

Deepe

Inserts to American Marine series.

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SEPT. 30/65.

Insert article one of Marine series after page three:

The immediate danger is not a military defeat for Vietnam, which was a distinct possibility a year ago; the arrival of American combat units has <sup>VE</sup> forced the Viet Cong to de-escalate into guerrilla bands in the areas secured by the American troops; the American troops have upset the Viet Cong timetable by at least as much as a year--possibly more, and this has caused a upsurge in the optimism of official statements. However, the danger is much more subtle now..." of being politically sucked out of Vietnam, because of weariness with the war of attrition," as one counter-insurgency expert explained.

"The Viet Cong can't defeat the Marines or push them out of Vietnam," one reliable source explained. "But by small pricks of mosquito bites all over--by constant harrassment and knocking off small Marine patrols--they can kill the American political spirit to stay in Vietnam."



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starlight--new lead--page two

september 6, 1965

A second key discrepancy also arose between the official versions and the battlefield versions on the ~~discri~~ description of the battle itself. Official briefings sought to ~~pa~~ portray the battle as "World War II, with helicopters added"—that the Marines had forced the Viet Cong to stand and fight a conventional set-piece battle. Descriptions by ground commanders indicated, however, the Viet Cong had employed effectively against the Marines the classical mobile warfare tactics that lead the French forces to defeat ~~and~~ more than a decade ago.

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Consistently, throughout the operation, serious discrepancies arose on key points between the official statements and the eyewitness accounts. Marine Corps privates, sergeants and unit commanders and regimental officers on the battlefield revealed in two days of interviews by this correspondent.

The most vivid example of the many discrepancies was the denial ~~of a Marine Corps spokesman that an amphibious tractor was lost and burned~~ <sup>STROYED</sup> in the ~~Bot~~ <sup>7</sup> battle; both the Associated Press and the New York Herald Tribune had photographs of the burned-out vehicle contained <sup>ING</sup> two charred Marine ~~in~~ bodies.

But the key discrepancy rested on ~~the confirmation~~ whether or not the Viet Cong dead had actually been confirmed by body count. The first official Marine Corps statement made after the first day of fighting was "we haven't had time to sort it (Viet Cong casualties) out, but it will run in the hundreds." The next morning, Western correspondents at the regimental headquarters were told there were 552 Viet Cong confirmed by body count, which an official spokesman defined as "American Marines on the ground counting 552 dead Viet Cong, mostly from air, naval gunfire and artillery."

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This statement, however, appeared to be without ~~valid~~ validity, for officers at the regimental level--which collected the facts--said the basis of their reporting was ~~that~~ only an estimate of 600 Viet Cong dead and was not a body count. ~~It~~ They said the ground forces had barely begun to sweep the battle area.

Besides officially stating the 552 <sup>Viet Cong</sup> bodycount initially, the Marine Corps spokesman also announced an estimated 1000 Viet Cong ~~men~~ wounded. After Western correspondents had written this for more than two days, another spokesman for the American command in Saigon announced "this estimate has not been finalized;" and shortly later the Marine Commander in the Pacific, who had visited the battle, announced the Marines had no right to make the estimate in the first place.

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*Orthodox*  
~~traditional~~ The official Marine Corps briefings sought to ~~portary~~ as *along* conventional warfare the battle of the 5000 Marines along a frontline arcing 6000 meters by 4000 meters.

But, battlefield commanders ~~said~~ said that the hottest battle occurred only within a 1000-meter pocket along this ~~line~~ irregular frontline. Based on their descriptions, it appeared the fighting within this *meter* 1000-~~yard~~ pocket was the ~~see~~ scene of a murderous meatgrinder operation, in which an unrealistic battle plan and defective command decisions cost some, but not many, needless American lives.

An invisible enemy first pinned down and chewed up two Marine infantry companies and two columns of tanks, anti-tanks and ~~amphibious~~ amphibious tractors. Then, instead of sending in massive reinforcements, the Marine ground commanders piecemealed them in--another armored column and another infantry company--only to have them pinned down and chewed up.

Outside this 1000-*meter* ~~yard~~ pocket, the remaining 4000-plus ground forces made little contact with the Viet Cong and suffered "practically ~~negligible~~ negligible" casualties. However, within this 1000-*meter* ~~yard~~ ring of violent fighting--which one tank officer called hell's valley"--the 700-strong Marine force escaped annihilation because the Viet Cong disappeared in the darkness. They were not defeated.

~~up~~ continue with page 3; ~~omit~~ omit pages 4 and 5 and uppick second para page six x x x even before the battle began x x x