Colonel Edward Dupra: This is an interview conducted with Major William Dickison by Colonel Edward Dupra at Marine Corps School, Quantico, Virginia on 14 December 1965. It is an unclassified interview. Maj. Dickison, what were your duty assignments while you were in Vietnam?

Major William Dickison: I was division ordnance officer, sir.

ED: And what period did you serve?


ED: And what particular location were you in country?

WD: I was at Da Nang sir, division CP.

ED: All right. You were the division ordnance officer, then you should have a fair idea of some of the logistical problems encountered, and we’ll stick basically to this area of interest then, the field of logistics. Would you discuss from your particular point of view the influence that weather and terrain had on logistics while you were in Vietnam?

WD: The expected monsoon period did not materialize during my in country stay. However, some heavy rains were experienced. Nominal rains were found to contribute to hazardous road conditions and impede off-loading of supplies from shipping, and retarded distribution from supply points. These observations are directed to Class Five supplies. However, they are considered valid to other classes.
ED: Were there any major problems encountered in Class Five storage because of the monsoons or the lack of good, adequate road nets?

WD: Storage had to be rescheduled due to the expected monsoon periods from the initial dump complexes established during the initial inception in country, and they did retard the construction of adequate and suitable sites also.

ED: Were most of your Class Five storage areas covered or uncovered?

WD: Uncovered, sir. The point that I left, however, I departed, plans were afoot to get those most-required items undercover. We did have cover in one complex for one group of Class Five.

ED: All right, let’s move along on the questionnaire then. Did you have observations on the equipment and weapons, which the 3rd Marine Division was utilizing?

WD: Yes, sir. During my period there were several items that were not TE, that were planned for and in the inception stage of introduction, such as the M-60 mortar, additional shotguns for in-country use, and the M-70 Winchester for the sniper operations involved there. Also during that period, the units tried out 106 recoilless rifles with the LVT in combat.

ED: This was the 106 mounted on a P5?

WD: Yes, sir, that is correct.

ED: Do you have any recommendations for improvement of the weapons, which are organic to a Marine division?

WD: The weapons as issued primarily seemed to, from my observation, stood up very well. Constant research needs to be made for application, I feel, of possibly intermediate weapons in certain areas, such as the fact that the introduction of the shotgun seems to be well-received by all hands, this being the first time it’s been tried in combat by the Marine Corps.

ED: How about the NATO family of weapons? How did they hold up from a maintenance point of view?

WD: I would say that we were surprised that the maintenance on the machine gun was less than had been anticipated at one time due to the experience during training.
ED: Okay, let’s move along now. Did you encounter any unusual problems in the logistics area, those which you feel we should cite here?

WD: I can think of an area, sir, in replacement evacuation of tanks and LVTs, areas that were distant or remote from the centralized area of stockage where water transportation was relied upon. Shipping is very tight, and getting an LVT or a tank into Qui Nhon requires water transportation which is not available due to lack of adequate tidal range. The re-supply of Class Five items wherein we experienced high usage of certain items was also another problem. These items included illumination and signal devices, which, the usage was much higher than had been anticipated previously by our stockage objectives.

ED: I understand that there had been some problems in the maintenance of motor transport equipment, primarily due to a lack of spare parts. Could you comment on this, please?

WD: My area does not include the automotive, sir. However, we did experience problems, in adequate spare parts support, in some of our equipment, notably track vehicles. A point to be discussed there, I feel, is that the suspension systems particularly received a lot of hard usage in the, due to the sand and terrain that they were operated in.

ED: You had a good deal to do with the maintenance of track vehicles. Were there any other problems in the logistics support of the tracked vehicle units?

WD: Yes, sir. The high density of track vehicles rendered them unserviceable in combat due to land mines, increased the maintenance efforts required in country. This logistics problem further backs up into replacement of like assets from in country and or CONUS support.

ED: Assume that I am about to relieve you as the divisional ordnance officer. Do you have any words of wisdom to offer me?

WD: I think I would have to tell my relief to keep in constant touch with all staff and special staff sections to be attuned to any problems that might come up and/or nip them in the bud before they do become a problem. Also, monitor maintenance units of such as FLSG, FLSU. Review all sit-reps and select message traffic daily. At further times stay on top of ammo expenditures by daily contact with the ASPs. And conduct technical inspections on a frequency to detect any trends.
ED: Would you say that based upon your experience as the divisional ordnance officer, the problems which you encountered in Vietnam, will they be cured with the passage of time and the addition of additional technical personnel in-country?

WD: I feel that many of them are being approached from the right standpoint and are being corrected, yes, sir. At least they have been acknowledged and action has been taken to correct those problem areas that we did run into.

ED: Thank you, Maj. Dickison.