

Operational Art in a War of Limited Aims: General Robert Cushman Jr. in I Corps Tactical Zone, 1967-1969

A Monograph

by

Major Bryceson K. Tenold
US Marine Corps



School of Advanced Military Studies
US Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, KS

2018

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGEForm Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 09-04-2018		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) JUN 2017 – MAY 2018	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Operational Art in a War of Limited Aims: General Robert Cushman Jr. in I Corps Tactical Zone, 1967-1969				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Maj Bryceson K. Tenold				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Advanced Military Studies Program				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Although wars of final victory enable campaigns to flow logically from beginning to end, wars of limited aims have no discernable logic, for the aims continue to change as the situation evolves. This characteristic of limited war presents a unique challenge to operational artists. This monograph examines General Robert Cushman Jr.'s operational art as the commanding general of III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF), June 1967-March 1969, to understand how a commander aligned ends, ways, and means and mitigated risk in a war of limited aims. His approach to the challenges facing III MAF provide an example of operational art incorporating full spectrum operations in a complex environment across the depth and breadth of a large territory. While many histories of the Vietnam War highlight the American military's inability to link tactical actions with strategic aims, General Cushman provides an example of a commander who did. His cognitive approach to a complex operating environment and mission provide a model for contemplating contemporary conflicts.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Operational Art, III Marine Amphibious Force, Vietnam War, Limited War, Pacification, Marine Corps					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT (U)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 47	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Maj Bryceson K. Tenold
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

Monograph Approval Page

Name of Candidate: Major Bryceson K. Tenold

Monograph Title: Operational Art in a War of Limited Aims: General Robert Cushman Jr. in I Corps Tactical Zone, 1967-1969

Approved by:

_____, Monograph Director
John M. Curatola, PhD

_____, Seminar Leader
Eric J. Adams, LtCol

_____, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
James C. Markert, COL

Accepted this 24th day of May 2018 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, PhD

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other government agency.

Fair use determination or copyright permission has been obtained for the inclusion of pictures, maps, graphics, and any other works incorporated into this manuscript. A work of the United States Government is not subject to copyright, however further publication or sale of copyrighted images is not permissible.

Abstract

Operational Art in a War of Limited Aims: General Robert Cushman Jr. in I Corps Tactical Zone, 1967-1969 by Maj Bryceson K. Tenold, US Marine Corps, 47 pages.

Although wars of final victory enable campaigns to flow logically from beginning to end, wars of limited aims have been the rule since the end of World War II. Given the contemporary prevalence of limited wars, how have commanders previously aligned ends, ways, and means in wars of limited aims?

The following paper examines General Cushman's operational art as the commanding general of III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF), June 1967-March 1969, to understand how a commander negotiated the challenges of aligning ends, ways, and means and mitigated risk in a war of limited aims. Although General Cushman preceded the formal adoption of operational art into US military doctrine, his approach to the challenges facing III MAF provide an example of operational art incorporating full spectrum operations in a complex environment across the depth and breadth of a large territory. After briefly framing the arguments with a discussion of operational art, this paper examines the strategic context of III MAF operations, General Cushman's understanding of the operating environment, and General Cushman's operational approach to demonstrate how General Cushman integrated ends, ways, and means and mitigated risk to organize and employ III MAF.

General Cushman's operational art provides a useful example of negotiating the demands of a rapidly changing operating environment with shifting operational limitations in a war of limited aims. While many histories of the Vietnam War highlight the American military's inability to link tactical actions with strategic aims, General Cushman provides an example of a commander who did. His cognitive approach to a complex operating environment and mission provide a model for contemplating contemporary conflicts.

Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Acronyms	vi
Illustrations	vii
Tables	vii
Introduction	1
Operational Art.....	5
Context of III MAF Operations in June 1967.....	6
Revolutionary Development.....	10
An Alternative Operational Approach.....	12
Designing the Operational Approach	16
Strategic Direction.....	17
Operating Environment	20
Problem Defined.....	23
General Cushman’s Operational Approach.....	27
Pacification.....	28
Counter guerrilla Operations	31
Large Unit and Defensive Operations	34
Adjustments to the Approach	35
Results	38
Conclusion.....	43
Bibliography	48

Acknowledgements

As with all of my military service, none of this would have been possible without the constant support of my wife.

Acronyms

ADRP	Army Doctrinal Reference Publication
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
ATP	Army Techniques Publication
CORDS	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development
CTZ	Corps Tactical Zone
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
FMFPAC	Fleet Marine Forces Pacific
HES	Hamlet Evaluation System
HQMC	Headquarters US Marine Corps
JP	Joint Publication
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MAF	Marine Amphibious Force
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OCO	Office of Civil Operations
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
SLF	Special Landing Force

Illustrations

Figure 1. I Corps Tactical Zone.....	viii
--------------------------------------	------

Tables

Table 1. Comparison of National Aims and Strategies.....	11
--	----

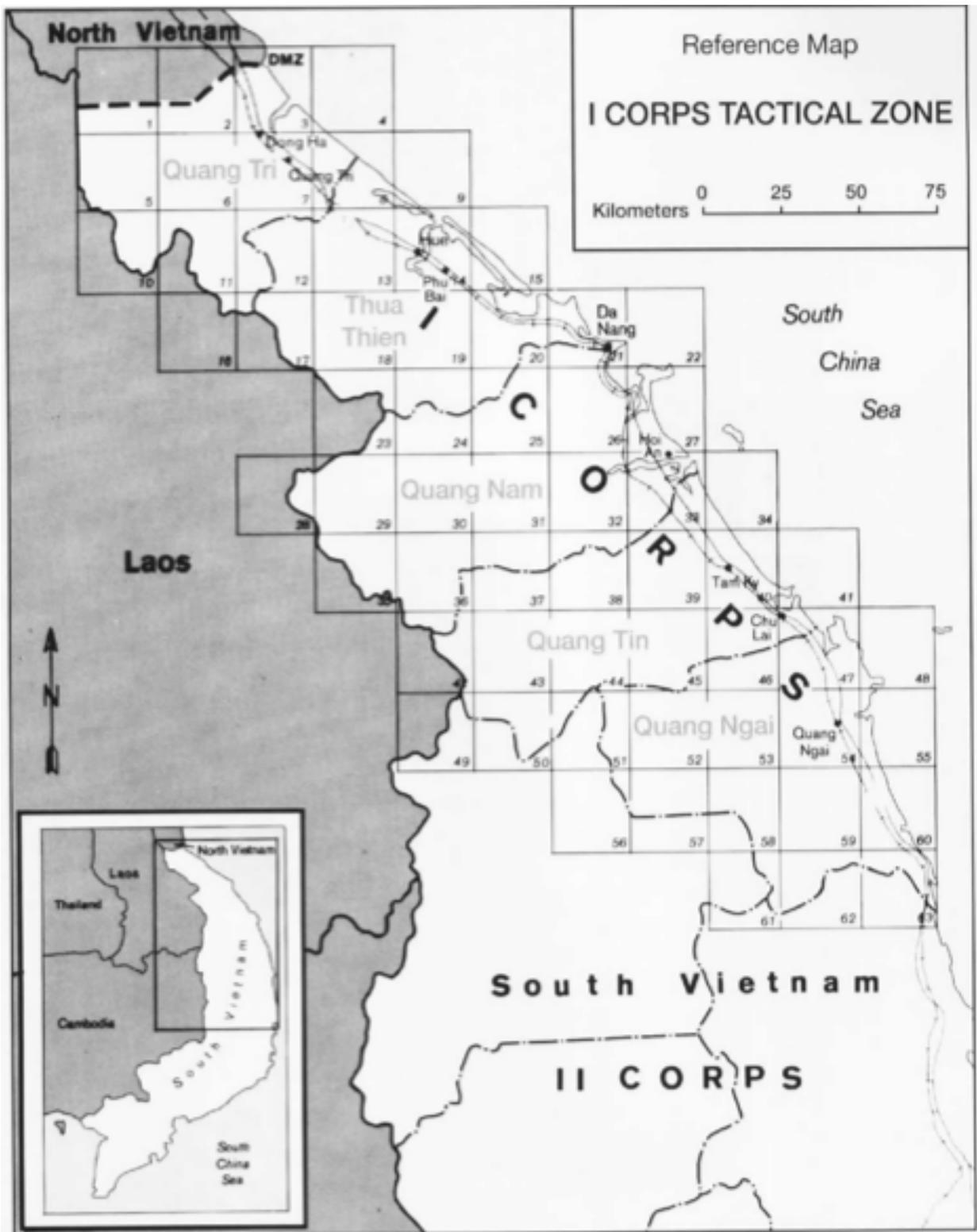


Figure 1. I Corps Tactical Zone, Jack Shulimson et al., *US Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year 1968* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1997), xiv.

Introduction

As we shall see [...] the original political objects can greatly alter during the course of the war and may finally change entirely since they are influenced by events and their probable consequences.

—Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

The logic of wars of final victory are quite simple to understand: one state seeks the total defeat of an enemy by destroying its armed forces, seizing its territory, and breaking the will of its people.¹ The US policy aims and subsequent military campaigns in World War II provide a clear example of this phenomenon. As Clausewitz notes in the above epigraph, however, wars pursuing limited aims have no discernible logic: the aims continue to adjust in light of the unfolding situation.² For the operational military commander, this presents a significant challenge to his ability to take effective action. Commanders are responsible for employing means to achieve specific ends that ultimately support the state's policy aims. Shifting policy aims should produce cascading changes to the ends, ways, and means of military plans. Given the contemporary prevalence of limited wars, how have commanders previously aligned ends, ways, and means in wars of limited aims?

During the Vietnam War, American military leaders constantly struggled with this challenge. Citing tactical success as evidence for the effectiveness of their military strategy, these military efforts did not always produce the desired political outcomes. Regardless of the number of enemy fighters killed, supplies destroyed, and attacks repulsed, North Vietnam refused to abandon its aims and agree to a negotiated settlement.³ Out of the introspection that followed the

¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 92.

² Ibid.

³ Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Books, 1999), 59.

war in the US Military came the concept of operational art. This intended to rectify one of the major failings of military operations in Vietnam by requiring commanders to clearly link tactical actions to strategic objectives.⁴

Interestingly, the Vietnam War also presents examples of commanders who successfully arranged the actions of their forces to pursue evolving strategic ends; among them is General Robert Cushman Jr. General Cushman assumed command of III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) in June 1967 and faced a number of tactical and operational challenges. III MAF's missions involved supporting the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) in extending control over the entire area of operations, primarily through a program known as "Revolutionary Development," as well as destroying the communist forces in I Corps Tactical Zone (I CTZ). Initial Marine actions resulted in a mix of success and setback as III MAF faced an enemy conducting guerrilla, conventional, and psychological warfare in urban and rural terrain.

In June 1967, the North Vietnamese began a massive conventional build up along the northern border of I CTZ and also increased guerrilla activity and rocket attacks against US bases. At the same time, shifting policy objectives changed the ways and means available to General Cushman. The US Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, directed the construction of a strong point obstacle system along the demilitarized zone, and General Cushman's operational commander, General William Westmoreland, directed III MAF to prioritize conventional operations over support to revolutionary development. As a result, General Cushman faced the

⁴ Richard M. Swain, "Filling the Void: The Operational Art and the US Army," in *Operational Art: Developments in the Theories of War*, ed. BJC McKercher and Michael Hennessy (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 148. See also Michael Krause and R. Cody Phillips, "Introduction," in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, eds. Krause, Michael D., and R. Cody Phillips (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, US Army, 2007), 329. This idea has lengthy historical antecedents and has elsewhere been called "military strategy," among other titles, but it emphasized the responsibility of political leaders to define clear objectives before committing military forces and the responsibility of military commanders to ensure that tactical actions support strategic aims. Harold Nelson, "The Origins of Operational Art," in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, 340-341. See also Bruce Menning, "Operational Art's Origins," in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, 7. For more about military strategy, see B. H. Liddel-Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 322-324.

challenge of prioritizing resources against competing requirements and directives as he sought to achieve the strategic aims of the war in a dynamic, non-linear, and complex environment.⁵

These challenges faced all of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), and yet, General Cushman understood the strategic direction of the conflict, analyzed the operating environment, and defined the problem facing his force differently than did General Westmoreland. Whereas General Westmoreland became fixated on destroying the enemy forces and materiel faster than the enemy could replace it, General Cushman focused on extending the control of RVN over its territory. General Cushman sought to achieve a political condition as opposed to a military effect. To do this, General Cushman unified III MAF actions along three lines of effort that primarily supported the RVN's strategy. He further arranged his bases to take advantage of naval logistics, protect key population centers, enable the theater air campaign, and extend operational reach. As policy objectives shifted, General Cushman assumed greater risk to the pacification mission but also balanced the enemy threat with his operational limitations to produce effective operations.

The year 1968 proved to be a defining year for the war. Seven months after General Cushman assumed command, the North Vietnamese launched a massive attack against the major cities of South Vietnam. What became known as the Tet Offensive confirmed for General Cushman and the III MAF staff that his operational approach was working. However, the Tet Offensive contradicted General Westmoreland's assertions, pointed to a MACV military strategy disconnected from the strategic aims of the conflict, and completely changed the perceptions of the war by the US public and government leaders. General Abrams replaced General Westmoreland and immediately began emphasizing an operational approach that recognized the

⁵ Such problems are contemporarily called "ill-structured problem." For further discussion of different types of problems, see US Department of the Army, Army Techniques Publication 5-0.1, *Army Design Methodology* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 4-5.

nature of wars of limited aims and aligned cognitively with General Cushman's approach.⁶

Although military conditions improved following the Tet Offensive, US public opinion shifted and future political discussion centered on withdrawing as soon as possible.

The following paper examines General Cushman's operational art as the commanding general of III MAF, June 1967-March 1969, to understand how a commander negotiated the challenges of aligning ends, ways, and means and balancing risk in a war of limited aims. Although General Cushman preceded the formal adoption of operational art into US military doctrine, his approach to the challenges facing III MAF provide an example of operational art in a large and complex environment. After briefly framing the arguments with a discussion of operational art, this paper examines the strategic context of III MAF operations, General Cushman's understanding of the operating environment, and General Cushman's operational approach to demonstrate how General Cushman integrated ends, ways, and means and mitigated risk to organize and employ III MAF.

Additionally, this monograph seeks to fill a void in the body of knowledge with regard to General Cushman's actions in Vietnam. Despite being a significant figure in the histories of the Marine Corps and Vietnam War, General Cushman remains generally absent from the current body knowledge. He did not write any books or publish memoirs, and he did not leave any personal papers that might provide insight into the challenges he faced. Internal reports and messages from III MAF, however, illuminate the myriad challenges he addressed and the logic behind his decisions. He played a significant role in the Vietnam War as the commander of a multinational force, facing a hybrid threat in a complex operating environment and confronting significant challenges at each level of war.

⁶ While Lewis Sorely does not credit the Marines with informing General Abrams' pacification strategy, the new MACV approach and measures of effectiveness match III MAF's. These similarities are explored in this paper's final section. See Sorley, *A Better War*, 59-79.

During his two years in command, I CTZ extended 220 miles north to south and included five provinces. III MAF grew from 98,000 to 138,000 Marines, sailors, and soldiers organized in two reinforced Marine infantry divisions, one US Army division, one Marine aircraft wing, a force logistics command, and two attached battalions from Seventh Fleet's Special Landing Force (SLF).⁷ Additionally, General Cushman had coordinating authority over the Republic of Korea's 2d Marine Brigade, and he served as the advisor to the I Corps of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).⁸ Under General Cushman's leadership, III MAF withstood the Tet Offensive, regained the initiative, and enabled the RVN to reassert control over critical provinces that the communist forces had strongly contested. General Cushman implemented an operational approach that employed a wide variety of forces, programs, and agencies across the spectrum of conflict to improve the viability of another nation. His cognitive approach provides a model for contemplating contemporary conflicts.

Operational Art

“Operational art is the application of creative imagination by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, and experience—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, means, and risks.”⁹

⁷ For initial troop strength, see III Marine Amphibious Force, “Command Chronology June 1967,” Folder 003, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 7, accessed December 28, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1201003058>. For final troop strength in March 1969, see III Marine Amphibious Force, “Command Chronology March 1969,” Folder 005, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 8, accessed December 28, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1201005046>.

⁸ Jack Shulimson et al., *US Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year 1968* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1997), 2.

⁹ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 4-1. US Army doctrine's definition also focuses on the cognitive process of ensuring that tactical success will enable strategic advantage. As it states, operational art is the “pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.” US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 4-1.

The need to link tactical actions to strategic ends is a natural outgrowth of the changeless political nature of war, but the expression of operational art continues to evolve.¹⁰ Over the last two centuries, operational art evolved in terms of scale, scope, and complexity. Social, industrial, and information revolutions enabled military forces to influence larger areas with greater firepower against multiple objectives simultaneously. These developments increased the complexity of the operating environment and the options available for the employment of military forces.

Key to developing these strategies, campaigns, and operations is understanding the logic of the complex operating environment and the means by which military forces can influence it. Within the last decade, the US Military codified an iterative process known as “operational design” to create shared understanding, identify and frame problems, and develop approaches to resolve military problems in a way that will support the larger strategic aims.¹¹ Operational art and design result in an operational approach, which provides the general framework within which staffs conduct detailed planning and develop orders. Operational art and design, therefore, are the methods by which a commander ensures that operations are linked to strategic aims and develops measures to assess the effectiveness of operations in achieving these aims.¹² Linking tactical actions to policy aims proved especially challenging during the Vietnam War, for the strategic aims remained ambiguous from the start.

Context of III MAF Operations in June 1967

The ambiguity of the Vietnam War’s strategic aims resulted from a perceived change in the global security paradigm following World War II and President Lyndon Johnson’s

¹⁰ For discussions of war as a continuation of political discourse, see Clausewitz, *On War*, 605-610. James Schneider argues that operational art did not appear before the American Civil War as commanders prior to this did not have the independence, operational capabilities, or operational vision required and consequently executed a classical form of warfare. As defined by ADRP 3-0, however, operational art existed well before the Civil War. See James J. Schneider, “Loose Marble—and the Origins of Operational Art,” *Parameters* (March 1989): 85-99.

¹¹ US Joint Staff, JP 5-0, *Joint Planning 2017*, 4-1.

¹² *Ibid.*, 4-4.

subordination of the war to domestic goals. At the conclusion of World War II, American leaders confronted a radically different international system. Whereas the previous centuries witnessed a balance of power in Europe, global power now consolidated around either the United States or the Soviet Union. With the demise of the British and French Empires, colonies around the world began or accelerated demands for independence and quickly became hotbeds of instability as factions violently pursued their aims. Unlike all other countries, the national power of the United States grew in every respect as a result of World War II, and this new international system drew the United States into a foreign policy of global intervention.¹³

For the most part, this intervention excluded mainland Asia, focusing instead on Europe and key sources of economic or military strength, such as the Middle East. However, in October 1949, Mao Tse Tung and the Chinese Communist Party took control of China, and the ideologies of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin now controlled the world's territorially and demographically largest countries. This shocked the White House and President Truman reframed his foreign policy: the United States had to consider defending almost any country not under communist control, not just those of high military or industrial value.¹⁴ The subsequent commencement of communist insurgencies in Malaya and Burma, as well as the Sino-Viet Minh alliance in Indochina, indicated that the spread of communism could be likened to the falling of dominos.¹⁵

¹³ Summary of post-World War II context found in George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 437 & 595-598.

¹⁴ Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 24.

¹⁵ While popularized later under President Eisenhower as the "domino theory," this phenomenon did not categorically expect the formation of communist governments in neighboring countries but at least alliances with communist powers. It also did not suggest that the fall of one country predicted immediate revolution in neighboring countries, only that the spread of communism encouraged campaigns of intimidation and subversion that would pull more nations into the communist orbit. See Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, 24. Eisenhower would famously use the domino analogy later in justifying intervention at Dien Bien Phu, and the metaphor proved especially powerful in future discussions of national security. See John Prados, *Vietnam: History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2009), 29.

Out of this new paradigm emerged “A Report to the National Security Council - NSC 68.” This national security strategy recommended “the rapid and sustained build-up of the political, economic, and military strength of the free world,” in order to “wrest the initiative from the Soviet Union.”¹⁶ It represented a cognitive shift for policymakers when President Truman adopted it in April 1950. The commencement of the Korean War two months later provided President Truman with the opportunity to define this strategy in practice. The US response and the Chinese reaction set a precedent for US foreign policy as it later sought to contain the expansion of communism in another Asian nation on the border with China. The RVN progressively appeared to be on the front line of the struggle between the Free World and the communists. Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy increased financial and material support to the RVN, but these efforts proved ineffective and the violent spread of communist control continued there.¹⁷

In January 1965, as South Vietnam descended into further political turmoil, President Johnson faced the dilemma that every administration since President Truman had feared: he might preside over the fall of the first domino in what would lead to a dramatic shift in the global balance of power. After an initial strategic bombing campaign failed to produce the anticipated results, President Johnson committed to large scale combat operations with American military forces. To avoid adverse impacts to his domestic agenda and reduce the potential for a Chinese

¹⁶ US National Security Council, “A Report to the National Security Council - NSC 68,” April 12, 1950, Truman Papers, 64, accessed September 30, 2017, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf. Driving this new paradigm was the belief that the Soviet Union was behaving differently from previous great powers. “Animated by a new fanatical faith, antithetical to our own,” the report argued, the Soviet Union would retain and solidify its absolute power by subverting or destroying any non-communist foreign governments and replacing them with compliant, communist clients. See US National Security Council, “NSC 68,” 4-6.

¹⁷ Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy implemented different strategies, but both sought the objectives established in NSC 68 and feared escalation into a global war and nuclear exchange. Because of this paradigm and the abundance of other countries battling communist insurgencies, both presidents maintained negative aims rather than defining positive goals.

military response, he adopted a national security strategy of “graduated pressure” that would theoretically enable him to contain communism while projecting an image that he was reluctant to escalate the war.¹⁸ Instead, it allowed further communist aggression, created a dysfunctional decision-making process, and blurred strategic aims.

Johnson sought a defensive war of limited aims to force a diplomatic solution with the North Vietnamese by pushing the conflict to a “stalemate.”¹⁹ The policy aims remained deliberately ambiguous so that Johnson could project an image of domestic political consensus with regard to the deployment of military force.²⁰ Invading the North would have required sustained political capital to maintain the national enmity and resources, distracted attention from his domestic agenda, and risked a larger regional or global war. His strategy, subsequently, planned to employ air power to exhaust the North Vietnamese beyond the blood and treasure they were willing to expend to achieve their aims of unification, while controlling urban centers of

¹⁸ H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 84. Defense Secretary McNamara believed that he could exactly calculate the force required to achieve policy objectives, but to do this he needed “precise control of the application of force.” This led to a requirement to tightly control the military and resulted in further distrust between the civilian and military leadership. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 96.

¹⁹ Defense Secretary McNamara stated as much during a cabinet meeting in June 1965: “We think [we] can achieve that objective by moving toward a stalemate, convincing [Hanoi] that the situation in the South will not lead to a military victory, that they can’t win while the stalemate continues, they are being forced to absorb the penalty in the North as a result of our bombing of their military targets. So that is our basic strategy. We think that if we can accomplish that stalemate, accompanied by the limited bombing program in the North, we can force them to negotiations . . . that will lead to a settlement that will preserve the independence of South Vietnam. The basic question, the military question is, how can we accomplish a stalemate, and how can we move from a situation in which they believe they are winning, to one in which they see that there is no hope for the victory that they are endeavoring to accomplish?” From “Minutes of the meeting of the President’s Cabinet, in the Cabinet Room, the White House, at 11:10 a.m., Jun 18, 1965,” folder Cabinet Meetings 6/18/65, box 3, Cabinet Papers, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, 43, as cited in Graham Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Withdrawal, 1968-1973* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, US Army, 2006), 425.

²⁰ The JCS, Congressional leaders, political advisors, and former presidents all sought clarity from President Johnson as to the specific objectives of his Vietnam policy, but he consistently provided contradictory and ambiguous answers in an attempt to maintain his domestic approval ratings. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 238 & 266. McMaster asserts that “American soldiers, airmen, and Marines went to war in Vietnam without strategy or direction.” McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 275.

power within South Vietnam.²¹ In reality, he embarked on a strategy of not losing rather than one of specific objectives.

In support of these aims, the JCS adopted three lines of effort. The first was an air campaign striking strategic targets in North Vietnam. Called “Operation Rolling Thunder,” these strikes sought to bring the North Vietnamese to negotiations by eliminating key industrial, transportation, and military capabilities. The second and third lines of effort were “search and destroy” and “pacification” operations that sought to deny Hanoi influence in South Vietnam.²² In support of these missions, MACV coordinated closely with the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) in designing and executing campaign plans, but viewed cooperation with the host nation as a supporting effort to the larger US strategy of stalemate.

Table 1. Comparison of National Aims and Strategies

	United States	South Vietnam	North Vietnam
Political Aims	Limited	Absolute	Absolute
Means	Limited	Unlimited	Unlimited
Strategy	“Stalemate”	Revolutionary Development	Conquer South Vietnam
Strategic orientation	Defense	Defense	Offense
Operational orientation	Defense	Offense	Offense

Source: Author.

Revolutionary Development

Even though MACV coordinated closely with the RVNAF, the organizations operated under fundamentally different paradigms. The RVN faced an existential threat, established

²¹ Making the war appear costly to the enemy is an option Clausewitz presents for wars of limited aims. President Johnson apparently chose to wear down the enemy to increase the cost to Hanoi, but he may not have recognized the time required for such an approach. “Wearing down the enemy in conflict means using the duration of the war to bring about a gradual exhaustion of his physical and moral resistance.” Clausewitz, *On War*, 93.

²² Graham Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, US Army, 2005), 382-383.

positive policy aims, and developed a comprehensive approach to eliminating communist influence within its borders and reestablishing control of the government over its territory. Although the communist guerrillas, Viet Cong, and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) forces all presented a significant threat to the country, the RVN viewed the elimination of these threats as a means to a secure and stable South Vietnam and not an end. The RVN viewed success less in terms of exhausting Hanoi than in creating a healthy state that fully enabled the success of its people. In pursuit of these aims, it created the Ministry of Revolutionary Development to implement political, economic, and social programs in key villages and hamlets.

These programs sought to develop the local government, generate self-sustaining economic activity, and earn the support of the local populace. Called “New Life Development” programs, revolutionary development cadre groups comprised of personnel from different government agencies implemented these programs in designated locations.²³ In doing this, these cadres also provided these locations with a connection to their government, access to resources and government programs, improved standards of living, and stability. Within a short amount of time, these key villages and hamlets enjoyed great benefit from the focused government effort and freely gave RVN their support.²⁴

In order to set the conditions for these revolutionary development teams, RVNAF provided security against the communist guerrillas, Viet Cong, and NVA regular forces. At the district level, Popular Force platoons protected hamlets and villages with outposts and heavy patrolling. Members of the local village manned these platoons and provided the most basic form

²³ Headquarters III Marine Amphibious Force, “Combined Campaign Plan 2-68,” June 30, 1968, Folder 004, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, accessed December 12, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1201004028>, C-3.

²⁴ United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, “Handbook for Military Support of Pacification,” February 1968, Folder 14, Box 05, United States Armed Forces Manuals Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, accessed December 12, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1370514001>, 7-8.

of security. Working out from the villages into the rural areas and focusing on the entire province, Regional Forces maintained a greater combat capability and protected critical infrastructure in addition to the population. These two forces resembled militias in their limited training and resources, yet they represented nearly half of RVNAF.²⁵ ARVN provided the outer layer of security and engaged larger regular and irregular forces.

To enable unified action with the US and RVN, General Westmoreland initially envisioned US forces predominantly assuming responsibility for the search and destroy mission while RVNAF implemented pacification. General Westmoreland sought to use the Americans' overwhelming firepower and mobility to destroy the large NVA units that threatened to seize key urban areas. These NVA forces could be interdicted and defeated outside of populated areas where the risk of civilian casualties was far less. Pacification, on the other hand, targeted the Viet Cong and sought to deny the communists influence over the South Vietnamese population through security and economic development. Despite some initial attempts to sharpen the difference between these missions, by mid-1967, General Westmoreland acknowledged that the enemy situation required US forces to do both.²⁶ For the Marine Corps, this realization came much earlier and led to an initial operational approach in I CTZ that prioritized the goals of pacification over attrition.

An Alternative Operational Approach

From the beginning, the Marines viewed the situation in Vietnam differently from that of General Westmoreland.²⁷ Drawing on the Marine Corps' heritage in the Banana Wars, the *Small*

²⁵ MACV, "Military Support of Pacification," 23.

²⁶ Cosmas, *Years of Escalation*, 400-401. Initially, the pacification mission fell to a civilian coordination authority, the Office of Civil Operations, but in March 1967 MACV received responsibility for its mission and the office fell under the military command as a joint staff section, the Office of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development. Cosmas, *Years of Escalation*, 357-361.

²⁷ In March 1965, the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade landed at Da Nang to secure its airfield as well as those at Chu Lai and Phu Bai in support of Operation Rolling Thunder. Two months later, III Marine Amphibious Force arrived and soon began repulsing enemy attacks against its bases. The Marines

Wars Manual, and studies of British and French counterinsurgency efforts, Marine leadership perceived the political nature of the conflict in Vietnam, as well as its violent manifestations.²⁸ Therefore, they emphasized a military strategy of expanding local security and governance instead of attrition. The first III MAF commander, General Walt, and the senior leaders in the Marine Corps believed that popular support from local South Vietnamese was the ultimate objective for both the communists and the RVN. They reasoned that the Viet Cong would be unable to threaten the security and stability of the country if the local population did not permit its movement or presence. As General Walt assumed command of III MAF, he designed an operational approach to protect these population centers.

The emphasis on pacification also fit more easily with III MAF's primary mission of protecting coastal air bases. Given the geographic, materiel, and manpower constraints as well as the character of the enemy forces, III MAF could not simply establish a perimeter defense. Instead, the Marines needed to increase its defense in depth by generating local support for the Government of South Vietnam near these coastal bases. If the local populace felt protected, Viet Cong forces could not get within range to attack these bases with direct fire or rockets.²⁹

To do this, the Marines employed aggressive patrolling, the Combined Action Platoons, and civic action. With few forces tied to maintaining the physical security of the bases, Marine units were available to patrol the surrounding areas and locate enemy forces and bases. After locating enemy forces through these small patrols, Marine forces rapidly destroyed the enemy

began launching operations to interdict and defeat enemy forces nearby, and the enemy threat continued to grow. The Marines were initially prohibited from engaging in offensive combat operations since their mission was to protect airbases. After attacks increased, President Johnson lifted this restraint and the Marines began executing offensive combat operations. See Victor H. Krulak, *First To Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps* (Annapolis: MD, Naval Institute Press, 1999), 181.

²⁸ David Strachan-Morris, "Swords and Ploughshares: An Analysis of the Origins and Implementation of the United States Marine Corps' Counterinsurgency Strategy in Vietnam between March 1965 and November 1968" (PhD diss., University of Wolverhampton, 2010), 13, accessed March 6, 2018, <http://hdl.handle.net/2436/140193>.

²⁹ Michael A. Hennessy, *Strategy in Vietnam: The Marines and Revolutionary War in I Corps, 1965-1972* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 69.

through vertical envelopment and combined arms. Additionally, the Marine Corps began to integrate Marine squads with the Popular Forces and Regional Forces at individual hamlets and villages. Known as Combined Action Platoons, these forces provided permanent protection from Viet Cong and guerrilla forces by combining local cultural fluency with access to US firepower and support. After large-scale operations drove out Viet Cong forces from an area, these platoons maintained an enduring presence to ensure that the RVN could retain its influence. Civic action programs, in coordination with the revolutionary development teams, addressed other economic, infrastructure, agricultural, or governance needs specific to that area.

Naval support and proximity to urban areas further contributed to this pursuit of expanding South Vietnamese control. The Marine Corps relied heavily upon naval logistics to maintain operations ashore to be a “Force-in-Readiness,” and was not organized or equipped to operate inland for extended periods of time. It had the capability to surge forces forward, but this was sustainable for only a period of weeks and relied heavily on aircraft. Naval gunfire support provided significant protection to the fixed positions and reduced the logistical requirement of artillery cannons ashore.

Beyond the tactical considerations, Marine bases provided protection to major urban areas as well. Although enemy forces had mobility in the central highlands of Vietnam, these rural areas were sparsely populated and presented less of a threat to the overall political support of the South, as opposed to cities like Hue and Da Nang. Marine operations, therefore, intended to add defensive depth around key terrain without decreasing mobility and responsiveness. In this way, the Marines believed they could keep enemy forces off balance and prevent them from massing attacks against the air bases or infiltrating into urban areas.

General Westmoreland, however, viewed the situation and strategic requirements differently in I CTZ. He believed the North Vietnamese were preparing to launch a large-scale

attack from Laos and capture Hue City.³⁰ Following a Honolulu conference in February 1966, Westmoreland became more directive with General Walt in the distribution and employment of the III MAF forces. In an effort to get the Marines out of their beachheads and to bring the enemy's main forces to battle, he directed Walt to create an air assault force of two or three battalions and to "punish the enemy's big units and disrupt their bases and supply caches" in large, combined operations with the ARVN.³¹

General Walt tried to resist these directives as it contradicted his understanding of the tactical and operational realities. In what seemed to reverse General Westmoreland's earlier goals, MACV now tasked III MAF with search and destroy operations against Viet Cong and NVA main body forces as well as eradicating Viet Cong infrastructure and protecting the local populace. Whereas the Marine leaders placed primacy on extending their defense in depth and using small patrols to locate enemy main body forces and destroy them with large operations, Westmoreland believed that all of MACV needed to primarily align its resources against the NVA regular forces. Only after defeating these forces, Westmoreland reasoned, would the South be safe to conduct pacification.³² As a result, in late 1966 the Marines began occupying a series of strong points along the DMZ that stretched from Khe Sanh to the sea and pulled resources away from pacification and defending the air bases in order to meet these new requirements.

III MAF still maintained the mission to protect the bases at Phu Bai, Da Nang, and Chu Lai, but now it also assumed responsibility for protecting the borders with Laos and the DMZ as well as destroying guerrilla and NVA forces in sparsely populated areas. As ARVN forces evacuated fixed positions along the DMZ to conduct the pacification mission to the south, III MAF backfilled them and further reduced its mobility. Enemy activity increased in the northern

³⁰ Strachan-Morris, "Swords and Ploughshares," 207.

³¹ William Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1989), 165-166.

³² *Ibid.*, 145.

province of Quang Tri, and III MAF found it could hold these positions but was unable to regain the initiative.³³ The initial mission set had already strained naval logistics and manpower available, but this campaign plan brought them to the breaking point. General Walt identified the troop-to-task imbalance to General Westmoreland and requested more forces.

The result was the creation of Task Force Oregon with reinforcement from the Special Landing Force's Alpha and Bravo elements. Pulling US Army brigades and battalions from other corps tactical zones, MACV formed a provisional division in Chu Lai that freed up Marine forces to execute counter-infiltration and search and destroy mission in northern Quang Tri province. The 26th Marine Regiment's headquarters flew in from Okinawa and assumed responsibility for Khe Sanh, and the SLF forces reinforced operations along the DMZ. By May 1967, MACV reinforced III MAF with twelve new US battalions. III MAF realigned its forces in northern I CTZ, regained the initiative, and checked the NVA summer offensive.³⁴ General Cushman arrived to take command of III MAF as these force alignment changes began reshaping the operational environment, but changes to the enemy threat and additional directives from the Pentagon would present him with a new problem set.

Designing the Operational Approach

Arriving at the end of March 1967, General Cushman used the following two months to analyze the I CTZ area of operations, meet adjacent and subordinate commanders, and understand General Westmoreland's expectations. General Cushman was convinced that mobility provided the best defense against regular NVA forces and that III MAF was competing with the enemy to control the local population, specifically in the urban areas. While MACV and strategic decision-makers remained focused on body-counts and an enemy-centric strategy of attrition, General

³³ Gary L. Telfer, Lane Rogers, and V. Keith Fleming Jr., *US Marines in Vietnam: Fighting the North Vietnamese 1967* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division HQs, US Marine Corps, 1984), 75.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

Cushman designed an approach that built upon General Walt's approach and aligned more closely with the perspective of the Ministry of Revolutionary Development. Based on his understanding of the strategic direction of the war, the operating environment of I CTZ, and the problem he faced, General Cushman implemented his operational approach shortly after taking command in June 1967. This operational approach adapted to a changed enemy order of battle, new operational directives, and increased friendly forces to better support pacification.

Strategic Direction

Personal experience shapes the ability of a commander to understand the strategic direction of a war, and General Cushman's secondary socialization as a Marine officer prepared him well to practice operational design. Throughout his previous thirty-two years of service, General Cushman executed a broad scope of assignments that exposed him to issues at each level of war, in different regions of the world, and within different organizational structures. He read voraciously, instructed students in formal schools, advised senior leaders, and led Marines valorously.³⁵ These elements of his character and history shaped his understanding of the tactical, operational, and strategic pictures in I CTZ, and enabled him to craft an operational approach that adequately met the variety of enemy threats while adhering to operational and strategic limitations.

General Cushman's military experience began as a newly-commissioned second lieutenant deployed to China 1936-38 where he observed the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. As commander of 2d Battalion, 9th Marines in World War Two, he led Marines in campaigns across the Pacific, receiving a Bronze Star with "V" at Bougainville, a Navy Cross at Guam, and a Legion of Merit at Iwo Jima. Following the war, he instructed at the Marine Corps Schools in Quantico for three years and then spent two years on staff at the Far East Branch of the Central

³⁵ Shulimson et al., *The Defining Year 1968*, 2-3.

Intelligence Agency studying guerrilla operations.³⁶ Later, as a division commander, he was heavily involved with contingency plans for Southeast Asia and even led a task force assigned to invade Laos to keep it out of communist control.³⁷ Relating specifically to the Vietnam War, in 1964 General Cushman accompanied the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Greene, during his first visit to Vietnam before serving as the Director of Marine Corps Operations for two years.

As the Assistant for National Security Affairs to Vice President Richard Nixon for four years, 1957-61, General Cushman received greater exposure to strategic issues and concerns than most general officers at that time.³⁸ He understood the international communist threat, the impacts of China's October Revolution, and the broader implications of NSC 68 for foreign and defense policies. Additionally, General Cushman's work at the Central Intelligence Agency provided additional insight about the internal operations of the communist movement, Soviet Russia, and Red China, as well as the realities of US attempts to contain these forces without escalating the conflict into another world war. By the time he arrived in Da Nang, Vietnam in March 1967, General Cushman had personal experience in combat and limited war, had commanded up to the division level, and had engaged seriously with policy makers and intelligence officials at the strategic level.

The pursuit of limited aims through a strategy of stalemate remained central to operational commanders in Vietnam as General Cushman refined his understanding of the strategic direction. In early 1967, the Commander-in-Chief of Pacific Command released updated

³⁶ Robert E. General Cushman, Jr., interview by Benis M. Frank, November 1, 1982, oral history transcript (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1984), 1-4 & 203-204.

³⁷ Ibid., 244.

³⁸ Working for the vice president had allowed him to engage at the strategic level and taught him to cooperate with other elements of government in pursuing shared goals. Ibid., 258.

objectives.³⁹ This operational guidance reflected the emphasis on attrition and body counts over pacification objectives, which ranked below route security and railroad repair. Given the large manpower and resource requirements to build and secure railroads, strategic leadership seemed to believe that securing the population provided less benefit to US military strategy. It also suggested that these roads and railroads would not be any safer as military forces secured more areas. Responsibility for defeating the enemy threat fell to firepower and maneuver, followed by static security and engineers. Securing the local people would come later.

General Westmoreland further refined this guidance to support MACV's military strategy, and from this guidance General Walt had derived six goals for III MAF in 1967.⁴⁰ General Walt could not openly reprioritize the objectives he received, but he could justify support to pacification by clarifying these goals and adding supplementary III MAF objectives. The Combined Action Platoons had proven to generate the cooperation, intelligence, and security III MAF needed to destroy the communist infrastructure and enable revolutionary development. General Walt resourced these priorities according to his understanding of the operating environment.⁴¹ General Cushman retained these objectives when assuming command, but he gave serious consideration to their relevance as he considered five assessed enemy goals:

³⁹ These objectives were: "Neutralize the Viet Cong/NVA base areas in the first ten priority groupings; begin to inflict losses on the Viet Cong/NVA forces at a rate which exceeds their input; open 100% and secure 50% of the roads essential to friendly operations; open 65% of the railroads and secure those segments in the National Priority Areas; increase the percentage of the population living in secure areas from 56.8% to 66%, and secure 800 additional hamlets." Fleet Marine Forces Pacific (FMFPAC), "Operations of US Marine Forces Vietnam, January 1967," Folder 001, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 5, accessed December 27, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1201001106>. These monthly reports from FMFPAC will hereafter referred to as "FMFPAC, '[Month, Year]'."

⁴⁰ FMFPAC, "January 1967," 5-6. These goals were: neutralize two major base areas in the hinterland of I CTZ; inflict losses on the enemy that exceed his monthly input from infiltration and recruitment; open 70 miles of critical roads and secure additional 221 miles of roads; open 167 miles of railroad and secure 30 miles in National Priority Area; increase to 1,782,000 the number of people living in areas assessed at 60% or greater in the III MAF Revolutionary Development scale; increase Combined Action Platoons to 114.

⁴¹ In its first six months of reports, III MAF reported that it was falling behind the fourth goal and that it likely would not achieve it. This goal suffered from significant enemy action in March 1967, the

1. Seize control of the people, their labor, their products and their resources and the cities.
2. Establish political control of the countryside.
3. Win popular support for the Viet Cong.
4. Defeat Government of Vietnam pacification programs.
5. Defeat Free World military forces.⁴²

Whereas the United States was fighting to create an absence of enemy inside South Vietnam, Hanoi was fighting for the support of and control over the local South Vietnamese populace. In keeping with the inherently defensive strategy of stalemate, MACV and III MAF goals remained defensive, limited in nature, and oriented on defeating enemy threats, whereas the communists' goals encouraged an offensive strategy oriented on control of the South Vietnamese people. The United States wanted a negotiated settlement with Hanoi, but Hanoi wanted unconditional surrender of the RVN and the withdrawal of the United States and its allies, known as the Free World Military Assistance Force. These distinct goals would lead to different perceptions of the operating environment and approaches to realizing these goals.

Operating Environment

In continuing to develop an operational approach for III MAF, General Cushman further analyzed the operating environment to understand the enemy's strategy and the friendly actions required to achieve the strategic aims of the war. He believed that the enemy sought control over the populated areas because it wanted to establish Hanoi's legitimacy to rule and demonstrate Saigon's inability to govern and maintain its authority. Control over the key cities of Hue, Phu Bai, Chu Lai, and Da Nang would enable the communists to isolate the northern two provinces of South Vietnam from Saigon and eliminate III MAF's ability to support Operation Rolling Thunder as well as other operations in I CTZ. He assessed that enemy forces sought to frustrate

destruction of four bridges. But rather than demanding more resources to repair them, III MAF continued to focus on other objectives. See FMFPAC, "June 1967," Folder 001, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 20, accessed December 18, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1201001165>.

⁴² Ibid., 5.

the US pacification and Vietnamese revolutionary development actions in the heavily-populated coastal plain as this line of effort directly threatened the enemy's main objectives.⁴³ Since the beginning of 1966, pacification had eaten away at the complex infrastructure the enemy used to retain control over the population, an infrastructure which had taken the communists two decades to emplace and which served as the main effort to realizing the conflict's strategic aims.⁴⁴

In response to the success of pacification, the enemy was pursuing a two-front campaign against III MAF to draw combat forces into the unpopulated border regions in order to launch guerrilla attacks against the weakened Popular Forces and Revolutionary Forces.⁴⁵ Since June 1966, the NVA battalions along the DMZ increased from 18 to 37, and NVA indirect fires daily shelled III MAF and ARVN positions, hitting them with more than 1600 shells during June.⁴⁶ As III MAF responded to the increased threat along the DMZ, it pulled forces from the counter-guerrilla line of effort and left the pacification effort without protection from larger attacks.

Since the United States had pledged not to conduct ground attacks outside of South Vietnam's borders, operating from the border region provided the NVA the additional advantages of nearby sanctuaries to which it could retreat and from which it could launch rocket and artillery attacks.⁴⁷ The communists traded high NVA casualties to preserve the guerrilla infrastructure and reassert control over the populated lowlands. Although costly, Hanoi pursued this strategy because it would increase American casualties and undermine American domestic support for the war. By the time General Cushman took command in June 1967, the enemy had lost an estimated

⁴³ FMFPAC, "June 1967," 7.

⁴⁴ By mid-1966, areas under strong Marine influence had grown to more than 1600 square miles and included 500,000 people, increases in six months of 70% and 100% respectively. *Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

75 percent of its forces in I CTZ, or more than 30,000 troops.⁴⁸ Yet, Hanoi appeared determined to “bleed [the American’s] without mercy,” in order to destroy the pacification program.⁴⁹

The national strategy of stalemate within a war of limited aims placed the United States on the strategic defense, and General Cushman believed that the enemy’s two-front strategy would place III MAF on the operational defense if the Marines did not deliberately retain the initiative. With more forces being diverted to enemy action away from the cities, and being unable to eliminate the threat of enemy invasion or cross-border fire bases, III MAF was allowing the communists to dictate the terms of action. The enemy contested the physical terrain along the northern border to the extent that III MAF began to cede control over the lowland areas, even as it retained domination of the air and maritime domains.

Additionally, enemy rockets and artillery ranged critical III MAF logistical support infrastructure at Dong Ha and Cua Viet from sanctuaries north of the DMZ, and this meant III MAF required additional resources to extend its operational reach, neutralize these attacks, and build up logistical redundancy elsewhere.⁵⁰ The air bases at Phu Bai, Da Nang, and Chu Lai remained critical to the III MAF mission in I CTZ, and these could only be protected from indirect fire with the support of Vietnamese security forces and the local populace. The local populace sought security, economic development, and good governance in exchange for their support, and this indicated that commercial infrastructure, government officials and structures, and popular perceptions all played key roles in III MAF’s ability to achieve its goals. As the bilingual I Corps-III MAF “Combined Campaign Plan 2-68” would later state, “Operations to annihilate the enemy are by themselves inadequate. The people must be separated and won over

⁴⁸ FMFPAC, “June 1967,” 7.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 10.

⁵⁰ FMFPAC, “August 1967,” Folder 001, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 3, accessed December 18, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1201001150>.

from the enemy, and this can only be done with the active cooperation of the people themselves.”⁵¹

III MAF’s desired end state, therefore, involved more than just the elimination of enemy threats to the government and local populace. III MAF needed to enable a responsible and responsive RVN that maintained legitimacy and control over all of its territory, protected rights and freedoms of its people, and encouraged economic and social development. Even if Washington did not realize it, the support of the local population was the decisive terrain in this war. By attacking Hanoi’s strategy and denying the communists access to this decisive terrain through a high operational tempo and extended operational reach, III MAF would encourage the North to seek a diplomatic solution and give the United States a position of strength from which to negotiate. In short, General Cushman could not concern himself with just the defeat of an enemy force, but he also had to enable the maintenance of an independent nation.⁵²

Problem Defined

General Cushman faced a complex set of challenges in order to realize III MAF’s desired end state. A hybrid enemy threatened Free World Military Assistance Forces and urban areas across the length and breadth of I CTZ. The most serious challenge, however, was that conventional enemy forces in the north continued to grow stronger but remained out of reach in sanctuaries.⁵³ To defend against invasion, the III MAF reassigned units in urban areas to the border. This, however, left the urban areas more vulnerable and diverted III MAF forces away from attacking an enemy source of strength, the infrastructure that the Viet Cong used to control the local populace.

⁵¹ Headquarters III MAF, “Combined Campaign Plan 2-68,” C-2.

⁵² A Marine Corps order released five months later pointed out this contrast with previous campaigns. Headquarters US Marine Corps (HQMC), “Marine Corps Order 3510.2,” November 3, 1967, Folder 07, Box 03, John Donnell Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 1, accessed December 18, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=0720307004>.

⁵³ FMFPAC, “August 1967,” 3.

Moving farther north presented the additional challenge of operational reach and the potential for culmination. Since III MAF forces were supported from three coastal bases and a naval support force, it had to maintain lines of communication to these ports as it pushed further inland. However, as an expeditionary force, the Marines did not have the heavy armor and mobile firepower assets required to provide persistent protection to these lines of communication. Instead, it relied on air sustainment to forward forces when the enemy severed ground lines of communication, making the supported forces more vulnerable to weather and enemy anti-aircraft threats. The US Army divisions assigned to III MAF possessed more assault support, but they also required ground lines of communication back to the ports.

General Cushman also recognized an imbalance in the forces assigned to III MAF when compared to the enemy's force distribution and enemy activity. MACV estimated that 32 percent of the enemy's total force were located in South Vietnam, and even more were massing and threatening from the border regions. During the first six months of 1967, I CTZ accounted for 45 percent of the enemy killed and 46 percent of the friendly troops killed. Additionally, 44 percent of enemy incidents took place in I CTZ, and yet, I CTZ received only 21 percent of all friendly forces in South Vietnam.⁵⁴ Although MACV pledged to send more forces, Cushman required more resources in order to match the priority that the enemy placed on I CTZ. Superior technology, mobility, and firepower provided an advantage when fighting large unit engagements, but these did not compensate for limited manpower in the pacification and counter-guerrilla lines of effort. These facts further underscored the logic and potential effectiveness of the enemy's two-front campaign.

In addition to the constraints against ground invasions of Laos or North Vietnam and requirement to maintain fixed positions along the DMZ, soon after General Cushman arrived to III MAF, Secretary McNamara directed the construction of a barrier along the DMZ that intended

⁵⁴ FMFPAC, "June 1967," 12.

to halt the flow of enemy personnel into I CTZ. Later known as Operation Dye Marker, Secretary McNamara envisioned a strong point obstacle system with towers, wire, minefields, and sensors that was linked by strong points serving as fire bases and patrol bases.⁵⁵ Reaction forces and ready aircraft provided additional assets to destroy and forces attempting to infiltrate, effectively sealing off the border and severing enemy lines of communication.

This plan required enormous resources in a war already characterized by shortfalls, especially combat troops. Yet according to the plan, tactical units would clear and build this obstacle system while under the supervision of engineers. General Walt believed it to be a useless waste of manpower, one that would not stop infiltration and would only unnecessarily risk the lives of Marines as they built it. It added another resource-intensive task to III MAF's missions and eliminated any gains to mobility provided by Task Force Oregon. The Marines were again tied to fixed positions and unable to control the surrounding areas to prevent enemy build up, let alone attacks. The consequences of this situation would fully manifest at the beginning of 1968.

Beyond these limitations, MACV did provide a significant opportunity for III MAF by assuming control of the Office of Civil Operations (OCO) and combining it with the MACV Directorate for Revolutionary Development. The resulting Office of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) was led by a civilian and exercised operational control over pacification through single managers in each province.⁵⁶ These managers retained control of the revolutionary development advisory teams, civilian agencies, and resources earmarked for revolutionary development support, and they theoretically enabled close coordination with military activities. General Westmoreland, however, treated it as a separate entity from his field commanders, giving it advisory responsibility for the Popular Forces and

⁵⁵ Telfer, *US Marines in Vietnam*, 88. This was originally known as the "Practice Nine Plan" but was later changed.

⁵⁶ Cosmas, *MACV: Years of Escalation*, 361.

Regional Forces as well as for identifying and destroying the Viet Cong infrastructure.⁵⁷ It also conducted the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) to provide estimates of RVN control over specific areas, and it coordinated with ARVN for additional support.⁵⁸

For General Cushman, the OCO Regional Director now fell under the III MAF chain of command as his Deputy for CORDS. This enabled him greater integration with Revolutionary Development and coordination with civilian agencies operating in I CTZ.⁵⁹ With clear lines of authority, responsibility, and coordination in place for supporting revolutionary development, General Cushman could better influence and support what he believed to be the main target of the enemy's strategy in I CTZ.⁶⁰ Unification of military and support for revolutionary development provided General Cushman greater access to resources that supported the overall pacification efforts and provided another means of collecting information that would improve his situational awareness.⁶¹

As General Cushman completed his evaluation of the operating environment, his primary problem appeared to be centered on human-terrain instead of the enemy forces. He needed to spread control of the RVN by gaining the willing support of the local populace, first in the urban areas and then in the wider hinterland. The enemy threatened to disrupt this progress through small scale rocket attacks, terrorism, and destruction of infrastructure as well as large-scale conventional forces and invasion. General Cushman had to defend his bases, defeat guerrilla forces, and fight a division or more of NVA regular forces, as well as construct and defend a manpower-intensive obstacle system in the north. These requirements taxed his already-stretched

⁵⁷ Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 215-216.

⁵⁸ The Hamlet Evaluation System was originally developed by the Marine Corps and later adopted by CORDS as a measure of effectiveness for pacification. See Richard Hunt, *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 95.

⁵⁹ III MAF, "Command Chronology June 1967," 43-44.

⁶⁰ FMFPAC, "June 1967," 47 & 56.

⁶¹ Cushman, interview, 451.

manpower. His operational approach needed to provide enough flexibility within his forces to defeat large-scale conventional forces without assuming unacceptable levels of risk to the revolutionary development program. This would prove challenging in a large area with a disproportionate amount of enemy activity compared to the forces allocated to III MAF, an area that appeared to be the enemy's main effort and which would later face the brunt of the enemy's surprise offensive.

General Cushman's Operational Approach

With this understanding of the strategic guidance and operating environment, General Cushman envisioned an operational approach that matched the perspective of the Ministry of Revolutionary Development more than of MACV. While General Westmoreland stated he did not want operations against NVA forces to come at the expense of pacification efforts, prioritizing destruction of enemy forces, protection of the border, and building railroads over pacification essentially directed otherwise. Regardless of this contradiction, General Cushman designed an operational approach that directly attacked the enemy's main effort, protected the RVN's revolutionary development efforts, and employed resources across the spectrum of conflict to support the larger strategic aims of the war. By the end of 1967, however, the constraints of Operation Dye Marker and the enemy's increased forces along the DMZ required General Cushman to realign his operational approach and accept risk to the pacification effort.

Using General Walt's framework, General Cushman imagined the three lines of effort to function like conceptual and territorial concentric circles. The inner, and most critical circle, was revolutionary development and pacification, which was protected by a ring of counterinsurgency operations, followed by a final ring of large unit and defensive operations. Each of these rings served to extend the control of the RVN by protecting South Vietnamese populations from internal and external enemy threats as well as by denying the enemy the ability to operate in the South. More than just defensively protecting the RVN from enemy invasion and operations

within the South, these lines of effort supported an offensive plan to take away territory and influence from the enemy and retain it for the RVN.⁶² Once Hanoi could not achieve its aims through violent force, it would seek a diplomatic solution so as to preserve its viability and legitimacy.

Pacification

Pacification and revolutionary development sought to deny the communists the ability to influence the people of South Vietnam. Achieving the objectives for this line of effort required creating specific political, economic, and military conditions in areas considered key by the RVN.⁶³ Although often used interchangeably in reports and secondary literature, Marine Corps orders and the I Corps-III MAF “Combined Campaign Plan 2-68” provide a narrow delineation between the terms in order to emphasize the role of Free World Military Assistance Forces in support of RVN actions. Pacification addressed the security and support required to directly enable the revolutionary development teams to succeed. Externally focused, it primarily provided the initial security belt around designated villages and hamlets. Revolutionary development remained internally oriented as “the integrated military and civil process to restore, consolidate and expand government control so that nation building can progress.”⁶⁴ It generally sought five goals through coordinated military and civil actions:

1. Liberate the people from the control or influence of subversive elements of the society.
2. Restore public security.
3. Initiate political and economic development.
4. Extend effective government authority.

⁶² This image is visually depicted later in a December 1968 FMFPAC report, but the construct is the same as General Cushman’s initial operational approach. See FMFPAC, “December 1968,” Folder 002, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 5, accessed December 18, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1201002023>. This framework is recognizable in General Cushman’s earliest reports to FMFPAC in June 1967, but is explicitly stated in “Combined Campaign Plan 2-68” a year later. See Headquarters III MAF, “Combined Campaign Plan 2-68,” B-3.

⁶³ Headquarters III MAF, “Combined Campaign Plan 2-68,” 3.

⁶⁴ HQMC, “Marine Corps Order 3510.2,” 1.

5. Win the willing support of the people to [these] ends.⁶⁵

General Cushman believed that the pacification mission was the main effort of III MAF and the primary target of the communists, even though it put III MAF in a supporting role to the RVN. The pacification line of effort provided smaller combat forces to the villages and larger units to the surrounding areas. In keeping with the national plan of the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, district and provincial governments developed and supervised the execution of local plans for revolutionary development, coordinating them with RVNAF in their territory. Leaders selected sites for revolutionary development based on population density, strategic location, economic prosperity, and security feasibility.⁶⁶ The plan emphasized the responsibility of the local people themselves to participate in their own security and it incorporated regular ARVN and III MAF forces when the Popular Forces, Regional Forces, and National Police proved temporarily inadequate. Detailed planning and coordination resided at the provincial level in order to meet the unique requirements of local areas, and intelligence dissemination included vertical and horizontal channels.⁶⁷

As much as this line of effort emphasized indigenous leadership and participation, the local populace retained primacy in importance for III MAF. In order to protect the population, III MAF closely integrated tactical forces with RVNAF. This cooperation provided security for revolutionary development teams and critical resources for the population, and it enabled security forces to destroy guerrilla forces and the enemy's political-military infrastructure.⁶⁸ These actions included close integration with Popular and Regional Forces through the Combined

⁶⁵ Ibid. In the 1968 Combined Campaign Plan, General Cushman consolidated these goals into three: sustained territorial security, effective political structures, and self-sustaining economic activity. See Headquarters III MAF, "Combined Campaign Plan 2-68," C-1 & C-2.

⁶⁶ Headquarters III MAF, "Combined Campaign Plan 2-68," C-6.

⁶⁷ Ibid., C-2-3 & C-2-4.

⁶⁸ HQMC, "Marine Corps Order 3510.2," 6-7.

Action Platoons at the hamlet and village level, a combined intelligence network, and control of the movement of resources and individuals.

III MAF also conducted combined operations at higher echelons to separate the enemy elements from the population, defeat enemy threats, and deny the enemy influence over the local population. These actions required high levels of local patrolling and mobility in order to continue isolating the enemy from the population and to rapidly defeat enemy forces once detected. Combined Action Platoons integrated with local village security forces to provide additional supporting arms and coordination with III MAF, otherwise RVNAF provided the majority of the security required for revolutionary development.⁶⁹ When requested by ARVN or provincial governments, III MAF provided additional combat forces up to the brigade-level to conduct pacification operations in coordination with ARVN units, and this remained the dominant mission for forces in the southern three provinces of I CTZ.⁷⁰ This combination of security layers and flexible combat power enabled the destruction of enemy infrastructure near key areas, the spread of law and order under the National Police, and the further aims of revolutionary development.

In pursuit of the revolutionary development goals, General Cushman appointed CORDS to be the principle coordinating authority between the Ministry of Revolutionary Development and III MAF. This meant that an integrated civilian-military staff under a subordinate civilian deputy coordinated tactical operations, the ARVN military advisors, civic actions, and civil operations with the Ministry of Revolutionary Development to ensure that III MAF actions supported the ministry's goals.⁷¹ Major subordinate commands of III MAF with missions primarily focused on pacification coordinated with this staff to support civic actions, refugee

⁶⁹ FMFPAC, "August 1967," 49.

⁷⁰ Headquarters III MAF, "Combined Campaign Plan 2-68," 4.

⁷¹ FMFPAC, "August 1967," 48.

support, and other revolutionary support within its area of operation. CORDS also supervised much of the reconstruction and development as well, directly supporting the revolutionary development teams in villages and hamlets as they extended the RVN's legitimacy and control.

Counter guerrilla Operations

Protecting the revolutionary development efforts between the villages and the borders with Laos and the North, counter guerrilla operations sought to destroy the communist guerrilla forces operating within South Vietnam. III MAF and RVNAF forces coordinated to destroy Viet Cong infrastructure and eliminate Viet Cong fighters through ambushes, search and destroy missions, patrolling and census collection. It also protected the rice harvest and the farmers raising it while denying the enemy its primary source of food. Counter guerrilla operations restricted the Viet Cong's freedom of movement and influence by making their positions and networks within I CTZ untenable.⁷² Operating in company-size elements and below, to include small reconnaissance teams, these operations denied the communists the ability to provide resources and support to Viet Cong operating in the villages and limited their freedom of maneuver throughout I CTZ. It also enabled III MAF freedom of action since these operations were enemy-centric and did not require forces to hold specific terrain.

These operations required greater autonomy for junior leaders. Small units located and destroyed an elusive enemy dispersed across sparsely populated areas, and III MAF sought to economize its resources to support these units. As one example, III MAF employed "Sting Ray" operations in which it inserted small reconnaissance teams into remote locations to observe likely areas of enemy activity. Combining deep reconnaissance and superior fire support, these Sting Ray operations identified guerrilla bases and activities, and they directed air munitions or artillery

⁷² By Oct 1967, Hanoi had shipped 500,000 metric tons of rice to guerrilla forces in I CTZ as a result of these operations. FMFPAC, "October 1967," Folder 001, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 6-7, accessed December 18, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1201001165>.

fires against them without exposing their own positions.⁷³ These reconnaissance assets could also locate larger enemy forces and ground commanders could employ superior mobility to rapidly fix and destroy these forces in search and destroy missions. The counterinsurgency operations further complemented the missions of the Special Forces units conducting unconventional warfare in the highlands and border regions of the country.

Like pacification, these operations also targeted the Viet Cong infrastructure. Without channels of support and influence, the communist forces struggled to gain and maintain control over the local population. But given the expansive territory of I CTZ, as well as its dense jungle and mountainous regions, locating every infiltrating route and covering it with observation and fires required more forces and assets than III MAF could spare. General Cushman looked for ways to cover some known infiltration and supply routes such as the A Shau Valley without using forces, but this proved too challenging.⁷⁴ Any ground unit in a permanent position required protection from Viet Cong forces, and General Cushman sought more flexible options for conducting this mission.

What III MAF lacked in troop strength for counterinsurgency operations it tried to make up through tempo. During 1967, it averaged 32,700 patrols, ambushes, and search-and-destroy operations every month.⁷⁵ This not only isolated the guerrillas and Viet Cong from the local populace, but it also visibly demonstrated the United States' commitment to securing the people and reinforced to the III MAF forces the vulnerability of the enemy guerrillas. Further, as US and ARVN forces destroyed enemy infrastructure, morale amongst combat forces increased. Success

⁷³ FMFPAC, "July 1966," Folder 001, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 13, accessed December 17, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1201001066>.

⁷⁴ Cushman, interview, 21. General Cushman tried aircraft and artillery options and even employed a new chemical that attempted to turn dirt into "impassible mud," with limited effectiveness.

⁷⁵ FMFPAC, "November 1967," folder 001, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 5, accessed December 18, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1201001171>.

chipped away at the belief in the guerrilla's invincibility while degrading the enemy's morale and encouraging locals to seek protection under the RVN.

In addition to tactical success, III MAF psychological operations influenced enemy morale and local loyalty by continuing earlier programs that undermined the enemy's infrastructure. Under the Chieu Hoi ("Open Arms") Program in the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, the RVN offered amnesty and rehabilitation to former Viet Cong. III MAF developed two programs to use these rehabilitated individuals for intelligence, psychological, and tactical purposes. These programs attacked the enemy physically and cognitively. Viet Cong leaders feared that lower-level fighters would betray their leaders' positions and plans, and it severed many of the personal relations connections that were central to the Viet Cong infrastructure.

The Armed Propaganda Teams organized Chieu Hoi into platoons and then sent them into villages without any Marine or RVNAF security. Having seen firsthand the divergence between the communist propaganda and Viet Cong actions, they conducted targeted engagements with villages and distributed cassette tapes of their messages. Teams of four entered villages to promote the Chieu Hoi program and encourage enemy defections, and they also collected intelligence, located positions, and captured enemy fighters. They proved effective method of delivering RVN propaganda straight to specific audiences and winning the local population's support for the government.⁷⁶

The Kit Carson Scout program added an offensive capability in pursuit of psychological operations goals. It employed former Viet Cong to act as guides for Marine units and locate "enemy hiding places, ambush sites, caches and mines; identify guerrillas known to them, and participate in psychological warfare activities."⁷⁷ Scouts' local knowledge of the terrain and

⁷⁶ FMFPAC, "June 1967," 66.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 45.

enemy assisted the Marines in finding and defeating the enemy's infrastructure, and it also encouraged Viet Cong to become Chieu Hoi. Scouts also conducted targeted engagements with villages and distributed propaganda. These operations, and their own personal courage frequently generated additional Chieu Hoi participants and resistance to Viet Cong influence.

Large Unit and Defensive Operations

The final ring of General Cushman's operational approach supported the pacification and revolutionary development effort by destroying large NVA forces operating within the RVN to keep the enemy off balance and prevent it from seizing the urban areas. Commanders in all five provinces contributed to this effort as they all faced NVA elements that had infiltrated across the western border with Laos and threatened the RVNAF security structure. With the addition of TF Oregon and support from the SLFs, III MAF maintained an aggressive tempo against NVA forces. Accurate intelligence, mobility, and overwhelming firepower enabled these operations to rapidly defeat enemy forces. This tempo and III MAF's operational reach, however was limited by III MAF's dependence on coastal basing.

This effort kept enemy conventional forces away from the urban areas and prevented them from supporting guerrilla activities. These operations consisted of battalion-size units and larger, to include the battalion landing teams from the SLF, and they often included combined operations with ARVN units. As named operations that required deliberate planning and coordination, they tended to operate on a longer time horizon than the counter guerrilla actions but typically lasted less than thirty days because of III MAF's sustainment architecture. III MAF averaged fourteen large unit operations during the initial six months of Cushman's command and they tended to provide the majority of enemy losses.⁷⁸ Even though it served a supporting role to

⁷⁸ Operation averages compiled by the author based on FMFPAC reports for June 1967 through November 1967. Although some operations carried over into another month, they still represented large unit operations being conducted against the enemy.

III MAF's priority effort, it served as the primary effort to achieve Westmoreland's top two goals for 1967.⁷⁹ It contributed the majority of the the assessment metrics that MACV and JCS prized, body counts and destroyed enemy units. As 1967 continued, these operations would receive increased attention.

Adjustments to the Approach

This increased attention forced General Cushman to adjust his operational approach by the end of 1967. He initially intended for large unit operations to continue throughout I CTZ in support of the pacification mission. However, senior-level decisions and the significant increase of enemy forces along the DMZ pulled these operations along the northern border and made them the focus of effort. Central to this reality was Operation Dye Marker, which intended to secure the border and free up forces but instead drained resources and dictated friendly operations.⁸⁰ General Westmoreland's directives and frequent inspections of the obstacle system required that III MAF devote significant manpower and resources to Operation Dye Marker. In October 1967, Westmoreland identified it as "an operational necessity second only to combat emergency," and III MAF further elevated its priority.⁸¹ General Cushman reprioritized his lines of effort in order to satisfy these constraints and the evolving enemy situation, and in doing so he risked delinking his means available from the desired ends.

⁷⁹ General Westmoreland's top two goals for 1967 in I CTZ were neutralizing two enemy bases and depleting enemy forces faster than Hanoi could replace them. See FMFPAC, "January 1967," folder 001, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 5-6, accessed December 27, 2017, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1201001106>.

⁸⁰ Shulimson et al., *The Defining Year*, 21.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 27. General Cushman assigned MajGen Raymond Murray to this task and even reorganized the staff to provide additional attention to its construction, but it seemed to divide unity of effort in the north more than it increased the pace of construction. See Raymond L. Murray, interview by Benis M. Frank, June 27, 1975, oral history transcript (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1988), 8. See also Shulimson et al., *The Defining Year*, 28.

Although III MAF initially maintained an advantage in combat power through superior firepower and mobility, environmental conditions in the north significantly reduced this. The DMZ extended roughly forty miles from the sea to Laos, rising 1,700 meters and evolving into thick, mountainous jungle that restricted visibility and the effects of large weapons systems.⁸² Enemy forces enjoyed greater freedom of movement and advantageous terrain that could negate US firepower and air reconnaissance. Moreover, since President Johnson prohibited ground attacks into Laos or North Vietnam, the NVA enjoyed sanctuaries in which to build up combat power and then strike III MAF forces as the time and place of its choosing. Finally, supported from the sea with naval logistics and based in the population-heavy coast, III MAF could provide limited protection to ground lines of communication to the border areas, and its limited endurance could only sustain these operations for a finite duration.

As III MAF continued construction of the barrier along the DMZ, the enemy increased its firepower and forces against it.⁸³ Although the resulting engagements produced the body counts and other measures of effectiveness that MACV attributed to progress, they put the Marines at a tactical disadvantage, unnecessarily burdened III MAF's ability to support pacification, and, as would become apparent the following year, did not achieve its primary objective of preventing enemy forces from infiltrating. Instead the construction of the obstacle system enabled the enemy strategy by encouraging greater enemy attacks in the north, which led to significant damage to logistical nodes and supplies. It pulled additional III MAF resources away from pacification in the urban areas, and it enabled the enemy to fight from a position of strength.

⁸² Shulimson et al., *The Defining Year*, 18.

⁸³ Cushman, interview, 12. See also III MAF, "Command Chronology December 1967," folder 003, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 7-8, accessed January 30, 2018, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=1201003083>.

Additionally, MACV did not provide the additional manpower, engineers, and equipment identified in the original MACV plan for Operation Dye Marker.⁸⁴ General Westmoreland did provide an additional brigade as well as priority of naval gunfires and B-52 strikes, but this did not speed up construction, assist with relocating thousands of civilians, accelerate developing the ARVN, or free up forces to large unit operations. Instead, much of 3d Marine Division was tied down in defensive positions that left them vulnerable and unable to strike enemy forces.⁸⁵

In response to these challenges, III MAF conducted “Rough Rider Operations” to move troops and supplies with support from pre-planned air and artillery fires. Air resupply provided a limited emergency option, but these methods still did not improve the basic structure to make extended operations along the border practical.⁸⁶ What General Westmoreland intended to be the main effort for III MAF was limited by the logistics system that enabled the Marines to effectively operate in I CTZ at all. Building the sustainment structure for large scale operations not only pulled forces away from pacification, but it incurred an additional requirement to protect it as well.

Although General Cushman recognized these factors and wanted to reprioritize resources towards other efforts, strategic considerations dictated that he could not abandon the US positions along the border. Beyond the requirement to build the obstacle system, such action would have become a major psychological victory for Hanoi and generate significant propaganda.⁸⁷ As the enemy continued to mass along the northern border, General Cushman felt that he had little other choice but to move an additional Marine regiment to the north.⁸⁸ He knew that diverting manpower and resources away from the cities accomplished the enemy’s intent, but the northern

⁸⁴ Shulimson et al., *The Defining Year*, 25.

⁸⁵ Cushman, interview, 45.

⁸⁶ FMFPAC, “November 1967,” 45.

⁸⁷ Shulimson et al., *The Defining Year*, 19.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

positions were vulnerable to being overrun if they were not reinforced. At the end of 1967, General Cushman reorganized I CTZ unit boundaries to enable a single division to focus all of its efforts against securing these border positions and constructing the obstacle system. It was not an optimal approach, but it enabled the pacification and counterinsurgency efforts to continue despite the operational limitations. In the coming month, the enemy would validate the accuracy of his assessment.

Results

As much as Secretary McNamara and General Westmoreland insisted that Operation Dye Marker would ensure the territorial security of South Vietnam, it produced quite the opposite effect. The massive enemy offensive during the Vietnamese lunar holiday of Tet in January 1968 demonstrated the weakness of President Johnson's strategy and MACV's misalignment of ends, ways, and means. It negatively altered the US public's perception of the war, and produced tremendous political consequences in the United States.⁸⁹ In March 1968, President Johnson announced that he would not seek reelection, and in April the public learned Westmoreland would be replaced by General Creighton Abrams.⁹⁰ The offensive, however, would validate the effectiveness of General Cushman's original operational approach, as would MACV's subsequent shift in military strategy. At the beginning of June, General Abrams implemented an operational approach as the new commander of MACV that integrated military action across the spectrum of conflict to gain control of the local population.⁹¹ In support of this, General Cushman published a

⁸⁹ Ronald Spector, *After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 6.

⁹⁰ Sorely, *A Better War*, 12-16. Westmoreland's military reputation within the government was damaged beyond repair as a result of Tet, and this promotion was more of a relief than a commendation. Westmoreland's public reputation was also damaged after publically predicting a "great defeat for the enemy," while in the United States just prior to the Tet Offensive. See A. J. Langguth, *Our Vietnam: The War 1954-1975* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 467. Even though he privately anticipated an enemy offensive, this public statement furthered the growing narrative that military leaders could not be trusted.

⁹¹ Sorely, *A Better War*, 18.

combined campaign plan with ARVN's I Corps that reoriented III MAF to his original operational approach.

The construction of the obstacle system and the steady build up of forces along the DMZ caused the communist leadership in Hanoi to conclude that time was running out for them to begin the final phase of revolutionary warfare. For the previous two years, the communist leadership had become convinced that its strategy was continuing to make progress and that the people and soldiers of South Vietnam increasingly longed for a united country, just as the rest of the North did.⁹² As the communists believed, the South appeared ripe to rebel against its perceived imperialist masters; all that was needed was a spark to ignite a climatic struggle against Saigon.

In January 1968, the North launched a "General Offensive-General Uprising" to "deal [the enemy] thundering blows so as to change the face of the war, further shake the aggressive will of US imperialism, compel it to change its strategy and de-escalate the war."⁹³ This "Tet-Offensive" united conventional and guerrilla forces in a surprise attack against combat outposts, military bases, towns, and cities.⁹⁴ During January 30-31, 1968, the North infiltrated and attacked five autonomous cities, thirty-six provincial capitals, sixty-four district towns, and the major American air bases, with particular emphasis placed on Hue in I CTZ.⁹⁵ While the initial assault spanned two days, the general offensive continued eight months.

⁹² Cosmas, *Years of Withdrawal*, 25.

⁹³ Le Duan, *Letters to the South* (Hanoi, 1986), 93-100, quoted in Ang Cheng Guan, "Decision-Making Leading to the Tet Offensive (1968)-The Vietnamese Communist Perspective," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 3 (July 1998), 351, accessed March 6, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/261120>.

⁹⁴ Strachan-Morris, "Swords into Ploughshares," 283. III MAF and MACV intelligence reports indicated that the North was planning an attack at the beginning of the year, but it did not expect the offensive to launch during the popular holiday, or to be coordinated and broad enough to strike forty cities simultaneously. See also Cosmas, *Years of Withdrawal*, 56-57.

⁹⁵ Cosmas, *Years of Withdrawal*, 59. As a former imperial capital, Hue retained particular cultural and political significance as a symbol of legitimate authority.

The Tet Offensive exposed the weaknesses of General Westmoreland's decision to prioritize conventional operations and the construction of the obstacle barrier at the expense of pacification. Hanoi sought national strategic objectives with this offensive and not military objectives: tactical failure mattered little to the communist leadership if it generated the appropriate strategic conditions to achieve policy aims. The Tet-Offensive highlighted the vulnerability of the cities and the presence of large NVA forces operating throughout the South. It also demonstrated that the RVN and US Military did not control or protect the South Vietnamese people as well as it had declared earlier. It further contradicted the logic of Operation Dye Marker and establishing fixed positions along the DMZ. III MAF could have just have easily employed heliborne operations to detect and defeat infiltration instead of tying down forces for site security.

In the immediate aftermath, however, General Westmoreland insisted that his plan was working and that it accounted for the communists' severe losses and inability to hold the cities.⁹⁶ In his mind, it was the fault of the South Vietnamese government that the enemy was able to access the cities and towns, not a failure of MACV to neglect pacification.⁹⁷ However, that the Tet-Offensive targeted the local populace and also failed to ignite a general uprising against the RVN validates General Cushman's approach instead. As General Westmoreland advocated a strategy to "hound the enemy, destroy his forces, and rid this land of his influence," General Cushman emphasized the importance of protecting population centers and actively extending the RVN's control over them.⁹⁸ Had III MAF oriented all its forces on fighting the enemy in the rural areas, communist actions would have met far less resistance and likely would have been more effective.

⁹⁶ Historical Branch, MACV Joint Staff, *Command History: U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1968* (Saigon: HQ USMACV, 1969), 19. See also Cosmas, *Years of Withdrawal*, 66.

⁹⁷ Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 333.

⁹⁸ Historical Branch, MACV Joint Staff, *Vietnam 1968*, 30.

General Cushman responded to the Tet Offensive by pursuing the operational approach he initially articulated, prioritizing protection of the population and increasing the mobility of his forces. Following the enemy attacks in January, he ceased work on Operation Dye Marker and redirected the forces used for constructing the barrier to respond to the enemy attacks and sweep the DMZ for enemy forces.⁹⁹ Coinciding with General Westmoreland's departure in June, III MAF published its Combined Campaign Plan 2-68, which reiterated the same three lines of effort as Cushman's initial approach a year earlier.¹⁰⁰ Pacification and revolutionary development became the decisive line of effort, subordinating counterinsurgency and large unit operations.

To fully support this campaign plan, General Cushman worked with the ARVN I Corps commander and the new MACV commander to reduce the amount of forces tied to fixed positions. Once the siege of Khe Sanh ended, national media attention had focused elsewhere, and General Abrams was in command, General Cushman renegotiated the Dye Marker requirement with MACV. General Abrams approved the evacuation and leveling of Khe Sanh, elimination of several other outposts, and freeing up of more maneuver forces.¹⁰¹ By October 1968, General Abrams ordered all activities associated with Dye Marker to halt, and a week later indefinitely suspended the construction of the obstacle system.¹⁰² These changes to its tasks enabled III MAF to regain control of urban areas and continue attacks against NVA regular forces in I CTZ. As more forces became available, General Cushman launched attacks into the A Shau Valley and continued to sweep the DMZ. After reducing the immediate threat of another large-

⁹⁹ Cushman, interview, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Headquarters III MAF, "Combined Campaign Plan 2-68," B-3.

¹⁰¹ Historical Branch, MACV Joint Staff, *Vietnam 1968*, 916. General Cushman submitted his request to General Abrams four days after General Westmoreland departed Vietnam and began reducing Khe Sanh another four days later. Khe Sanh officially closed on 5 July 1968.

¹⁰² Historical Branch, MACV Joint Staff, *Vietnam 1968*, 916-917.

scale attack, he returned to prioritizing pacification and revolutionary development over the other lines of effort.

Recognizing the central importance of pacification and revolutionary development to achieving the strategic aims of the war did not end with III MAF in I CTZ. Upon assuming command, General Abrams reoriented the entire theater on extending legitimate control of the Vietnamese Government instead of the destruction of enemy forces.¹⁰³ Like General Cushman, he focused on destroying the infrastructure that enabled the communists to control instead of leaving the task to the Vietnamese security forces or solely to CORDS. General Abrams believed that destroying this enemy infrastructure would be more decisive than wearing down the enemy's divisions. The new MACV approach followed along the same lines as what III MAF had been pursuing in I CTZ. Like General Cushman's three rings, General Abrams envisioned that US forces would support pacification by conducting offenses to disrupt the enemy forces, neutralizing the enemy's base areas and lines of communication, and intensively "drive against the VC infrastructure and political apparatus [...] in close coordination with all elements of the GVN and USG."¹⁰⁴

Additionally, General Abrams replaced Robert Komer with William Colby at CORDS and implemented an Accelerated Pacification Campaign as a counteroffensive to regain the initiative.¹⁰⁵ This ninety-day campaign began in November 1968 and emphasized improving the Regional Forces and Popular Forces by increasing US advisors, training, weapons, and recruitment. This plan also encouraged further communist defections through the Chieu Hoi program, targeted Viet Cong leadership through the Phoenix program, and energized the

¹⁰³ Sorley, *A Better War*, 59.

¹⁰⁴ Historical Branch, MACV Joint Staff, *Vietnam 1968*, 33.

¹⁰⁵ Sorley, *A Better War*, 64-65.

Vietnamese Government to extend and strengthen its control.¹⁰⁶ It sought to convince both the communist and the local South Vietnamese that Hanoi would no longer be able to influence the South and that the RVN was quickly moving to end the war.¹⁰⁷

By the end of December 1968, III MAF had made significant progress towards defeating the enemy and extending the RVN's control, especially given the large-scale attacks throughout the year. During 1968, Free World Military Assistance Forces in I CTZ rehabilitated 3,118 Viet Cong, neutralized more than 4,000 Viet Cong infrastructure cadre, secured sixty-nine percent of the population, and increased the People's Self-Defense Organization to nearly a quarter-million civilians. III MAF destroyed enemy forces at a rate faster than Hanoi could replace them and trained the local Vietnamese and ARVN to defend their own territory.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, General Cushman improved the United State's diplomatic position by increasing the perceived legitimacy of the RVN while dismantling the communists' networks used to exercise influence there. His operational approach was better positioning the United States to achieve a negotiated solution.

Conclusion

This study of General Cushman's operational art in a war of limited aims suggests two conclusions. First, commanders must understand the kind of war they are facing to design an effective operational approach. The distinctions between General Westmoreland's approach and that of General Cushman are few but critical. Just as General Westmoreland spoke frequently about the importance of pacification and allocated resources toward its success, so General Cushman also understood the threat of NVA regular forces and the importance of winning conventional battles. Both generals promoted visions of full spectrum operations that

¹⁰⁶ The RVN established Phung Hoang in July 1968 to neutralize Viet Cong infrastructure and joint MACV/Vietnamese operations in support of this program were known as the Phoenix program. Historical Branch, MACV Joint Staff, *Vietnam 1968*, 520.

¹⁰⁷ Historical Branch, MACV Joint Staff, *Vietnam 1968*, 33.

¹⁰⁸ Statistics and estimates from FMFPAC, "December 1968," 5.

incorporated all elements of national power and sought to transfer total responsibility for the security of South Vietnam to the local security forces as quickly as possible.

The primary differences between the two approaches lay in their understanding of the environment and the nature of the problem they faced. General Westmoreland identified the NVA as the enemy's center of gravity and therefore viewed the solution as one of conventional forces. President Johnson's belief in "graduated pressure" and his strategy of stalemate encouraged this understanding and dictated certain metrics for validating and enlarging the paradigm. Measuring the destruction of enemy forces, material, and weapons, as well as its current disposition and infiltration rate provided useful data for reinforcing the "graduated pressure" paradigm and demonstrating progress. Gatekeepers of the paradigm dismissed anomalies like the slow spread of revolutionary development teams and ineffective governance as a failure in the RVN or ARVN and not a failure in the strategy. As these anomalies continued to accumulate, General Westmoreland applied more energy and resources to these large unit operations instead of considering an alternative approach. With the crisis of the Tet Offensive, senior leaders in Washington and Saigon began looking for a new paradigm with which to understand the war.

General Cushman understood Vietnam through a different paradigm, and this caused him to align his ways and means differently. The United States did not face an existential threat but was a supporting force against an existential threat to an ally. Success for the United States was rooted in the survival of this ally and not the destruction of the enemy. Therefore, the most valuable objective for the United States was the people of South Vietnam as they were the entity required to legitimize the RVN and provide the labor, security, and commitment to a free, stable, and enduring republic. As shifting policy objectives adjusted the ways and means available to General Cushman, he continued to orient his approach on defeating the enemy's strategy and enabling the South Vietnamese strategy.

While this was a strategically defensive war, III MAF went on the operational offensive by attacking the enemy's strategy and eliminating the enemy's control over the local populace.

Since ground forces were prohibited from conducting combat operations outside of the RVN's territory, General Cushman knew it would be unproductive to chase enemy forces in the hinterland. The NVA regular forces did pose a very significant threat, however, and General Cushman ensured his approach incorporated the flexibility to disrupt them without assuming unreasonable risk to expanding the RVN's control. By prioritizing and resourcing pacification above other lines of effort, despite heavy pressure to do otherwise, General Cushman ensured balance between the ends, ways, and means of his approach.

Second, this study enables a critique of an operational approach incorporating full-spectrum operations against a hybrid enemy in a highly distributed environment to achieve limited aims. The foundation of General Cushman's operational art was his ability to recognize the enemy's strategy and to distribute his forces to optimize operational reach. Dismantling the communist infrastructure, controlling the urban areas, and limiting the guerrillas' freedom of movement would bring the North Vietnamese closer to negotiations than trying to grind down the NVA. Additionally, the alignment of General Cushman's assessment with that of the South Vietnamese emphasizes the importance of unified action. Because General Cushman's assessment matched that of the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, III MAF more easily unified its efforts with South Vietnam's actions.

While commanders do not need to manipulate all elements of operational art in developing an operational approach, General Cushman does not appear to have been deliberate with his use of tempo and phasing. III MAF's tempo seemed to be dictated by enemy actions rather than be a deliberate choice; nearly every monthly report from III MAF mentions that the operating tempo is higher than the previous month, and this is perceived to be a positive attribute. Periods noted as less active are a result of the enemy refusing engagements and not a factor of reduced friendly activity. Although accelerating tempo for a prolonged period can wear down the enemy and get within enemy commanders' decision-making cycles, it can also reduce operational reach and cause culmination of friendly forces. General Cushman did surge SLF elements for

some large scale operations, but he did not tie these actions to a deliberate psychological effect and may have missed an opportunity to exploit weaknesses in the communists' command and control.

The same assessment can be made of phasing. Although General Cushman developed lines of effort with specific objectives, he did not articulate future conditions that would precipitate a change to the mission, task organization, or rules of engagement. Changes to the task organization reflected an increase in forces available and not an attempt to sequence larger III MAF actions. These changes also appeared to react to enemy activity or implement MACV directives. But based on III MAF reports, it appears that General Cushman already found the troop-to-task requirement too high to enable any other arrangement than simultaneous operations. With the directives to move more forces north and the threat to the villages and revolutionary development, the absence of phasing may reflect the uncertainty of future means available and the unacceptable risk to mission if pacification were reduced further.

General Cushman's use of basing and operational reach demonstrated the benefits and liabilities of a naval expeditionary force in this type of operating environment. These bases provided effective locations for sustainment, air operations, and urban operations, and they enabled him to briefly surge combat operations throughout the AO. They further provided the flexibility and mobility necessary to locate and rapidly defeat an elusive enemy threat. Because of its naval logistics support, III MAF enjoyed more flexibility and independence than did the other corps that competed within MACV for sustainment, and it was able to operate at the extreme edge of the MACV area of operations. General Cushman used bases to provide operational reach to the theater commander through Operation Rolling Thunder strikes, as well as to protect the major urban areas along the coast and launch long-range operations. This meant that the priority line of effort, pacification and revolutionary development, enjoyed more consistent support since these operations tended to be nearer to the bases than the large unit and counterinsurgency operations.

But because it was an expeditionary force, it lacked the protection and endurance needed to conduct persistent, large scale operations in the interior of the AO. This became more apparent as MACV directed additional fixed positions along the DMZ and as Operation Dye Marker continued. Even though these two requirements intended to increase protection to the force, it had the opposite effect. By reducing mobility and occupying easily-targetable positions, III MAF assumed greater risk to its forces. To mitigate this risk, General Cushman increased the endurance and protection of these forces but had to reduce their momentum, the operational reach of other units, and the tempo for all forces.

Although wars of final victory enable campaigns to flow logically from beginning to end, wars of limited aims have been the rule since the end of World War II. General Cushman's operational art as the commander of III MAF in Vietnam provides a useful example of negotiating the demands of a rapidly changing operating environment with shifting operational limitations in a war of limited aims. While many histories of the Vietnam War highlight the American military's inability to link tactical actions with strategic aims, General Cushman provides an example of a commander who did. His cognitive approach to a complex operating environment and mission provide a model for contemplating contemporary conflicts.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Cushman, Robert E., Jr., interview by Benis M. Frank, November 1, 1982. Oral history transcript. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1984.

Historical Branch, MACV Joint Staff. *Command History: U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1968*. Vols. 1 and 2. Saigon: HQ USMACV, 1969.

McNamara, Robert S. and John McNaughton. "1966 Program to Increase the Effectiveness of Military Operations and Anticipated Results Thereof." In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*. vol. 4, *Vietnam, 1966*. Edited by David C. Humphrey. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1998. Accessed February 15, 2018. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v04/d70>.

Murray, Raymond L., interview by Benis M. Frank, June 27, 1975. Oral history transcript. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1988.

"The Truman Library Archives." The Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum. Accessed September 30, 2017. <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/archivesearch/>.

"The Virtual Vietnam Archive." The Vietnam Center and Archive. Accessed Aug 1, 2017. <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/>.
John Donnell Collection
US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection

Westmoreland, William. *A Soldier Reports*. New York, NY: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1989.

Books

Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Edited and translated by Peter Paret and Michael Howard. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Cosmas, Graham. *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation 1962-1967*. Washington, DC: Center for Military History, US Army, 2005.

———. *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Withdrawal, 1968-1973*. Washington, DC: Center for Military History, US Army, 2006.

Hennessy, Michael A. *Strategy in Vietnam: The Marines and Revolutionary War in I Corps, 1965-1972*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997.

Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations Since 1776*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Hunt, Richard. *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995.

Krause, Michael and R. Cody Phillips, eds. *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*. Washington, DC: Center of Military History, US Army, 2007.

- Krulak, Victor H. *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1984.
- Langguth, A. J., *Our Vietnam: The War 1954-1975*. New York, NY: Touchstone, 2000.
- Liddell Hart, B. H. *Strategy*. New York, NY: Penguin, 1991.
- McMaster, H.R. *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997.
- Moyar, Mark. *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Prados, John. *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2009.
- Shulimson, Jack, and Charles M. Johnson. *US Marines in Vietnam: The Landing and the Buildup 1965*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1978.
- Shulimson, Jack, Leonard A. Blasiol, Charles R. Smith, and David A. Dawson. *US Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year 1968*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1997.
- Sorley, Lewis. *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Books, 1999.
- Spector, Ronald. *After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Swain, Richard M. "Filling the Void: The Operational Art and the U.S. Army." In *Operational Art: Developments in the Theories of War*, 147-172. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996.
- Telfer, Gary L., Lane Rogers, and V. Keith Fleming Jr. *US Marines in Vietnam: Fighting the North Vietnamese 1967*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1984.

Periodicals and Articles

- Guan, Ang Cheng. "Decision-Making Leading to the Tet Offensive (1968)-The Vietnamese Communist Perspective." *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 3 (July 1998): 341-353. Accessed March 6, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/261120>.
- Schneider, James J. "Loose Marble—and the Origins of Operational Art," *Parameters* (March 1989): 85-99.

Dissertations

- Strachan-Morris, David. "Swords and Ploughshares: An Analysis of the Origins and Implementation of the United States Marine Corps' Counterinsurgency Strategy in Vietnam between March 1965 and November 1968." PhD diss., University of Wolverhampton, 2010. Accessed March 6, 2018. <http://hdl.handle.net/2436/140193>.

Government Documents

US Department of the Army, Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 5-0.1, *Army Design Methodology*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015.

———, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012.

US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Planning*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017.