment; and it left Ichiki high and dry at Taivu Point with only four-days' rations. Even if Ichiki had not believed in the superiority of Japanese fighting spirit over Western material advantages, he could hardly have done anything other than attack quickly, though he might have attacked better. In retrospect, what was supposed to be an elite commando-style operation turned into a fiasco.

Bartsch's narrative is well supported by the book's

appendices, references, and visual aids. Four appendices identify the officers of the 1st Marines involved in the battle, the Marine casualties, and the officers and staff of the Ichiki detachment. Notes are copious and clearly identify sources. Five maps and a wealth of photographs give the reader ample visual orientation and illustration.

As Bartsch himself notes, the opportunity to do participant-driven history, such as *Victory Fever on Guadalcanal*, has now all but ceased to exist, due to the passing of "The Greatest Generation." Bartsch's book is a fine last hurrah for this type of narrative history and a worthy addition to the shelf of anyone interested in the Guadalcanal campaign or the Pacific War. ♦1775♦

BOOK REVIEW

History Division's Publications: Marines in the Vietnam War

Paul W. Westermeyer
Historian, History Division
Marine Corps University

From 1962 to 1975, more than 800,000 men and women served in the U.S. Marine Corps. Of these, 500,000 served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War, with 13,091 Marines killed and 88,594 wounded. During the conflict, Marines earned 57 Medals of Honor, 44 posthumously. In duration and scale, the Vietnam conflict ranked amongst the largest in the history of the Marine Corps. Because of this, interest in the war is only natural and compounded by the conflict's many controversies. Since 1968, the Marine Corps History Division has produced more than a score of studies on the conflict, telling the story of Marines in the Vietnam War.

The foundation for studying the Marine Corps' role in this conflict is the U.S. Marines in Vietnam series, the definitive official histories (sometimes referred to as the Green Books). This was a 20-year project, with the first work published in 1977, while the last work—*The Defining Year, 1968*—was published in 1997. The chronological series includes nine volumes covering 26 years of Marine involvement in Vietnam. Each book in the series provides an operational narrative of its period, along with appropriate appendices that include a chronology, command and staff lists, unit lists, Medal of Honor citations, and other material. Maintaining consistent quality and style for more than 20 years of scholarship is a daunting task. This series should be the first stop for anyone studying the Marine Corps' role in the Vietnam War.

In addition to operational narrative definitive his-

tories, the History Division produced several anthologies and monographs examining specific aspects of the Vietnam conflict. The division reprinted then-Captain Francis J. "Bing" West Jr.'s *Small Unit Action in Vietnam, Summer 1966* (first published in 1967) and a study of the battle of Khe Sanh (first published in 1969). Before the war ended, the History Division also produced two studies, published as historical monographs, written by Marine Reserve officers, who were scholars in their civilian lives. The officers studied Marine civic action and civil affairs in Vietnam during the late 1960s. In 1974, before work began on the definitive histories, the division published an anthology and annotated bibliography, highlighting the best articles on Marines and Vietnam from publications such as the *Marine Corps Gazette* and the U.S. Naval Institute's *Proceedings*. Later, as the definitive histories were being written, the branch produced two monographs covering the specialized histories of Marine military law and chaplains who served with Marines in Vietnam.

In the 1980s, the History Division published three occasional papers on Vietnam: *Leadership Lessons and Remembrances from Vietnam*; *Bibliography on Khe Sanh USMC Participation*; and *Vietnam Revisited: Conversation with William D. Broyles, Jr.** The *Vietnam Revisited* publication is the transcript of a 1984 seminar discussion involving multiple History Division staff, journalists, and other Vietnam War veterans. The publication is remarkable for its candor and the wide range of the discussion. In contrast, *Leadership Lessons* is a series of articles written by Lieutenant General Herman Nickerson Jr. in 1969–70 while he was commanding general of III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF). These articles had

* Occasional papers are works considered of intrinsic worth to the study of Marine Corps history but not intended for mass publication.

previously been published in *Sea Tiger*, the weekly III MAF newspaper.

In 2009, the History Division published four more occasional papers on the Vietnam War. These included a collection of primary source documents on the Vietnamese Marine Corps and its American Marine advisors, a short history of Marine advisors with the Vietnamese provincial reconnaissance units, a study of Operation Millpond, and a master's thesis examining close air support during the battle of Khe Sanh.

The Vietnam War was long and complicated. Marine participation spanned decades but was concentrated in the years from 1962 to 1975. As part of the U.S. Department of Defense observance of the 50th anniversary of the introduction of ground troops, the History Division is publishing a series of commemorative histories on the conflict. The Marines in the Vietnam War commemorative series are written by scholars and retired Marines on a variety of Vietnam War topics. The first of these works, *The Path to War: U.S. Marine Corps Operations in Southeast Asia, 1961 to 1965* was published in 2014. Additional titles are in production, including a chronology of the conflict illustrated with Marine combat art and histories of Con Thien, Operation Starlite, Operation Harvest Moon, Khe Sanh, Hue City, and the Special Landing Force. Other commemoratives are expected to be released during the course of the commemorative period.

In addition to the commemorative histories, the History Division is publishing *The Greene Papers: General Wallace M. Greene Jr. and the Escalation of the Vietnam War, January 1964–March 1965*. Compiled and edited by Dr. Nicholas J. Schlosser, this recently declassified trove of documents will provide fodder for historians on all aspects of the Vietnam War, especially those interested in the Corps' contributions and the inner workings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the critical early stages of direct U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War ended 40 years ago. Since the end of that conflict, the History Division has produced an impressive body of scholarly histories and documentary collections on this pivotal event in American history.* The war's significance in the on-

going development of the Marine Corps demands such attention, and the ongoing commemorative series will ensure that the Vietnam War and the Corps' role therein will be neither forgotten nor ignored.

U.S. Marines in Vietnam Series

The Advisory & Combat Assistance Era, 1954–1964. Capt Robert H. Whitlow, USMCR. 1977. 1982 reprint. 190 pp.

The Landing and the Buildup, 1965. Jack Shulimson and Maj Charles M. Johnson, USMC. 1978. 261 pp.

An Expanding War, 1966. Jack Shulimson. 1982. 390 pp.

Fighting the North Vietnamese, 1967. Maj Gary L. Telfer, USMC, LtCol Lane Rogers, USMC, and V. Keith Fleming Jr. 1984. 338 pp.

The Defining Year, 1968. Jack Shulimson, LtCol Leonard A. Blaisol, USMC, Charles R. Smith, and Capt David A. Dawson, USMC. 1997. 805 pp.

High Mobility and Standdown, 1969. Charles R. Smith. 1988. 403 pp.

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BOOK REVIEW

Defend and Befriend: The U.S. Marine Corps and Combined Action Platoons in Vietnam

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Defend and Befriend: The U.S. Marine Corps and Combined Action Platoons in Vietnam. By John Southard. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014. Pp. 232. \$40.00 cloth, epub, and pdf.)

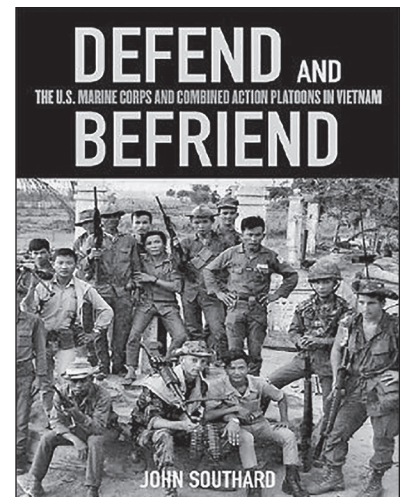
From 1965 to 1971, while U.S. Marine infantry battalions and regiments waged large-unit operations against the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army across the five northern-most provinces of South Vietnam, a smaller contingent of U.S. Marines waged a different kind of war against Communist political and guerrilla cadres embedded within the villages and hamlets of South Vietnam's I Corps. This was part experimentation and part lessons learned from past counterinsurgency experiences in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua in the 1920s and 1930s. The U.S. Marine Corps recognized that winning the war in South Vietnam was as much about the people as it was forcing elusive enemy formations into set-piece battles. Beginning in August 1965—not long after the III Marine Amphibious Force arrived in South Vietnam to begin its campaign to clear and hold the enclaves—overextended Marine battalions searched for a way to protect the gains made through small-unit civic actions and other population-centric counterinsurgency techniques.

The challenge confronting these battalions was how to effectively distribute Marines across large swaths of land dotted with villages and hamlets—all under the observation, influence, or control of local Viet Cong elements. A plan to integrate Marine rifle

squads with local South Vietnamese Popular Forces won out. In *Defend and Befriend: The U.S. Marine Corps and Combined Action Platoons in Vietnam*, John Southard provides a historical account and analysis of how this program and subsequent combined

action platoons (CAPs), originated and evolved to the point of being essential to winning the war, as many military officers believed.

Southard is not the first to write about the CAP and the “other war” that Marines fought in South Vietnam. Bing West first introduced the world to this innovative approach in his seminal book *The Village* (1972). In 1989, Michael E. Peterson wrote on CAP Marines in *The Combined Action Platoons: The U.S. Marines' Other War in Vietnam*. Al Hemmingway described his time in a CAP in *Our War Was Different: Marine Combined Action Platoons in Vietnam* (1994), followed three years later by Barry L. Goodson's *CAP Mot: The Story of a Marine Special Forces Unit in Vietnam, 1968–1969* (1997). Aside from Peterson, the authors wrote from firsthand experience as members or observers of the CAP. Southard, like Peterson, elected to write about the CAP because of its uniqueness but mostly due to its relevance to military operations at the time. Unlike the others, Southard's book provides a useful analy-



sis of the CAP concept and its inner workings, considering more than operational history or narrative. Southard considers the rarely discussed racial and cultural aspects associated with the war and the environment.

A true academic study, *Defend and Befriend* offers a great depth of analysis with meticulous research, operational statistics, and interviews, whereas authors of the previous books profited mainly from recounting their own personal experiences and memories. This does not diminish the value of previous efforts to tell the CAP story. Rather, it strengthens each and provides more substantive perspective for students and veterans of the Vietnam War to evaluate and consider.

Southard's first two chapters carefully and thoroughly examine the purpose and scope of the CAPs and how the program came to be. One chapter compares CAPs with their perceived U.S. Army equivalents, the Special Forces (SF) and Mobile Advisory Teams (MAT). Southard dispels the belief that CAPs are much like SF and MAT by highlighting their differences in "length of tenure in Vietnam, the overall purpose of the units, their training, the military composition" to name a few (p. 33). The next few chapters detail how a Marine became a member of a CAP, his training and daily existence in a CAP within a village or hamlet, the Popular Forces, and CAPs' roles within III Marine Amphibious Force's plans to clear and hold the enclaves and within overall U.S. military strategy in South Vietnam.

Of significant interest is Southard's presentation of the two U.S. military strategies—search and destroy for the Army and the "hearts and mind" campaign waged by the Marines. In this, Southard revives the interservice rivalry that plagued the U.S. military during the war, one in which the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese politically exploited in South

Vietnam and in the United States by way of the media. He recounts the historical perspectives of both Services and the events that led up to formation of the two strategies. Southard focuses on the principal figures including Army General William C. Westmoreland and Army Lieutenant General William E. DePuy—both opponents of the CAPs and the Marine Corps' approach to the war—and Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak and General Lewis W. Walt. Southard recalls their positions on the CAPs, based on their experiences and appreciation for the war itself. He does not identify a single factor as to why the CAP program did not excel the way proponents of the program expected it to other than to note that it was a matter of differences in thinking between the Services on how best to approach the war and that the "war itself proved to be the chief instigator of the program's demise" (p. 143).

The author summarizes his and others' assessments of the program and what might have been had the U.S. military seriously invested in CAPs. This leads to a short discussion on the program's use, or similar concepts, in future operations. Although subjective and speculative, which is common in an academic study of this magnitude, Southard raises several interesting issues worthy of discussion and should not be discounted, regardless of the accepted outcome of the war. His points are particularly interesting and relevant as he considers the U.S. military's most recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Defend and Befriend is a well-researched, historical, and academic study that deserves the attention of students and veterans of the Vietnam War. Not only has Southard produced a study that complements earlier works on the CAPs, he enhances the reader's appreciation for one of the more dangerous, yet interesting and unique, missions of the Vietnam War. ♦1775♦

BOOK REVIEW

Da Nang Diary: A Forward Air Controller's Gunsight View of Flying With SOG

Fred H. Allison
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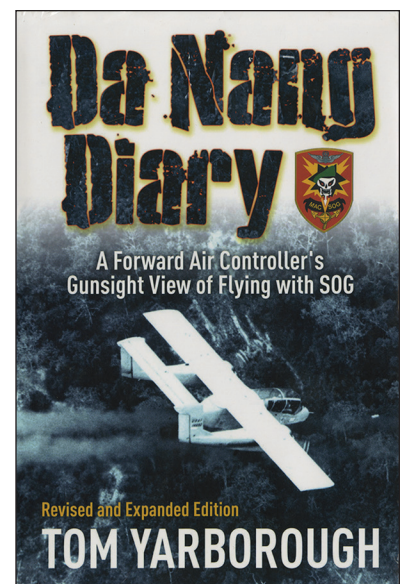
Da Nang Diary: A Forward Air Controller's Gunsight View of Flying With SOG. By Tom Yarborough. (Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2013. Pp. 376. \$32.95 cloth.)

U.S. Air Force Colonel Tom Yarborough (Ret) flew more than 600 combat missions in Vietnam (1970–71) as a forward air controller (airborne) (FAC[A]) in the North American OV-10 Bronco aircraft. In his book *Da Nang Diary: A Forward Air Controller's Gunsight View of Flying With SOG*, Yarborough details his first combat tour as a pilot with Operation Prairie Fire. Prairie Fire was the code name for the joint, covert operations conducted by the Studies and Observation Group (SOG) unit, “the most clandestine U.S. military unit to serve in the Vietnam War” (p. 9). Its roots

can be traced to the World War II Office of Strategic Services (OSS). As a FAC(A), Yarborough directed air support for the SOG teams, conducting reconnaissance and raid operations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and Vietnam's Demilitarized Zone.

Yarborough uses his own extensive diary from the era and audio recordings of cockpit communications as source material. Originally published in 1991, the book's latest version (published in 2013) also includes recently declassified information on SOG operations. The new sources and the author's writing give an authentic feel to the narrative and accomplishes Yarborough's goal of an “investigation of my personal experiences as a vehicle for examining the extraordinary events surrounding . . . SOG” (p. 9).

The book is not overly aviation centric and, therefore, most readers will be able to understand the narrative. Yarborough handles the combat action account well and gives a sensitive and thoughtful treatment of the interpersonal relationships extant in the close-knit squadron at Da Nang, which included nonaviator U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers who rode the OV-10 as observers. Yarborough also recounts off-duty, leave, and rest and relaxation ac-



Fred H. Allison is an oral historian for Marine Corps University and a retired Marine major and aviator with a subspecialty in aviation history. A Texas native, he has a PhD in military history from Texas Tech University. His dissertation is entitled “The Black Sheep Squadron: A Case Study in U.S. Marine Corps Innovations in Close Air Support.” Allison received the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation's Dissertation Fellowship and the Roy S. Geiger Aviation Writing Award. He coedited and compiled a Marine Corps History Division book entitled *Pathbreakers: U.S. Marine African American Officers in Their Own Words*.

tivities that often included the heavy drinking and rowdy behavior that was part of Vietnam aviators' "play hard, fly hard" mentality—something that sharply contrasts with the current social climate in the military.

The book reiterates the utility of aviation in the ground combat equation. With aircraft overhead, the SOG teams enhanced situational awareness and assured that tremendous firepower and rescue and evacuation resources were available to troops, if necessary. The enemy's capabilities conversely were restricted and their options limited. The North Vietnamese were forced to remain hidden, meaning they could not act with boldness or in mass for fear of being detected and attacked. They were forced into the shadows and the sanctuary of night.

As a result of this dynamic, according to Yarborough, an air-ground bond was established by the close air support mission. Pilots flying air support—whether they were FAC(A)s, strike pilots, helicopter gun-

ship crews, or transport flyers—pulled out the stops to help their fellow warriors engaged in ground combat. An affinity developed for the troops supported. Yarborough expresses this sentiment in a diary entry he made at the end of his first combat tour: "I seem to have found, as incomprehensible as it may seem, more pure love in Vietnam than in any other place I have ever lived or visited. . . . I am proud to count these warrior-friends as my knights in shining armor—forever the quintessential heroes of my memory . . . and I would rather die than let them down" (pp. 330–31). Indeed, does this not express the air-ground bond institutionalized by the Marine Corps?

This book should be recommended reading for active military members and those interested in a fast-paced and revealing account of a little-known aspect of the Vietnam air war. The reader can learn a great deal about special operations in Vietnam from the perspective of an aviator who went to battle with them. ♦1775♦

BOOK REVIEW

Al Gray, Marine: The Early Years, 1950–1967, Vol.1

Charles D. Melson
Chief Historian, History Division
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Al Gray, Marine: The Early Years, 1950–1967, Vol. 1.
By Scott Laidig (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute Press, 2012. Pp. 440. \$29.95 cloth; \$19.95 paperback.)

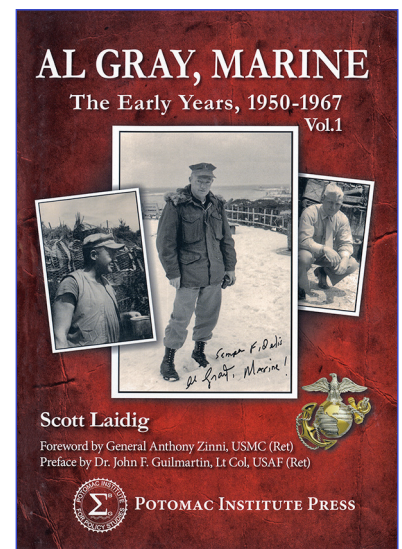
General Alfred M. Gray, 29th Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, is best known for serving during a critical time in the Corps' history—the 1990–91 Gulf War. However, he also participated in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts of the Cold War. Scott Laidig's biography on Gray explores the experience of those two wars and how they shaped "Al" Gray's background for his final assignment. In *Al Gray, Marine: The Early Years, 1950–1967*, Laidig looks at Gray's roles as an artilleryman, infantryman, communicator, and cyberwarrior. The focus of this review is the five chapters that focus on Gray's early Vietnam experiences (176 pages of the book).

As a captain at Headquarters Marine Corps in 1961, Gray was instrumental in sending Marines to South Vietnam in support of signals intelligence activities with the U.S. Army Security Agency at Plei-

ku in the II Corps Tactical Zone and later to Phu Bai in I Corps. Gray also took part in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and negotiated Pentagon politics and in-country tactical realities before leaving Headquarters for Vietnam in 1964. He joined the so-called Marine Detachment Advisory Team One

from the 1st Composite Radio Company (the predecessor of the 1st Radio Battalion) along with an infantry detachment from 3d Marines, which became the initial Marine Corps ground force to arrive since air units did not arrive until 1962. Their mission was to monitor Communist infiltration along the Ho Chi Minh Trail from an isolated location in northeast South Vietnam, Tiger Tooth Mountain (Dong Voi Mep), and then farther south at *Dong Bach Ma*.

In 1965, even with a hazardous duty restriction due to his intelligence background, then-Major Gray served in South Vietnam with the 12th Marines as the artillery regiment's communications officer, a fire direction officer, and then regimental operations officer. By 1966, 3d Marine Division and 12th Marines moved to the demilitarized zone in the north. As the Marines moved closer in 1967, the North Vietnamese responded with heavy artillery and rocket fire.



Charles D. Melson, major, USMC (Ret), is chief historian for the U.S. Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. He is an official historian of the Vietnam War and an oral historian for General Gray, and has published works on military history, the *Journal of Slavic Military History* and the award winning *Operation Knight's Move*.

The artillery of III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) fired about 281,110 rounds along the demilitarized zone against 42,190 incoming rounds from the North Vietnamese Army. This created a command for Gray, a composite Marine Corps and U.S. Army artillery battalion that was part of the firepower attrition slugfest. The composite artillery battalion had a mix of tubes, tanks, antitank, direction finding, and aeroscout aircraft at Firebase Gio Linh. As noted in the official history, some batteries were minibattalions, and some battalions were miniregiments with a mix of weapons types and calibers.

Despite Gray's combat arms assignment, III MAF still sought Gray's intelligence insights. This led Major Gray back to the war with signals intelligence and the radio battalion in 1967. Volume one ends with personal and professional recognition for Gray, who earned a Silver Star for heroism and was part of the 1st Radio Battalion, which received the National Security Agency's Travis Trophy for best service cryptologic unit of the year. Lieutenant Colonel Gray's subsequent experiences in Vietnam between 1968 and 1975 are set to appear in a second volume of work.

For the first volume of this biography, Laidig uses a combination of oral memoir and a life-and-times

approach. The switch from the personal to the objective may make it an uneven read. The length rather than the subject matter likely led to the narrative ending with several more years of fighting to go before the 1971 departure of the III MAF. Even so, the book is interesting and insightful for the Vietnam period (1961–67) while Gray was still a captain and then a major.

For this volume, the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation awarded Laidig the Colonel Joseph Alexander Award for a distinguished book of biographical literature. The foreword and preface were written by General Anthony C. Zinni (Ret) and Professor John F. Guilmartin Jr., respectively. The book also includes blurbs from former Senator James H. Webb Jr. and retired Generals James L. Jones and James T. Conway. Laidig was also a Marine, serving during both the Cold War and Vietnam. Shaping his view of the subject, these experiences bring a personal interest to bear on the narrative. This was Laidig's first published book, with a second volume expected to carry the story forward. Despite expert advice on the project, more developmental editing was needed to integrate the personal with the historical perspectives. In present form, the narrative was awkward. ♦1775♦

BOOK REVIEW

*Underdogs**

When did the Marine Corps become “Modern”?

David J. Ulbrich
(Rogers State University and
Norwich University)

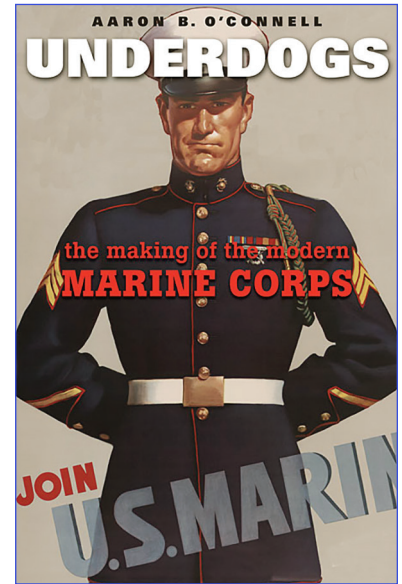
Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps.
By Aaron B. O’Connell. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012. Pp. 400. \$29.95 cloth.)

Aaron O’Connell’s *Underdogs* is at once fascinating and compelling, as well as frustrating and conflicting. He attempts to show how and why the U.S. Marine Corps became “modern” in the years between 1940 and 1965. He defines this term in an endnote in his introduction: “I use the word ‘modern’ generically here, meaning the present-day Marine Corps. The principal characteristics of the Corps today are its force-in-readiness mission, its aggressive public relations infrastructure, its deep-seated political influence, and its elite position in American society” (p. 284). O’Connell believes that these characteristics grew out of the Marines’ experiences in World War II, and became deeply entrenched during the early Cold War. For O’Connell, the pre-World War II Marine Corps either displayed no aspects of the narrowly defined characteristics of modernity, or they were so underdeveloped as to warrant no discussion in this book. At times, the reader may be left with the impression that the pre-1940 Marine Corps is hardly worthy of study.

O’Connell sets out to make three major points. First, between 1940 and 1965, Marines saw themselves differently from the other Armed Services. Deep lines of division were created by the Corps between the other Services, the American public, and itself. Insularity and mistrust combined with exceptionalism and

self-promotion were manufactured by mid- to senior-level officers to ensure the Marine Corps’ existence. To this end, the Corps sought to make itself more appealing to the public, recruits, and active-duty Marines through a compelling public relations narrative that touted their elite status. Second, this sense of

exceptionalism originated in World War II and grew stronger over the two succeeding decades. Indeed, for O’Connell, this produced a uniquely “Marine” culture. That self-created, self-imposed culture buttressed the Corps from such external threats as military unification and nuclear weapons-focused national security strategies, as well as from such internal problems as alcohol abuse and domestic violence that threatened that elite public image. Third, Marines’ unique culture helped the Corps grow more influential in the United States military establishment over time. Marines portrayed themselves as the nation’s only legitimate force-in-readiness, able to complete any combat, peacekeeping, or humanitarian operation. Their influence, according to the author, extended beyond the military sphere and into American politics and society, where the Corps enjoyed supporters that were both powerful and numerous. As a paral-



* While *Underdogs* was previously reviewed by Dr. Nicholas Schlosser in *Fortitudine*, Vol. 37 No. 4, 2013 issue, we felt the title and the topic warranted consideration from this reviewer’s perspective.

lel theme throughout the work, O'Connell seeks to debunk several Marine Corps myths by highlighting the realities behind those myths that were sometimes repulsive.

The book's title "underdogs" fits the author's purpose well because he sees the Marine Corps in a perpetual state of conflict, fighting enemies that were sometimes real and sometimes imagined. There is a certain amount of credibility to this institutionalized paranoia among Marines. Their struggles against undisciplined recruits, unhappy parents, unsupportive politicians, and bitter sister Services were, in fact, real. To substantiate his major points, O'Connell explores how culture functioned in the Corps. His use of the term "culture" takes on many forms by referring to organizational structures, ideological default settings, and motivational mythologies. In so doing, O'Connell draws on works by T. J. Jackson Lears, Michael G. Kammen, Michel Foucault, Clifford J. Geertz, Warren I. Susman, and Benedict Anderson. Among military historians who deal with cultural studies, O'Connell cites books by Craig M. Cameron, John A. Lynn II, and Martin L. van Creveld.

Underdogs takes the reader through a part-chronology, part-thematic examination of the cultural history of the Marine Corps. The first two chapters examine the Corps in World War II where, according to O'Connell, the war established the "modern" Marine Corps as the nation's amphibious force of closely-knit, ferocious, elite warriors. A new recruit left his civilian world and endured an often painful process to become a "marine" in basic training. The recruit becomes entrenched in the belief that the Marine Corps was different from and better than the U.S. Army. Proceeding temporally, the author next examines combat operations during the Pacific War. He focuses on Wake Island and Guadalcanal as two emblematic experiences that shaped the Marines' sense of self and public image. For O'Connell, these battles in 1941 and 1942 marked the beginning of the Corps' incredibly effective publicity machine, which was run at the time by Brigadier General Robert L. Denig and supported by active-duty Marine combat correspondents.

In the third chapter, O'Connell delves into the Marines' efforts to fend off military unification in the late 1940s. For this reviewer, chapter 3 stands as the most intriguing part of the book. It covers the

attempts of the "Chowder Society," composed of active-duty, retired, and veteran Marines, to fend off attempts to fold the Marine Corps into a single American military Service. This unofficial group included the likes of Robert Debs Heinl, Merritt "Red Mike" Edson, Victor "Brute" Krulak, and Gerald C. Thomas. The author ably tells how these Marines worked legally and sometimes illegally to generate support for their Corps among the American people and especially their senators and representatives in Congress. The Chowder Society used rhetoric that painted the Corps as not only the force-in-readiness in an uncertain future, but also as the necessary bulwark against possible tyranny of a completely unified military establishment.

O'Connell then turns to the early Cold War and the Korean War in his fourth and fifth chapters. He offers useful commentary on how and why most Americans and most American military personnel chose to forget the Korean War. They did not view this conflict as an American victory, and they found the nation's limited warmaking during the Cold War to be uncomfortable. Marines, however, did not see Korea as a defeat. Conversely, they appropriated the battlefield heroics from the Chosin Reservoir and the Inchon landing to bolster the Corps as a warrior elite and premier amphibious assault force. The Marines did not concern themselves with the issues of nuclear strategy. Instead they focused on preparing themselves to be a versatile force-in-readiness as envisioned in the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), which is still in existence today. As the foundational warfighting unit of the Marine Corps, the MAGTF, as an organizational structure, gives the Marine commander control of ground, aviation, and logistical components necessary to accomplish far-ranging missions from humanitarian operations to full-scale war. Following this discussion, O'Connell moves to a different topic—the 1950s on the home front during and after the Korean War—and analyzes several examples of poor discipline, rude behavior, violence, and alcohol abuse by Marines. Significantly, the author accurately links the physical and alcohol abuse. In addition, he properly spotlights the untold thousands of Marines who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other invisible wounds cause by brutal combat in World War II and the Korean conflict.

O'Connell's conclusion also serves as an epilogue. He extends the Corps' underdog mentality to the twenty-first century after briefly looking at the Marine Corps in the Vietnam War and more recent conflicts. He tries to connect public relations, force-in-readiness, and other topics covered in World War II and the early Cold War with the contemporary Marine Corps.

While there are commendable sections of O'Connell's *Underdogs*, several others raise serious questions regarding definitions, time periods, arguments, and sources in this book. First, what is meant by the book's subtitle *The Making of the Modern Marine Corps*? O'Connell's answer is not effectively substantiated in its pages, in part, because he is too selective in examples and evidence, ignoring divergent perspectives that may problematize or altogether discredit his thesis. As such, the author comes close to making teleological arguments, because his arguments and conclusion are informed so conspicuously by a contemporary view of the Corps, rather than by careful theoretical and historiographical examinations of the past in context.

The breakdown of time periods in this work is flawed. Did the Marine Corps only start looking "modern" at the end of the interwar years? Was the Corps never seen as elite or as a flexible fighting force before 1940? Are readers to believe that the Marine Corps had no well-conceived public relations campaigns before World War II? O'Connell devotes only a few pages and several notes to the four decades of Marine Corps history before that conflict. He offers no detailed coverage of such iconic battles as Belleau Wood, Château-Thierry, and the Argonne in World War I; nor does he analyze the profound impacts of the Great War's memory on the Corps over the last century. Many World War I veterans went on to become senior Marine leaders in the interwar years, World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War. Is it unreasonable to think, as O'Connell asserts, that Marines' experiences in World War I and the interwar years had profound effects on their actions during World War II and thereafter? Major General John A. Lejeune, for example, recognized the value of France's modern staff organization during World War I. Later, as Commandant of the Marine Corps, Lejeune instituted similar structure reforms in the 1920s. His contributions began the modernization

process, which was continued by John H. Russell, Thomas Holcomb, and others.

Elsewhere, O'Connell does not account for the roots of Marine Corps' amphibious doctrine that he argues establishes the Service as unique and elite. The operational successes of World War II can be traced back to Earl H. "Pete" Ellis in the 1920s, if not to the Marine Corps advanced base force of the pre-World War I era. Ellis and others like him were forward-looking and modern in their amphibious doctrines. Later, Ben H. Fuller, John Russell, and subsequent Commandants of Marine Corps spurred the development of the Corps' amphibious doctrines and capabilities throughout the 1930s. The collective efforts culminated in the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual* (1934) and the *Tentative Manual for Defense of Advanced Bases* (1936), all of which were compiled at the Marine Corps Schools in Quantico, Virginia, and codified into Marine doctrine years before World War II.

Additionally, the author provides no in-depth coverage of the thousands of Marines serving in Latin America, or the effects of their deployments on the Corps' public image as the Service that is "First to Fight." Most of the Corps' future senior leaders spent time fighting these so-called "Banana Wars" in the early twentieth century. These constitute significant cultural forces that they felt later in their careers and that helped shape beliefs about the Corps, its future missions, and its place within the American armed forces and the nation. In addition, lessons learned and doctrines for fighting counterinsurgencies were eventually compiled in the *Small Wars Manual* (1935, 1940). This manual's insights into insurgency, techniques for fighting counterinsurgencies, and tactics for overcoming terrain and elusive enemies have reverberated through the decades and affected recent American counterinsurgency efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Adding to the difficulties associated with clumsy definitions and blurry timeframes are holes in historiography. In his preface completed in May 2011, O'Connell explains that he wrote chapters between 2002 and 2010. It is unclear, however, why there are no citations to many important pre-2010 works that may or may not contest his conclusions. Several other historians have recently wrestled with what constituted "modern"-ness in Marine Corps' publicity and

symbolism, including Heather Pace Marshall's dissertation "It Means Something These Days to be a Marine': Image, Identity, and Mission in the Marine Corps, 1861–1918" (2010) and Colin M. Colbourn's thesis "Esprit de Marine Corps: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps through Public Relations, 1898–1929" (2009). Additional perspectives on publicity can be drawn from Gary L. Rutledge's thesis "The Rhetoric of United States Marine Corps Enlistment Recruitment" (1975); and broader context can be found in Daniel Pope's *The Making of Modern Advertising* (1983). Beyond the study of public relations, O'Connell makes no mention of the Corps' amphibious development as explored in Timothy Moy's *War Machines: Transforming Technologies in the U.S. Military, 1920–1940* (2001), among several other works. Although these authors may differ on dates and definitions, they assert that facets of a decades-long evolution toward a modern Marine Corps actually culminated in the Service that fought World War II and the Cold War.

There are several other relevant secondary sources missing from O'Connell's endnotes. In sections devoted to the Marines on Wake Island in December 1941, there are no citations for Gregory J. W. Urwin's *Facing Fearful Odds: The Siege of Wake Island* (1997) or Robert J. Cressman's "A Magnificent Fight": *The Battle for Wake Island* (1995). These books would have bolstered O'Connell's legitimate point about the great value of Wake Island to Marine publicity and American morale early in World War II. Similarly, Richard B. Frank's *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle* (1990) and Stanley Coleman Jersey's *Hell's Island: The Untold Story of Guadalcanal* (2007) are absent from the author's endnotes. O'Connell also does not deal in sufficient depth with the historiography of when, how, and why the MAGTF concept emerged.

It is worth noting that *Underdogs* contains no bibliography. This made evaluating the book's research a cumbersome process. However, the backmatter content may have been a decision made by Harvard University Press and thus beyond the author's control.

Still more lapses can be seen in primary sources. O'Connell draws on more than 20 collections at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, and more than 25 collections at the Marine Corps

University in Quantico, Virginia. He also makes use of several oral history interviews, two of which he conducted with veterans and their families in 2007 and 2008. Unfortunately, these research efforts do not provide a preponderance of evidence for some of his key arguments about cultural history. Additional testimony is available in the Marine Corps University Archives' several hundred oral history transcriptions and personal paper collections of Marines serving between 1940 and 1965. Regardless, the author also does not filter the few interviews in this book through the lenses of memory studies and oral history methodology, both of which have well-established and sophisticated processes to interpret interviews. It is all the more important to include these processes of evaluating interview when dealing with incredibly delicate issues like PTSD and alcohol abuse.

Inadequate documentation ultimately leads to unfounded arguments. For example, in chapter 5 on the Marine Corps in the 1950s, O'Connell states that, "The Corps' loudest supporters were primarily men; opposition came most often from women" (p. 189). This quote relates to the Ribbon Creek incident and alcohol abuse, the second such example that, according to the author, correctly represented and remains a major problem for Marines. In early 1956, an intoxicated Marine drill instructor took some recruits on an unsanctioned night march through swamps, where six of them died in an accident. This shocking event caused negative publicity that doubtlessly tainted opinions of some American men and women. Illuminating the dark side of Marine Corps culture seems reasonable, especially when that institution so carefully crafts its image for its members and the public at large. However, O'Connell provides no statistical evidence to justify this statement about the Corps' varying support among men and women in the 1950s. There are several other instances where the author makes sweeping claims without adequate primary or secondary source evidence.

In closing, Aaron O'Connell offers important observations about Marine Corps history, especially relating to the activities of the "Chowder Society." Nevertheless, weaknesses in breadth and depth of his research and in selection of his evidence undermine other arguments in *Underdogs*. ♦1775♦



Submissions

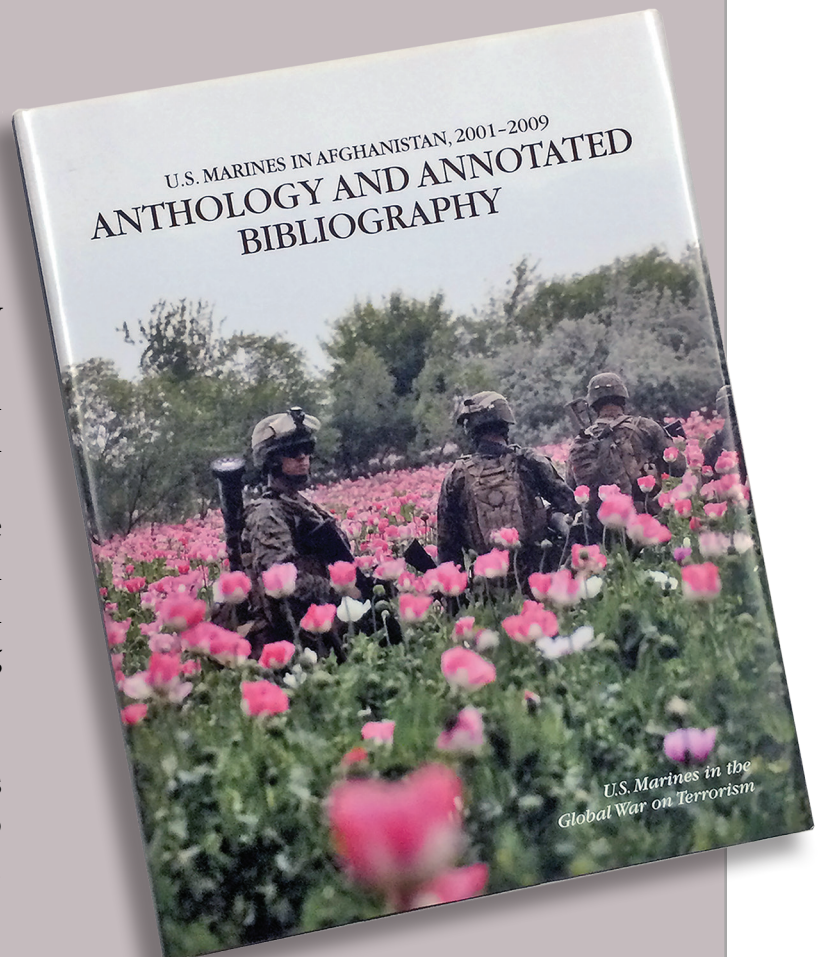
Marine Corps History Division is actively searching for contributors to *Marine Corps History* (MCH). MCH is a scholarly, military history periodical published twice a year (Summer and Winter). Our focus is on all aspects of the Corps' history, culture, and doctrine. Articles should be no less than 4,000 words and footnoted according to *Chicago Manual of Style*. For more information about submitting an article or writing a book review, please email history.division@usmc.mil with the subject line of "Marine Corps History Submission."

U.S. Marines in Afghanistan, 2001–2009

Anthology and Annotated Bibliography

Major David W. Kummer

This anthology and bibliography presents a collection of 37 articles, interviews, and speeches describing many aspects of the U.S. Marine Corps participation in Operation Enduring Freedom from 2001 to 2009. This History Division publication is intended to serve as a general overview and provisional reference to inform both Marines and the general public until monographs dealing with major Marine Corps operations during the campaign can be completed. The accompanying annotated bibliography provides a detailed look at selected sources that currently exist until new scholarship and archival materials become available.



MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION'S

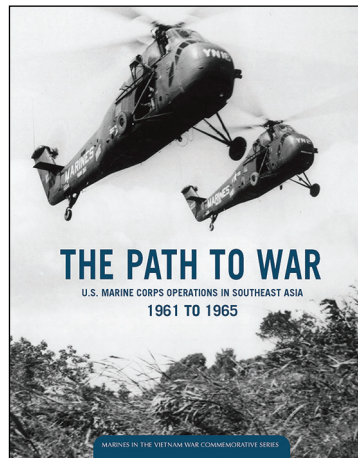
New Releases

The Path to War

U.S. Marine Corps Operations in Southeast Asia, 1961 to 1965

Colonel George R. Hoffmann Jr. (Ret)

Book one of this commemorative series documents the activities of the U.S. Marine Corps in Southeast Asia from January 1961 to March 1965, during which time Marines saw increased involvement in the region as they served to protect American interests. While individual Marines saw duty as early as 1954 with the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group in Saigon, the first operational unit of 300 Marines from Marine Air Base Squadron 16 was deployed to Udorn, Thailand, in March 1961 to provide aircraft maintenance and flight-line support for Air America.

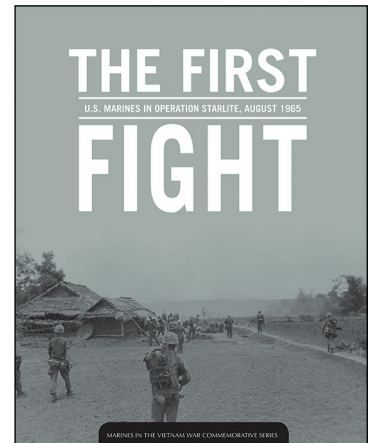


The First Fight

U.S. Marines in Operation Starlite, August 1965

Colonel Rod Andrew Jr., U.S. Marine Corps Reserve

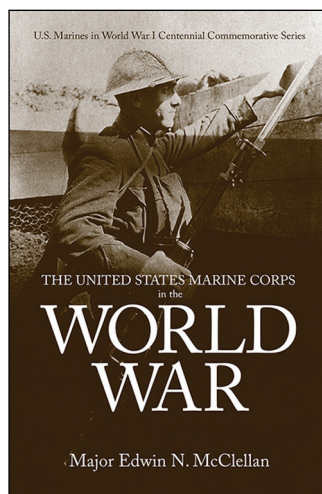
Operation Starlite, as the Marines called it, took place on the Van Tuong Peninsula, about 10 miles south of the Marine base at Chu Lai. In the short term, the tactical victory won by the Marines validated such operational concepts as vertical envelopment, amphibious assault, and combined arms that had not been put into practice on a large scale since the Korean War. It proved that Marine ground troops and their junior officers and noncommissioned officers, as well as Marine aviators, were just as tough and reliable as their forebears who had fought in World War II and Korea. In the long term, Starlite foreshadowed the American military's commitment to conventional warfare in Vietnam and showed how difficult it would be to defeat Communist forces in South Vietnam.



The United States Marine Corps in the World War

Major Edwin N. McClellan

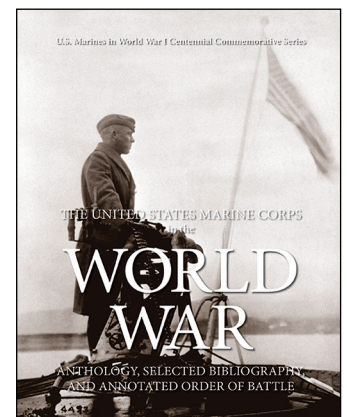
The United States Marine Corps in the World War provides succinct, factual, and historical information on the Marine Corps during the First World War. Published initially in 1920 as the first book from the newly created Historical Section of the Marine Corps, Major Edwin N. McClellan's history of Marines in the first global war has stood the test of time with its statistical and concise details of the growth, activities, and combat exploits of Marines. During the 50th anniversary of the First World War, History Division provides an updated version that accounts for more accurate casualty numbers. In honor of the centennial of the First World War, this expanded version now includes short biographical sketches on key Marine Corps leaders in the war and photographs within the text. This reprint of McClellan's seminal work is the first in a series commemorating Marines in the war.



The U.S. Marine Corps in the First World War *Anthology, Selected Bibliography, and Annotated Order of Battle*

Annette D. Amerman

The aim of this collection of articles is to give readers the broad historical strokes to U.S. Marine Corps participation in World War I, as well as to show that the Corps' contribution to the war effort was not limited to the 4th Marine Brigade. World War I created the modern-day Marine Corps; an adaptive force-in-readiness even when seemingly relegated to ship and barracks duty.



Marine Corps History

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