

5530 Eastbourne Drive
Springfield, VA 22151
15 August 1992 4:51pm

Mr. Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, MD 21702

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Hope this letter finds you both well and enjoying the baseball season...it appears the Orioles aren't doing poorly.

Enclosed please find the information regarding *Operation STRONGBACK*. The information is that which I obtained from the original records, all of which were initially classified and now have been downgraded as a result of normal downgrading procedures. Obviously I didn't copy the entire order as it was a couple of inches thick. Interestingly enough, I found it to be a very comprehensive operations order and very professional in its composition. Any errors in the material I've enclosed are mine since I didn't copy the material but re-typed it into my portable computer.

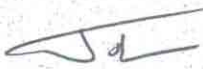
As you will note, *STRONGBACK* was a training exercise and corresponds with the information at WR 683-684. Unfortunately, all that is in the records regarding the exercise is the Operations Order from which I extracted the information enclosed. There are no orders reflecting troop lists and the like. However, one would not normally expect that type of material to be retained regarding a training exercise, less some extraordinary occurrence. Therefore, I cannot actually state that LHO participated although the unit to which he was assigned is troop listed in the order. The air control elements would be a natural inclusion to the troop list given the training objectives regarding the heavy emphasis on air assets - combat air traffic control and airspace management being a very difficult endeavor can never be minimized and one gets the sense from reading the order that part of the Commander's Intent was to exercise this aspect rigorously. It would have been in this area that I would have expected LHO to participate. The dates included at WR 683-684 correspond nicely to the exercise period and suggest his participation - what that might have been given the gunshot incident I can't infer...whether he was on light duty or not during the period I don't know...however his unit was there...he had been released for duty...and his unit was listed to perform its' mission...

There were no after action reports in the files and that thought didn't occur to me until yesterday. I'm not certain that it's worth the effort to attempt to discover if there is such a report...if you have any thoughts on this I'd appreciate them

I've included a photo copy of the cover sheet to the OPORDER...thought you'd appreciate it.

Regards to Mrs. Weisberg and I hope to visit with you again in the near future.

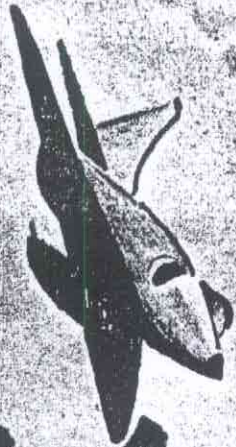
Sincerely,



John W. Masland

CONFIDENTIAL

HQ. 1ST MARINE AIRBORNE DIVISION
AIRCRAFT, FMF, PACIFIC AND AIRCRAFT
AMPHIBIOUS TROOPS (167) 50



184 139

184/39

PRODUCTION ORDER
10/1/55

STRONGER BACK

CONFIDENTIAL

Records obtained from the National Records Center, Suitland, MD through the U.S. Marine Corps Historical Society, Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. on 13 August, 1992.

Ms. Conyers was the archivist who assisted.

Reference is to Records ACC 65A-4620
Boxes 18 & 39
Location 2/36:4-7-2

Copy 182 of 183 copies
Headquarters
1st Marine Aircraft Wing, Aircraft, FMF, Pacific and Aircraft Amphibious Troops (CTG 71.3)
C/O FPO, San Francisco, California
311200Z Jan 1958

Paragraph 1 Situation omitted

2. MISSION. The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing will move by air and surface lift to the objective area and will provide aircraft and air control facilities for tactical air support and air movement as directed by Commander, Amphibious Task Force (CTF 78) during the amphibious phase of the operation and as directed by Commander, Marine Expeditionary Force (CTF 71) during the ashore phase of the operation in order to destroy AGGRESSOR forces on LUZON.

3. EXECUTION.

a. Concept of Operations. See Annex C (Concept of Operations).

b. MWHG, 1st MAW.

(1) Establish Wing Headquarters and the Tactical Air Control Section in the vicinity of 981240.

(2) Establish, operate, and maintain communications for Headquarters, Aircraft Amphibious Troops (TG 71.3) in accordance with Appendix 1 (Radio Frequency Plan) and Appendix 3 (Wire/Radio Relay) to Annex F (Communications/Electronics).

(3) Establish a Counter Air Operations Center (CAOC) in the vicinity of CANTONEMENT AIRSTRIP and a Gap Filler Radar Site in the vicinity of PALAUTING POINT.

(4) Establish a Direct Air Support Center (DASC) and one Air Support Radar Team (ASRT) in the vicinity of the Command Post of the Commander, Landing Force (Surface) (CTG 71.1)

(5) Upon establishment ashore, be prepared to pass operational control of MACS-3 and MASS-1 to 1st MAW.

(6) Upon establishment ashore, attach Detachments, Communication Section MWHG (Radio Relay Team) as indicated in Annex A (Task Organization).

c. MAG-11.

(1) Establish airfield facilities, to include all-weather navigation aids, as BASA AIRSTRIP to support the air operations of 1st MAW units operating from that base.

(2) Establish a Counter Air Operations Center (CAOC) on CORREGIDOR ISLAND and a Gap Filler Radar Site in the vicinity off NASUGBU.

TASKS 3 - 9 I DID NOT INCLUDE - NOT USEFUL

d. MAG-12.

(1) Be prepared to augment NAS, CUBI POINT as required to support the air operation of 1st MAW units operating from that base.

(2) Be prepared to conduct tactical air support in the objective area in accordance with Appendix 4 (Air Support) and Appendix 5 (Air Defense) to Annex D (Air Operations), and Annex Q (Special Weapons)

TASKS 3-4 I DID NOT INCLUDE - NOT USEFUL

SUB-PARAS E-K I DID NOT INCLUDE AS NOT USEFUL

1. COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS.

(1) The code word assigned PHIBLEX 58M is Exercise "STRONGBACK"

(2) D-Day is established as 1 March 1958.

(3) H-Hour is 0600 - Time of landing first surface wave.

(4) L-Hour is 0800 if CVA Thetis Bay is located in BALER BAY (primary plan), 0900 if located in DINGALAN BAY (alternate plan). (MY NOTE: Time Zone used is Hotel)

SUB PARAS 5-18 I DID NOT INCLUDE AS NOT USEFUL.

Annex C (Concept of Operations) to Operation Order 202-58 (Exercise STRONGBACK)

1. CONCEPT.

a. PHIBLEX 58M (Exercise STRONGBACK) involves the commitment of a Marine Expeditionary Force comprised of the 3rd Marine Division (-) and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (-), plus certain Armed Forces of the PHILIPPINES in a major combined amphibious and land supported exercise on LUZON ISLAND to aid friendly nation destroy an AGGRESSOR invader. The Marine Expeditionary Force will land in AGGRESSOR seized territory and conduct air and ground operations against invading AGGRESSOR forces.

b. Major elements of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing will arrive in the objective area prior to the arrival of the Amphibious Task Force and will support PHILIPPINES Forces in the conduct of air operations against AGGRESSOR prior to the amphibious operations.

2. MISSION. The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing will move by air and by surface lift to the objective area and will provide aircraft and air control facilities for tactical air support and air movement as directed by Commander, Amphibious Task Force (CTF 78) during the amphibious phase of the operation and as directed by Commander, Marine Expeditionary Force (CTF 71) during the ashore phase of the operation in order to destroy AGGRESSOR forces on the island of LUZON.

Appendix 1 (Training Objectives) to Annex C (Concept of Operations) to Operation Order 202-58 (Exercise STRONGBACK)

Ref: (a) Annex B (Training Objective for Amphibious Troops) to FMFPac Letter of Instruction 1-58, STRONGBACK
(b) I MEF Planning Memorandum # 6 of 21 Nov 1957

1. Training objectives for Operation STRONGBACK are listed below in order of their priority:

a. Further develop tactics and techniques for employment of helicopters borne forces from multiple helicopter transport decks and from fields ashore.

b. Further test atomic employment with emphasis on atomic logistics.

c. Test the capability of organic communications means to support the exercise of command and control over widely separated forces.

d. Further develop and test intelligence and reconnaissance techniques including parachute and amphibious reconnaissance.

e. Develop all possible phases of the logistic support essential to a Marine Expeditionary Force.

f. Further develop and test procedures and techniques for the provision of helicopter protection by both jet and reciprocating aircraft against aggressor air and ground opposition.

g. Further test and evaluate air defense against atomic attack.

h. Provide experience and test the ability to effect the mass evacuation of an infantry battalion and a unit replacement plan.

i. Provide experience and test the ability of Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, to employ its forward echelon as a Headquarters of a Marine Expeditionary Force, organized as an air ground task force.

j. Further explore the concept of the Force Logistical Area Command.

k. Further evaluate the capabilities of the Amphibious Assault Bulk Fuel Handling System, and Tactical Airfield Dispensing System.

l. Emphasize close and deep air support and air defense.

m. Further develop and test parachute pathfinder employment and techniques.

Annex D (Air Operations) to Operation Order 202-58 (Exercise STRONGBACK)

FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATION:

1st Marine Aircraft Wing/Aircraft Amphibious Troops (CTG 71.3)

Tactical Air Control Section

Tactical Air Control Center/Tactical Air Direction Center

MASS-2

Direct Air Support Center/Helicopter Direction Center/Air Support Radar Team

MACS-1

Counter Air Operations Center (2d Alternate TACC)
Gap Filler Radar Site
Early Warning Site (PAF)

MACS-3

Counter Air Operations Center (Alternate TACC)
Gap Filler Radar Site
Early Warning Site (PAF)

VMJ-1

6 F2H-2P

MAG-11 (-)

VMA 332	24 AD-6
VMF (AW)-513	18 F3D-2/4 F3D-2M
MABS-11	BASA AIRSTRIP
6th Fighter Squadron PAF	8 F86F
8th Fighter Squadron PAF	8 F51

SOME ORDER OF BATTLE NOT INCLUDED HERE - I DIDN'T COPY IT.

1. SUPPORTING AIR FORCES

a. TF 77 from time control is passed ashore until approximately 1600 D+2.

b. AEW aircraft number and duration to be announced.

c. Theater air (constructive)

2. GENERAL

a. Concept of Operations. See Annex C (Concept of Operation)

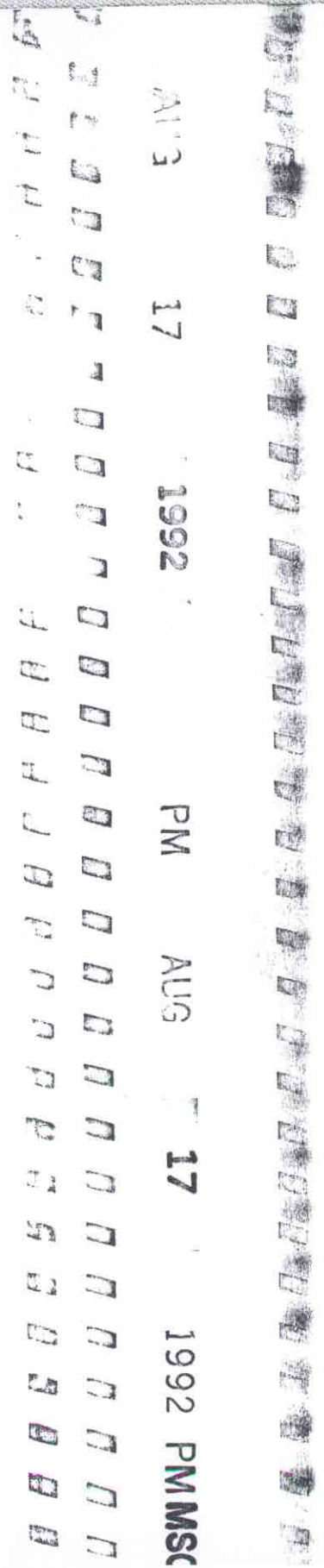
b. The objective area for Exercise STRONGBACK is that area contained within a circle of two hundred (200) NM radius of CLARK AIR FORCE BASE; the exercise area is that containing the LAUR Maneuver Area and the sea approaches to DINGALAN BAY and BALER BAY.

0 PERMIT 1 ON STROMBERG

J.W. Masland
5530 Eastbourne Drive
Springfield, VA 21150



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7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, MD 21702