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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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JK
JCSM-237-68
19 April 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Operational Control of III MAF Aviation Assets (U)

1. On 2 March 1968, CINCPAC approved, with minor changes, a proposal made by COMUSMACV to provide single management of fighter-bomber-reconnaissance air assets in I Corps Tactical Zone of South Vietnam. The system as approved by CINCPAC was in operation on 21 March 1968.
2. (U) The proposal made by COMUSMACV, and the reasoning behind his proposal, is provided at Appendix A.
3. (U) The Commandant of the Marine Corps has previously expressed concern over the proposal made by COMUSMACV regarding control of fighter-bomber-reconnaissance aircraft of the First Marine Air Wing by the Deputy COMUSMACV for Air. On 23 March 1968, the Commandant of the Marine Corps requested that the Joint Chiefs of Staff advise CINCPAC that the COMUSMACV plan for single management of strike and reconnaissance aircraft assets in I Corps, as approved by CINCPAC, is not in consonance with previous decisions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and that these changes should not be implemented. The views of the Commandant of the Marine Corps are provided at Appendix B.
4. (U) The Chief of Staff, US Army, and the Chief of Naval Operations support the position of the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Their views are provided in Appendix C.
5. (U) The Chief of Staff, US Air Force, supports the proposal made by COMUSMACV and the approval action taken by CINCPAC.

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6. (S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff are unable to agree on the change of control of the air assets of the III MAF by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC and, therefore, submit the matter to you for your decision.

7. (U) The views and recommendation of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, are provided in Appendix D.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Earle G. Wheeler

EARLE G. WHEELER

Chairman

Joint Chiefs of Staff

Attachments

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APPENDIX A

PROPOSAL OF COMUSMACV ON OPERATIONAL CONTROL
III MARINE AMPHIBIOUS FORCE AVIATION ASSETS (U)

1. (S) On 14 February 1966, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved 1
a proposal by COMUSMACV, and concurred in by CINCPAC, to designate 2
III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) a separate uni-Service command 3
with MACV; that it be assigned to Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force 4
Pacific (Hq, FMFPAC), under command, less operational control of 5
CG, FMFPAC; and that it be under the operational control of COMUSMACV. 6
2. (S) Until 21 March 1968, all air assets of the First Marine 7
Aircraft Wing, as a component part of the III MAF, have been under 8
the operational control of CG, III MAF. 9
3. (S) During late summer 1967, the enemy began to move major 10
concentration of forces into the I Corps area. In reaction, 11
COMUSMACV initiated deployment of additional forces to this area. 12
By February 1968, US and Army of Vietnam (ARVN) force levels were 13
equivalent to field army in size. As the scope of operations 14
subsequently increased, it was the view of COMUSMACV that the com- 15
mand and control procedures previously used were no longer respon- 16
sive to his requirements. In particular, fixed-wing air operations 17
were of such magnitude as to require the major portion of 7th Air 18
Force, Vietnam Air Force (VNAF), carrier-based, and Thai-based forces. 19
The problems of coordination and direction of the diversified air 20
elements now operating in support of the ground forces were, in 21
COMUSMACV's judgment, beyond the capability of then existing command 22
and control systems. Based on these developments and the fact 23
that Marine fixed-wing assets now provided only a relatively small 24
number of the total air support sorties required, COMUSMACV pre- 25
pared a proposal to CINCPAC assigning the responsibility for single 26
management of all MACV fighter-bomber/reconnaissance assets to MACV, 27
Deputy for Air. A Provisional Corps had already been established 28

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and the necessary adjustments to existing command and control
arrangements were made to support the single manager concept
of operations. COMUSMACV reports that his proposal provided the
following:

- a. Maintained the Marine air/ground team intact except when
the tactical situation dictated otherwise.
- b. Established a procedure for central control and direction
of air effort available in support of I Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ)
forces.
- c. Permitted CG, III MAF, to determine where air effort should
be applied in his area.
- d. Provided a single airman responsible for coordination of
all air effort.
- e. There was no change in Service doctrine or roles and
missions.

4. ~~TOP SECRET~~ The COMUSMACV plan, as approved by CINCPAC on 2 March 1968,
contained instructions for the organization of forces in I Corps
Tactical Zone and described air control and coordination arrange-
ments. The COMUSMACV directive to the CG III MAF, which trans-
mitted the approved plan, includes the following:

"1. (S) Because of the increased deployment of Army forces to
I Corps area, the concentration of air effort in support of all
ground forces being deployed, and the overriding requirement to
maintain the flexibility to concentrate this effort as directed
by the enemy threat, I have concluded that it is of paramount
importance to achieve a single manager for control of tactical
air resources. Consequently, I have decided to charge my
Deputy Commander for Air Operations with the responsibility for
coordinating and directing the air effort throughout Vietnam, to
include I Corps and the extended battle area. He is responsible
for seeing to it that the air effort is applied in the most
effective manner in furtherance of the MACV mission."

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"2. (S) You will make available to my Deputy Commander for Air Operations the following air assets for mission direction: 1
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"a. Strike aircraft. 3

"b. Reconnaissance aircraft. 4

"c. Tactical air control system as required." 5

"3. My Deputy Commander for Air Operations will be responsible for fragging and operational direction of these air assets with all other available assets now under his control to meet the daily operational requirements of forces in I CTZ. Consistent with the tactical situation, Marine aircraft will be fragged through the appropriate DASC to support Marine ground units. In the joining together of the two tactical air control systems to insure continuity of control of air operations, the integrity of the Marine tactical control system shall be preserved. Marine helicopters and airlift assets will not be affected by this directive." 6
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"3. (S) I expect you to provide my Deputy Commander for Air Operations with the following: 17
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"a. G2 and G3 air representation in the MACV TASE to establish priority of effort between major commands. Also, personnel to augment the TACC and appropriate DASCs (total personnel involved should not exceed ten). 19
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21
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"b. Daily status report of availability of aircraft for fragging in accordance with your established priorities. 23
24

"c. Mission reports. 25

"d. Such officers as you see necessary for planning special allied or combined air operations." 26
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"4. The inclosure reflects the organization of forces in I CTZ and describes air control and coordination arrangements. Additionally, a description of the reporting procedures is included." 28
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APPENDIX B

VIEWS OF THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS ON
OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF III MARINE AMPHIBIOUS FORCE
AVIATION ASSETS

1. I have given further consideration to the COMUSMACV plan for single management of fighter/bomber/reconnaissance assets which has been approved by CINCPAC. I cannot concur with the plan for the following reasons, which are amplified in the succeeding paragraphs:
- a. The single management plan effectively places the III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) strike and reconnaissance aircraft assets under the operational control of the 7th Air Force, thus removing them from control of the CG, III MAF.
 - b. The effect of placing these Marine air assets under operational control of the 7th Air Force is to fragment the III MAF air-ground team, thus reducing its combat effectiveness.
 - c. The single management system is not as responsive to either preplanned or immediate air support for Marines in I Corps as was the previous system.
 - d. The single management plan contravenes my responsibility as a Service Chief to organize the forces provided to a unified commander for his employment.
 - e. A change to the single management system is not required. The previous air support system met III MAF requirements, provided for coordination of air operations, and contained the flexibility required by COMUSMACV to apply total air support assets against emergency requirements.
 - f. The single management plan contravenes the provisions of the Unified Action Armed Forces relating to the exercise of command by a unified commander through his component commanders, and preserving, where practicable, the uni-Service character of the forces provided to insure their optimum effectiveness.

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g. Justification given for the single management system that it is required due to the high level of air activity in I Corps is counter to the principles approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 12 May 1965 which points out the difference between responsibility for air space control and control of weapons systems of the separate Services.

h. Removal of control of Marine air from the III MAF air-ground team impacts on basic roles and missions of the separate Services as stated in Department of Defense Directive 5100.1 and the National Security Act.

2. ~~101~~ In the single manager plan, COMUSMACV directs the CG, III MAF to:

". . . make available to my deputy commander for air operations the following air assets for mission direction: A. Strike Aircraft. B. Reconnaissance Aircraft. C. Tactical Air Control System as required. My deputy commander for air operations will be responsible for fragging and operational direction of these air assets . . ."

The plan continues with instructions that operational direction of tactical air support in I Corps will be accomplished by the 7th Air Force Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) in Saigon. The TACC will assign targets to appropriate units, establish ordnance loads and time over targets. The following includes assignment of tasks, designation of objectives, and the authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission, all of which are included in the function of operational control. Thus, the MACV plan has removed control of strike and reconnaissance assets from the III MAF air-ground team.

3. (TS) By fragmenting the III MAF team, its combat effectiveness is reduced. Fundamental to the entire matter is the nature of the Marine Corps air-ground organizational structure. A careful balance has been struck in the numbers and types of the various

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supporting arms to enable the Marine commander to effectively fight 1
his force. Air support, in particular, must be immediately respon- 2
sive to the Marine ground commander. Marine combat structure is, 3
accordingly, characterized by deliberately built-in organizational 4
arrangements, compatible communications, and operational procedures 5
at every level to integrate air support with the fire and maneuver 6
of ground units. Because of the deliberately designed integration 7
of air into the Marine combat formations, and dependence upon its 8
immediate availability, Marine strike and reconnaissance aircraft 9
must remain under operational control of the Marine air-ground team 10
commander to effectively fill their roles. In this respect, Marine 11
fixed-wing air support parallels the relationship of helicopter 12
gunships and observation aircraft within the Army ground organiza- 13
tion while having the additional capability to operate at longer 14
ranges and carry heavier and more diversified ordnance. If the 15
Marine air-ground team is deprived of responsiveness of its inherent 16
fixed-wing assets, it has no other source of organic weapon support 17
to compensate for this critical loss. 18

4. ~~(S)~~ The impact of the single manager plan is decreased 19
responsiveness, lack of assurance of availability of close air 20
support, and reduced capability to integrate fire support means. 21
Examination of the plan for single management of strike and recon- 22
naissance assets indicates that responsiveness provided by the plan 23
would be considerably less than that previously provided in I Corps. 24

a. Preplanned air requests in the previously established 25
system involved only three processing steps from the originating 26
battalion or regiment to the III MAF TACC. Including lead time 27
for processing, a cycle time of 18 hours was required from sub- 28
mission of the initial request to receipt of air support. In 29
contrast, the single manager system has imposed intervening 30
layers of processing agencies between I Corps units and the 7th 31

Air Force TACC in Saigon. Now six steps are required to process 1
air requests from 1st Marine Division units and seven steps for the 2
3rd Marine Division units in northern I Corps. The 7th Air Force 3
frag order is executed in two phases: night radar missions and 4
day radar/visual missions. The first phase of the frag is exe- 5
cuted at 1900 on the day following arrival of the request at the 6
MACV Tactical Air Support Element (TASE) and the second phase is 7
executed at 0600 on the second day after arrival of the request at 8
the MACV TASE. Adding in the lead time required for processing 9
by intervening agencies prior to the request reaching the MACV 10
TASE results in a cycle time of 38-50 hours for initial request 11
to receipt of air support. 12

b. Immediate air requests were met under the previous III MAF 13
system by essentially a three-step process from originator to 14
his respective division Direct Air Support Center (DASC) to the 15
III MAF TACC. The TACC then scrambled aircraft from a ready hot 16
pad which was constituted with aircraft having various ordnance 17
configurations. The hot pads were reconstituted automatically. 18
In contrast, the single manager system stresses reliance upon 19
diverting aircraft already assigned to other missions. This 20
results not only in the original requestor being deprived of his 21
support, but also in the questionable ability of the diverted 22
aircraft to properly perform the immediate mission by reason of 23
such variables as fuel status and type of ordnance load. In 24
effect, the system actually nullifies most of the planning accom- 25
plished on the preplanned missions. 26

c. Further, the single manager plan provides that the TACC in 27
Saigon will assign targets to appropriate units, establish ord- 28
nance loads and time over targets (TOT). This procedure serves 29

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very well for strikes outside of South Vietnam on missions other 1
than close air support of troops. However, I submit that it is 2
the ground commander who is in the best position to determine the 3
target, the ordnance required, and the time of strike, since air 4
support must be coordinated with his scheme of maneuver and other 5
supporting fire plans. 6

d. In further analysis, a comparison of the two systems indi- 7
cates: 8

(1) The single management system is, in one sense, very 9
simple. Anything that is not categorized as an immediate need 10
is called preplanned, whether it is a strike in Laos or just 11
a block of sorties put in the air and destined for support of 12
a specific command or geographic area. What Marines call im- 13
mediate close air support is provided, in the single management 14
system, primarily by diverting these preplanned sorties, with- 15
out respect to pilot briefing, ordnance load, or fuel state. 16
Furthermore, the diverting is done by an Air Force watch 17
officer, whose knowledge of the ground tactical situation is 18
incomplete and who is not in a position to know the effect on 19
the ground action of the mission diversion. 20

(2) The Marine system is quite different. From the 21
viewpoint of the Marines on the ground, preplanned means 22
preplanned. A battalion commander integrates close air sup- 23
port into his planned maneuver, like artillery or naval gun- 24
fire. He counts on it to be there at the right time and with 25
a pilot who has already been briefed on the job. It is a 26
cardinal element of his tactical plan and, if it is diverted 27
to meet a need elsewhere, his operation is compromised. In 28
any case, if there is a diversion undertaken under the Marine 29
system, the decision of what has highest priority resides in 30
the ground chain of authority. 31

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(3) There is a difference in basic philosophy. The single management system is producer oriented. The Marine system is consumer oriented.

My greatest concern over reduced responsiveness is that the ultimate result will be increased casualties.

5. (TS) Equal in impact to reduced responsiveness is reduced combat effectiveness by reason of the fact that the single management plan removes an organic component from a carefully structured and balanced air-ground team.

a. Within this balanced team, the mix of fire support means has been derived to place heavy reliance on close air support. I must justify to the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of Defense, and to Congress every element and every weapon of this force. It is my conviction that the resultant battle tested organization provided is a proper one not only for our primary mission of amphibious operations, but for the mission presently assigned in Vietnam as well.

b. The structure of this force is my responsibility as a Service Chief. My responsibility in this area is clearly defined in UNAAF 10103b, which states:

"Under the National Security Act, as amended, and as amplified by the Functions Paper, each of the Military Departments and Services, coordinating as appropriate with the others, has the responsibility for organizing, training, equipping, and providing forces to fulfill certain specific combatant functions and for administering and supporting such forces. This responsibility includes the formulation of tactical and technical doctrine for the combatant functions involved, the internal structure and composition of forces, the type of training to be given, and the types and quantities

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of equipment and supplies to be developed and procured. 1
This undivided responsibility in a single Military Depart- 2
ment and Service of preparing forces for a broad field of 3
warfare insures that our combat forces are effective. It 4
utilizes existing departmental and service facilities 5
effectively." 6

I have made every effort to see that this assigned responsi- 7
bility has been met fully and must oppose any action that 8
detracts from the effectiveness of the Marine Corps forces 9
provided under my authority as a Chief of Service. 10

6. In my view, the MACV plan is not required. Although 11
COMUSMACV has indicated that increased deployment of Army forces 12
to I Corps and resultant intermingling of Army and Marine Corps 13
units has resulted in the requirement for a control system which 14
is flexible enough to concentrate the total air effort when 15
required, this cannot be regarded as a new problem. The Air Force 16
and Marine Corps systems have coexisted in I Corps over the 17
past three years. The Air Force system was responsive to ARVN 18
forces prior to deployment of the AMERICAL Division to I Corps, 19
at which time it became additionally responsive to the Army 20
forces. Throughout this same time frame, the Marine Corps system 21
was responsive to Marine Corps forces (including ROK Marine Corps 22
forces), and no problems existed. Provision for the coordination 23
of airspace and coordination of air operations has been and is 24
currently set forth in MACV directives which clearly state that 25
the Commander, 7th Air Force, in has capacity as MACV Air Force 26
Component Comamnder, acts as coordinating authority for all 27
US/Free World military assistance forces air operations and 28
Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) activities in the MACV area of 29
responsibility. In my opinion, air support for increased forces 30
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in I Corps is not improved by removing control of organic strike 1
 and reconnaissance assets of one component and placing it 350 miles 2
 away in Saigon. There has been no specific evidence of deficiencies 3
 in the conduct of air operations in I Corps, and initial analysis 4
 produces no evidence that the single management system would pro- 5
 vide any improvement. Previous arrangements have provided a good 6
 working basis for the emergency options General Westmoreland must 7
 have to support operations throughout the theater while preserving, 8
 for normal conditions, the tactical integrity of the various force 9
 packages that comprise the Free World military forces in the 10
 Republic of Vietnam. In support of this view, I would like to 11
 submit that: 12

a. During 1967, of over 80,000 Marine sorties flown, about 13
 18,000 were voluntarily identified as excess to III MAF require- 14
 ments and made available for fragging by the 7th Air Force. 15

b. While the CG, III MAF, could request assistance when re- 16
 quired, provisions also existed for COMUSMACV to levy emergency 17
 sortie requirements on the Marines. A specific example of this 18
 latter provision is contained in CG, 7th Air Force message 19
 131205Z February 1968, which is quoted in part: 20

"In accordance with instructions from COMUSMACV, Commander 21
 7th Air Force is the responsible agent for management of the 22
 air support of Khe Sanh. To increase the emphasis in the Khe 23
 Sanh area the following tactical air sorties are tasked on a 24

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daily basis in direct support of Operation NIAGARA: 7th Air Force - 150 sorties; SAC - 48 ARC LIGHT sorties; Task Force 77 - 100 sorties; III MAF - 100 sorties plus whatever additional effort can be made available."

c. Further evidence to demonstrate the significant accomplishment of a coordinated joint effort which was realized prior to implementation of the single management system is found in the following statistics developed from Operation NIAGARA during the period 1 January to 5 March 1968.

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Number of Sorties</u>
7th Air Force	6,616
Strategic Air Command	1,596
III MAF	3,263
US Navy	3,618

d. The flexibility and ability of the previously established system to concentrate air support and effectively coordinate the efforts of all supporting arms was also demonstrated last fall at Con Thien. Three thousand six hundred eighteen air sorties were flown into this 20 square mile area in less than a month. Of this total, 2,436 were Marine, 699 were 7th Air Force, 412 were B-52 strikes, and 71 were flown by the Navy. In addition to the high rate of air sorties, 127,000 rounds of artillery and 6,100 rounds of naval gunfire were fired into this area during the same period.

e. The examples of Con Thien and NIAGARA demonstrate that the required air support was provided by coordination, not operational control of SAC B-52s, Navy and Marine aircraft. Additionally, the examples show noteworthy accomplishments in airspace control and fire support coordination effectiveness. Yet the justification for the single manager plan includes the statement that to gain flexibility and coordination, COMUSMACV needs operational control only of the Marine air assets and not the other participants.

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7. ~~TOP SECRET~~ The decision to implement the single manager plan is con- 1
trary to the specific directions on the methods of exercising command 2
of a unified command as stated in UNAAF, pertinent sections of which 3
are quoted as follows: 4

a. "30202.b. Within unified commands, operational command 5
will be exercised through the Service component commanders subject 6
to the exception addressed in paragraph 30215c(1) (f), or be 7
exercised through the commanders of subordinate commands, when 8
such commands are established by the unified commander in accord- 9
ance with criteria and procedures set forth herein." 10

b. "30213.b. Maintenance of Uni-Service Integrity. The com- 11
mand organization should integrate components of two or more 12
Services into efficient teams while, at the same time, preserving 13
to each Service its uni-Service responsibilities. The commander 14
of any force must give due consideration to these responsibili- 15
ties. Furthermore, organizational integrity of Service components 16
should be maintained insofar as practicable to exploit fully their 17
inherent capabilities." 18

c. Paragraph 30215c(1)(f) is the exception mentioned in 19
30202.b. It provides that a unified commander may exercise com- 20
mand "Directly to specific operational forces which, due to the 21
mission assigned and the urgency of the situation, must remain 22
immediately responsive to the commander. Such specific forces 23
must be identified by the commander and approved by the Joint 24
Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense." 25

It can be noted that CINCPAC's decision is contrary to 30202.b and 26
30213.b; however, command is permissible under 30215c(1)(f) provided 27
it is exercised directly and has been approved by the Joint Chiefs 28
of Staff and the Secretary of Defense. This approval was neither 29
requested nor obtained. 30

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8. ~~TOP SECRET~~ Further, the single manager plan is contrary to the 1
decision of the Joint Chiefs of Staff which specifies the difference 2
between command authority and coordination of the use of airspace. 3
The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in their approval of a concept for air- 4
space control, established principles which provide for: 5

a. Air space control defined as a service which coordinates, 6
integrates, and regulates use of airspace over the combat zone. 7

b. The assignment of air space blocks or sectors of responsi- 8
bility within which each Service can operate its own aerial 9
vehicles in accordance with its own tactical concepts and under 10
its own control. 11

c. The assignment of coordination authority to the Air Force 12
component commander with respect to air space control - with 13
such authority being: 14

"considered as that degree of authority necessary to 15
achieve effective, efficient and flexible use of air space 16
without at the same time providing command authority." 17

And, finally, the concept of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was 18
designed to ". . . alleviate the problems associated with one 19
Service having a degree of authority over organic weapons 20
systems of another Service." 21

9. ~~TOP SECRET~~ The facts stated above demonstrate that the course of 22
action as approved by CINCPAC, is contrary to agreed joint doctrine 23
and to a specific decision of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. To propose 24
that the Joint Chiefs of Staff not only permit this action, but 25
concur in it, constitutes a major reversal of previous actions by 26
the Joint Chiefs of Staff. 27

10. ~~TOP SECRET~~ To structure, equip, train, and maintain an effective 28
force, a Service Chief must be able to depend upon agreed joint 29
doctrine and have confidence in decisions made by the Joint Chiefs 30
of Staff. Otherwise, he must initiate reconsideration of the 31

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Joint Strategic Objectives Plan, current program objectives, and 1
revision of Unified Action Armed Forces and roles and missions con- 2
tained in Department of Defense Directive 5100.1 and Title 10, US 3
Code, "Armed Forces." 4

11. I maintain that it is necessary to advise CINCPAC that he 5
has approved actions that counter the principles and procedures for 6
unified action of the Armed Forces. Since the Joint Chiefs of 7
Staff have declined to reaffirm the doctrine promulgated in UNAAF 8
and the specific concepts for airspace control which they approved 9
on 12 May 1965, I have no other recourse than to request that the 10
Secretary of Defense direct CINCPAC to restore the procedures for 11
control of air operations as they existed prior to implementation 12
of the single manager plan. 13

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APPENDIX C

VIEWS OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF, US ARMY, AND THE CHIEF OF NAVAL
OPERATIONS ON OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF III MARINE
AMPHIBIOUS FORCE AVIATION ASSETS

1. (S) I have reviewed the action taken by CINCPAC and COMUSMACV 1
to place III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) attack and reconnaissance 2
air assets under the virtual operational control of COMUSMACV 3
Deputy for Air/CG 7th Air Force, and do not concur in it. I sup- 4
port the position* of the Commandant of the Marine Corps in this 5
matter. 6
2. (S) This change in the control of air assets appears contrary 7
to: 8
 - a. The intent of Title 10, US Code in providing the Marine 9
Corps with organic air. 10
 - b. Title 10, US Code, as amplified by the Functions Paper, 11
in charging each of the military departments and Services with 12
the responsibility for organizing, training, equipping, and 13
providing forces to fulfill certain specific combat functions 14
and for administering and supporting these forces. This respon- 15
sibility includes the formulation of tactical and technical 16
doctrine for the combat functions involved and the internal 17
structure and composition of the forces (para 10103.b, JCS Pub 2). 18
 - c. A 12 May 1965 decision by the Joint Chiefs of Staff which 19
approved the basic concepts for control of air operations and 20
airspace control over the combat zone, while avoiding one Service 21
having a degree of authority over organic weapons systems of 22
another. 23
3. (S) Particular problem areas were not cited as motiva- 24
tion for changing to the single management system. Significant 25
improvement in the quality of support to the land forces and 26

* Appendix B, hereto

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in the efficiency of utilization of available air assets, if any, 1
is not evident as a result of the change. This change, which 2
deprives the Marine commander of control of his organic air and is 3
in violation of the authorities and precedents cited in paragraph 4
2 above, is not justified. Treatment of organic air in this fashion 5
would establish a precedent for centralized control which would 6
invalidate the very precepts under which the various specialized 7
air/land teams have been developed and proven to be so effective. 8
Therefore, it is recommended that CINCPAC be directed to restore 9
Marine air assets to the direct control of III MAF in accordance 10
with previously established policies. 11

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APPENDIX D

VIEW OF THE CHAIRMAN, JCS, ON OPERATIONAL CONTROL
OF III MAF AVIATION ASSETS

1. While I agree with some aspects of the views of my col- 1
leagues on this matter, I disagree substantially with major 2
portions of their views and, in particular, with the conclusions 3
they reach. 4

2. I consider it militarily unsound to dictate to responsible 5
senior commanders of the level of COMUSMACV and his superior, 6
CINCPAC, how to organize their forces and exercise command and 7
control of them. Commanders of such rank, experience, and knowl-8
edge of the principles of war, who also have intimate knowledge 9
of the specific situation facing them, are expected to utilize 10
assigned forces and resources so as to maximize their combat 11
effectiveness and minimize casualties sustained. If an officer 12
bearing these responsibilities fails to utilize his resources 13
properly to achieve these ends, a simple recourse is available. 14

3. General Westmoreland stated to me, and I communicated to 15
my colleagues, that he recommended a change in the operational 16
control of III MAF aviation assets to meet a tactical situation 17
imposed by the enemy. In brief, the enemy massed sizeable 18
forces in the Khe Sanh area and along and south of the DMZ; 19
these hostile deployments necessitated the movement of two Army 20
divisions (1st Cavalry Division and 101st Airborne Division) 21
north of the Ai-Van Pass into what is now known as I Corps North 22
General Westmoreland established the Headquarters Provisional 23
Corps, Vietnam, in I Corps North to command these two Army 24
divisions and the 3rd Marine Division, which had heretofore 25
been the senior tactical headquarters in I Corps North, and to 26
operate in coordination with ARVN units in the same area. To 27
provide coordinated air support to these diverse tactical 28
elements, General Westmoreland considered it expedient to 27
establish a single air support system rather than to maintain 28
two air support systems, each of them supporting different 29

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ground combat elements. He stated to me that he regards the 1
current arrangement as an expedient which will have served its 2
purpose when the enemy threat in the area diminishes, and the 3
Provisional Corps, Vietnam, together with a substantial portion 4
of the Army element thereof, can be redeployed to the south. 5
Further, General McConnell has expressed his judgment that from 6
an air operational standpoint, the single air support arrange- 7
ment optimizes the exploitation of air assets in support of the 8
campaign in the I CTZ. 9

4. With regard to the argument that Marine Corps assets have 10
been divorced from control and support of Marine Corps ground 11
elements, three factors are pertinent: (a) General Westmoreland 12
has deployed to I Corps, and placed under Marine Corps opera- 13
tional command, substantial Army combat and service support 14
units; these forces are comprised of artillery, engineer, 15
helicopter, and service support units furnished and intended to 16
support Army combat units in Vietnam. (b) All US ground forces 17
in I Corps are under the operational command of CG, III MAF. 17
(c) General Westmoreland has, therefore, utilized his forces so 18
as to maximize the combat effectiveness of his force as a whole. 19

5. I do not regard the organization of air assets recommended 20
by General Westmoreland and approved by Admiral Sharp as setting 21
a precedent governing the future assignment of Marine Corps air 22
units or as affecting the Marine concept of the air/ground team. 23
Rather, I regard the current air organization in South Vietnam 24
as being an expedient adopted to meet a situation imposed by the 25
enemy. When the situation changes, General Westmoreland can and 26
should modify the organization of his forces in the light of that 27
situation. Obviously, since the enemy has volition as to his 28
deployments and combat operations, no forecast can be given or 29
fixed time established when a change would be feasible. 30

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6. Therefore, I recommend that no action be taken to direct 1
CINCPAC to modify the current procedures for the management 2
and control of air operations. Instead, the Secretary of 3
Defense should direct the Joint Chiefs of Staff to inform 4
CINCPAC that: (a) the Joint Chiefs of Staff have noted his 5
action regarding the arrangements for the management and control 6
of air assets in I Corps; and (b) they expect that at such time 7
as the tactical situation changes MACV will modify the 8
organization of his forces, including the management and control 9
of air assets in I Corps, in the light of that situation. 10

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