

STATE of the CORPS

**By Gen Leonard F. Chapman, Jr.
Commandant of the Marine Corps**



The status of the Corps continues to reflect the sacrifices, dedication and courage of the individual Marine, whether in the air, on land or sea.

THE Marine Corps has consistently advocated the principle that the war in South Vietnam can be conclusively won only through convincing the South Vietnamese people in the villages and hamlets that their hope lies with freedom, not with communism. Today, under the conditions of cessation of bombardment of North Vietnam and the search for negotiated settlement, this becomes even more important.

Throughout 1968, the validity of Marine Corps concepts was demonstrated against significant opposition in I Corps. Incursions by North Vietnamese Army units in the DMZ area were defeated during the year, while repeated efforts of NVA units to control the rich agricultural area of central I Corps were thwarted. Field commanders have reported the success of these operations in the GAZETTE. And despite the major commitment against NVA forces, the counter guerrilla campaign regained its momentum, after the setback incurred as a result of the Tet Offensive.

This dominant military position by the Free World Forces in I Corps was continued through the year. Although the enemy attempted it several times, he was never able to mount another sustained offensive or achieve any degree of military success.

As an indication of the intensity of the conflict in I Corps in 1968, the casualty figures for the year

include 4,618 Marines killed and 29,320 wounded. A total of 89,551 enemy were killed by Government of Vietnam/Free World Forces in I Corps. Of this total 31,264 were killed by Marine units. During the period 1965-1968, USMC units in I Corps have killed 61,775 enemy.

During 1968, Marines conducted 41 major operations of battalion size or larger. Ten of these operations extended over a period of three months or longer. Since the start of 1969, Marines have commenced four major operations, two of which are still in progress.

The Special Landing Forces of the Seventh Fleet, of which I will speak more later, conducted 13 amphibious landings in support of III MAF operations during the year. The versatility of these forces was demonstrated by the variety of missions assigned: independent landing operations, landing operations in support of ground operations inland, and as a rapidly established cordon around populated areas in support of our pacification effort.

One product of our mobile and aggressive tactics in I Corps has been the large numbers of enemy caches uncovered. Seizure of these caches has denied the enemy forces significant amounts of weapons, ammunition, and food.

Let me stress that this has been an air/ground effort, and Marine aviation units by their support

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of all Allied forces in I Corps have shouldered a tremendous burden.

During 1968, Marine fighter/attack aircraft flew more than 67,000 sorties in support of Free World Forces in South Vietnam.

During the same period, Marine helicopter units distinguished themselves by lifting more than 1,100,000 troops, delivering over 129,000 tons of supplies, and evacuating more than 79,000 casualties. This last task has been a large contributing factor to the lowest mortality rate among casualties of all major wars in modern history.

Major psychological operations conducted in I Corps in support of the GVN Chieu Hoi program resulted in more than 3,000 enemy defections during 1968, a 20 per cent rise over the previous year.

Mission and Organization

Despite the heavy impact of our Vietnam commitment on the rest of the Marine Corps, we have managed with certain personnel and logistic restrictions to maintain our readiness to meet other commitments which could arise. As part of the Navy/Marine Corps team, we never lose sight of the responsibilities inherent in our role as this nation's force in readiness for the projection of seapower ashore or such other duties as our country may require.

Congressional legislation established our primary mission: to prepare for and execute landing force operations as part of an amphibious task force.

This mission is broad. The United States must have the capability, in event of a major war, to

seize advance bases for operating and staging areas and to gain beachheads to enable substantial follow-on forces to mount an offensive. This may require a forcible lodgement, or reentry of U. S. forces, from the sea and against opposition.

At the same time, the United States must be able to meet contingency situations or limited wars with varying degrees of force. Amphibious forces are essential for that flexibility and rapid response capability.

Personnel

Today's Marine Corps is the second largest in our history. Since the summer of 1965, our strength has expanded from a force of 193,000 officers and men to more than 313,000. Currently we are authorized an end strength of 313,400 for FY 69 and 314,500 for FY 70.

Supporting these officers, men, and women, are some 26,000 civilian personnel employed by the Marine Corps who form a vital part of our Marine Corps team.

There are 81,000 Marines in South Vietnam, 12,000 elsewhere in the Western Pacific, and another 4,200 Marines in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean. Still others are assigned to ship detachments.

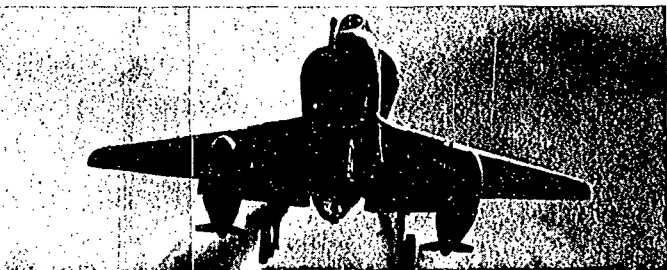
All told, about one in every three Marines is deployed overseas on unaccompanied tours.

During the first two years of the Vietnam war, our major manpower effort was devoted to building up our total strength as rapidly as possible in order that we could deploy and sustain the large forces required in the Western Pacific. We managed to do this without involuntary recall of reservists and with limited use of the draft.

Today our major manpower efforts are aimed at sustaining that strength necessary to meet our

Helicopter units in Vietnam lifted more than a million troops, 129,000 tons of supplies and evacuated 79,000 casualties.





A4 leaves Bogue Field via JATO.

commitments in the Western Pacific while still maintaining our uncommitted forces at adequate levels of readiness.

Our rotation policy, since the start of the Vietnam war, has been based on a 13-month tour in the Western Pacific. This tour, administered on a 395-day basis, commences on departure from CONUS and terminates on return to CONUS. Marine Corps policy is to order a Marine involuntarily to a second tour in Vietnam *only* after all other Marines in his rank and specialty have been assigned an initial tour. And no Marine is assigned involuntarily to a second unaccompanied tour in WestPac until he has completed an accompanied tour with dependents, or at least a 24-month assignment in a CONUS-based unit.

The dimensions of the rotation problem are, of course, reduced by voluntary extension in Vietnam and by those who volunteer for a second tour. Since the Vietnam war started, more than 30,000 Marines have voluntarily extended their duty in Vietnam, and another 1,500 Marines are currently serving voluntary second tours.

The overall problem of retention is an area of real concern, especially in relation to retaining Marines with those skills requiring long lead time training.

We intend to continue intensive efforts toward improvement of both officer and enlisted retention programs. Increased emphasis has been placed on providing facilities, especially barracks and family housing, to improve the living conditions of the individual Marine. Further, I directed this past year that a special career planning effort be undertaken throughout the Marine Corps to revitalize our entire retention program, and already we have seen that we can do much within the Marine Corps to achieve better results.

Another manpower problem which we have not faced in other years is the requirement to release large numbers of Marines prior to the normal expiration of enlistments. Our large commitment to the Western Pacific is the driving force in this problem. To ensure sufficient numbers of deployable Marines to meet this commitment, and still maintain an economical total force, we must artificially create vacancies in our enlisted structure by allowing certain Vietnam veterans to terminate

their enlistments up to 12 months early. This program was initiated last July and will continue through FY 70 at least.

Logistics

Continuing the Marine Corps traditional regard for the individual Marine, we are providing him with functionally better equipment and substantially better clothing which have proved, with few exceptions, to be excellent in terms of design and maximum utility. To provide him daylight deception, the new camouflage patterned, tropical lightweight utilities are presently being issued to our Marines in Vietnam. Modification of the M16 has erased problems with the individual weapon.

The individual Marine is being fed well, too. Marines are receiving the best subsistence support ever provided them in combat. About three in every four Marines in Vietnam get three hot meals daily. The fourth subsists on packaged operational rations supplemented by fresh fruits, juices, milk, and bread—and when tactical conditions permit, at least one hot meal each day.

Ground Munitions

The ground munitions situation is good. Production is stable and sufficient ammunition is available for present combat and training needs. In the last half of FY 68 we introduced the new improved conventional munitions.

We are requesting additional funds for tracked combat vehicles. The two most significant items in this request are the 175mm self-propelled gun, and the initial procurement of our new amphibian assault vehicle. The 175mm gun is a replace-



MajGen Raymond G. Davis, CG, 3d MarDiv, fires the "Georgia Fireball," one of four 175 mm artillery pieces acquired by his command. The big gun, named for the general's home state, was fired for the first time at the Rockpile on 24 Mar. The gun, designated the M-107, replaces the 155mm SP gun and gives greatly increased range.

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ment for the 155mm self-propelled gun, which is 14 years old. The 175mm gun gives us about 33,000 meters of range, an increase of 9,500 meters.

Additionally, we are requesting funds for artillery recovery vehicles and rebuilt tanks.

We are requesting in other funds to commence a four-year procurement of a new amphibian assault vehicle, the LVTPX-12. This new amphibian assault vehicle will replace vehicles which have been in use over 16 years.

The new vehicle has increased range, maneuverability, speed, armor protection, safety against fire and explosion, weapons firepower, and overall reliability. It is also less expensive to buy, operate, and maintain. The LVTPX-12 will have five configurations to provide personnel carriers, command, recovery, mine clearance, and fire support capabilities.

The present HAWK system will be replaced by an improved HAWK system. The improved system will provide better low-level aircraft detection, greater range and target speed handling capability, improved electronic countermeasures capability, greater lethality, and decreased reaction time.

While discussing logistics, I must highlight the outstanding support that is provided by Navy personnel and units that participate as an integral part of III MAF, or as in the case of Naval Support Activity, Danang, operate in direct support thereof. The well-being of the individual Marine and the lowest mortality rate among casualties of all major wars in modern history is a monument to the professionalism and devotion to duty of the officers and corpsmen of the Medical

Corps has been inestimable. The Seabees, continuing a long-time Navy-Marine Corps team effort, have provided the heavy construction necessary to build expeditionary airfields, lines of communication, port facilities and the essential cantonments.

The material readiness of Marine aviation has continued to improve during the past year. The OV-10A is now fully operational. Modifications to the CH-46 have proven to be satisfactory and are continuing without interference to operations. By the end of FY 69, all UH-34s in the regular wings will be replaced with CH-46s.

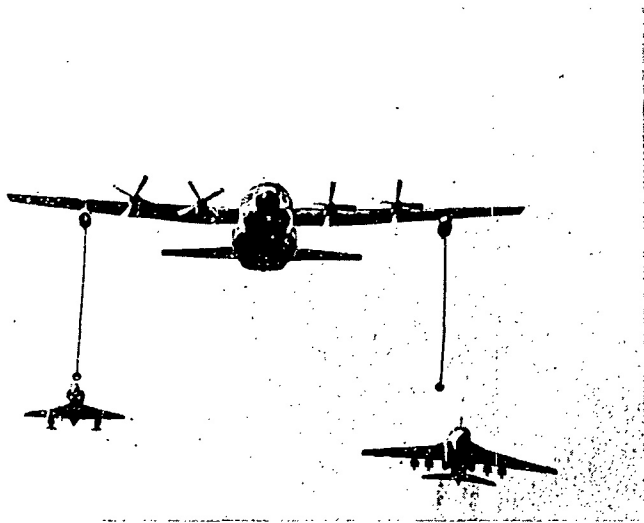
The CH-53 continues as the heavy lift workhorse in Vietnam. A second CH-53 squadron was deployed to III MAF last September.

As part of a continuing program to improve existing aircraft or procure other types, the AH-1G "Cobra" has been procured as a replacement for the UH-1E in the armed helicopter role and will be introduced into the III MAF inventory.

To effect modernization of our light attack force structure, the Marine Corps will be equipped with an improved version of the A4 aircraft, the A4M. The proposed FY 70 budget includes funding for the first of those A4Ms required to support authorized force levels through 1980. We foresee no difficulty in maintaining our authorized force levels for the F-4, RF-4B, A-6A, and KC-130.

Delivery of EA-6A Marine Corps aircraft, funded in FY 68, commenced in December of 1968, one month ahead of schedule. The EA-6A is an electronic warfare aircraft. The effectiveness of the EA-6As we have been operating in SEASIA has placed these aircraft in great demand.

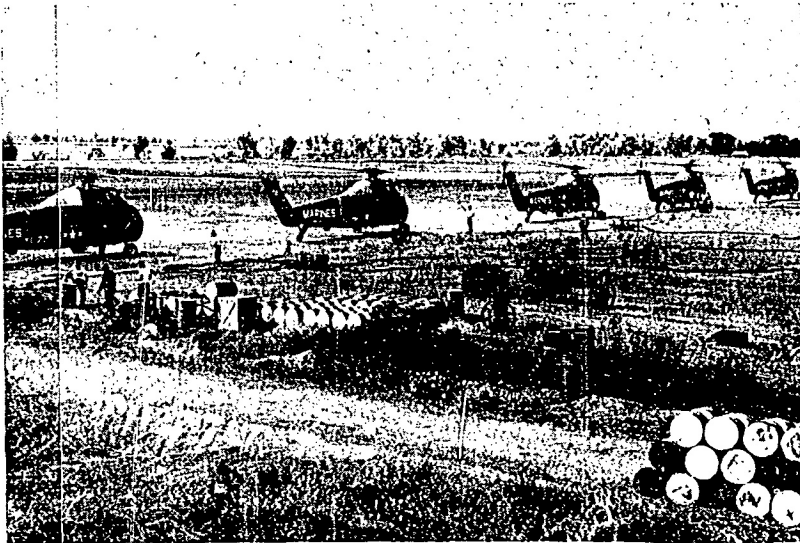
The Marine Corps has had a long-standing requirement for a tactical V/STOL aircraft. The vectored thrust HARRIER, an aircraft com-



C-130 simultaneously refuels A4 and A6A.



OV-10A is fully operational in Vietnam.



Veterans of Vietnam, UH 34s, are being assigned to 4th Marine Air Wing.

parable in many respects to the A-4, has progressed to the operational stage. Funds are included in the FY 70 budget to buy 12 of these aircraft in order to fully explore the many operational and tactical possibilities inherent in this new weapons system.

Research and Development

The Marine Corps' research and development program is designed to meet our statutory mission of developing the tactics, techniques, and equipment used by landing forces in amphibious operations. Our objective is to design and prepare the Marine Corps of the future to carry out this assigned mission as well as to meet the broad mandate of "such other functions as the President may direct."

We have ensured optimum contact with the urgent developmental requirements of our forces in Southeast Asia by a program called Special Procedure for Expediting Equipment Development—or SPEED—which provides quick reaction to short term needs of the FMF. Our technical efforts are further welded to the demands of the Vietnam conflict by air and ground liaison officers incountry from our Development Center at Quantico. The Navy is aiding our efforts by the direct assignment of Navy Laboratory representatives to the III MAF.

Last year I told you about the Marine Air/Ground Intelligence System, called MAGIS, which we are developing jointly with the Air Force. MAGIS will be employed at the MEF, division, and wing levels to provide the commander with the complete, accurate and timely intelligence he so vitally needs.

MAGIS is typical of Marine Corps participation in joint service developmental efforts. We

pursue unilateral development only when planned developments of the other services will not meet specific requirements for our concepts of amphibious landings and vertical assault.

In order to provide necessary improvement of tactical and logistical mobility, we have under development a marginal terrain vehicle (MTV) which will give us the capability to move Marines and their equipment over practically any type of terrain condition including swamps, snow, and muskeg.

As a result of participation in other developmental programs of the other services, the Marine Corps portion of the R&D budget has been and continues to be relatively small.

Marine Corps Reserve

We are assigning UH-34s to the 4th Marine Air Wing as they become available from the active wings, and both the UH-1E and CH-53 helicopters will be introduced into the reserves.

Our plans for the future include refinement of the command structure of the IV MEF so that when the plans are implemented, our reserve MEF will be as similar to our regular forces as possible.

Conclusion

The achievements which have been made in the past year by the Marine Corps have been realized through the sacrifices, complete dedication and great personal courage of the individual Marine.

The Marine Corps has upheld the great trust that the citizens of this nation have placed with us. We take great pride in that trust and in our contributions to the defense of our country as part of the Navy/Marine Corps Team. USMC