On 6 May 1965, the 3rd Marine Division opened the Marine Compound at the Da Nang Air Base, Vietnam. They were the first American combat troops to be sent to Vietnam to protect the Da Nang Air Base. By the end of 1965 the Division had all its regiments (3rd Marines, 4th Marines and 9th Marines) on the ground. The first major multi-regiment operations against the North Vietnamese Army was Operation Hastings in July 1966. Operation Prairie followed in October. This area would come to be known as Leatherneck Square. In late 1967 the headquarters moved again from Phu Bai to Đông Hà in the Quang Tri Province and more outposts were opened. There were five Medal of Honors awarded and nearly 40 Navy Crosses given during this period of time. For its service in the Republic of Vietnam the division was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation in 1967. This is the story of the Third Marine division’s battle of Con Thien in the Quang Tri Province. Story begins on Page 2.
Con Thien (Vietnamese: căn cứ Cồn Tiên, meaning the "Hill of Angels") was a United States Marine Corps combat base located near the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone about 3 km from North Vietnam in Gio Linh District, Quảng Trị Province. It was the site of fierce fighting from February 1967 through February 1968.

**Marine Commanders**

**Lewis William Walt** (February 16, 1913 – March 26, 1989), also known as Lew Walt, was a retired United States Marine Corps four-star general who had served in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. During World War II he was awarded two Navy Crosses for extraordinary heroism, one for leading the attack on "Aogiri Ridge" during the Battle of Cape Gloucester; the ridge was renamed "Walt's Ridge" in his honor.

**Robert Everton Cushman, Jr.** (December 24, 1914 – January 2, 1985) served as the 25th Commandant of the Marine Corps from January 1, 1972 to June 30, 1975. He was honored for heroism in battle during World War II at the battles of Guam (Navy Cross), Bougainville (Bronze Star) and Iwo Jima (Legion of Merit). He also commanded all Marine forces in Vietnam from June - December 1967. Cushman served as Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) from 1969-1971.

**Strength**

Third Marine Division – 9,000 Marines
North Vietnam – 8,000 to 12,000 NVA

**Casualties and Losses**

Marines – 1,419 killed and 9,265 wounded
NVA Soldiers – 7,563 killed NS 168

**Location**

Con Thien is located at 16°54′35″N 106°58′48″E and was originally established as a Special Forces/CIDG camp before being taken over by the Marines in December 1966. Together with Marine bases at Gio Linh, Đồng Hà and Cam Lộ, Con Thien enclosed the area known to the Marines as Leatherneck Square. Con Thien was intended to be used as a base for the McNamara Line to prevent NVA infiltration across the DMZ. The firebase was strategically important because it was within range of NVA artillery north of the DMZ which was largely immune to counter-battery fire.

**Border battles**

On 27 February 1967, in response to Marine artillery fire into and the area north of the DMZ (Operation Highrise) NVA mortar, rocket and artillery fire hit Con Thien and Gio Linh. On 20 March, NVA began shelling Con Thien and Gio Linh which continued sporadically for the next two weeks.

On 24 March 1st Battalion, 9th Marines began Operation Prairie III where they encountered an NVA battalion in a bunker complex southeast of Con Thien. After a two-hour fight the NVA withdrew leaving 33 killed in action. Sergeant Walter K. Singleton was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in the attack. 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines (3/3) operating beside 1/9 encountered an entrenched NVA Company, killing 28 NVA including two women. On 30 March, Company I 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines was establishing a night ambush position when it was attacked by an NVA force, 2LT John P. Bobo was posthumously...
awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the attack.

In mid-April Charlie Company, 11th Engineer Battalion was tasked with clearing a 200m wide strip from Con Thien to Gio Linh, a distance of 10.6 km. The engineers were protected by a task force consisting of the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, an AMTRAC (LVT-5) platoon, a platoon of M42 Dusters from the 1st Battalion, 44th Artillery and some ARVN units. By 19 April, despite harassment from NVA mines, small arms, recoilless rifle, mortar and artillery fire the strip was half-completed.

In order to protect Route 561, the supply line to Con Thien from Route 9, the Marines had established two outposts, C-2 Base was located 3 km southeast of Con Thien and contained artillery and infantry positions, while C-2A nicknamed the Washout was on low-lying ground overlooking a bridge.

**Attack on Con Thien**

8 May, at 0300 some 300 rounds of mortar and artillery fire hit the base, while NVA sappers with Bangalore torpedoes breached the perimeter wire. At 0400 two battalions of the 812th North Vietnamese Regiment armed with flamethrowers overran the Marine stronghold. At the time of the attack the base was defended by the command element and Company 'D' of the 1st Bn. 4th Marines. The well-organized attack fell primarily on Company D's northern perimeter. Fierce hand-to-hand combat along the perimeter by the outnumbered Marines eventually led to repelling the initial attacking forces. A relief column from Company 'A' was sent with an M42 Duster, 2 LVT-5s and 2 quarter ton trucks. The M42 was hit by an RPG-7 and an LVT-5 and one truck were destroyed by flamethrowers and satchel charges. A large number of casualties were sustained by Marines of 'A' company. By 0900 some six hours later the enemy had withdrawn leaving 197 killed and 8 prisoners. The Marines had suffered 44 KIA and 110 wounded.

**Remilitarizing the DMZ**

After the 8 May attack, recognizing that the NVA were using the DMZ as a sanctuary for attacks into I Corps, Washington lifted the prohibition on US forces entering the DMZ and MACV authorized the III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) to conduct combat operations into the southern half of the DMZ.

From 13–16 May, 1/9 Marines cleared Route 561 from Cam Lo to Con Thien fought a well-entrenched NVA force south of the base. The NVA subsequently withdrew into the DMZ.

**Operations Hickory/Lam Son 54/Beau Charger**

III MAF proceeded to plan a series of combined operations with ARVN forces that occurred from 18 to 26 May. Under Operation Hickory 3rd Marines advanced to the Ben Hai River. Under Operation Lam Son 54 the 1st ARVN Division advanced parallel to 3rd Marines while the amphibious Special Landing Force Alpha secured the coastline south of the Ben Hai River. Under Operation Beau Charger and Special Landing Force Bravo linked up with 3rd Marines under Operation Belt Tight. Once at the Ben Hai River, the forces swept south on a broad front to Route 9.

From 19 to 27 May when Lam Son 54 ended the ARVN were in constant contact with the NVA. The ARVN suffered 22 KIA and 122 wounded, while the NVA suffered 342 KIA and 30 captured.

The amphibious element of Operation Beau Charger met no opposition while the helicopter assault dropped into a hot LZ. Only one platoon was landed and it remained isolated until rescued several hours later. Beau Charger continued until 26 May with minimal contact. 85 NVA were killed.

In Operation Hickory the 2nd Battalion, 26th Marines and 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines advanced north from Con Thien on the morning of 18 May to press any NVA against a blocking force from the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines on the Ben Hai River. At 10:00 2/26 Marines made contact with 2 NVA Battalions in bunkers and trenches. The 2/9 Marines joined 2/26 and fought a running battle until nightfall. 5 Marines were KIA and 142 were wounded, while 31 NVA were killed. That night 75 radar-controlled airstrikes were called in on the bunker complex. At 07:00 on 19 May after 2 hours of artillery preparation (in which short rounds killed 3 Marines), the 2/26 proceeded to attack the bunker complex, overrunning it by 10:30 killing 34 NVA. At 13:30 2/9 Marines met heavy automatic weapons and mortar fire and an M-48 moved up to silence the NVA positions with canister fire. 2 M-48s were later knocked out by RPG-7 fire and 2/9 Marines suffered 7 KIA and 12 wounded. On 20 May, 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines covering the left flank of the operation encountered an NVA bunker complex and in fighting lasting into 21 May suffered 26 KIA and 59 wounded for 36 NVA dead. On 25 May Companies H and K from the 26th Marines engaged an NVA Company in a bunker complex near Hill 117 5 km west of Con Thien, fighting lasted throughout the day and cost 14 Marine KIA and 92 wounded for 41 NVA killed. Marine air and artillery pounded the complex throughout the night and a new assault was planned for the morning of 26 May, but NVA fire brought down a UH-1E injuring the command element and the assault was postponed until 27 May when Companies E and F 2/26 Ma-
rines and 3/4 Marines took the hill with no resistance. For the remainder of Operation Hickory the Marines encountered only scattered resistance but discovered and destroyed numerous bunkers, ordnance and rice. Operation Hickory concluded on 28 May, the Marines had suffered 142 KIA and 896 wounded for 362 NVA killed. Lam Son 54, Hickory, Belt Tight and Beau Charger also resulted in the removal of the entire civilian population from the area with the result that it was all now a free fire zone.

Map of Operations Hickory, Belt Tight, Beau Charger and Lam Son 54.

Operation Prairie IV
At the conclusion of Operation Hickory, all participating units joined Operation Prairie IV sweeping the area southwest of Con Thien. On 28 May 3/4 Marines ran into a bunker complex on Hill 174, 6 km southwest of Con Thien. Companies M and L attacked the complex but were forced back by small arms, machine guns, 57mm recoiless rifle and 82mm mortars for the loss of 2 Marines KIA and 21 wounded. Artillery hit the hill throughout the night and the next day Companies M and I attacked the hill, suffering 5 KIA and 33 wounded without driving the NVA from the crest of the hill. Companies M and I attacked unsuccessfully again on 30 May suffering 1 KIA and 45 wounded. The NVA abandoned the hill during the night of 30/31 May. Operation Prairie IV resulted in 505 NVA killed and 8 captured for 164 Marines KIA and 1240 wounded.

Operation Cimarron
Operation Cimarron began on 1 June in the same area with the same units. There was limited contact with the NVA but many enemy bunkers and supply caches were found and destroyed and several NVA graves located. Cimarron ended on 2 July. On 1 July the land-clearing project from Con Thien to Gia Linh was completed, with the clear strip widened to 600m.

Operation Buffalo
On 2 July Companies A and B from 1/9 launched Operation Buffalo, a sweep of the area north of Con Thien. As the infantrymen moved along Route 561 in an area called the Marketplace, the NVA attacked inflicting severe casualties on Company B. This was the single worse day for Marines in Vietnam (86 killed). Operation Buffalo concludes on 14 July at a cost of 159 Marines KIA and 345 WIA. The NVA suffered 1290 KIA.

Operation Hickory II
Following the conclusion of Operation Buffalo III MAF ordered a sweep of the southern half of the DMZ. Operation Hickory II last from 14-16 July and resulted in 39 NVA killed for the loss of 4 Marine dead and 90 wounded.

Operation Kingfisher
Operation Kingfisher took place from 16 July to 31 October 1967.

Operation Kentucky
Operation Kentucky took place from 1 November 1967 to 28 February 1969 and resulted in 520 Marines killed and 2698 wounded, while the NVA lost 3,839 killed, 117 captured and an unknown number wounded. In support of Operation Kentucky, squadrons of the First Marine Air Wing provided air support from 4 January 1968 to 23 March 1968. Air support missions included resupply of ammunition, rations, and other supplies. Numerous medevac missions were flown to transport wounded Marines to medical facilities at Dong Ha and to the hospital ship Repose.

The Siege in the media
Con Thien was in the news during the time it was
under artillery attack. *TIME* featured the story on the cover of its 6 October 1967, issue which was instrumental in bringing the reality of Vietnam combat to American readers.

David Douglas Duncan’s photos of the Marines at Con Thien were featured in the 27 October 1967 issue of *Life* Magazine and in his book *War Without Heroes*. CBS News broadcast a special report on October 1, 1967, *The Ordeal of Con Thien*, hosted by Mike Wallace, which featured footage and interviews from the field.

Much has been written about the siege, gathered from people who were there, people who were not, and taken from historical Marine documents. Con Thien was the battle before Tet, a battle commanders at the time dismissed, and later forgotten maybe a little embarrassed because it showed how unprepared the US was for the 1968 Tet offensive.

1968 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines took over the defense of Con Thien in mid-December. During the Christmas truce period the Battalion added 11 bunkers and dug a new trench along the forward slope. The troops then sandbagged existing bunkers with a "burst layer" in the roofs, usually consisting of airfield matting to burst delayed fuse rounds, they then covered the positions with rubberized tarps to keep the water out. By the end of the year, all of the new bunkers had been sandbagged and wired in with the new razor wire.[19] During January the NVA kept up sporadic fire on the base firing for 22 of 31 days with each barrage averaging about 30 rounds. The artillery fire gradually destroyed the minefield and bunkers protecting the north-west of the base causing regular casualties.

The 803d NVA Regiment had relieved the 90th NVA Regiment in the positions facing Con Thien and began to launch regular small scale probes of the Marine defenses. On the night of 14 January, the NVA tripped a mine and one soldier was left in the minefield, the NVA made 2 attempts to rescue their wounded man, eventually succeeding under cover of small arms, recoilless rifles and mortars. On 22 January, around midday the NVA bombarded Con Thien with 100 rounds of 82mm mortar, followed by 130 rounds of 152mm shells. 1/4 sustained 2 KIA and 16 wounded. 30 minutes later, about 1 km north of the base, Companies F and G encountered an NVA Company which withdrew under cover of 60mm mortar fire, 2 Marines were KIA and 8 wounded for 3 NVA killed.

In late January with increasing NVA pressure on Khe Sanh Combat Base and Route 9, 1st Battalion 9th Marines was transferred to Khe Sanh and 3rd Battalion 4th Marines was moved to the Lancaster area of operations. 2nd Battalion 4th Marines was assigned to take over the 3/4's area of operations northeast of Con Thien and on 27 January, HMM-361 landed the first units near C-2, by the end of the day the entire battalion was deployed.

On 29 January a Marine observer at Con Thien using a Starlight Scope spotted an NVA convoy moving about 1 km north of the Ben Hai River and called in artillery air strikes. The NVA responded by launching five SAM-2 missiles on the attacking aircraft which proceeded to destroy both the convoy and the SAM site.[22] By the end of January the defensive positions on the trace line, including C-2, C-2A and Con Thien (A-4) were largely complete, although there was abundant evidence of continued NVA infiltration across the DMZ.

The Tet Offensive was little noticed at Con Thien and elsewhere along the DMZ, rather it was just the same fighting that had been going on for the previous weeks and months. There was no Tet Truce here, but nor was there a sudden NVA thrust through the DMZ or frontal assault on Khe Sanh that MACV had expected.

The NVA continued to pressure the Marines particularly around the A-3 strongpoint between Con Thien and Gio Linh. On 3 March Lima Company, 3rd Battalion 3rd Marines, occupying an outpost on Hill 28 just north of the A-
3, intercepted an NVA battalion attempting to infiltrate the Marine positions. The NVA encircled the Marines and were only driven back by airstrikes and Huey gunship runs. One Marine was killed and thirteen wounded while killing over 100 NVA.[241] On 16 March, Mike Company, 3/3 Marines and Charlie Company, 1/4 Marines clashed with another battalion-sized NVA force. The two Marine companies called in artillery and air upon the NVA, the bulk of which disengaged, leaving a company behind to fight a rear-guard action. NVA artillery from north of the DMZ answered the American supporting arms with a 400-round barrage of its own on the Marines. Marine casualties were two KIA and nine wounded for 83 NVA killed. For the entire month in Operation Kentucky, the 9th Marines reported over 400 enemy dead while Marine casualties were 37 KIA and more than 200 wounded.

On 22 May a patrol from Company A 1/4 Marines ran into an NVA force east of Con Thien. 1/4 attacked east from Con Thien, while 3/3 Marines attacked west from Strongpoint A-3. 3/9 Marines were helicoptered into blocking positions in the south, while 1/9 Marines was helicoptered into blocking positions in the north. The NVA tried to escape across the trace line but were mowed down by artillery, tank, gunship and fixed-wing fire. The NVA suffered 225 killed, while the Marines had 23 KIA and 75 wounded.

On 6 June, a reinforced platoon from Company E, 26th Marines observed and then engaged an NVA company while on patrol 1.8 km southeast of Con Thien. Reinforced by the command group and a rifle platoon from Company H, the patrol engaged the NVA with small arms and 81mm mortars. 14 NVA were killed and the Marines suffered 14 KIA and 11 wounded.

On 7 July, to exploit the results of Operation Thor in the Cua Viet-Dong Ha sector, the 9th Marines began a sweep of the area between Con Thien and the DMZ. On 11 July, 4 km northeast of Con Thien, elements of 3/9 Marines discovered a reinforced NVA platoon in the open. Fixing the NVA in place with small arms fire, the Marines, with air, artillery, and tank support, launched a coordinated air-ground attack through the area killing more than 30 NVA. The 9th Marines uncovered and destroyed numerous NVA fortifications, a few of the positions were lightly defended, but the majority were abandoned. One bunker system discovered 4 km meters due north of Con Thien spanned more than 1 km and included 242 well-constructed bunkers. Supplies and equipment abandoned included weapons, 935 mortar rounds, 500 pounds of explosives, 55 antitank mines, and 500 pounds of rice. The Marines also found 29 NVA bodies, killed by artillery and airstrike during the advance on the complex.

On 21 July 2/9 Marines discovered a major NVA bunker complex 6 km southwest of Con Thien. Composed of 60 A-frame timbered bunkers built into the sides of bomb craters, each with an average overhead cover 10-feet-thick, the system was connected to a large command bunker by a network of interconnecting tunnels. The command bunker featured an aperture overlooking Con Thien and C-2 and documents found in the bunker indicated that the NVA had been observing and reporting the movement of helicopters, tanks, and trucks entering and leaving Con Thien and C-2.

Early August saw little contact with the NVA other than an encounter by Company F, 9th Marines with 30 NVA, 3 km east of Con Thien. In the face of artillery and fixed-wing support, the NVA broke contact and the Marines began a sweep through the area during which they regained contact. The NVA again broke and ran, and Company F moved through the area, capturing a number of weapons and counting 11 NVA dead.

On 15 August, an NVA company attacked a four-man Marine reconnaissance team southeast of Con Thien near the abandoned airstrip at Nam Dong. The patrol returned fire and requested reinforcement, while simultaneously calling in preplanned artillery fires. Within minutes a platoon from Company A, 1st Marines, accompanied by three tanks, moved out of positions 1 km away and headed south to assist. The coordinated attack, which included more than 150 rounds of 105mm artillery, 40 rounds of 4.2-inch mortar, 75 rounds from the 90mm guns of the tanks, and airstrikes by Marine UH-1E gunships accounted for several NVA dead.

As NVA activity continued to increase in the eastern DMZ, particularly north of Con Thien, the Marines decided to act. In addition to sightings of enemy tanks, Marine fighter pilots and aerial observers reported spotting trucks, truck parks, camouflaged revetments, storage bunkers, and trenchlines. Of special interest were repeated sightings of low, slow moving lights during hours of darkness which, it was assumed, came from enemy helicopters thought to be resupplying forward positions with high priority cargo such as ammunition and medical supplies or conducting medevacs. On 19 August, after 60 Arclight strikes 2nd Battalion 1st Marines (2/1) assaulted into three LZs in the Trung Son region of the southern DMZ, 5 km north of Con Thien. Supported by a platoon
of tanks from 3rd Tank Battalion, 2/1 swept the area but found no evidence of use by VPAF helicopters. During the extraction one CH-46 Sea Knight was destroyed by a command detonated mine, killing 4 Marines.

While the assault claimed no NVA casualties, it did scatter NVA forces in the area. On the morning of the 19th, Bravo Company, 2/1 and the Army's Company A, 77th Armored Regiment engaged an NVA platoon while supported by M-48s from 3rd Tank Battalion, killing 26 NVA. 6 km southwest of Con Thien Mike Company, 3/9 Marines intercepted a reinforced NVA platoon, under the cover of air-strikes and artillery they kill 30 NVA and captured 2. On 20 August, 2 NVA squads attacked Companies G and H, 2/9 Marines with small arms, RPGs, mortars, and artillery. The Marines, supported by 5 M-48s from 3rd Tank Battalion forced the NVA to withdraw northward, leaving their dead. On 21 July, Company I, 9th Marines began receiving sniper fire and within an hour, the company had engaged an NVA unit of undetermined size, firing small arms and grenades, responding with accurate rocket, mortar, and artillery fire, the Marines forced the NVA to break contact and withdraw to the north. A search of the area found 14 NVA dead and 12 weapons.

On 24 August at 17:00, Marine reconnaissance team Tender Rancho was moving 7 km southeast of Con Thien near Dao Xuyen, when it surprised a group of 15 bivouacked NVA troops killing 6. Within minutes the team received a barrage of 82mm mortars and immediately formed a 360-degree security. 90 minutes later gunships arrived on station and informed the team that the NVA surrounded them. At 19:30 despite receiving 0.50 caliber and 82mm mortar fire helicopters inserted a reinforced platoon from Company D 1st Marines to assist. Meanwhile additional platoons from Company D, along with Company C, moving overland from the east took up blocking positions north of the encircled reconnaissance team before dark. At daylight on 25 August, Marine helicopters inserted the remainder of Company D. During the insertion a CH-34, while dodging enemy fire, struck a tree breaking off the tail section, killing 3 and wounding 14. With the arrival of elements of 1/3 Marines and Company M, 3/9 Marines later in the day, the Marines effectively cordoned the area, preventing an NVA withdrawal. During the remainder of the 25th and into the 26th, as Companies C and D, 1st Marines pushed southward toward the other blocking forces, the NVA made several unsuccessful attempts to break the cordon. By the end of 26 August, after three days of fighting, the NVA had suffered 78 killed while the Marines suffered 11 KIA and 58 wounded.

On 31 August 1st Marines was relieved of responsibility for the Kentucky area of operations and the Army's 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) took over.

On 4 September, a platoon from Company A, 61st Infantry was sent to the relief of Company M 3/9 Marines which was engaged in battle with a reinforced NVA company in bunkers west of Con Thien. Joined by a reaction force from Company C, 61st Infantry, and supported by artillery and airstrikes, the American units killed more than 20 NVA for 6 US KIA and 55 wounded in the two-and-one-half hour battle that followed.

On 11 September, Company D, 11th Infantry engaged an NVA force of unknown strength from the 27th Independent NVA Regiment occupying bunkers near the "Market Place," 4 km northeast of Con Thien. The Company called for air and artillery strikes while a platoon of tanks from the 1st Battalion, 77th Armored moved up reinforce. At 18:30 the NVA attempted to break contact, but the artillery prevented their withdrawal. One group of NVA raised a white flag, so the American gunners ceased fire momentarily to allow the group to surrender, instead the NVA broke and ran and the artillery barrage resumed. A later sweep of the area found 40 dead NVA, 7 were captured.

On 13 September following Arclight and naval and land artillery strikes 3 Battalion task forces from the 5th Infantry Division attacked into the DMZ northeast of Con Thien. To the east the 1st Squadron, 7th ARVN Armored Cavalry, supported by two platoons from Company A, 3rd Tank Battalion, simultaneously attacked to the north and northeast of A-2 and Gio Linh. The ARVN achieved almost immediate contact. The Marine tanks providing a base of fire for the advancing ARVN infantry fired 90mm canister and high-explosive rounds and their machine guns to break through the NVA defenses killing 73 NVA. Following in the wake of the tanks, and supported by helicopter gunships, the ARVN infantry killed an additional 68 NVA and captured one. On the left flank, after encountering mines and antitank fire, the three Army task forces joined the action, accounting for another 35 NVA and seizing a large cache of mortar rounds. The allied forces reached their northernmost objectives, turned south, and returned to their bases by late afternoon. The captured NVA soldier identified his unit as an element of the 138th NVA Regiment which had
assumed control of the 27th Independent Regiment’s area of operations, due to the heavy casualties suffered by the regiment in recent months.

In late September heavy monsoon rains had swollen the Ben Hai River, forcing remnants of the 320th NVA Division and independent regiments north across the river, but military intelligence indicated that some groups had been trapped in the south by the rising water. On 26 September Companies B, C, and D, 11th Infantry moved out from positions at C-2 and C-2 Bridge. In coordination with the 2d and 3d Battalions, 2nd ARVN Regiment, and the 3d Marines, the companies moved to a position west of Con Thien and then attacked north across the southern boundary of the DMZ, toward the Dong Be Lao mountain complex. During an 8 day patrol into the DMZ, they encountered minimal opposition from the NVA rearguard. Searches of numerous bunkers and other complexes indicated that the NVA had only recently abandoned the positions.

On 11 October a brigade mechanized infantry and tank force, composed of Companies B and C, 61st Infantry and Company B, 77th Armored, engaged a platoon of NVA in heavily fortified bunkers, 2.5 km northeast of Con Thien. The NVA used RPGs and 60mm mortars to knock out 3 M-48s and one M-113. Mines disabled another two M-48s and one M-113, killing 3 and wounding 20. After five hours of battle 26 NVA were killed.

Despite heavy rain during October, ground and aerial reconnaissance missions indicated the presence of a sizable NVA force south of the Ben Hai River between Gio Linh and Con Thien. On 23 October the brigade task force, composed of three companies of the dismounted 1st Battalion, 61st Infantry attacked north from A-3 and Con Thien into the DMZ and then eastward along the Ben Hai River toward the 2d ARVN Regiment and Company H, 9th Marines which had earlier trapped an NVA force killing 112. As the task force continued eastward during the 24th, through Kinh Mon, Tan Mon, and An Xa along an abandoned railroad, Company A engaged an NVA platoon, killing seven. At 08:30 on 25 October, Company A encountered an NVA battalion in well-fortified bunkers, while Company B came under heavy small arms and mortar fire. By 10:30 the engaged companies had linked up, and while Company A attacked to the northeast against the enemy’s flank, Company B assaulted and overran the enemy position, capturing one 82mm mortar, two 60mm mortars, and two 0.50-caliber machine guns. Both companies, later reinforced by Company B, 77th Armor, remained in contact until 18:00 killing 231 NVA for the loss of 4 KIA and 24 wounded.

On 22 October General Abrams, COMUSMACV ordered all construction and planning efforts associated with the anti-infiltration effort halted. Under the new plan, referred to as Duel Blade, allied forces, supported by air, artillery, and naval gunfire, would maintain a mobile posture and actively resist infiltration from the North by maintaining a comprehensive surveillance effort. While ground reconnaissance would be a part of the effort, attended and unattended detection devices or sensors would provide a majority of the surveillance capability. As part of the implementation of Duel Blade the “A” and “C” strongpoint sites considered essential would be used as fire support bases, while those of no value, such as A-3 and C-3, would be closed.

With effect from 21:00 on 1 November the US ceased all offensive operations against the territory of North Vietnam. This prohibition also applied to offensive operations north of the DMZ’s southern boundary. General Abrams later sought and obtained authority to send squad-size patrols into the southern DMZ to capture prisoners and obtain intelligence on the NVA military buildup in the DMZ.

On 1 November the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division, was directed to move from the Kentucky area of operations into an area near Quang Tri City. The 3d Marines supported by the 3rd Tank Battalion assumed control of the Kentucky area. As a sign of the reduced NVA activity in the Kentucky area, by December only Company E, 2/3 Marines was responsible for the security for Con Thien and C-2 Bridge, as well as patrolling and ambushing throughout its assigned 54-square kilometer area.
The 3rd Marine Division is an infantry division in the United States Marine Corps based at Camp Courtney, Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler and Okinawa, Japan. It is one of three active duty divisions in the Marine Corps and together with the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (1stMAW) and the 3rd Marine Logistics Group (3rd MLG) forms the III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF). The division was first formed during World War II and saw four years of continuous combat in the Vietnam War. The 3rd Marine Division departed South Vietnam in November 1969 with more than 20 Marines receiving the Medal of Honor. They moved to Camp Courtney, Okinawa, where it is presently located.
John Ollejnicki presented MCL State’s Distinguished Citizenship Award to Rita Kollias for her outstanding work with Toys For Tots.

Commandant John Ollejnicki presents Jr Past Commandant Vicky Cobbett with Detachment 399’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

Commandant John Ollejnicki presents Judge Advocate Gary Cobbett with Detachment 399’s Lifetime Achievement Award at recent detachment meeting.
Over Memorial Day weekend detachment members Rita O’Reilly and Brian Kollias exchanged vows. The couple met while serving with 2/24. Proud father of the bride also a Detachment 399 Member Ed O’Reilly had the pleasure of escorting the bride down the aisle.
FUND RAISERS

Downers Grove Fest 2015

Right: Dominick and Ralph shucking corn

Left: Captain Martinez taking the cash while (below) Vicky Cobbett takes a well deserved break

Top Left: John Meschi lecturing Marine Recruit Austin Wall on the art of selling corn while John and Marty check Bob Kulseth out on the roaster
399 Color Guard presented colors at Pugi’s Auto Show and County Fair. Left to right: Steve Collins, Vicky Cobbett, Roger Gaden and Mike Mikulecky

Above: Steve Collins with Dominick Pugliani, detachment member and President of Pugi Auto Group. Left Steve Chojnacki trims corn at DuPage County Fair

Right: Fund Raising Chairmen and Rose Captain Larry Olson. More Fair photos follow.
George Bormann
After a long day on the job

Ed O’Reilly with Brian Kollias (right) and George Bormann at cash register (left)

Above a happy customer enjoys corn while right, Chuck Wingard checks with Erin Angelo and Gary Cobbett
Right:
Commandant Ollejnicki calls meeting to order

Top Left Howie Chittenden listens to Javier Martinez (center) tell about visit to Marine Corps Museum and Howie’s Chess Set he made while POW in WWII

Above, Howie Chittenden enjoys round of applause from detachment members.

Above, Howie Chittenden’s hand-made Chess Set that he made while a POW in WWII. Set has been donated to Marine Corps National Museum in Quantico, VA. Right Trustee Bill Barta checking numbers while Chuck Wingard, Jr and Frank Foster look on
Prayers are heard in heaven in proportion to our faith. Little faith gets very great mercies, but great faith still greater. -- Spurgeon

DEATH NOTICE
Raymond Linder, Life Member, Past Commandant and Marine of The Year passed away August 1, 2015. The detachment will hold a Memorial Service at 7:00 PM August 4, 2015 at Hultgren Funeral Home, Burial will be at a later date at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.

Mary Ann O’Reilly, wife of Marine Ed O’Reilly and mother of our Sr. Vice Commandant Rita Kollias passed away of June 21, 2015. Our condolences and prayers go out to the O’Reilly family.

PRAYER LIST
DETACHMENT MEMBERS

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS: Joe DiMaggio, Rosemary Collins.


ANONYMOUS MARINES: Anonymous Marines are our brothers and sisters Marines who have health issues or are going through difficult times but do not want to ask for any help. Our prayers go out to all of you Anonymous Marines whomever and wherever you are. “Anonymous Marines” will be a permanent name on our Prayer List.

Dan Kenyon
Chaplain
Greeting Marines and Associate Members:

I would like to thank all of our volunteers who worked at the Downers Grove Feast and the DuPage County Fair for their participation. Special thanks to Larry Olson, John Meschi, Chuck Wingard, Dick Schie and Gary Cobbett for their leadership in making all the arrangements, set up and scheduling all the volunteers. Also, thanks goes to our color guard who once again presented and raised colors at the opening of the 61st edition of the DuPage County Fair. We celebrated our 25th year of selling corn at the Fair and while the weather for the Fair this year was exceptional, the crowds were down on the weekdays. Hopefully that won't impact on the money we collected.

I would also like to thank our volunteers who turned out for our Rose Day events in June and July and The Pugi Car Show in July. Special thanks to detachment member Dominick Pugliani, President of Pugi Auto Group for hosting the car show where most of the proceeds were donated to the detachment. Once again we had our Roses at the show and our color guard presented colors to start the show.

We have a few major events that remain this year, the selling of Roses where proceeds are used to help veterans and provide scholarship’s to Marines and family members, monthly Bingo at the VA Hospital and Toys for Tot's. I encourage all to continue to support our detachment in these fundraisers.

Finally, our Volunteer Appreciation picnic will be held this year at the Wheaton VFW on Sunday August 30th from 1 to 5 PM. Please let Trustee Bormann know if you will attend and how many in your party.

Remember we are Marines, “Improvise, Adapt and Overcome!”

John Olejnicki  
Commandant
Detachment #399 Moves into Cyberspace!

Jr. Vice Commandant Larry Adamiec, Jr. announced on 20 June 2015, Detachment #399’s launching of its web site; www.mcleague399.org. The launch completed Phase 1 of the project. Phase 1 was a quick and easy way for us to make ourselves known throughout the world. Since the launch, we have had visitors from Poland, France, Mexico, and various places in the U.S. Our “Contact Us” page has already allowed two individuals to inform detachment officers of important events!

Larry who is our detachment Web Sgt., said creation of Phase 2 is nearing completion. When launched, this phase will add more color and a slightly different layout. Phase 2 will also allow us to upload pictures and images much easier than now. It should also allow us to upload PDF files, which is the electronic format of our newsletter.

Phase 3, if approved, will add a security certificate to our site allowing active detachment members to login into the web site using encryption and search for other members contact information. This will allow our members to always have updated information regarding membership.

Phase 4 will be an extension of Phase 3 and will see our web site integrate with the detachment’s bank electronically. The integration will allow members to pay their dues online and allow us to accept donations from anywhere in the world.

If you have any ideas, comments, or concerns about the site, please contact Larry Adamiec Jr. Vice-Commandant & Web Sgt., at www.mcleague399.org.

Senate Confirms Marine Commandant Joseph Dunford as Chief of Staff

Washington (AFP) - The US Senate confirmed Marine General Joseph Dunford as the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the US military's top officer, after President Barack Obama chose him for the post in May.

Dunford, 59, currently the commandant of the US Marine Corps, will replace General Martin Dempsey, who is set to retire after he finishes his second term as chairman in October. The Senate confirmed Dunford by unanimous consent. Describing Dunford as "one of the most admired officers in our military," Obama hailed the Boston native as a top-notch strategic thinker when he announced the nomination on May 5.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff acts as the top military advisor to the US president and the secretary of defense. The position does not involve direct operational authority, but the government takes its direction and issues orders to the field.

The job often carries hefty influence on matters of war and peace, and the chairman also is seen as the public face of the armed forces. Dunford previously served as the commander of NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan from February 2013 until August 2014. During his time as commander in Kabul, Dunford oversaw a major drawdown of tens of thousands of US troops, as Afghan forces took the lead in the fight against the Taliban insurgency.

But Dunford persuaded the White House to keep a small force on the ground after 2014 instead of a total troop withdrawal. Dunford also led troops in the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq and spent nearly two years in the country.

In 2009, he was appointed head of Marine forces in the military's Central Command, which oversees American troops across the Middle East.

An infantry officer, Dunford followed General James Amos, a pilot, as commandant of the Marine Corps. He holds a master's degree in government from Georgetown University
and a master’s degree in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

**Marine commandant nominee draws fire for answers on Iraq, arming recruiters**

WASHINGTON — The nominee to be the next Marine Corps commandant had a rocky confirmation hearing in the Senate on Thursday, drawing fire for his positions on the war in Iraq and arming military recruiters.

Lt. Gen. Bob Neller, who was nominated earlier this month to replace Gen. Joseph Dunford, told the Armed Services Committee that the war in Iraq against the Islamic State has been at a stalemate for at least a year. When pressed by committee chairman Sen. John McCain, Neller backed the current Obama administration strategy, which relies on keeping U.S. troops off the ground, directing air strikes. McCain, R-Arizona, has argued that the policy is losing the year-old war in Iraq. “The Iraqis cannot do it themselves. That is why they are losing,” he told Neller, citing the fall of Mosul to the Islamic State last year. “That is why they’ve lost their second largest city.” Neller disagreed, telling the committee that the Iraqis are not losing. “I do not believe they are winning either. I believe they are at stalemate right now,” he said. McCain made his position clear: “I am very disappointed in a number of your answers.”

Neller led the I Marine Expeditionary Force in Iraq from 2005-07 and oversaw forces in Anbar province during the Sunni Awakening, which became a key turning point for the U.S. war effort and the country’s sectarian insurgency. The MEF trained 6,000-8,000 Iraqi police and returned territory to U.S.-trained Iraqi security forces during the earlier war.

Neller also butted heads with Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., over arming recruiters. He was the second military nominee this week to say firearms at the nation’s recruiting centers should be considered. On Tuesday, Army Chief of Staff nominee Gen. Mark Milley testified that it could be appropriate under certain circumstances. But he also cautioned against the move and possible unintended consequences. “I think we need to take a look at it, but I have some concerns of second- and third-order effects of that,” Neller told senators. “I’m not going to discount it but I think in the end, it is the most extreme measure to do what we need to do, which is protect those Marines who are serving out there.”

Defense Secretary Ash Carter has ordered a complete security review in the wake of the shooting, which has highlighted the threat of homegrown attacks and the vulnerability of military offices where personnel are barred from carrying weapons.

“We need to stay connected to the American people and we need to make sure they [recruiters] can go to schools and find the young men and women who want to become Marines,” Neller said.

Congressional leaders have pushed to allow more firearms on military bases and have proposed legislation to do it. Governors in some states have moved to arm some recruiters and move troops to armories.

Graham, who sits on the Armed Services Committee, criticized Neller on his position and said arming the strip mall recruiting center hit by a hail of bullets could have made a difference. Nobody was killed at the recruiting center but the shooter escaped and killed the servicemembers at a Navy Reserve center.

“It is time to get real as to where we stand as a nation,” said Graham, who is running for the Republican presidential nomination.
Mission Statement

Members of the Marine Corps League join together in camaraderie and fellowship for the purpose of preserving the traditions and promoting the interests of the United States Marine Corps, banding together those who are now serving in the United States Marine Corps and those who have been honorably discharged from that service that they may effectively promote the ideals of American freedom and democracy, voluntarily aiding and rendering assistance to all Marines, FMF Corpsmen, and FMF Navy Chaplains and former Marines, FMF Corpsmen, and FMF Navy Chaplains and to their widows and orphans; and to perpetuate the history of the United States Marine Corps and by fitting acts to observe the anniversaries of historical occasions of particular interest to Marines.

History

The Marine Corps League perpetuates the traditions and spirit of ALL Marines and FMF Corpsmen and FMF Navy Chaplains who proudly wear or who have worn the eagle, globe and anchor of the Corps. It takes great pride in crediting its founding in 1923 to World War I hero, then Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune. It takes equal pride in its Federal Charter, approved by An Act of the Seventy-Fifth Congress of the United States of America and signed and approved by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on August 4, 1937. The League is the only Federally Chartered Marine Corps related veterans organization in the country. Since its earliest days, the Marine Corps League has enjoyed the support and encouragement of the active duty and Reserve establishments of the U. S. Marine Corps. Today, the League boasts a membership of more than 76,000 men and women, officer and enlisted, active duty, Reserve Marines, honorably discharged Marine Veterans and qualified FMF Corpsmen and FMF Navy Chaplains and is one of the few Veterans Organizations that experiences increases in its membership each year.

The Marine Corps League is headed by an elected National Commandant, with 14 elected National Staff Officers who serve as trustees. The National Board of Trustees coordinates the efforts of 49 department, or state, entities and the activities of over 1100 community-based detachments located throughout the United States and overseas. The day-to-day operations of the League are under the control of the National Executive Director with the responsibility for the management and direction of all programs, activities, and affairs of the Marine Corps League as well as supervising the National Headquarters staff.

The prime authority of the League is derived from its Congressional charter and from its annual National Convention held each August in different major U.S. cities throughout the nation. It is a not-for-profit organization within the provisions of the Internal Revenue Service Code 501(c) (4), with a special group exemption letter which allows for contributions to the Marine Corps League, its Auxiliary and subsidiary units, to be tax deductible by the donor.
Below is a list of our standing committees and the chairperson for the respective committees. If you are interested in joining a committee please contact the Chair.

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<th>Committee</th>
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NOTICE
Our meeting place has changed for the next year. We will be meeting at the American Legion Post 76 located at 570 South Gary Ave in Carol Stream, IL. This is just a 1/4 mile north of the intersection of Geneva Rd and Gary Avenue on the west side of Gary Ave. Meetings are held the 4th Tuesday of the month beginning at 1930.

Scuttlebutt: (SKUT-I-but) noun 1. Rumor, gossip. 2. A drinking fountain or a cask of drinking water on a ship.
Etymology: From scuttle (a small opening in the deck or hull of a ship) + butt (cask)

Editor’s Fighting Hole

Greetings!
Detachment 399 is one of the largest detachments in the State of Illinois and yet we continue to struggle with the number of members who are willing to volunteer with our fund raisers, Hines VA Monthly Bingo and attendance at Eagle Scout ceremonies. Why is that? I understand that we are all busy but is taking two or three hours out of your week to help with detachment events asking too much?

To do Bingo require 1 ½ to 2 hours once a month on a Sunday afternoon.
To do a corn roast takes 3 four hour shifts of 8 to 10 volunteers once a year over a period of 3 to 5 days.
To work a Rose Day event requires 2 to 3 hours of your time on a Saturday morning and to attend an Eagle Scout ceremony requires 1 to 1 ½ hours of your sitting down during the ceremony.

We struggled to keep our corn sales going this year with several of us working eight hour shifts including some wonderful non-member volunteers. We had the same six or seven members work three hours to sell roses. Our Rose Day Events are no brainers! Working less than four hours on three Saturdays we have collected more than $2,000! That’s all profit and the funds are used to put on our Bingo at Hines VA and our scholarship fund.

We have managed to go through with these events because we are Marines and Marines “Improvise, Adapt and Overcome!” but it’s the same guys who are there when help is needed. Please consider helping out with our events and fund raisers and you will make this an even more successful detachment.