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HEADQUARTERS  
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MACOI

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SUMMARY OF ACTION FOR 1965

A summary of the major developments in 1965.

A chronology of the year.

Highlights, by month, of significant events.

It should be noted that various statistics provided  
are those available at the time of writing.

## SUMMARY OF 1965

U.S. participation in the Vietnam war increased steadily throughout 1965. Total US military strength grew from about 23,000 on January 1, 1965 to approximately 181,000 at year's end. Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces increased during the year from about 511,000 to approximately 565,000. Enemy military strength rose from about 103,000 to an estimated 230,000 by December 31.

As troop strength increased, the pace of the war quickened. More than 1,200 US troops and some 11,000 ARVN forces were killed in action, while the enemy lost over 34,000 men killed and almost 6,000 captured. There were 28 combat operations in which more than 200 VC were killed, but more than 28,000 incidents were initiated by the VC and reported during the year.

The US and VN Air Forces flew close to 12,000 strike sorties into North Vietnam during the year and over 60,000 within the Republic of Vietnam. Navy and Marine Corps both carrier and land based, struck at North Vietnam in more than 6,600 sorties. They also supported operations in RVN, flying over 39,000 sorties. However, more than 160 US planes were lost over North Vietnam and some 80 went in the south. Surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) accounted for 10 of the planes downed in North Vietnam. The US

in return, struck at 18 SAM sites. Starting Feb. 7, US planes almost daily hit military targets in the north. In the third quarter of the year alone, more than 500 highway bridges were struck. US Air Force planes dropped over 56,000 tons of ordance and Vietnamese aircraft dropped more than 25,000 tons. Almost 80,000 airlift or logistical sorties were <sup>also</sup> flown by the US Air Force, carrying about 265,000 tons of cargo and more than 660,000 passengers. The Air Force flew 13,500 search and rescue sorties, saving 162 persons.

The war was many sided. US and South Vietnamese personnel dropped more than 77 million leaflets, 340,000 newspapers and 20,000 gifts into North Vietnam. Under the "Open Arms" program, more than 11,000 military and civilian Vietnamese returned to government control. The US Armed Forces gave medical treatment to over 4.5 million Vietnamese under the Medical Civic Action Program during 1965. They also assisted in distributing to the Vietnamese people 106,000 tons of foodstuffs and more than \$100,000 worth of other commodities, donated by various relief services. There were more than 2,400 military civic action construction projects, ranging from bridge and school building, to road repair and drainage control. Throughout the country US military units and individuals contributed to support hundreds of orphanages, schools and dispensaries.

An economic boom accompanied the military expansion. Planned U.S. construction projects in South Vietnam at year's end were valued at nearly \$1 billion. Petroleum consumption rose from 250,000 barrels in January to more than 1 million per month in December. Imports by ship into South Vietnam rose 800 per cent while inter-coastal shipping doubled, from the January tonnage figure of 25,000. Civilian personnel working on military construction projects totaled only a few thousand in January but were over 20,000 at the end of the year.

With the US military buildup in Vietnam continuing, at the end of the year these were the major units stationed in the country: III Marine Amphibious Force, including the 3rd Marine Division (Reinforced) and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing; 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile); 1st Infantry Division; 2nd Air Division (8 wings); 173rd Airborne Brigade; 1st Bde, 101st Abn Div.; Naval Advisory Group; Headquarters Support Activity; 1st Logistical Command; 25th Infantry Division (3rd Brigade), and units from the 7th Fleet.

CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT NEWS EVENTS  
OF USMACV IN 1965

January	1	US Military strength in Vietnam is 23,000
	1 - 31	Highest VC monthly losses since 1961 reported
February	7	VC attack US compound at Pleiku and nearby Camp Holloway
	7	First US air strike against North Vietnam hits Dong Hoi
	8	President Johnson orders withdrawal of US dependents
	9	First elements of USMC 1st L.A.A.M. Bn operational at Da Nang
	10	VC blow up US BEQ at Qui Nhon
	16	Largest VC weapons cache of war is seized at Vung Ro Bay
	19	First jets used in RVN
March	4	First USAF planes are shot down by MIGs over NVN
	9	First Marine infantry (3d Bn, 9th Mar) lands at Da Nang
	30	US Embassy in Saigon damaged by VC explosives
May	5	First elements of 173d Airborne Bde arrive
	7	US Marines and Seabees land and begin construction at Chu Lai
	11	VC attack provincial capital of Song Be
	16	Bien Hoa airbase rocked by series of accidental explosions

May 29 - June 3 Major battle around Quang Ngai City  
 June 1 US military strength in Vietnam 52,000  
 8 1st Bn, Royal Australian Regiment arrives  
 9 Construction begins on base at Cam Ranh Bay  
 9 - 12 Heavy casualties on both sides in Dong Xoai battle  
 16 Explosives charge damages Tan Son Nhut terminal  
 17 First MIGs shot down by US Navy over NVN  
 18 First B-52 bomber raid in South Vietnam  
 25 Two VC mines blast My Canh restaurant in Saigon  
 25 Several VC battalions attack ARVN battalion in Duc Hoa  
 July 7 8,000 more Marines land at Da Nang and Qui Nhon  
 12 - 16 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and the 1st Logistical Command land at Cam Ranh Bay, Vung Tau and Qui Nhon  
 15 SFC Isaac Camancho's escape from VC prison is confirmed  
 15 MACV confirms presence of PAVN 101st Regiment in RVN  
 17 B-52 bombers support ground operation  
 24 First US aircraft shot down by SAM over NVN  
 27 US Aircraft hit two SAM sites northwest of Hanoi  
 29 1st Bde., 101st Abn Div. lands at Cam Ranh Bay  
 30 US military strength in Vietnam 80,000  
 August 9 Four USAF B-57s are presented to Vietnamese Air Force  
 14 - 15 6,400 more Marines arrive at Da Nang and Chu Lai  
 18 - 24 Marines conduct Operation Starlight south of Chu Lai

August 24 VC mortar attack on Bien Hoa Airfield damages 49 aircraft  
 September 7 - 10 US and RVN Marines in Operation Piranha south of Chu Lai  
 18 First elements of 1st Cavalry Division land at Qui Nhon  
 18 - 21 1st Bde, 101st Abn Div in Operation Gibraltar near An Khe.  
 23 - 30 Heavy VC losses at Phu Co outpost along Highway 1  
 October 8 First elements of Capitol ROK Division arrive  
 10 First elements of 1st Infantry Division arrive  
 17 US Navy jets destroy first mobile SAM site in NVN  
 19 - 31 Battle of Plei Me Special Forces Camp  
 27 VC attack USMC air installations at Da Nang and Chu Lai  
 November 1 - 12 1st Cavalry Division battles west of Plei Me  
 7 MACV confirms presence of five PAVN Regiments in RVN  
 8 173rd Abn Bde in major engagement in Zone "D"  
 10 - 12 US and Vietnamese Marines join in Operation Blue Marlin  
 14 - 19 Battle of Ia Drang Valley biggest US engagement of war  
 27 VC overrun ARVN 7th Regiment at Michelin Plantation  
 December 1 1,038 VC incidents in week ending Dec. 1  
 2 USS Enterprise begins her first combat  
 4 Terrorist bombing of the Metropole BEQ in Saigon  
 15 US Air Force hits Uong Bi thermal power plant near Hai Phong  
 19 Operation Harvest Moon ends

- 25 VC breaks own and US/South Vietnamese Christmas  
cease-fire
- 29 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division arrives at  
Pleiku
- 31 US military strength in Vietnam approximates 181,000



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SIGNIFICANT NEWS EVENTS

OF USMACV IN 1965

JANUARY

As the 5th year of US involvement in the war began, American military strength in Vietnam totalled 23,000 men, primarily advisory personnel. For RVNAF, January was the most successful month since the beginning of the counter-insurgency effort: all eight major operations involving battalion-size forces or larger were government victories. VC losses were the highest for any month since 1961.

	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH (in thousands)	CASUALTIES			WPNS DET/CPTD LOST
		KIA	WIA	MIA	
US	24	12	90		
RVN	509	800	1800	400	1525
VC	103	1635			555 665
NATL POLICE	34				

(NOTE: Statistics are as of the last day of month, plus or minus 3 days. They have been corrected to reflect the latest information available 15 Dec. 65. Strength figures include all military components of each force.)

FEBRUARY

On February 7th, in its first major action of the year against American forces, the VC attacked a US compound at Pleiku and nearby Camp Holloway. Friendly casualties were 8 killed and

108 wounded. Eighteen aircraft were destroyed or damaged.

Later the same day, US aircraft were ordered to strike North Vietnam for the first time: US Navy planes hit the Dong Hoi military barracks north of the 17th parallel. One A-1 was lost and the pilot was killed.

On February 8th, President Johnson ordered the evacuation of all US dependents from Vietnam, which started almost immediately.

The first US troop unit entered the country on February 9th when elements of the USMC 1st Light Anti-Aircraft Missile Battalion became operational in the Da Nang area.

On February 10th the VC blew up a four story hotel in Qui Nhon occupied by US enlisted men. After days of digging through rubble 30 feet high, final casualties were announced as 23 US dead, 21 injured and 14 Vietnamese injured.

The largest collection of VC weapons ever captured at one time was found near and aboard a supply ship attacked and sunk in shallow water February 16th off the coast of Vung Ro Bay. The haul was estimated at 80 tons.

The first US jet aircraft used in operations in South Vietnam were F100s, and B-57s, which carried out interdiction strikes February 19th against Viet Cong targets around Phuoc Tuy, 40 miles east of Saigon.

	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH (in thousands)	KIA	WIA	MIA	DET/CPTD	WPNS LOST
US	25	45	252			
RVN	506	900	1800	1300		1980
VC	107	1840		289		3175
NATL POLICE	34					

### MARCH

On March 4th, the first US aircraft were shot down by MIGs over North Vietnam. Two USAF F-105 Thunderchiefs were downed on a mission over the Ham Rong Bridge near Thanh Hoa, 85 miles south of Hanoi.

The first US ground offensive unit to enter the country was the 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines, 3d Marine Division, FMF, which landed at Da Nang on March 9th.

On March 30th, a VC car filled with explosives heavily damaged the US Embassy in Saigon. Two Americans and 11 Vietnamese were killed and 143 persons were injured.

	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH (in thousands)	KIA	WIA	MIA	DET/CPTD	WPNS LOST
US	29	14	115	1	1	-
RVN	502	700	1500	700		1380
VC	128	1615			235	1295
NATL POLICE	35					

APRIL

There were no significant news events this month. The period was without major battles and was one of general VC inactivity. ARVN operations brought generally light contacts.

	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH (In thousands)	KIA	WIA	MIA	DET/CPFD	WPNS LOST
US	36	38	88	6	1	
RVN	506	700	1700	300		909
VC	154	2817			605	1189
NATL POLICE	38					

MAY

The first American paratroopers entered the country on 5 May when the 173rd Airborne Brigade began landing and went immediately into tactical bivouac at Bien Hoa air base north of Saigon.

Two days later on 7 May, US Marines and Seabees began landing at Chu Lai, south of Da Nang. Security deployment was quickly carried out and construction of a new airfield got underway.

On 11 May, the VC launched a heavy attack on the provincial capital of Song Be. Friendly casualties were 56 killed, including 5 US. Thirteen US were wounded, while 297 VC were killed.

A series of accidental explosions at Bien Hoa air base on May 16th killed 24 Americans and injured 105. More than 40 aircraft were destroyed or damaged.

In a week-long battle around Quang Ngai City beginning 29 May, ARVN suffered about 500 casualties. VC casualties were estimated at 825.

	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH (in thousands)	KIA	WIA	MIA	DET/CPTD	WPNS LOST
US	52	34	189	3	1	
RVN	514	900	1800	700		1369
VC	154	1817			504	719
NATL Police	39					

#### JUNE

The first Australian combat troops entered the country on 8 June when the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment arrived.

On 9 June some 2,500 US Army combat engineers began construction of a major base, including an airfield, logistics and port facilities, at Cam Ranh Bay, Khanh Hoa Province.

Both sides suffered heavy losses in a four-day battle beginning 9 June at Dong Xoai, about 55 miles northeast of Saigon. Friendly casualties were estimated at 650, including 7 US killed, 15 wounded and 11 missing in action. An estimated 700 Viet Cong were killed.

On June 16, a 10-20 pound charge was exploded at the civilian

passenger terminal of Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Airport. There were 46 persons injured, including 34 US.

Two F4 Phantom II aircraft from the carrier Midway shot down the first MIGs of the war on June 17, about 50 miles south of Hanoi. The Phantoms were on a strike mission against the Yen Phu barracks when they were attacked by four MIGs. Two of the surviving MIGs fled north.

On June 18, 27 B-52 bombers hit a VC concentration north of Ben Cat in Binh Duong Province of South Vietnam. This raid, with high explosive and general purpose bombs, was the first of the war by B-52's.

The Viet Cong set off two claymore mines at the My Canh floating restaurant in Saigon on June 25. Of the 44 persons killed, 14 were US. The 81 injured also included 16 US.

Also on June 25, the VC launched a multi-battalion attack on an ARVN battalion at Duc Hoa in Hau Nghia Province. Friendly casualties were 87, while VC casualties were estimated at 137.

	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH (in thousands)	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH				WPNS LOST
		KIA	WIA	MIA	DET/CPTD	
FVMAF	60	77	276	6	3	
RVN	519	1500	2300	1600		2936
VC	154	3550			302	925
NATL POLICE	43					

JULY

On July 7th, about 8,000 men of two US Marine battalion landing teams and combat support elements of the III Marine Amphibious Force landed and deployed at Da Nang and Qui Nhon.

Between July 12 and 16, the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, and the 1st Logistical Command landed at Cam Ranh Bay, Vung Tau and Qui Nhon.

MACV confirmed on July 15 that US Army SFC Isaac Cammancho had escaped after nearly 20 months of imprisonment by the VC.

On the same day, MACV announced it accepted as confirmed the presence in South Vietnam of the complete PAVN 101st Regiment with three Battalions. MACV acknowledged as probable the presence of the PAVN 18th Regiment and as possible the presence of the PAVN 95th Regiment.

B-52 bombers were used in support of a ground operation in South Vietnam for the first time on July 17, when about 30 aircraft bombed a suspected VC troop area in the Mang Yang Pass along Highway 19.

On July 24 the first US plane was downed by a surface-to-air missile (SAM) over North Vietnam. A USAF F4C was shot down about 40 miles west of Hanoi, while in support

of a strike on the Lang Chi explosives plant. The pilot was presumed lost.

Three days later, on July 27, retaliating US aircraft hit SAM sites in North Vietnam for the first time. A flight of 46 F-105s struck two sites and the Phu Nhien Barracks 40 miles northwest of Hanoi.

On July 29, the first elements of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, landed at Cam Ranh Bay.

	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH (in thousands)	KIA	WIA	MIA	DET/CPTD	WPNS LOST
FWMAF	81	69	330	11	3	
RVN	531	1100	1600	500		1141
ENEMY	154	2602			406	731
NATL POLICE	44					

#### AUGUST

Four B-57 aircraft were presented by the US to the Vietnamese Air Force on 9 August. Premier Ky accepted these first jets for his Air Force and flew one himself after ceremonies at Tan Son Nhut.

Another 6,400 Marines, including the 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines Regiment, arrived at Da Nang and Chu Lai August 14 and 15.

Marines carried out the largest US action of the war to date, Operation Starlight, between August 18 and 24. The combined surface and air regimental strength assault



On August 24, A VC mortar attack on Bien Hoa Airfield damaged 26 US and 23 Vietnamese aircraft. Friendly casualties were light.

	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH (in thousands)	KIA	WIA	MIA	DET/CPTD	WPMS LOST
PWMAF	100	92	535	8	1	
RVN	541	800	2000	200		588
ENEMY	210	3445			561	1001
NATL POLICE	47					

SEPTEMBER

US Marines joined Vietnamese Marines and soldiers in Operation Piranha, an amphibious/heli-borne assault, in the Batangan Peninsula south of Chu Lai between September 7 and 10. The coordinated operation netted 178 VC killed, 69 captured, 168 suspects detailed and 24 weapons captured. Friendly casualties were light.

On September 13, elements of the US Army's 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) landed at Qui Nhon and were headquartered at An Khe in Binh Dinh Province.

Elements of the 101st Airborne carried out Operation Gibraltar near An Khe between September 13 and 21. There were 226 VC killed.

In a week-long battle starting September 23 for the Phu Co outpost along Highway 1 northwest of Qui Nhon,

ARVN killed an estimated 700 VC. Friendly casualties were moderate in the action, which involved an overall VC force estimated at regiment size.

	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH (in thousands)	KIA	WIA	MIA	DET/CPTD	WPNS LOST
FWMAF	132	98	601	23	2	
RVN	550	800	2000	300		965
ENEMY	213	3072			687	973
NATL POLICE	49					

#### OCTOBER

The first elements of the Capitol ROK Division arrived in South Vietnam on October 8.

The first elements of the US Army's 1st Infantry Division arrived on October 10.

On October 17, five US Navy jet aircraft from the carrier **Independence** destroyed what was believed to be the first operational mobile SAM installation, located 52 miles northeast of Hanoi.

The month-long battle for and around the Plei Me Special Forces Camp began October 19. The first phase involved the VC attack and subsequent relief of the camp by friendly forces and ended October 31 with 317 VC killed and 70 believed killed and carried away. Friendly casualties were 117 killed including 12 US and 246 wounded, including 6 US.

On October 27, the VC launched simultaneous mortar and suicide squad attacks against US Marine air installations at Marble Mountain (Da Nang East) and Chu Lai. Friendly casualties were light while 39 VC were killed. In the two attacks, 18 helicopters and two A4 Skyhawks were destroyed and 22 helicopters and five A4s damaged.

	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH (in thousands)	KIA	WIA	MIA	DET/CPTD	WPNS LOST
FWMAF	153	171	936	22	4	
RVN	559	900	2200	200		666
ENEMY	221	3293				916
NATL POLICE	49					

#### NOVEMBER

Between November 1st and 12th, the 1st Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division battled the Viet Cong west of Plei Me. The Viet Cong lost 216 killed and 117 captured. US losses were 55 killed and 194 wounded.

MACV confirmed on November 7th the presence of five PAVN regiments in South Vietnam the 13th, 95th, 101st (of the 325th PAVN Division), and the 32nd and 250th.

On November 8th, the 173rd Airborne Brigade clashed with a large VC force 30 miles northeast of Saigon in War Zone "D". VC losses were 391 killed. Friendly casualties were moderate.

Operation Blue Marlin between November 10 and 12 north of Chu Lai involved the first combined US and Vietnamese Marine amphibious landing against the VC. Losses on both sides were light.

In the biggest US engagement of the war to date, the 1st Cavalry Division's 3rd Brigade fought the battle of the Ia Drang Valley through the week of November 14. The Viet Cong lost 1,238 killed and 20 captured. US losses were 250 killed and 358 wounded.

For the entire Plei Me - Ia Drang Campaign total figures were: VC killed were at least 1,771, captured 138, US killed 317, wounded 558. ARVN killed 105, wounded 248.

On November 27, an estimated VC regiment overran the ARVN 7th Regiment at the Michelin Plantation in Binh Duong Province. Friendly casualties were heavy.

	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH	KIA	WIA	MIA	DET/CPTD	WPNS
	(in thousands)					LOST
FWMAF	170	461	1310	33		
RVN	564	1100	2200	400		998
ENEMY	228	5318			595	2027
NATL POLICE	52					

DECEMBER

In the week ending December 1, a total of 1,038 VC incidents was reported, the highest weekly figure of the war to date.

On December 2, the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Enterprise went into combat for the first time, launching 118 sorties against VC targets in South Vietnam.

A VC panel truck carrying explosives was set off at the Metropole Bachelor Enlisted Quarters in Saigon on December 4. Eight persons were killed and 137 injured.

On December 15, USAF F-105s struck the Uong Bi thermal power plant 14 miles from Hai Phong. Jets from the carrier Kitty Hawk hit the plant again on December 20, and the plant was practically destroyed December 22 in a third raid by Navy planes from the Enterprise, Kitty Hawk and Ticonderoga.

On December 19 the extensive search and destroy Operation Harvest Moon carried out by US Marines and ARVN south of Da Nang ended with 419 VC killed, 53 captured and 314 suspects detained.

Between 1800 December 24 and 0600 December 26, the VC initiated 84 hostile actions, despite its own and the US/South Vietnamese announced Christmas ceasefires.

On December 29, elements of the 3rd Brigade,  
25th Infantry Division began arriving at Pleiku from  
Hawaii.

On December 31, US military strength in Vietnam  
was about 181,000 men.

	APPROX FORCE STRENGTH (in thousands)	Casualties #			WPNS DET/CPTD LOST
		KIA	WIA	MIA	
FWMAF	181	130	628	18	
RVN	569	900	1700	800	1515
ENEMY	230	3581			432 1069
NATL POLICE	53				

\*Estimated to 31 Dec. #As of 25 Dec.

	<u>ANNUAL TOTALS</u>				<u>WPNS</u>
	<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>MIA</u>	<u>DET/CPTD</u>	<u>LOST</u>
FWMAF	1241	5350	132	16	
RVN	11,100@	22,600	7400		15,972
ENEMY	34,585			5,746	14,690

@Does not include deaths from other sources