8-hour, established as 0600 on 30 March. The U.S. elements participating in the combined operation were designated Task Force KILO and the Vietnamese Army portion of the operation designated LAM SON 203. The deception operation envisioned a task force attacking northeast from Dong Ha toward the demilitarized zone.

As the final co-ordination was being accomplished to insure all units were ready for the pending operation, some elements were already at work. In addition to the U.S. Air Force actions in preparation for the operation, the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry of the 1st Cavalry Division, was directing strikes to eliminate antiaircraft positions in the area before the airmobile division committed the bulk of its helicopters. Heavy U.S. Air Force strikes had stripped away much of the concealment needed by the enemy. With the addition of the reconnaissance squadron of the 1st Cavalry Division, the effectiveness of artillery and air strikes directed against the enemy antiaircraft positions was almost total. As the final hours of March ticked away, the Free World Forces awaited the signal to strike.

CHAPTER VI

The Free World Counteroffensive

Opening Operations

At 0600, 30 March, U.S. Army, Marine, and Vietnamese Army forces initiated their planned deception operation northeast of Dong Ha. The U.S. element consisted of the 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry; Company C, 2d Battalion, 34th Armor; Company A, 1st Battalion, 502d Airborne, 101st Airborne Division; and 2d Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment; all controlled by the 3d Marine Division. The Vietnamese Army element consisted of the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 1st Infantry, under the control of the 1st Vietnamese Army Infantry Division. The maneuver elements attacked generally north toward the demilitarized zone along the coastal plains near Gio Linh. All units reached their objectives that afternoon. Following only light action, the operation was terminated on the afternoon of 1 May.

The broad concept for the relief of Khe Sanh envisioned the 1st Cavalry Division attacking west from Ca Lu to seize the high ground along Highway 9 in a series of successive air mobile assaults. Concurrently the marines were to secure and repair Highway 9 leading to Khe Sanh. Under the single manager concept for air, intensive close air support was to assist the attacks, together with massive B-52 strikes prior to and during the assault. Major units reinforcing the 1st Cavalry Division were the 1st Marine Regiment with three battalions and an airborne task force of three battalions, plus the supporting combat and service units. (Chart 3)

Operation PEGASUS began at 0700 on 1 April with U.S. Army, U.S. Marine, and Vietnamese forces moving out from Ca Lu along Highway 9 toward the Khe Sanh Combat Base. The 1st Cavalry Division attacked with a combination of air and ground assaults to clear and secure the road and remove the enemy from the area of operation. During the morning hours, the two lead Marine battalions moved out according to plan, pushing west from Ca Lu. Delayed by weather, it was not until 1300 that the initial waves of 1st Cavalry Division helicopters placed men of the 3d Brigade of the Cavalry on a series of landing zones as close as five miles to Khe Sanh. (Map II)
The 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, advanced westward on the north side of Route 9 while the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, advanced on the south side of the road. As the Marines progressed and cleared Route 9 and the nearby terrain of enemy troops, engineer companies began repairing the road. They cleared one and a half kilometers of road and constructed four by-passes the first day. Throughout the operational area, the Americans spent a quiet night in rapidly prepared defensive positions.

Although Operation NIAGARA had been terminated with the beginning of PEGASUS, air support continued. The first day of the operation, eight B-52 raids were flown to assist the ground forces. Four of the missions were in the vicinity of Khe Sanh. Poor weather in the early daylight hours limited tactical fighter support to 66 sorties. Eight U.S. Air Force C-130 and four C-123 cargo aircraft delivered 115 tons the first day and 24 helicopter missions boosted the sum to just under 150 tons. An additional 44 personnel joined the combat base by way of C-123 aircraft, which were still permitted to land on the strip.

On 2 April operations began at 0655 with two Marine battalions resuming their advance along either side of Route 9 toward Khe Sanh. Contact with the enemy was minimal. The 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry, began an air assault at 1300. The late starting time was
attributed to ground fog, haze, and low hanging clouds. These unfavorable flying conditions continued throughout the operation.

The 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, remained near the air field north of Ca Lu, which had been designated Landing Zone STUD. The Marine unit retained this mission for the duration of the operation.

The Army, Navy, and Marine engineer units continued their work along Route 9. On 2 April they cleared almost three kilometers of the road and completed two bridges and two more bypasses. (Map 12)

The sustained air support included 36 B-52 aircraft delivering six strikes, five of which were in the immediate vicinity of Khe Sanh Combat Base. In spite of the unfavorable flying weather, 142 tactical air sorties were flown by Air Force, Navy, and Marine aircraft in support of the ground troops conducting PEGASUS. Air Force cargo aircraft dropped 91.4 tons of supplies into Khe Sanh and helicopters raised the total tonnage to 162.

On 3 April the tempo of the operation picked up somewhat. The marines continued westward along Route 9 with the engineers working furiously right on their heels. The 1st Cavalry's 3d Brigade continued operations in the vicinity of the landing zones they had occupied during the first day. The 2d Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division air-assaulted in the PEGASUS area of operations one day ahead of schedule with the 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry, going into Landing Zone TOM and the 2d Battalion, 12th Cavalry, moving first to Landing Zone STUD by CH-47 helicopters, then reloading into smaller UH-1H helicopters for an air assault into Landing Zone WHARTON. The 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, then flew into Landing Zone WHARTON. Both landing zones received artillery and rocket fire from enemy positions during the moves, but the troops were not to be easily diverted. By the end of the day, all 2d Brigade troops and three batteries of the 1st Battalion, 77th Artillery, were in position. At that time, other artillery batteries in position included Battery C, 21st Artillery, which had followed the air assault troops into Landing Zone CATES, and B Battery, 21st Artillery, which had followed into Landing Zone MIKE on D-day. Battery A, 21st Artillery, joined the 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry, at Landing Zone THOR on 2 April.

During the fourth day, April 4, the enemy resistance continued at a moderate level. The marines maintained their westward attack along the main supply route and the Third Brigade kept up pressure on enemy elements around the established landing zones. The 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, initiated an attack on an enemy battalion occupying positions in an old French fort.

On the same day, elements of the 26th Marine Regiment began their first major offensive move in weeks, attacking out of the Khe Sanh Combat Base. Preceded by extensive artillery preparation, at 0600 the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, assaulted southeast towards their objective, Hill 471. The hill was secured by 1720 that day.

The fifth day, 5 April, opened with an enemy attack on Hill 471, which the Marines had occupied the previous afternoon. At 0515 the 7th Battalion, 66th Regiment, 304th North Vietnamese Division, charged up the hill. The fight was one of the highlights of Operation PEGASUS and was quite one-sided. Assisted by tremendous artillery and close air support, the marines cut down large numbers of the attackers while suffering few casualties themselves. (Map 13)

Elsewhere, except for the 1st Cavalry Division's 2d Brigade, the operation followed a routine pattern. The marines and the 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry, maintained their westward movement, meeting moderate opposition along Route 9. The engineers had reconstructed a total of 5.5 kilometers of the road, completing four bridges and twelve by-passes.

The Marine advance along the main supply route continued through 6 April. The 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry, maintained its drive west and met stubborn enemy resistance occasioning the heaviest fighting of the operation thus far. Following a day-long battle, the
cavalry finally drove the enemy out of his defensive positions, capturing 121 individual and 10 crew-served weapons.

The 2d Battalion, 12th Cavalry, was airlifted from Landing Zone TIMOTHY to Hill 471 and effected relief of the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, at noon. The marines then opened a clearing attack to the northwest.

Meanwhile the 1st Battalion of the 5th Cavalry was encountering stiff resistance at an old French fort about 15 kilometers due east of Khe Sanh. On the sixth day of Operation PEGASUS the 1st of the 5th was extracted and the 2d Battalion of the 5th Cavalry picked up the mission of seizing the strongly defended position. The fort finally fell on 7 April thus eliminating the final known enemy strongpoint between the advance cavalry troopers and Khe Sanh.

Little further significant contact was to occur during the final days of the operation. The remainder of Operation PEGASUS was directed at opening the main supply route and sifting through the debris of battle. The retreating enemy continued to offer some resistance, but without spirit.

The seventh day, 7 April, witnessed a further lessening of enemy strength in the area of operations. Ground probes against friendly positions continued but fewer reports were made of attacks by enemy artillery.

At 0800 on 8 April, the relief of the Khe Sanh Combat Base was accomplished as the 3d Brigade airlifted its command post into the base and assumed the mission of securing the position. The 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry, cleared Route 9 to the base and linked up with the marines.

By this time it was apparent that the enemy had chosen to flee rather than face the highly mobile Americans. Vast amounts of new equipment were abandoned in place by the North Vietnamese as they hastily retreated.

Nevertheless, the enemy maintained some order in his withdrawal. At 0350 on 8 April, an element of the Vietnamese Army Airborne Task Force near the command post of the 3d Vietnamese Airborne Battalion was attacked. For over four hours the clash continued before the enemy withdrew leaving almost 75 dead behind. Later that afternoon, the 3d, 6th, and 8th Vietnamese Army Airborne Task Force closed in at Landing Zone SNAKE and began operations along Route 9 to the west.

The final battle of the operation took place on Easter Sunday, 14 April. The location was ironically between Hills 881 S and 881 N where the battle for Khe Sanh had started on 20 January. The 3d Battalion, 26th Marines, attacked from Hill 881 S to seize Hill 881 N and met heavy resistance. The marines prevailed, and the enemy withdrew leaving over 100 dead behind. (Map 14)

On 10 April, General Rosson had visited General Tolson, the
commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division, and told him to begin extracting units from PEGASUS to continue preparations for the assault into the A Shau Valley. The weather in the valley was ideal for airmobile operations at the time, and General Rosson was anxious to get the new action underway before the end of the month.

The next day, 11 April, Route 9 was officially declared open at 1600. The engineers had rebuilt 14 kilometers of road, replaced 9 key bridges, and constructed 17 by-passes. General Westmoreland described their achievement as herculean.

At 0800, on April 15, Operation PEGASUS and Operation LAM SON 207A were officially ended. The 2d Brigade came under the operational control of the 3d Marine Division, joined Task Force GLICK, and initiated Operation SCOTLAND II in the vicinity of Khe Sanh. The Vietnamese Army Airborne Task Force relocated to Hue.

The rapid and successful conclusion of Operation PEGASUS can be laid first to detailed planning and preparation. Second, the enemy was either unable to, or did not know how to, react against airmobile maneuvering of large numbers of combat troops and supporting artillery around and behind enemy positions. Third, an unprecedented degree of bomber and fighter air support was provided to the ground forces, and this combat power punched the enemy along the front line and throughout positions to his rear. Over 100,000 tons of bombs and 150,000 rounds of artillery were expended during the operation. More important, this ordnance was expended in response to excellent intelligence. Fourth, the ability to keep Khe Sanh and the troops in the field supplied was considerable. Fifth, of extreme significance was the determination and courage of the individual fighting man in the ranks.

Back to A Shau

Operation PEGASUS and the relief of Khe Sanh had been planned with an eye toward continuing the momentum of selected maneuver elements in a reconnaissance in force into the A Shau Valley. By 12 April the Provisional Corps, Vietnam, had completed a plan calling for the 1st Cavalry Division in co-operation with the 1st Vietnamese Army Division to conduct an airmobile offensive into the valley on 17 April.

During a visit to the headquarters of the Provisional Corps on 14 April, General Westmoreland chose from a hat the name DELAWARE for the operation. The plan for the operation was presented to General Westmoreland, and, while he reaffirmed his desire to go ahead with it, he disapproved the scheduled draw-down of all major units of the 1st Cavalry Division in the Khe Sanh area. General Tolson, Commanding General of the 1st Cavalry Division, General Troung, Commanding General of the 1st Vietnamese Army Division, and Major General Olinto M. Barsanti, Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Division, presented their plans for their divisions' role in Operation DELAWARE. General Rosson and General Cushman then developed a revised plan according to General Westmoreland's guidance. After a visit to the 1st Vietnamese Army Division, General Westmoreland returned to Phu Bai and approved the revised plan. The resulting operation plan 3-68 for Operation DELAWARE and Operation LAM SON 216 was published by the Provisional Corps on 16 April.

The 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry of the 1st Cavalry Division, had been conducting extensive aerial reconnaissance in the DELAWARE area of operations during the final phases of PEGASUS. The 101st Airborne Division and the 1st Cavalry Division published instructions to bring their plans into line with the modified Provisional Corps plan on 15 and 17 April, respectively. Extensive B-52 strikes conducted between 14–19 April preceded the initiation of the operation to eliminate antiaircraft positions located during the reconnaissance phase. The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, began moving west on 16 April and the Vietnamese Army Airborne
THE BATTLE OF A SHAU VALLEY

FRIENDLY SITUATION
19 April–12 May 1968

MAP 15

Task Force joined the 101st in moves to position units for the coordinated airmobile and ground attacks.

The operation began on the morning of 19 April. Extensive B-52 tactical air and artillery fire paved the way for the initial air assault into the A Shau Valley by the 3d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division. Nevertheless, the antiaircraft fires that met the helicopter-borne troops were intense.

To the east, the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, began its drive westward along Route 547, shifting out of CARENTAN II into Operation DELAWARE. The 2d Battalion, 327th Infantry, attacked southwest along the road. They were followed by an air assault of the 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry, into a landing zone near the junction of Route 547 and 547 A. The next day, the 3d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, continued to deploy into the northern A Shau Valley as the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, pushed southeast from their landing zone and the 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, moved to block Route 548 which entered the valley from Laos to the west. The 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry, began an air assault to establish a landing zone further south in the valley. The 6th Vietnamese Army Airborne Battalion airlanded into the landing zone held by the 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry, and immediately made contact with the enemy upon moving out from the landing zone. (Map 15)

On the third day of the operation, 21 April, contact with the enemy continued as the cavalry units worked deeper into the valley. Just before noon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, discovered an enemy maintenance area which included a Soviet-manufactured bulldozer that was still operational. The 2d Battalion, 502d Infantry, air-assaulted into the area around the road junction to reinforce the 1st Battalion, 327th, and the 6th Vietnam Army Airborne Battalion.

During the initial days of the operation, the weather had been poor. Flying conditions were not as favorable as had been expected, and the helicopter assaults and Air Force cargo resupply missions were accomplished at no little risk to those involved. Conditions improved on 22 April and plans were advanced to assault the A Luoi airfield and the central portion of the valley. This insertion took place on 24 April when the 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry, occupied a landing zone two kilometers south of the airfield. The 1st Brigade then began sweeping the surrounding area with the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, to the south and east; the 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry, to the south and west; while the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, secured the landing zone.

To the south of the airfield a cache of sophisticated radio and wire communications equipment was found, indicating the advanced level of communications used by the enemy in the area. Other caches were discovered by the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, to the north. Vehicles, ammunition, and three 37-mm. antiaircraft weapons were among the haul. Operation DELAWARE was spoiling the enemy’s supply depots in the A Shau Valley.

During the rest of April, the buildup of friendly forces and supplies continued around the A Luoi airfield. The 3d Vietnamese Army Regimental Task Force joined the 1st Cavalry Division elements in exploiting the caches throughout the valley.

As the month of May came to A Shau, enemy resistance lessened while Operation DELAWARE units continued to find new enemy caches. By the end of the operation, the supplies denied to the enemy reached staggering proportions. On 2 May, the first cargo aircraft, a C-7A or Caribou transport landed at the A Luoi field, and on 4 May, a large C-130 landed. Aerial drop of supplies continued in order to fill supply stocks at the position.
The link-up between the cavalry forces in the valley and those moving west along Routes 547 and 547 A took place on 12 May. Company C, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, represented the valley elements while the 3d Vietnamese Army Airborne Battalion was the lead unit in the westward moving forces. The meeting point was in the Rao Nho Valley some ten kilometers east-northeast of A Luoi and 25 kilometers southwest of Hue.

The extraction of the U.S. and Vietnamese from the A Shau began on 10 May and Operation DELAWARE terminated 17 May. The enemy had suffered over 850 casualties and had lost huge stockpiles of supplies. Any serious attempt by the enemy to conduct major offensive operations out of the A Shau base area would now require many months of additional preparation.

General Rosson labeled Operation DELAWARE:

... one of the most audacious, skillfully executed and successful combat undertakings of the Vietnam war ... it is significant that from its inception DELAWARE was a combined effort entailing association of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 3d ARVN Regiment, 1st ARVN Division, on the one hand, and the 101st Airborne Division and the 3d ARVN Airborne Task Force on the other. The outstanding results achieved through teamwork on the part of these combined forces reflect great credit on their leadership, professionalism, and unsurpassed fighting zeal.

The A Shau Valley campaign occurred after friendly forces had been absent from that area for two years. In a way, this operation signaled an end of one phase of the conflict. It marked the loss of enemy control of a long-held fortress and also demonstrated the control which the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces were re-establishing in the wake of the enemy's Tet offensive.

CHAPTER VII
Analysis of North Vietnamese Goals and Failures

The goals of the North Vietnamese in South Vietnam are summarized in Ho Chi Minh's three-point battle cry: "Defend the North, Free the South, and Unite the Country." This simple cry had much patriotic and emotional appeal, particularly since the U.S. forces were described as imperialists who had replaced the French, the former rulers of Vietnam. In the determination of military strategy and tactics and the political maneuvering to attain this goal, simplicity tended to fade away.

During 1964, the first Viet Cong division-size unit was formed and committed to combat. The Hanoi high command also decided to standardize the weapons used by its forces in the south, thus simplifying battlefield supply problems and increasing firepower. This step did have one drawback in that it required the Hanoi government to send greater tonnages of ammunition south to support the automatic weapons.

The North Vietnamese by December 1964 had reached the decision to escalate their reach for control of the south to the third and final phase of Ho Chi Minh's classical theory of revolution. They shifted from guerrilla warfare to a general offensive using major field maneuver units. The formation of the Viet Cong division and introduction of North Vietnamese Army units into the south were unmistakable evidence of this shift.

It was doubtful that the South Vietnamese could contain this increasing threat without substantial assistance. Measures were taken to provide the necessary help to strengthen the government and assist the Armed Forces. Limited numbers of U.S. Marine and U.S. Army airborne troops were deployed to South Vietnam in March 1965 to provide this assistance. Starting in July 1965, substantial numbers of U.S. Marine and Army ground forces were being deployed in South Vietnam along with required Air Force and Navy supporting forces. Thus, the pattern of enemy buildup and friendly counterbuildup was established.

The step-for-step counter to offensive enemy moves had thwarted Hanoi's aims and eventually resulted in Hanoi's apparent decision
to attempt to gain their desired end through political means. In the summer of 1967, North Vietnam's Vo Nguyen Giap must have reached the decision that it would be necessary for his forces to win a significant military advantage before the start of any peace talks.

The 1968 enemy winter-spring campaign, planned in late 1967, appears to have had two major phases. In the initial phase, a series of attacks on Free World Military Assistance Forces and installations in remote areas would take place. These attacks were designed to draw major U.S. and South Vietnamese forces out of their defensive positions around the principal cities. The double-edged second phase was to consist, first, of a major attack on South Vietnam's larger cities in the expectation that the liberators would receive much popular support and, second, of a major attack directed eastward from Laos along Route 9 to capture or destroy all friendly positions from the Laotian border east to the sea.

This was a major change in enemy strategy. It was a result of the enemy's desire to repeat his 1954 success at Dien Bien Phu. As mentioned earlier, it was an admission or realization that time, once an ally, was no longer on his side.

A reassessment of the situation, made by the highest level of the Hanoi government, seemed to cause a significant redirection of goals. The enemy leadership both in Hanoi and South Vietnam took a hard critical look at how things were going in the fall of 1967. North Vietnamese combat operations had been largely unsuccessful. Despite his best efforts, his strength was declining, and his control of the population in South Vietnam was decreasing. Approximately 40 percent of the population was under North Vietnamese Army control in 1965, but this proportion had fallen to between 15 and 20 percent by September of 1967. Loss of population control meant a loss in manpower, revenues, and supplies. The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong would have to make up this deficit through greater demands on the people still under their control. Such demands would not further endear the North Vietnamese Army to the people. The relationship was already strained by the subjection of the population to more frequent military and psychological pressures by the Free World Military Assistance Forces.

The North Vietnamese Army troops had seen enough of the big picture to realize they were having little success. As a result, morale was declining drastically. Rather than generating the desired feeling of accomplishment among its troops, the Hanoi government's war-of-attrition policy was fostering a sense of despair. As the need for a North Vietnamese Army success to discredit the government of South Vietnam increased, the prospect of gaining such success had decreased.

During 1966, the North Vietnamese Army suffered approximately 93,000 killed. An estimated 35 percent of this figure comprises men who died of wounds or were permanently disabled as a result of combat actions. In 1967, the casualty figure climbed to over 145,000. During 1966 and 1967, the enemy had a total of 238,000 personnel losses. At the end of 1967, his duty strength was estimated between 210,000 and 235,000. Comparison of losses to present-duty strength at the beginning of 1968 indicated a personnel problem of staggering proportions.

It seemed obvious that continuation of the old war-of-attrition strategy could not possibly lead to success. After consideration of these adverse trends, the enemy adopted a new goal with these objectives: to win the war by a political and psychological campaign and to gain and maintain control of the people.

The North Vietnamese most probably chose to seek their hoped-for military victory, which they felt must precede peace talks, in the Khe Sanh area for a number of reasons. Since the target area was just across the demilitarized zone, in close proximity to good staging areas in Laos, the enemy could build up military strength and concentrate his forces outside the boundaries of South Vietnam. The remoteness of the area would complicate U.S. and Vietnamese Army resupply and support problems while at the same time favoring the North Vietnamese Army logistical situation. Also, the reaction forces coming to the aid of the attacked position would be exposed to ambush and destruction at numerous locations between Hue, Da Nang, and Khe Sanh. Once drawn into the fight, these reaction forces would be far removed from the cities which the North Vietnamese planned to attack. As noted earlier, the section of Route 1 between Quang Tri City and Hue had been a constant thorn in the flesh of the French Army during its prosecution of the Indochina War, and it was from this stretch of road that Bernard Fall drew the title of his book, Street Without Joy. Finally, another reason for choosing the Khe Sanh region was that this area was historically an influential Communist stronghold.

To perform the military operation, the enemy had brought four divisions plus support troops into the vicinity of Khe Sanh. In the area north of Hill 881 N, the enemy had deployed the 325C North Vietnamese Army division. Southwest of Khe Sanh was the 304th North Vietnamese Army Division and in the demilitarized zone area north of the Rock Pile was the 320th North Vietnamese Army Division. The fourth division was across the Laotian border to the west. Also around Khe Sanh were an estimated one to three armored battalions, possibly from the 203d Armored Regiment; the 68th Artillery Regiment; and elements of the 164th Artillery Regi-
ment. Intelligence reports had further indicated the presence of at least 27 PT-76 tanks, numerous 240-mm. rocket launchers and 122-mm. assault guns, antiaircraft weapons, and at least one communication relay site.

From the enemy's point of view, his revised plan for the domination of the south should have created a significant defeat for the U.S. if Khe Sanh had gone the same way Dien Bien Phu went fourteen years before. However, the enemy had made a few serious errors in his planning. High-level enemy documents of a self-analysis nature attest to these errors. He expected massive popular risings as his troops entered the cities and further expected large numbers of Vietnamese Armed Forces to defect to his ranks. In both these expectations he was entirely disappointed.

Having failed in his Tet offensive in the spring of 1968, the enemy attempted to regain momentum by maintaining constant pressure on the urban areas through continuous interdiction of lines of communication, through the imposition of a tight economic blockade, and through the destruction of the administrative control held by the government of South Vietnam. These enemy measures were meant to cause the people to demonstrate and rebel. Enemy pre-positioned and thoroughly trained political cadres could then step in and assume leadership and control of the people.

The enemy winter-spring campaign, of which Tet was the high-water mark, was a "Battle of the Bulge" attempt to reverse the trends of the war and create a favorable political and psychological position that would ultimately lead to the collapse of the government of the Republic of Vietnam. As of June 1968, his military efforts to achieve this goal had been totally unsuccessful. To obtain a military victory, it remained necessary for him to trigger a general uprising culminating in a successful coup d'état. Such success was impossible unless the enemy could regain his momentum and win the support of both the population and the armed forces of South Vietnam. In June of 1968, there was nothing to indicate he could gain such support. In fact the opposite effect prevailed. The Tet offensive was the "Pearl Harbor" of South Vietnam, arousing and uniting the people against the Communists. This public attitude resulted in large part from the ruthlessness of the Viet Cong and enabled the Vietnamese government to mobilize its manpower on a much greater scale.

There were a number of reasons for the U.S. success in defeating North Vietnamese attempts to take over the two northern provinces of South Vietnam. These included: the acquisition and analysis of enemy intelligence; the organization of forces to counter the enemy threat; air mobility; the superior ground and air firepower possessed by the Free World Military Assistance Forces; good communications; logistical support; the improvement, modest as it was, of Vietnamese Army forces; and finally, the co-ordinated actions of the divers Free World Force elements which operated to contain and defeat the enemy.

**Intelligence**

Information about the enemy is an invaluable asset in any military conflict and proved itself especially so in Vietnam. In a conventional struggle, one can at least engage the enemy; that is, observe him and take him under fire, even if his immediate intentions, strength, equipment, and unit organizations are unknown. In the guerrilla environment of South Vietnam two very critical unknown factors existed. It was difficult to know where and who the enemy was. In the populated areas, much importance was placed on determining who the enemy was while in the unpopulated regions, the problem was learning where the enemy was.

The intelligence effort was increased in response to the enemy concentration of forces in and around northern I Corps. Civilian agents, military patrols, long-range reconnaissance patrols, aerial observers particularly from helicopters, the Civilian Irregular Defense Group forces at Lang Vei, Special Forces teams operating in the A Shau Valley, and radio interceptors provided a steady stream of information about the enemy's activities.

An extensive reconnaissance program in early January was initiated to obtain as much information as possible about the enemy. This effort, code-named NIAGARA I, included all sources of information, and aimed at developing target information about the enemy in northern I Corps and the adjacent area immediately to the west of the Laotian border. The information was derived from, among additional sources, aerial and ground searches, interrogation of prisoners and other persons that may have been in or passed through the area, and study of captured enemy documents.

After the enemy's Tet offensive in 1968, Operation LEAP FROG was instituted as an accelerated effort to obtain intelligence indicating the enemy's goals in the campaign. Such knowledge would identify his future moves, thus making possible the formulation of friendly countermoves.

Allied intelligence analysis concluded that the attacks were politically motivated and aimed at seizing the urban areas, at the replacement of Republic of Vietnam officials with members of the Viet Cong infrastructure, and possibly, after having established a position of power from which to negotiate, at suing for a coalition government.
THE WAR IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCES

**Chart 4—Buildup of Opposing Maneuver Battalions in I Corps Tactical Zone**

1 This graph displays only infantry type maneuver battalions.

**Organization for Combat**

The responses to this intelligence were reflected in the continued gradual movement of the III Marine Amphibious Force into the northern segment of the corps area and the influx of United States Army and Republic of Korea Army troops in an effort to increase the density of the Free World Forces in the threatened area. The Military Assistance Command and Command Post was initially organized to control the deployment of a U.S. Army corps into the area. The organization and deployment of Task Force Oregon and the headquarters of Provisional Corps, Vietnam, have already been discussed. In May of 1968, there were 98 maneuver battalions in the corps area of which 26 were U.S. Marine Corps, 31 were U.S. Army, 37 were Vietnamese, and 4 were Republic of Korea. This total, 196, was somewhat above the June figure and is indicative of the fluid situation. (Chart 4)

The U.S. maneuver battalions were assigned to the 1st and 3d Marine Divisions, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), 101st Airborne Division, and the American Division; the Vietnamese Army battalions were normally assigned to, or under, the operational control of the 1st and 2d Vietnamese Army Divisions and the 51st Independent Infantry Regiment. The four Republic of Korea battalions were under the 2d Republic of Korea Marine Brigade which, although not under the operational control of the III Marine Amphibious Force, was generally treated as such for planning and coordinating purposes.

The flexibility of the III Marine Amphibious Force organization was attested to by the mix of Army and Marine units under various command echelons. Both Army and Marine battalions were considered to be basically interchangeable during the preparation of operation plans. Reporting directly to the III Marine Amphibious Force were Provisional Corps, Vietnam; C Company, 5th U.S. operation plans. Reporting directly to the III Marine Amphibious Force were Provisional Corps, Vietnam; C Company, 5th U.S. Special Forces; 1st Marine Air Wing; 1st Marine Division; 23d or Americal Division, and, informally, the 2d Republic of Korea Marine Brigade. (Chart 5)

Within Provisional Corps, Vietnam, were three divisions. The 3d Marine Division was reinforced from three to five Marine Regiments and, in May 1968, reinforced by the 2d Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division. The 1st Air Cavalry Division had its two organic brigades and the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. The 101st Airborne Division had two organic brigades and the 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division. The organization for combat of Army and Marine units was dictated by the tactical situation.

The flexibility of the U.S. forces, and their ability to shift Army, Navy, and Marine combat and combat support units among the various headquarters in response to changes in the tactical situation was a major contribution to the success of operations against the
enemy in I Corps. This flexibility also facilitated the implementation of cross-servicing agreements.

Airmobility

Airmobility provided a proportionate increase in the combat potential of combat units. From a tactical point of view, the helicopter gave unit commanders a new dimension in warfare—vertical envelopment of an enemy's rear or flank. For centuries commanders have sought to outflank their enemies, by foot, by cavalry, and even by elephants—and more recently by tanks and by airborne forces. The helicopter provided this ability to U.S. forces in Vietnam on an unprecedented scale. The 85 knots per hour helicopter placed troops at decisive points in time to influence the outcome of the battle. This ability had a multiplying effect on U.S. combat power.

The helicopter was the work horse of the Vietnam War. Despite the helicopter's sensitivity to weather conditions, its versatility gave it great value in combat operations. In addition to being faster than ground vehicles, it had the important advantage of being able to disregard the ruggedness of terrain. The helicopter rescued people from minefields, plucked them from the water, captured prisoners of war, and evacuated casualties from the scene of battle to supporting hospitals, including naval hospitals afloat.

Superior Firepower

The massive firepower available to units of the Free World Military Assistance Forces dominated actions in the air, on the ground, and at sea. Artillery, aerial rocket artillery, naval gun fire, tactical fighter-bombers, and strategic bombers brought awesome destructive power to bear on enemy units.

Following the target acquisition program under Niagara I the successive artillery and air firepower operation was designated Niagara II. The massive close air support provided under the single manager concept for air is described in the concluding pages of Chapter IV.

B-52 raids were an important factor in the program. The heavy bombing raids generated many casualties and created fear and low morale among enemy troops while bolstering morale within friendly units. The raids forced enemy units of battalion and regimental size to evacuate elaborately prepared positions, thus abandoning sites in which considerable resources had been invested.
Communications

The upswing of activity along the demilitarized zone and within the two northern provinces demanded a vast and rapid increase in teletype and voice communications channels to handle expansion of operational and logistical traffic. The influx of additional Marine units, two Army divisions, plus associated combat service support and combat support units, and the eventual organization of the Military Assistance Forward Command Post succeeded by the Provisional Corps, Vietnam, added to the need for expanded communications.

Within a 30-day period, U.S. Army, Vietnam, organized the 63d Signal Battalion, 1st Signal Brigade of the Strategic Communications Command, concurrently with the organization of the Military Assistance Forward Command Post and the Provisional Corps, Vietnam. During that short time frame the unit grew from a headquarters nucleus in Phu Bai to a 1300-man, three company battalion. With tactical and mobile contingency equipment flown in from various areas in Vietnam and Thailand, the battalion established command control and area communications for Military Assistance Command Post Forward, Provisional Corps, and the III Marine Amphibious Force. At the same time, U.S. Air Force elements provided a 60-channel system from Dong Ha to Phu Bai and thence to Da Nang, furnishing the needed communications gateway to the commanders of the U.S. Military Assistance Command and the U.S. Army, Vietnam, through the Defense Communications System.

During Operations PEGASUS and DELAWARE, when the tactical command posts of the 101st Airborne and 1st Cavalry Divisions moved into the Ca Lu and A Shau area, mobile 12- and 24-channel very high frequency radio relay and tropospheric scatter systems were extended to these field locations from Phu Bai.

Logistics

Moving large troop units into the undeveloped northern region required prodigious effort in construction of logistical facilities and in operational planning down to the finest details. Maneuvering of combat troops placed enormous strain on the transportation capabilities, and resupplying the troops in new distant locations was a formidable task.

Logistical planning kept pace with the buildup of U.S. forces in I Corps. Procedures were developed by the U.S. Navy for the initial support to Army units deployed north. As the Military Assistance Forward Command Post and the equivalent of a U.S. army corps deployed to the 1st Corps Tactical Zone, a forward area support base was organized at Da Nang to support them and handle the heavy volume of supplies.

Transportation was improved as Highway I reopened and the fuel pipeline was restored. A logistical-over-the-shore (LOTS) facility was constructed, and a new pipeline laid from the LOTS facility into Dong Ha. Finally the Phu Bai airport had been expanded to increase its tonnage handling.

In general, resupply was accomplished by surface means to the maximum extent possible. However, some operations required aerial supply for certain elements of a unit or even for the entire unit. This need prevailed at the garrison at Khe Sanh. The calculation of aerial resupply capabilities was for this reason an important step in planning.

The advantage of surprise in military operations could easily be lost if impending actions were revealed by pre-stocking supplies in a new operational area. It was therefore necessary to move vast amounts of supplies into a new area at the same time the combat troops moved in. This generated major fluctuations in requirements for aircraft and trucks during the deployment period.

In allocating resources available to conduct resupply during an upcoming operation, there were many opportunities to substitute one resource for another. Operation PEGASUS was an example of this fact. The Khe Sanh garrison was entirely supplied by cargo aircraft, its outposts by helicopter. The closing relief forces were supplied by air or truck convoy, depending upon their proximity to Route 9 and the engineers' progress in rebuilding the route. Although there is little resemblance between a C-130 cargo aircraft, a CH-47 helicopter, and the engineer bulldozer-supply truck combination, from a logistical standpoint, they accomplished the same thing. It was a matter of selecting the most economical means or simply using what was available.

Improvement of Vietnamese Armed Forces

While units of the Free World Military Assistance Forces shouldered the burden of containing the enemy offensives, modest gains were made in improving the combat capability of Republic of Vietnam military forces. This feat was accomplished by providing military advisers to help Vietnamese commanders solve the complexities of tactical and logistical problems. Changes were made in the military school system to more adequately address contemporary problems. (Chart 6)

Another step was to revamp the promotion system for better
recognition of the merit of officers and noncommissioned officers. The senior Vietnamese officers began to summarily relieve incompetents, reprimand weakness in subordinate’s leadership, and give recognition to superior performance. One statistical measure of the general improvement of the military forces was the decreasing desertion rate. Another measure, and a significant one, was the growing number of Vietnamese units that earned the United States Presidential Unit Citation for their heroic actions in combat. During and following the 1968 Tet offensive, the military forces of South Vietnam acquitted themselves adequately. In many cases, such as that of the 1st Vietnamese Division in Hue, they fought with distinction.

Along with the qualitative betterment of personnel, strides were taken in improving the equipment of the armed forces. Vietnameization began with the issue of the M16 rifle, mainstay weapon of U.S. ground services, to Vietnamese Army units. Better machine guns, mortars, and other crew-served weapons were added to the Vietnamese Army inventory. In addition to these weapons, the issue of aircraft, boats, helicopters, tanks, and armored personnel carriers improved the ability of the Vietnamese to reposition their forces as required by changes in the tactical situation. The morale of the Vietnamese rose greatly upon receipt of this modern equipment.

Each Saturday morning, the commanding general of the III Marine Amphibious Force was briefed on Vietnamese Army operations by the U.S. advisers to I Corps. Following the briefing, a commander’s conference was held at the headquarters of General Hoang Xuan Lam to discuss matters of mutual concern. The agenda, usually distributed in advance, covered planned operations, both unilateral and combined, which required co-ordination and co-operation of Free World Military Assistance support. The extensive exchange of liaison officers down to battalion level, when required, was a common practice throughout I Corps.

The U.S. commanders worked closely with the Vietnamese commanders adjacent to their areas of responsibility and provided excellent support on a routine basis. The co-operation was extended to other Free World Military commanders as in the case of Brigadier General Kim Yun Sang of the 2d Republic of Korea Marine Brigade.

By 1968, combined operations were becoming the rule rather than the exception. Operations PEGASUS and DELAWARE were prime examples of such operations conducted in I Corps during the first four months of 1968.

Co-operation between Vietnamese Army and Free World Military Assistance Forces also extended to logistics and training. Vietnamese Army elements operating with U.S. units received logistical support from those units. On the training side, two examples serve to demonstrate the mutual benefit derived from this practice. In 1967, the 3d Battalion, 6th Vietnamese Regiment, trained companies of the newly arrived 198th U.S. Infantry Brigade in Viet Cong tactics, the detection of mines and booby traps, and the techniques of Viet Cong village search. That same year, the 3d Marine Division trained 2,430 men of the 2d Vietnamese Army Regiment in use of the M16 rifle.

Co-ordination of artillery fires and air strikes with one another were also accomplished by Vietnamese, U.S., and Free World Military Assistance Forces throughout I Corps. This co-ordination was done at the division level in both the 1st and 2d Vietnamese Division areas, and included U.S. naval gun fire.

The Other War

The failure of the North Vietnamese to gain control of the population of South Vietnam was not an outcome of unsuccessful combat actions alone. Also contributing to their failure was the fact
that the South Vietnamese government developed many programs supporting the economic, social, and political goals of the population. To obtain popular support, the government announced these new programs after the 8 February 1966 Honolulu Conference. The government pronouncement called on all citizens of South Vietnam to work together to develop the country:

We must bring about a true social revolution and construct a modern society in which every man can know that he has a future ... To those future citizens of a free, democratic South Vietnam now fighting with the Viet Cong, we take this occasion to say come and join in this national revolutionary adventure:
—come safely to join us through the Open Arms Programs,
—stop killing your brothers, sisters, their elders, and their children,
—come and work through constitutional democracy to build together that life of dignity, freedom, and peace those in the North would deny the people of Vietnam.

Along with implementation of a new constitution, the government established the revolutionary development program to initiate the social, economic, and political reforms needed to improve the life of the rural population, and to strengthen their confidence in the government and its resistance to the Viet Cong. The program sent teams of 59 men, armed for self-defense, into recently secured areas to help establish local security, weed out any remaining Viet Cong, and initiate a development program.

Two additional actions that had good results were the Chieu Hoi or Open Arms Program and the Doan Ket or National Reconciliation Program. The former program began as early as 1963 when more than 5,700 Viet Cong accepted the opportunity to return to the government during the initial four months of the declared amnesty period. As additional combat troops took the field against the enemy, the number of enemy soldiers rallying to the government increased.

When a man returned to the government under this program, he was interviewed to determine his sincerity, rewarded for any weapons or equipment turned in, and placed in a re-education program through which he learned the aims and purposes of the government of South Vietnam and the role of the Free World Military Assistance Forces in the war. An added bonus in this program was the fact that an estimated 30 percent of the returnees then served in the government armed forces.

The second program, Doan Ket, offered more to the middle and upper ranks of the enemy hierarchy than the Chieu Hoi amnesty program. This program included provisions that returnees would be employed in accordance with their ability, presumably in posi-

**Conclusion**

The North Vietnamese failed to achieve victory in the northern provinces in 1968 because their efforts to gain and retain control of the population and the government of South Vietnam were obstructed by determined U.S. and Free World Military Assistance Forces. During the critical period when the enemy upgraded his operations from insurgency and guerrilla actions to a full-scale conventional invasion, enemy aims were thwarted by military action. The success of the Free World Forces can be attributed to their flexibility in organization and tactics to meet the ever changing enemy situation and their mutual co-operation in conducting combined operations against the foe. The success was also due to the steady improvement of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces—a long-term goal of the headquarters of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. The establishment of programs to win the allegiance of the people to their government by eliminating the social, political, and economic injustices which provided a fertile environment for insurgency also furthered success.

A final tribute must be paid to the fighting heart of the individual soldier, sailor, marine, airman, and civilian who faced the dangers of a cruel enemy. Although scientists have invented weapons that have revolutionized warfare, they have not been able to replace the soldier on the ground. He was aggressive, physically fit, eager to fight, with pride in his profession and compassion for the Vietnamese people—a superb fighter in the finest traditions of great Americans, great patriots, and great soldiers.
**Glossary**

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<tr>
<td>ABN</td>
<td>Airborne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACD</td>
<td>1st Air Cavalry Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADC</td>
<td>Assistant division commander</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMERI</td>
<td>Americal Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMMO</td>
<td>Ammunition</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARTY</td>
<td>Artillery</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARVN</td>
<td>Army, Republic of Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>Antitank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARC</td>
<td>Barge, Amphibious Resupply Cargo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDE</td>
<td>Brigade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bladder boat</td>
<td>Inflatable non-self-propelled watercraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN</td>
<td>Battalion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B40/41</td>
<td>Grenade propelled by rocket</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.A.</td>
<td>Combined Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAV</td>
<td>Cavalry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIDG</td>
<td>Civilian Irregular Defense Group (Vietnamese)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CH-47</td>
<td>Cargo helicopter</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Command post</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRP</td>
<td>Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTZ</td>
<td>Corps tactical zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-7A or Caribou</td>
<td>Small cargo aircraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-123</td>
<td>Medium cargo aircraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-130</td>
<td>Large cargo aircraft</td>
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<tr>
<td>DMZ</td>
<td>Demilitarized zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFV</td>
<td>Field Force, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flareship</td>
<td>Aircraft configured to drop illumination flares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSB</td>
<td>Fire support base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWMAF</td>
<td>Free World Military Assistance Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW</td>
<td>Howitzer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HQ</td>
<td>Headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LARC</td>
<td>Lighter, amphibious, resupply cargo</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAW</td>
<td>Light anti-tank weapon</td>
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**GLOSSARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LCU</td>
<td>Landing craft, utility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCM</td>
<td>Landing craft, mechanized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOTS</td>
<td>Logistical-over-the-shore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LST</td>
<td>Landing ship, tank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LZ</td>
<td>Landing zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACV</td>
<td>Military Assistance Command, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACV FWD</td>
<td>Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Forward Command Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III MAF</td>
<td>III Marine Amphibious Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAR</td>
<td>Marine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAW</td>
<td>Marine Air Wing</td>
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<tr>
<td>M16</td>
<td>Rapid firing light automatic rifle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NVA</td>
<td>North Vietnamese Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontos</td>
<td>6-Tubed 106-mm. recoilless rifle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBR</td>
<td>Patrol boat, river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCV</td>
<td>Provisional Corps, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POL</td>
<td>Petroleum, oil, lubricants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROV</td>
<td>Provisional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT-76</td>
<td>Russian manufactured light amphibious tank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUAD-50</td>
<td>4 barrelled 50-Caliber air defense machine gun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readout</td>
<td>A device that displays in digits data computed or registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECON</td>
<td>Reconnaissance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROK</td>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPG</td>
<td>Rocket propelled grenade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>Recoilless rifle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seabees</td>
<td>Navy construction battalion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Special Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signal Hill</td>
<td>High terrain upon which communication antennas are mounted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVN</td>
<td>South Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tet</td>
<td>Lunar new year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TF</td>
<td>Task Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOC</td>
<td>Tactical operations center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH-IH</td>
<td>Utility helicopter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States Army</td>
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THE WAR IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCES

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United States Army, Vietnam
United States Marine Corps
United States Navy
Viet Cong
Vietnamese
Vietnamese Navy

A Marine task force in 1968

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