

ABSTRACT

The Vietnam War, spanning from 1955 to 1975, presented a unique set of challenges and complexities for the United States Marine Corps. This research paper explores the roles and contributions of the Marines during this tumultuous period in American history. The study delves into the Ap Bac's' successfulness undertaken by the Marines in Vietnam by examining primary and secondary sources, including military records, oral histories, and scholarly analyses.

INTRODUCTION

These were the faceless individuals whom insurance companies dread to acknowledge. Their operations took place behind the enemy lines. Their deaths were sometimes denied recognition by their homeland. They were the valiant warriors who traversed countless regions with hands forever marked by the poignant blood of unfamiliar souls. That is all what should be said about the United States Marine Corps (USMC) during the Vietnam War. With their distinct mission and ethos, the Marines brought a unique set of skills and capabilities to the conflict. This research paper delves into the roles and contributions of the Marines and their tactics during Battle of Ap Bac during the Vietnam War, shedding light on their experiences, challenges, and accomplishments in a turbulent and hostile environment.

BACKGROUND

The Marine Corps will normally conduct operations as part of a joint force. While the overwhelming majority of operations that Marine Corps forces will be involved with will be joint, there may be instances where Marine Corps forces may conduct single-Service operations. A combatant commander can establish command structure and conduct operations using a single-Service [1].

While joint operations are the norm for the Marine Corps, there are instances where Marines may be tasked with conducting single-Service operations. In such cases, the Marine Corps assumes sole responsibility for planning, executing, and sustaining military operations. These situations often arise when the mission aligns closely with the unique capabilities and expertise of the Marines, such as amphibious assaults, expeditionary operations, or specialized combat missions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Marine Corps Operation documents from the global security, the aviation combat element (ACE) plays a crucial role in conducting offensive operations, including defeating, destroying, or neutralizing the enemy. The ACE's capabilities, such as range, speed, mobility, and agility, are utilized by the MAGTF (Marine Air-Ground Task Force) commander to shape the battlespace and create favorable conditions for decisive action. These operations involve deep, close, and rear operations, where the ACE provides support through offensive air support, force protection, maneuver support, and assault support. In close operations, the ACE can have a decisive impact on the battlefield, while in rear operations, aviation assets contribute to maintaining freedom of action and continuity of operations. The ACE's integration into offensive operations and allocation of resources are important considerations, alongside weather conditions and employment duration.

CONTENT

Yet, during the Battle of Ấp Bắc, which took place on January 2, 1963, the Aviation Combat Element (ACE) and the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) encountered significant challenges and experienced failures. One of the main failures was during the step of intelligence gathering and analysis. The ACE and MAGTF did not possess accurate information about the strength and capabilities of

the enemy forces they were up against. This lack of intelligence led to a misjudgment of the enemy's defensive positions and their ability to counterattack. As a result, the ACE's airstrikes and artillery fire did not effectively neutralize the enemy positions.

Another failure was in determining coordination and communication between the ACE and the ground forces. The ACE provided air support during the battle, but there were instances of miscommunication which resulted in delays of delivering requested airstrikes and close air support to the ground troops. This lack of effective coordination hindered the MAGTF's ability to maneuver and respond to the enemy's movements.

During the battle, the ACE's most important error was its reliance on fixed-wing aircraft for close air support which proved to be inadequate for the close-quarters combat that characterized the Battle of Ấp Bắc. The limited maneuverability in specific terrain condition of the fixed-wing aircraft were not well-suited for engaging the enemy forces in the dense urban environment. This failure to adapt to the specific needs of the battle resulted in a less effective use of air power.

Furthermore, the MAGTF's infantry units faced difficulties in navigating and clearing the enemy strongholds due to the lack of proper training and experience in urban warfare. This hindered their ability to effectively engage the enemy and secure key objectives.

CONCLUSION

The failures of the ACE and MAGTF during the Battle of Ấp Bắc can be attributed to inadequate intelligence, coordination issues, inappropriate use of air power, and a lack of training in urban warfare. These shortcomings highlighted the need for improved tactics, better communication, and specialized training to

effectively confront the challenges of guerrilla warfare in the urban setting of Vietnam.

SOURCE:

[1] Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-0: Marine Corps Operations."

GlobalSecurity.org,<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/usmc/mcdp/1-0/mcdp1-0.pdf>. Accessed 16 May 2023.