

Corps began to contact the Viet Cong infrastructure through its operation at Le My and as a result of the counter guerrilla effort, it also began to coordinate its assistance to the rural population with the numerous U. S. government agencies in ICTZ. Simultaneously, various private U. S. assistance and relief organizations both in Vietnam and in the United States began to be synchronized with Marine Corps civic action. Finally, the first attack aircraft arrived at the Chu Lai airfield on 1 June 1965 and encouraged deeper moves against the main force of the Viet Cong, further expansion of the TAORs, and more sophisticated civic action.

III MAF had established an effective program of medical support for the rural population by June 1965. Permanent programs were set up in several fixed locations as contrasted with the numerous but irregular contacts made by individual Navy medical corpsmen operating with the daylight patrols. On 15 May 1965, at Le My, the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, had begun to support a daily medical service. Corpsmen assisted local health workers there in providing medical treatment to the local people and helped to instruct the government medical trainees. The situation at Le My was ideal. The battalion was committed to the support of the Vietnamese rural construction cycle whereby the village would be returned to the control of local officials of the Republican government. Lieutenant Colonel Clement's battalion ensured the immediate physical security of the village and encouraged a self-help attitude amongst the officials and the citizens which would free the battalion as soon as possible from its support and security functions. The Marine Corps treated approximately 3,000 villagers each week at Le My; and, often the people required immediate evacuation to hospital facilities. (19)

Late in June and farther north in the Hue/Phu Bai TAOR, Lieutenant Colonel William W. Taylor's 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, established a weekly medical service in the villages of Thuy Phu, Thuy Long, and Thuy Than. (20) Civic action had developed slowly at Hue/Phu Bai because of the military and the demographic situations. There the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines was in an unusual tactical position. It was a single battalion defending an airfield and radio station isolated from the two large Marine Corps TAORs at Da Nang and Chu Lai. The defensive situation at Hue/Phu Bai was inherently more difficult than in the other Marine Corps areas; for example, no part of the TAOR at Hue/Phu Bai lay on the sea. The isolated and land-bound position of the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines was responsible for the battalion's emphasis on tactics and eventually the hard type of civic action, i.e., civic action which stressed security measures. The battalion's TAOR was also sparsely populated with most of the area hilly, covered with clear forest, and totally uninhabited.

During the first half of June 1965, the battalion had concentrated on visits by medical teams supported by powerful security detachments. The visits were important because of their immediate impact and their effectiveness in meeting a basic need of the peasantry. But the visits were irregular and had the nature of a warm, humanitarian gift rather than impersonal direct support for the local Vietnamese government. The battalion described its medical civic action as people-to-people medical assistance visits; the description illustrated the almost private nature of civic action as late as mid-June 1965.(21) But with the expansion of the TAOR on 15 June 1965 from 38 to 61 square miles, the civilian population increased from 8,000 to roughly 18,000 persons.(22) This latest expansion combined with the precise yet flexible instructions from HQ, III MAF helped to transform civic action into a regular program which would support the expanding counter guerrilla operations in the area and ultimately buttress Vietnamese rural construction.

In the Chu Lai area, two of the infantry battalions had established regular medical service by June 1965 while the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines, a more centrally located artillery battalion, provided a daily dispensary service in conjunction with Company B, 3d Medical Battalion. The Marine Corps TAOR around Chu Lai was expanded during June, and by the latter half of the month the Vietnamese government had given the Marine Corps the authority to conduct unilateral offensive operations within its limits. The Marine Corps began to place greater emphasis on patrolling and ambushing far out in the TAOR. The Marines developed a coherent system of defensive positions to stop enemy attacks which was known as the Forward Edge of the Battle Area (FEBA). The Marine Corps intended to protect the Chu Lai airfield by vigorous offensive action far from the field and anchored on the fixed positions of the FEBA. The rise in patrolling activity increased the necessity for a regular civic action program coordinated with the local Vietnamese officials. The 2d Battalion, 4th Marines began to operate a medical aid station at Ky Lien village every other day. Corpsmen provided medical treatment for 100-200 people during each visit of the medical team. The 3d Battalion, 3d Marines also provided medical assistance on a regular basis in its area of responsibility in the southern part of the Chu Lai TAOR in the District of Binh Son, Quang Ngai Province.(23) Between 25 May-15 June 1965, the TAOR was expanded from 55 to 101 square miles and the population increased from 23,000 to almost 56,000 civilians.(24) These changes in area and population initially interfered with the development and the continuity of Marine Corps civic action by focusing Marine Corps energies on the construction of new defensive positions as the FEBA expanded inland from the South China Sea.

The rough edges of Marine Corps civic action were still apparent in June 1965. First Lieutenant William F. B. Francis,

who had become Civil Affairs Officer of the 3d Marines on 15 April 1965, presented a picture of civic action which substantiated the preoccupation of the infantry battalions with tactical missions and the association of civic action with superficial people-to-people contact. Francis also made it clear that the other U. S. military units in Vietnam in April 1965 had little to offer in the way of useful precedents. He met a problem of obtaining basic supplies, e.g., medicine, food, and clothing, for a civic action program and was forced to obtain them largely as gifts. Clear, legitimate channels of requisitioning and funding for civic action supplies took time to establish. Coordination between the Marine Corps and the various relief agencies including the U. S. Agency for International Development and the Catholic Relief Society (USAID and CRS) was slow in developing. Only a gratuitous trickle of supplies for civic action was received until late June 1965. (25)

Lieutenant Francis believed that the medical program in 1965 was the most important one in civic action. He emphasized the necessity for continuity in medical civic action and stated that "to treat the people once and let them go did absolutely nothing...They felt better for a little while, but really it was ineffective unless continued treatment were available." (26) Francis was critical of "pill patrols" amongst the Special Forces, or small patrols accompanied by medical personnel who would provide simple first aid. He emphasized that the irregular approach represented by the small combat or reconnaissance patrol "was almost a gimmick to win the favor and attention of the people in order to gain their confidence." (27) A medical facility operating at a fixed well-known location in conjunction with a training program for Vietnamese health workers was the best approach. Francis' basic opinion of the civil affairs effort in Vietnam during the early summer of 1965 was that the action "was enthusiastic but it was disorganized...just sort of groping and feeling with inadequate supplies and personnel." (28)

Captain Lionel V. Silva, the Civil Affairs Officer of the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines painted a somewhat different picture. His battalion engaged in an operation in the Le My area designed to clear the Viet Cong from the village complex and to secure the area for the GVN. The battalion commander and Captain Silva soon learned that the temporary clearing of the Viet Cong was relatively simple; for example, after one week of shooting there were no more rifle-carrying Viet Cong within the village complex. But the card-carrying Viet Cong of the infrastructure remained and the population had not changed from its apathetic attitude towards the government. Lieutenant Colonel Clement, the battalion commander, thereupon decided to make his stand in the village itself. Clement was fortunate in the location of his TAOR. The larger Da Nang TAOR was expanded several times during the pacification campaign, but the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines



Toys for little girls: two small waifs receive presents furnished through the U. S. Navy's Project Handclasp. 1stLt Brendan E. Cavanaugh makes the presentation in the village of Noa Thanh near Da Nang on 27 August 1965. (USMC A185025)



Candy was one of the basic commodities distributed during the early spontaneous days of civic action. In this picture taken on 10 September 1965 LtCol William F. Donahue, CO, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines passes out candy to the children of Cam Ne (VI). This hamlet was located in the middle of a hard-core VC area only four miles southwest of Da Nang. (USMC A185697)

was able to secure its area of responsibility without a radical shift of its tactical positions. Continuity proved to be the keynote of success. The battalion established a dispensary which proved to be permanent because Vietnamese health workers were trained to staff it and were kept alive by Marine Corps rifles. Finally, and probably most important, local security forces were reestablished and were aggressively supported by the people.(29) Captain Silva, who was running the civic action program, showed insight into the problems of successful civic action when he said "it was obvious that we would not always be in the Le My area. Even though we occupied it today, we knew that eventually our operations would necessitate our moving out."(30) Lieutenant Colonel Clement emphasized the same point. To him the essence of success was to create an administration supported by the people and capable of leading, treating, feeding, and protecting them by the time that the battalion was forced to leave.

But notwithstanding the individual success at Le My, the general picture of Marine Corps civic action was less a calculated effort at supporting local government and more an enthusiastic, irregular effort at medical assistance, support for local orphanages, efforts to improve communications, and various other activities. Lieutenant Francis painted the most accurate, general picture of civic action for the period March-May 1965. In June, however, HQ, III MAF provided central direction for the civic action effort in the form of concepts of civic action and the general picture began to change.

A Stormy Month and an Expanding Mission for III MAF

The transition from June to July 1965 in Vietnam was sharp and stormy for the Marine Corps. Early in the morning on 1 July 1965, Viet Cong forces attacked the southern end of the Da Nang Airbase between two fortified static posts. The attack **was** a raid conducted by small forces supported by 81mm mortars and probably one 57mm recoilless rifle. The Viet Cong in a stealthy, time-consuming operation cut their way through the wire obstacles at the southeast end of the runway. The cutting probably took more than 1-1/2 hours at the end of which time a coordinated attack took place. The mortars and the recoilless rifle fired for a period of four or five minutes. The fire was probably intended to inflict as much damage as possible while simultaneously suppressing resistance in the immediate area of the penetration so that Viet Cong with demolition charges could destroy the closest aircraft. The Viet Cong inflicted moderate damage during the attack and quickly retired after the demolitions thrust. Empty 81mm mortar cases found approximately 300 meters east of the runway testified to the boldness of the raid and the ineffectiveness of the boundaries of the Marine Corps TAOR. The Viet Cong had launched their raid from an area which was not part of the Marine Corps TAOR.(31)

HQ, III MAF reacted swiftly to the anomalies in the defensive situation to the east and south of the airbase. To ensure the defense of the airbase, the infantry battalion manning the defensive perimeter needed room to patrol, ambush, and maneuver several thousand meters forward of the perimeter. On 5 July 1965, CG, III MAF requested from CG, I Corps permission to enlarge the Marine Corps TAOR by moving eight kilometers into the densely populated rice growing region south of Da Nang to ensure adequate depth for the defense of the airbase. CG, I Corps sanctioned the expansion of the Marine Corps into the critical area south of Da Nang on 13 July 1965. Two days later, on 15 July 1965, CG, III MAF assumed responsibility for the area. The number of civilians under the control of the Marine Corps in the Da Nang area now totalled approximately 126,000 persons.(32) The raid on the Da Nang Airbase and its aftermath had deep repercussions in Marine Corps civic action. After 15 July 1965, III MAF came into direct competition with the Viet Cong for the loyalties and the support of the Vietnamese peasantry in a critical rice growing region immediately adjacent to a major city.

Nevertheless, Marine Corps civic action continued to have a people-to-people, or charitable ring to it. HQ, III MAF declared the objectives of Marine Corps civic action to be to gain support for the GVN and to win the confidence and cooperation of the Vietnamese civilians in the TAORS.(33) The Marine Corps, however, was not aware of the depth of Vietnamese efforts to win the struggle politically by means of rural construction. The Vietnamese government had placed heavy restrictions on the size of the Marine Corps TAORs and the missions to be performed inside of them because it doubted the ability of the Marine Corps to operate effectively in any of the densely populated areas of I Corps Tactical Zone. These restrictions and doubts were important reasons for the initial Marine Corps lack of concentration on the support of rural construction. For example, prior to 15 July 1965, the boundary of the Da Nang TAOR and the eastern defensive wire of the airbase coincided. The Marines were literally fenced in and physically cut off from the population to the east and south of the airbase. And they carried out little civic action on the uninhabited runway.

From March-July 1965, medical treatment was the most important civic action project of the Marine Corps. Teams of Marines, Navy medical corpsmen, and interpreters visited hamlets throughout the TAORs in a more advanced program than the original spontaneous efforts by combat patrols. In July alone approximately 29,000 civilians were treated for various minor ailments and a substantial number of people were evacuated for treatment of major afflictions. The number of treatments was impressive, but the real importance would be difficult to gauge. Medical teams made numerous treatments in unsecured areas where an appreciative but terrorized populace was simply unable to respond in any way beneficial to the Vietnamese cause. Probably the most important effort by July 1965 had been made at the

permanent dispensary at Le My which operated on a daily schedule. The dispensary attracted a large number of Vietnamese peasants from miles around the village. The provision of regular service at central locations pointed the way to increased numbers of treatments for Vietnamese peasants and greater numbers of intelligence contacts for the Marine Corps. Probably most important though, regular treatment at fixed locations enabled the Marine Corps to train Vietnamese personnel to assist and eventually run the health centers which the people had come to appreciate. Short-term, high-impact medical visits at irregular times and in varying locations continued to be made effectively after July 1965.(34) But after that month a gradual shift began towards more direct support of the Vietnamese government in the form of regular service and the training of Vietnamese rural health workers.

Other civic action programs ranked below medical assistance in both general importance and immediate impact in the period March-July 1965. But some of the other programs were unusually simple and effective. A thing so humble in the United States as soap highlighted an important reality of disease and infection in Vietnam. Approximately 75 percent of the ailments treated by the medical teams were skin infections caused largely by the lack of knowledge of basic hygiene among mothers and persons who were responsible for the care of small children. The Vietnamese peasant quickly accepted soap as a beneficial addition to his existence. The transfer of soap between Marines and Vietnamese civilians became an important part of civic action from the lowest through the highest levels in III MAF. And the CG, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (FMFPac) supported a campaign in the United States to collect soap for civic action.(35)

Units of III MAF distributed food and clothing in large quantities in South Vietnam. Sources of these basic commodities varied enormously and helped to direct Marine Corps attention to the problems of coordination among the numerous agencies and organizations competing to assist the rural population. Unused military rations, e.g., types C, B, and A, were passed on to especially needy Vietnamese individuals and families by Marine Corps units. In contrast with this spontaneous activity, III MAF received substantial quantities of wheat from the Catholic Relief Services, a powerful U. S. private relief organization which donated over 6,000 pounds of bulgur (a type of parched, crushed wheat) and delivered it to units of III MAF in Vietnam.(36) Clothing was a critical need for the Vietnamese people also, especially among the younger children. Parents and elders were often well-clothed because of their productive functions in a primitive rural society, but they neglected the satisfactory clothing of their younger children. The hot and humid climate of Vietnam was the reason for the physical neglect. The parents, who were certainly not apathetic towards their children, saw little reason for concern over clothing

of the younger ones. But footwear, light clothes, and hats were necessary to counteract the hazards of infections from punctures, infestation by worms, and the effects of the sun. The July temperature variation was a hazard also; scantily-clad or naked children were apt to have common colds turn into serious upper respiratory infections and pneumonia. The Commanding Officer, 4th Marines was prompted by the needs of the peasants in the Chu Lai area to request his wife on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, to organize a drive for clothing and send the collected material to his regiment. Marine Corps wives on Oahu collected over 1,000 pounds of clothing for this humanitarian purpose, and the Marines in the Chu Lai TAOR distributed it to the most needy individuals and families that they were able to find through coordination with the local authorities.(37)

The Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) and Project HANDCLASP were additional sources of civic action materials. CARE was a nonprofit, joint organization of 26 accredited American service agencies which had been formed in 1945 to help Americans overseas. Since that time, CARE has changed its emphasis to help human beings everywhere and has delivered almost one billion dollars worth of supplies overseas.(38) Project HANDCLASP was an official Navy program which had been formed in 1962 to promote mutual understanding between Americans and citizens of other lands. In June 1965, the Marine Corps units in Vietnam were brought into the program and shortly after that month began to receive HANDCLASP supplies for their civic action programs.(39)

On 5 July 1965, the first CARE supplies for III MAF arrived in Vietnam; the shipment was a humble beginning for a program with important possibilities for expansion by the Marine Corps. Two barrels of soap and two boxes of medical supplies comprised the first shipment. The directors of HANDCLASP delivered a substantial amount of supplies during July 1965 to Vietnam for distribution by III MAF. The relief and humanitarian nature of HANDCLASP as it applied to Vietnam was revealed in the shipping list of the first group of supplies. The first shipment, approximately 9,000 pounds of supplies, was comprised mainly of soap, buttons, thread, medicine, nutribio (a food supplement), and toys. Both CARE and HANDCLASP after humble beginnings, would become important sources of aid for Marine Corps civic action as III MAF expanded its TAORs and began to support Vietnamese local government and rural construction.

The provision of Marine Corps engineering and general construction assistance to Vietnamese in July 1965 highlighted the enforced limits of civic action during the first five months in Vietnam. Operational commitments minimized engineer work in support of civic action. The Marine Corps spent several months on the defensive in TAORs which were only gradually expanded. Construction of Main Lines of Resistance (later termed Forward

Edges of the Battle Area) took precedence over all building activity in the infantry battalions. And the engineer effort was split amongst airfield construction and engineer assistance for clearing new campsites, providing for area drainage, and constructing and repairing routes of communication within the expanding TAORs.(40) The continuous buildup of forces and the gradual movement inland and along the coast inhibited civic action construction projects.

The development of new life hamlets and the integration of refugees back into Vietnamese life were vital issues in the war and were affected by the initial defensive posture of the Marine Corps. III MAF units relocated civilian homes lying in fields of fire on the defensive perimeters surrounding the Da Nang Airbase and the Chu Lai Airfield. The movement of civilians under these circumstances was not the usual spontaneous and humanitarian thing on which the Marine Corps had concentrated. Coordination with the local governing officials proved difficult; this problem was reflected in the persistent return of displaced civilians to their cultivated plots. Additionally, the Marine Corps did not succeed in solving the problem of fair and timely payment of claims by the GVN.(41)

The First Five Months of Civic Action: Rising Emphasis on Support for Local Government

Nevertheless, the Marine Corps achieved substantial results in civic action during the first five months (March-July 1965) in Vietnam in the face of difficulties in emphasis, coordination, and adjustment. Command emphasis was primarily on the tactical integrity of the TAORs and secondarily on things like civic action. HQ, III MAF only gradually established coordination between its activities and those of HQ, I Corps Tactical Zone. The CG, I Corps remained suspicious of the intentions and the effectiveness of the Marine Corps and this fact interfered with coordination. But once General Walt had assured the tactical integrity of his TAORs, he proceeded to the long final step of determining what assistance the GVN required to win the rural struggle. The Marine Corps had required time to adjust to the movements of infantry battalions which were required to secure the expanding TAORs. III MAF also required time to develop and apply a sound theory of operations which took into account the necessity for security for the officials of the GVN who were executing the Republic's plan for rural construction. By the end of July, General Walt began to sense that civic action was the link between the Marine Corps tactical mission and Vietnamese rural construction.

Various factors by June and July 1965 pointed out the importance of purposeful civic action in support of the GVN. Continuous and regular medical support for the local population,

either at fixed locations or at different locations on a fixed schedule, had proven to be extraordinarily effective. The increasing emphasis on regular service implied the integration of Marine Corps medical treatments with the struggling Vietnamese Rural Health Service. A vital link with the Vietnamese health program began to be forged by the training of rural health workers by corpsmen both in the Da Nang and Chu Lai areas.(42) The Commanding Officer, 4th Marines, Colonel Edward P. Dupras, Jr., set up a medical training program for Vietnamese health workers in his area on 23 June 1965. Colonel Dupras' effort was a pioneering one in the Chu Lai TAOR and revealed the trend towards civic action in direct support of the GVN.(43)

But coordination between HQ, III MAF and the U. S. Operations Mission in Vietnam, the civilian side of the American effort in the Republic was slow in developing. Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP) supplies were distributed by the U. S. Operations Mission to the U. S. agencies and forces in Vietnam. The Marine Corps received no MEDCAP supplies through regular channels in March-April 1965 and not until June were appreciable quantities received. For example, on 30 June 1965, the Marine Corps received 1,500 pounds (value \$2,355.25) of medical supplies to be used during the month of July.(44) Coordination between the U. S. Operations Mission and III MAF was critical for both organizations. The mission had funds for medical supplies for support of rural construction but no operating personnel at the hamlet-village level.(45) The Marine Corps, on the other hand, had thousands of Marines and scores of doctors and corpsmen who were available as a concrete link between the U. S. government and the people of Vietnam at the hamlet level.

Throughout the first five months in Vietnam as Marine Corps support for Vietnamese rural construction began to coalesce, individual Marines launched spontaneous "programs" of their own which served as a powerful antidote to the Viet Cong propaganda which emphasized the brutality and ruthlessness of a foreign, professional, combat force. Sergeant John D. Moss of Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron (VMCJ) 1 bought a small horse in mid-June 1965 near the Da Nang Airbase.(46) Sergeant Moss then went into the free pony ride business and brought brief happiness and lasting memories into the lives of many innocents. Less well known was the anonymous Marine who impressed Mr. Nguyen Dinh Nam, Village Chief of Hoa Than (directly west of Da Nang). After observing Marine Corps operations for three months, Mr. Nam wrote a letter expressing the emotions of the people in Northwest Hoa Vang towards the Marine Corps. Both he and the rural population were especially impressed by the spontaneous humanity of the combat Marines. Mr. Nam noted the following:



Medical evacuation: a Vietnamese farmer waits for helicopter evacuation on 5 May 1965 northwest of Da Nang. Sgt Dubry, Company G, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines, is in immediate command of the move. Evacuation of seriously sick or injured civilians was an important part of the Medical Civic Action Program. (USMC A184126)



Eye ailments: infections of the eyes were notoriously common in Vietnam and were the result largely of missing emphasis on the use of soap and water. In this scene HM-2 M.E. Prigmore assists an old grey-beard while a probable father and small daughter wait their turn. Note the curious but apprehensive spectator at lower right. (USMC A184659)

They [the Marines] have all the favorable attitudes towards the people of this area. For example, it was noted that one officer of the rank of Major while walking saw a child whose foot was bleeding. He stopped and was happy to dress the boy's foot.(47)

Various Marine Corps combat and supporting organizations carried out humanitarian civic action which was imaginative and resourceful. On Monday 19 July 1965, Company D, 1st Battalion, 3d Marines purchased a young water buffalo for 4,000 piasters ("tourist" rate of exchange approximately 75 piasters to one dollar) at Hoa Thinh, a village complex located a few miles southwest of the Da Nang Airbase. The company planned to raise the buffalo and then give it to an especially needy family.(48) Closer to the center of the TAOR, the Force Logistics Support Group (FLSG) after its formation in the Da Nang area, began to support local charitable organizations. Members of the FLSG discovered that in the Sacred Heart Orphanage, a struggling religious charity, flour for bread was being provided in moderate quantities from Vietnamese government sources. But the Catholic sisters operating the charity seemed less pleased than they should have been with the generosity of the government. The FLSG soon found the answer to the paradox. The orphanage had no facilities for baking bread and the sisters had to deal with a city bakery which took half of the flour as the charge for preparing the remainder as bread. The HQ, FLSG, put available Marine Corps ovens to work in support of the handful of sisters and their brood of helpless and unwanted youngsters. One thousand pounds of bread were soon baked for the cause of the Sacred Heart.

The efforts of Marine Corps civic action were difficult to measure in terms of advances in the struggle against the Viet Cong. HQ, III MAF began to collect statistics on the number of medical treatments rendered, pounds of food and clothing distributed, etc.. But the correlation between medical treatments and the erosion of the Viet Cong political and military effort was too complex for definition. For example, how many civic action medical treatments advanced the Republican cause a certain percent towards final victory in the war? Questions of this sort were possible to broach; however, they were impossible to answer. Probably the most effective correlation between civic action and the struggle against the Viet Cong was information received from the peasants about the movements, activities, and plans of the rural communists. But the receipt of information of intelligence value was more dependent on calculated and effective security than warm, spontaneous, and humanitarian civic action. Nevertheless, there was a close relationship between security and civic action. Whenever Marine Corps civic action took place, Marine Corps rifles provided security, unwittingly at first in many cases but eventually on purpose. And in spite of the lack of a precise mathematical correlation between medical treatments for Vietnamese civilians and progress

against the Viet Cong, there was an indisputable increase in hard information about the enemy.(49)

Why was this information important? The Viet Cong existed only with the silence of the rural population. Viet Cong movement and functioning was impossible in the event of general disclosure by the peasantry. Lawrence of Arabia, two generations ago spelled out the reality of a successful guerrilla movement in a brief thought--a civilian population unwilling to disclose the presence and movements of the guerrilla functionaries. Lawrence's thought was a function of his experience in the sparsely populated Northwestern Arabian Peninsula. In the densely populated areas around Da Nang, guerrillas were even less able to move without the knowledge of the peasantry. Viet Cong success depended on muting the local people and this was done by a combination of physical terror and hope for a better future life. The emphasis was on terror, however, and any successful counteraction by the Marine Corps and the Vietnamese government would have to take the form of either more effective terror or decisive security against the Viet Cong atrocities.(50) The Viet Cong promise of a brighter future would have to be undercut by an effective program of rural construction on the part of the Republic and civic action by the Marine Corps.

The success of Marine Corps civic action could be measured by the receipt of intelligence information from the peasantry. And because the peasants provided information only with adequate security, the providing of intelligence information became one of the best indicators of progress in the war. Reliable information began to increase by mid-June 1965, and by July, peasants were providing information in a large number of exchanges. For example, on 10 July 1965, the peasants at Le My reported that route 545 (see Map Number One) was mined just north of Hill 282. Two days later, the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines reported that civilians from Think Tay had exposed the presence of a Viet Cong company located approximately 1,200 meters southwest of the district headquarters at Hieu Duc in notorious "Happy Valley" (see Map Number One). Marine Corps infantry battalions which had won the confidence of the people by careful attention to their feelings and needs were sometimes rewarded with remarkably precise and valuable information. On 24 July 1965, a woman living in Kinh Than reported that two days earlier, 100 Viet Cong carrying small arms including one automatic rifle and each carrying one grenade passed by her home. She also noted that the Viet Cong were wearing black uniforms and carrying rice in long cloth rolls.(51)

Civilians like the woman of Kinh Thanh repaid heavy investments in civic action. The Viet Cong insurgency was simply not possible with a population of similar people. Civic action aimed to create peasants who recognized the Marine Corps as a benevolent protector and who were willing to work hand in hand with the Republican government for the advancement of the rural

areas. And the concept began to emerge that Marine Corps combat operations against the main and guerrilla forces of the Viet Cong were not solely for the purpose of inflicting casualties. The higher Marine Corps leadership began to visualize the combat operations as the screen behind which Vietnamese rural construction could progress and "the other war" could finally be won.

Chapter V

A Turning Point August 1965

August 1965 ushered in a fresh realization of the importance of civic action. HQ, III MAF and the infantry battalions had learned that successful engagements against main force enemy units and interference with the movements of guerrillas were of little importance if the GVN was unable to fill the resulting political and military vacuum. In the area to the south of the Da Nang air base, the GVN was unable either to execute an effective program of rural construction or to reconstruct Republican government, and the 9th Marines was obliged to carry out operations behind its frontline positions because of the presence of a Viet Cong dominated peasantry in Cam Ne village.(1) These operations called attention to the need for much greater coordination between HQ, III MAF and the Vietnamese government in the northern region. The Vietnamese government was meeting heavy weather south of Da Nang and the Marine Corps had to trim its combat sails in order to assist Vietnamese rural construction behind the Marine Corps FEBA. On 7 August 1965, General Walt assumed operational control of the I Corps Advisory Group, a task which carried with it the necessity for increased knowledge of Vietnamese plans and capabilities.(2)

The general situation in August demanded more effective coordination between the commanders, politicians, and functionaries who disposed of the resources for combatting the Viet Cong. HQ, III MAF had coordinated extensively with the Vietnamese authorities prior to August 1965, but the most effective aims for Marine Corps civic action had not yet been determined. At the battalion level, civic action continued to have the spirit of an enthusiastic people-to-people effort rather than a program synchronized towards a single decisive goal.(3) For example, the diffuse idea of winning the people was simply not enough to direct a useful program of civic action. The GVN, the U. S. Operations Mission, and the Marine Corps were winning the people; but, the Vietnamese Government was unable to secure areas cleared by the Marine Corps and ARVN combat units. General Walt needed a firmer target for civic action. He had to know two things: first, the Republic's rural construction plans, and second, the resources available in ICTZ to support those plans. To discover those things he needed a better system of coordination between himself and the authorities of the Vietnamese state.

The Formation of the I Corps Joint Coordinating Council:
late August 1965

But the complexities of fighting in a foreign, sovereign state presented problems. Neither the United States nor South Vietnam would accept a single military commander and staff. Yet the Republican Government required the efficient use of all of the resources available for the struggle if it were ever to reestablish control over its Northern Region. The situation called for great tact; both the United States and Vietnamese authorities required a coordinating body to ensure the use of available resources in support of an effective plan for the survival of the Vietnamese government. "Pursuant to the August 25, 1965, conversation between General L. W. Walt...and Mr. Marcus J. Gordon, Regional Director USOM /United States Operations Mission/, I Corps, the first meeting of a permanent regional working group was convened on August 30, 1965." (4) The Civil Affairs Officer of III MAF had suggested on 29 August 1965 that the coordinating council which had been created several days earlier by the meeting between Walt and Gordon be called the I Corps Joint Coordinating Council (I Corps JCC). The term, council, had no connotation in the Republic of Vietnam which precluded its use. The term, joint, was used because General Walt and Mr. Gordon intended that the Vietnamese as well as the Americans be represented.

The establishment of the I Corps JCC was a milestone in the development of Marine Corps civic action in Vietnam. The mission of the council spelled out the importance of Vietnamese rural construction and was intended to ensure maximum support for it. The I Corps JCC was to become familiar with the GVN's rural construction program in the ICTZ. Having become familiar with the plan, the I Corps JCC was to determine the requirements for cooperation and support between agencies and to recommend methods or procedures to meet the requirements. (5)

General Walt, who had been designated as Senior U. S. Military Advisor to the CG, I Corps, earlier in August 1965, intended that the I Corps JCC focus Marine Corps civic action on a concrete central mission, essentially that of supporting Vietnamese rural construction. General Walt also intended that all of the U. S. agencies and private organizations operating in ICTZ be synchronized in support of rural construction by a regional-level coordinating body. The Senior (Vietnamese) Government Delegate in the First Region was immediately aware of the importance of the council. General Thi met with General Walt on 28 September 1965 and agreed to the formation and purposes of the I Corps JCC and appointed Lieutenant Colonel Cach, I Corps Rural Construction Officer, as the government liaison officer to the council.

The I Corps JCC rapidly became the coordinating hub for the civil activities of most of the U. S. governmental agencies in